



THE NEW CHAUCER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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newchaucersociety.org

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear member

There is plenty of exciting news to report since the last Newsletter in November 2014.

2016 Biennial Congress in London

Planning for the 2016 Biennial Congress in London is well under way, under the direction of Emily Steiner and Kellie Robertson, the co-chairs of the Program Committee, and their committee, and of Anthony Bale and Lawrence Warner, the co-chairs of the local organizing committee in London, and their committee. I'll be going out to London this July (2015) to meet with members of the local organizing committee and to see the various Congress venues.

Toronto-based medieval theatre group PLS (Poculi Ludique Societas) will be at the 2016 Congress; they plan to perform an all-female *Mankind* (plenty of scatology!) and also the fragmentary moral interlude *The Pride of Life*, one of the few surviving examples of English drama from Chaucer's lifetime. Participants at the Congress may also be interested in going north to York before the Congress begins to see a performance of the York Mystery Plays (exact dates not announced, but the performances will last a month, probably in June): <http://www.yorkminster.org/about-us/news/york-minster-mystery-plays-2016.html>.

Finance

The financial health of the Society continues to be excellent: as of 05/22/2015 we have \$32,317.18 in the checking account with Bank of America; as the Society's Treasurer I maintain this amount at approximately

\$30,000, as an operating fund; I regularly transfer any surplus into the endowment fund to increase the Society's assets. We currently have \$545,898.10 in the endowment fund with Vanguard (for comparison, we had \$514,843.98 in November 2014).

The NCS Postdoctoral Fellow

This year we will use 5% of the endowment (\$25,000) to support our first ever NCS Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr Holly James-Maddocks, who will take up her post in the Department of English at Saint Louis University on 1 September 2015. Saint Louis University is providing matching funding and benefits, to bring the value of the award up to \$50,000 p.a. As the NCS Postdoctoral Fellow for 2015–16, Holly will work on a project entitled "The Illuminators of the Middle English Poetic Tradition: Localising the Production of Decorated Copies of the *Canterbury Tales*, *Confessio amantis*, and *Fall of Princes*." Building on her PhD thesis, she will continue to examine the 74 manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Gower's *Confessio amantis*, and Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* that were decorated with illuminated borders. By locating the geographical and cultural contexts for the work of the limners who produced these manuscripts, she will investigate the ways in which knowledge

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about particular artists can complement or contradict what we know about the scribe, dialect, and even the quality of the Middle English literary text in question. The project will result in a monograph, *The Illuminators of the Middle English Poetic Tradition*. Holly is currently a Visiting Scholar at the University of Cambridge. I would like to extend a very special thank you to the members of the selection committee, who were (besides me), NCS Trustees Candace Barrington and Sarah Stanbury, and my colleague at SLU Joe Weixlmann. I would also like to thank our President Susan Crane for her support throughout the process of appointment.

Social media

What of our reach? This Newsletter goes out to 1244 members. We have 1,031 likes on Facebook (we crossed the thousand mark last month) and 948 followers on Twitter (sounds good but – to put this in perspective – the witty cult blogger Chaucer Doth Tweet @LeVostreGC has 38.3K followers). The story about NCS that we tell on Facebook and on Twitter covers many diverse aspects of the Society and its work: notices about the contents of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, our Biennial Congress, and Chaucer-related sessions at Kalamazoo; news of grants and bursaries in the field – and the occasional image of a Chaucer Lego figure.

Remember to check the blog on our website for contributions on topical events or new directions in the field: Anke Bernau wrote on curiosity in March 2015 and David Matthews wrote on medievalist historical fiction, largely on Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*, in April 2015: <http://newchaucersociety.org/blog>.

Studies in the Age of Chaucer

We hope you enjoyed your copy of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 36 (2014). The Contents of SAC 37 (which will appear later in 2015) have been announced: <http://newchaucersociety.org/pages/entry/sac>

Outreach to high school/secondary school teachers

Lynn Staley, one of our Trustees, continues to spearhead an initiative that has established bridges between the Society and secondary-school / high-school teachers. The day before the Congress, 10 July 2016, there will be a dedicated all-day event for high school teachers. NCS members and teachers Kara Crawford and John Longo are also organizing roundtables at the Congress for high-school teachers: the CFP is here:

<http://newchaucersociety.org/news>. Deadline: 1 October 2015.

What NCS is doing in the years between Congresses

Following a decision made by the Trustees in 2014, NCS provided sponsorship to two Chaucer conferences taking place in 2015: the Canada Chaucer Seminar (Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, April 18 2015) and the Biennial London Chaucer Conference: Science, Magic and Technology (10-11 July 2015). NCS sent \$1,500 to each conference.

Obituaries

This Newsletter contains two obituaries that celebrate the life and work of two eminent and much-loved Chaucerians. Larry Benson, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of English, emeritus, Harvard University, died February 16, 2015. Larry Benson was a former NCS Trustee (1984-88). John Hurt Fisher, eminent medievalist, former head of the English Department of the University of Tennessee and Professor emeritus, died February 17, 2015, in Knoxville TN, at the age of 95. John Fisher was a former NCS President (1982-3). RIP both.

I wish you all the very best for productive teaching and research the coming summer or winter, whichever hemisphere you are in.

Best wishes
Ruth

In Memoriam: Larry Benson (1929-2015)

With great regret we announce the death of Larry Benson, formerly Francis Lee Higginson Professor of English at Harvard University, on Tuesday, February 16, 2015, at the age of eighty-six. Born in 1929, Larry took his BA at the Arizona State University in Tempe, spent four years in the Marines (one of them in action in the Korean War), then moved to Berkeley, to work towards his PhD under the direction of Charles Muscatine and Alain Renoir. After graduating in 1959, with a dissertation on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, he came to Harvard as an assistant professor, where he stayed throughout his career, chairing the Department of English from 1981 to 1983. He also served as associate editor of *Speculum* for more than thirty years. After his retirement in 1998, he continued to teach at the Harvard Extension School and to update his Geoffrey Chaucer Website, keeping it current both for his own students and for users around the world.

Larry was the author of many books, the most important of which were perhaps his *Art and Tradition in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"* (1965), *Malory's Morte d'Arthur* (1974), his edition of the Middle English stanzaic and alliterative *Morte Arthur* (1980), and most famously *The Riverside Chaucer* (1987), his edition of the complete works of Geoffrey Chaucer, produced in collaboration with almost all the prominent Chaucerians of his day. This last manifested both his ability to work constructively with other scholars and, it is widely conceded, his willingness to give others credit for work that was in certain measure his. Besides these, he edited two essay collections that paid tribute to his senior colleagues, *The Learned and the Lewed: Studies in Chaucer and Medieval Literature* (1974), a tribute to B. J. Whiting, and *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield* (1982, with Siegfried Wenzel). He also produced a *Glossarial Concordance to the Riverside Chaucer* (1995), a collection of his own essays, *Contradictions: From Beowulf to Chaucer: Selected Studies of Larry D. Benson* (1996), and, most recently, a verse translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2012). One of the essays gathered in *Contradictions*, written not long after his arrival at Harvard, was "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry" (*PMLA* 1966), which robustly took on a group of prominent oral formulaicists who were his senior colleagues at the time. Another, "The Authorship of St. Erkenwald" (*JEGP* 1965), challenged the widely accepted opinion that this poem was by the Gawain poet. Theodore Anderson and Steven Barney's introduction to the book remains the best account of Larry's career and the significance of his intellectual contribution to that point.

At Harvard, Larry was a brilliant teacher of undergraduates and provided strong support to many of his graduate students, especially through his founding of the Medieval Doctoral Conference, which has now been an institution for well over thirty years. In Larry's memory, we have collected some reminiscences from certain of these students and others who knew him, many light-hearted. We apologize that we were not able to contact all of Larry's students who went on to scholarly careers.

Of the Doctoral Conference and what it said about what would now be called "mentoring," Christopher Cannon writes: "The weekly seminar, which Larry was instrumental in starting, was always accompanied by lunch before. This lunch was called the 'Chester A. Arthur Society', designed to honor the most undistinguished President of the United States. Larry had a long patter about the importance of this which was all pure Lewis Carroll. Delightful nonsense. But what it was really about was that we all get together and enjoy each other's company, irrespective of what the topic for the seminar was later. The speaker was always invited. And sometimes we did talk about something serious. But it was usually pretty raucous, and Larry's particular gift was that he was simply always there. So you felt you could and should be too. It really bonded us as a

cohort of medievalists (it was so good for our confidence) but he did it all by force of his own happiness.”

Others remember Larry’s exuberant sociability with equal fondness while also understanding it as part of his larger generosity to medieval studies. Elizabeth Fowler writes: “What I’m most grateful to Larry for: his relentless, contagious interest in words, words, words; his comradeship, which pressed tiny but illuminating cups of sherry upon the weekly Thursday medieval colloquium and in practice ensured that everyone felt comfortable and invested in thinking and joking more about texts and topics than the tensions of rank or status, and so made the medieval group a place of sanctuary and sociality; his dedication to providing (texts, concordances) helpful resources for other scholars above pushing his own individual genius. He was a servant of medieval literature, and though not a saint (he was just a bit more wicked than that), he set an example I carry with me.”

Martha Driver describes Larry as “always charming, courteous, wildly enthusiastic, and a lot of fun, I would say. Also massively productive and extraordinarily innovative with web-based pedagogy early on.” She particularly remembers a wild evening of celebration for *The Riverside Chaucer*, involving a revolving dance floor at the New York Hilton, a good deal of alcohol, and a certain amount of staggering: “I remember congratulating him ... but between the revolving floor and whatever Larry was imbibing, his balance was comically affected. He was standing in the center of the ballroom floor as the rest of us revolved around him, so one could see why.”

Elizabeth Scala also writes that Larry “was great at fostering the medievalist social life in the department, even after the critical field went in another direction than the one he was most comfortable working in,” after the rise of theory in the 1980s. Jeffrey Cohen likewise remembers his resistance to theory but praises the way he nonetheless “modeled how to be an intellectual while socializing,” and his desire to build a community of medievalists at Harvard” by many different means: “from playing Herod when some of us decided to mount a mystery play to inviting graduate students and faculty to his house for a picnic and to play croquet.” For Rebecca Krug, this desire lay at the root of his fascination with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a poem about mirth and game, “the absolutely spontaneous, playful, and seemingly insignificant event that can occur in a community with shared traditions.” Becky adds, “I suppose the highlight of Thursday should have been the late afternoon talks by visiting dignitaries (often very interesting talks) but for most of us it was lunch. This was because lunch was our humble version of festivities at Camelot and Hautdesert.”

Larry brought this same energy and careful enthusiasm to the undergraduate classroom, teaching a famous *Canterbury Tales* course to mighty enrolments but also more specialized courses, such as Early Middle English and the History of the English Language. Ken Bleeth was only one of a number of undergraduates who decided to pursue careers in Middle English as a result of his teaching, seduced by Larry’s teaching of *The Owl and the Nightingale* and, especially, the Gawain poet. Many testify to the great care he put into these courses, fretting over his undergraduate lectures long after he had them by heart. Susanna Fein writes: “I had the personal, rare fortune to learn the art of teaching Chaucer directly from Larry Benson. He characteristically taught with nervous energy, pacing a bit, jingling coins in his pockets, conveying through his own penetrating intelligence the brilliance, humor, and humanity of Chaucer. I learned much by watching him teach – each term was better than the last – never, for me, a repetition. He would enter the room brimming with new ideas born of his editorial attention to Chaucer. Even though I was there to aid the undergraduates, I came to feel like this was a master seminar just for me.”

On Larry as teacher and scholar, Derek Pearsall sent in these thoughts, under the title “Larry Benson, Master of Deceit”: “Larry was the man who brought me to Harvard, almost single-

handed, since he was Chair at the time. As I got to know him, I liked him more and more. I also came gradually to realise that Larry was a master of deceit. He deceived everyone into thinking that he was an idle, irresponsible, philistine son of the Arizona soil, whose main pleasure was in drinking and smoking and telling stories of a generally incorrect nature, and whose greatest delight and cause of self-congratulation was to have put one over on the eastern academic establishment. None of this was true, or nearly none of it. Larry was a scholar of great range and depth of learning whose judgment was meticulous and expressed only on those subjects that he knew about (a rare form of restraint). His opinion, when you asked for it, or got him in a corner where he was forced to give it, was always exact, clear and forceful. Anything of mine I have ever given him to read he commented on sparingly, but invariably picking unerringly on whatever was most wrong – not what you wanted to hear but what you needed to hear. Any graduate student who could get him to read their work could be assured of comments both generous and constructive. He pretended to be a lazy and incompetent teacher, whose greatest satisfaction was in keeping students from taking his classes by instituting untakable required courses. But he was a dedicated teacher and loved teaching, and continued teaching in the Extension School long after he retired. He was one of the best lecturers I have known: it was always a pleasure to look forward to hearing him.”

Reflecting on Larry’s death, David Benson writes: “With his passing the world has lost a great deal of learning, good fellowship, and fun. I think Larry knew about as much about Chaucer and medieval language and literature as anyone I have ever known. I was always amazed at how extensive and precise his scholarly knowledge was, and he interpreted Middle English poetry with a rare insight and subtlety. In addition to many great articles, his book on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was not only, I believe, the first on the poem, but is still the best. And yet Larry was never the least bit conceited or pompous. No matter how eminent he became, a piece of his heart, I think, was always back in Arizona where he grew up.”

Of Larry’s final years, David Staines adds: “Larry was a private man, separating his scholarly life from his home life. What occupied him in his later years was his selfless concern and care of his wife Peggy, who suffered from a steadily increasing and debilitating Parkinson's Disease. This disease lasted for ten years, and never once did I hear him complain, not one word. This area is the realm where he proved himself a complete champion.”

Steven Barney also praises his devotion to his family and his care of his wife in her last years, while being one of several to insist that any memorial to him be kept light.

Nicholas Watson, James Simpson, Daniel Donoghue

In Memoriam: John Hurt Fisher (1919-2015)

John Fisher died quietly on February 17, 2015, in Knoxville, TN, 95 years old. He was one of eight Founding Trustees of the New Chaucer Society (1978–82), its founding Bibliographer (1979–82), its third President (1982), and its second Executive Director (1982–89). John’s first wife, Jane Law Fisher, was the second Secretary of the NCS (1982–89), and together the pair was instrumental in shaping the contours of the Society as an international organization and setting it firmly on the road to success. John is survived by his second wife, Audrey Duncan, and by his three children, Janice Craven and her husband Alan, John C. Fisher (Jack) and his wife Ronni, and Judith Law Fisher and her husband Mark Allen.

John's scholarly and professional academic career was extraordinary. He held teaching appointments at the University of Pennsylvania, New York University, Duke University, Indiana University, and the University of Tennessee, where he was both John C. Hodges Professor of English (1972–88) and Head of the Department of English (1976–78). He held temporary or visiting professorships at USC, Michigan, NYU, and the University of Texas at San Antonio. A member of Phi Beta Kappa, he served as senator-at-large (1977–83). He was elected Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America (1983), Academy Vice-President (1985–86), Academy President (1987), and President of the Academy Society of Fellows (1993–96). His academic degrees were awarded by Maryville College (A.B. 1940) and the University of Pennsylvania (A.M. 1942; Ph.D. 1945); two honorary degrees came in 1970: Loyola University of Chicago (L.H.D) and Middlebury College (Litt.D.).

The two honorary degrees were awarded in large part on the strength of John's remarkable service to the Modern Language Association of America, which he helped to administer in various capacities between 1947 and 1971, "with seven years off for good behavior," as he put it.

While Executive Secretary of the MLA (1963–1971), John managed the enormous growth of the organization in several ways and helped to transform the learned society into a professional organization, moving the staff offices in New York twice, publishing the *MLA Style Sheet* (predecessor of the *Handbook*) for mass consumption, instituting the Job Information List, computerizing the annual bibliography and membership lists, formalizing the Association of the Departments of Foreign Languages, and establishing the Association of the Departments of English, among other notable activities. He also edited *PMLA* during this period and helped to lobby for various national reforms in English education, and for the establishment of both the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Center for Editions of American Authors. In 1970, John paid the price for his dedication by contracting diabetes—in part the result of the stress of the two tumultuous years that followed the upheavals of the 1968 MLA national convention in Chicago. In guiding the professionalization of the MLA, John had not anticipated its political dimensions fully, yet until his death he kept a glossy photograph of President Lyndon Johnson shaking John's hand at the ceremony for the establishment of the NEH. John and Jane kept the photograph in their downstairs powder room; John and Audrey kept it in John's study.

Somehow during these heady years, John produced his first book-length critical work. His first books had been editions, first of *The Tretyse of Loue* (1951), which developed out of his dissertation at Penn under the direction of Albert C. Baugh; second, an edition of the poetry of Edwin R. Hunter, head of the English Department at Maryville from 1938–60, *This Man's Art* (1964). John's scholarly reputation was set, however, by *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (1964), a foundational analysis of Gower's life and art, and along with G. C. Macaulay's edition of Gower's works, one of the two pillars of Gower studies. In recognition, the John Hurt Fisher Prize has been awarded annually since 1991 by the John Gower Society.

The South Atlantic Association of Departments of English periodically awarded a similarly named prize (the John Hurt Fisher Award) for professional service.

John's publications before and during the MLA days (some fifty books and articles, most scholarly, but some occasional) reflect his interests in medieval literature as well as in American education and English language history; yet it is not until after he left the MLA that his full impact on Middle English studies is felt with an additional eight books pertaining to Chaucer and English language history, and many essays and reviews. His *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1977, 1988, 2012) is, to date, the last single-editor edition of Chaucer's works in the tradition of Skeat and Robinson. His *An Anthology of Chancery English* is a fundamental resource in the tradition of Chambers and Daunt. His ground-breaking studies of late-medieval

standardization in English writing appeared in *Speculum* (“Chancery English and the Emergence of Standard Written English,” 1977) and in *PMLA* (“A Language Policy for Lancastrian English,” 1992), both later reprinted in *The Emergence of Standard English* (1996) with six others of his linguistic pieces. He contributed to Beryl Rowland’s *Companion to Chaucer Studies* (1979), to Donald Rose’s *New Perspectives in Chaucer Criticism* (1981), to Laura and Robert Lambdin’s *Chaucer’s Pilgrims* (1996), and to various collections, including festschriften for John G. Kunstmann, Albert Baugh, Margaret Schlauch, Lillian Herlands Hornstein, and Jean Mirashi. Joseph B. Trahern, Jr., edited John’s festschrift in 1989, *Standardizing English: Essays in the History of Language Change*.

In *The Importance of Chaucer* (1992) and elsewhere, John describes Chaucer as the “cynosure” of English language and literature in the late Middle Ages—the anchoring star or constellation of those cultural heavens. John was himself a cynosure of Middle English studies, not only for his publications and leadership, but also for the networks that he created. One hallmark of his scholarship is the number of people with whom he collaborated and aided in doing so—Diane Bornstein, Malcolm Richardson, Pete Beidler, Bob Yeager, and me, to name a few. One of his satisfactions upon the publication of the *Chancery English* anthology was that Jane Law Fisher (his co-editor along with Malcolm) would finally be in the Library of Congress catalog, as he put it. Mary Carruthers describes John as a “great soul” and remembers how he was “important to me at a crucial time.” Chauncey Wood calls his death a “loss to the world of scholarship.” Tom Bestul calls him “one of the giants, a warm and generous human being.” Many other medievalists, former students and colleagues, offered similar remarks via e-mail, in person, or on the Chaucer listserv after John’s death was announced— Alan Baragona, Bege Bowers, Mary Flowers Braswell, Mike Crafton, Mary Dzon, Tom Heffernan, Laura Howes, Jo Koster, Dan Mosser, Richard Newhauser, Dan Pigg, David Raybin, Joe Trahern, Bob Yeager, and others. As Tony Edwards put it, John “touched many lives, always for the better.”

I have been privileged to be a sounding board for these recollections because John was my father in law and because we collaborated on several projects. He paid for my first membership in NCS; our *Essential Chaucer* was my beginning in the business of Chaucer bibliographies. John first gave my career a firm push in 1984 when he invited me to help with the local arrangements at the NCS Congress in York—I drove the car that served as the shuttle from the train station to the University campus and thereby met many luminaries of the Chaucer world. Many others have received professional support from John—Paul Strohm, for one, has told me recurrently how John helped to shape his career—but the support John gave me was very personal as well and it is one of the great joys of my life to be a member of his family. In the week before John died, Judy and I were fortunate to be with him in the Knoxville hospital, reading to him because his eyesight had failed through macular degeneration; we read from the *TLS*, *Archaeology* magazine, *The New Yorker*, and more. John most enjoyed hearing us read Strohm’s *Chaucer’s Tale*, especially the portion about Chaucer’s residence above Aldgate. He also enjoyed us telling him about waterfalls and the views of the Smokey Mountains that he loved so well.

John’s predilections for mountains and for education and language study were rooted deeply. He was born in Kentucky, but raised by his lay missionary parents in mountainous Hamadan, Iran (then Persia), and sent home to the U.S. for advanced education at age 14 after home schooling. Remarkable for his generation, both parents held college degrees (like John, from Maryville College) and both were teachers, his father at the Community School in Hamadan which he helped to build, physically and institutionally. I understand that a street in Tehran is still named after Commodore Fisher, John’s father. Early on, John spoke Assyrian and Farsi as well as English. Rather solitary as a boy, he had a dog named Brownie, a horse named Scout, and the quite good library of classics of the Community School. When he arrived in the U.S. in 1934,

fourteen-year-old John told his Aunt Louise who met him at the boat “I am going to teach Chaucer.” He did. He taught Chaucer to many, and he taught us much more.

Mark Allen

OTHER CONFERENCES AND CALLS

Telling Tales: Manuscripts, Books and the Making of Narrative The conference of the Early Book Society 2015

The next biennial conference of the Early Book Society will take place at the **University of Oxford from 2.00 p.m. Thursday 2 July 2015 3.30 p.m. on Sunday 5 July 2015**. Most sessions will be held at St Anne’s College, Oxford, although sessions on the afternoon and evening of Friday 3 July will take place at the Weston Building, the new Special Collections department of the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

People who wish to attend should register online at the following website:

http://www.oxforduniversitystores.co.uk/browse/extra_info.asp?compid=1&modid=2&catid=22&prodid=321

This website takes payment for registration for the conference itself. Registration includes dinner on Thursday 2 July, a drinks reception in the Bodleian Library on Friday 4 July, lunch on Saturday 4 July and Sunday 5 July and refreshments throughout. The cost of registration is £95.00. The website also gives participants the option of signing up, separately, for the conference dinner at St Anne’s College on the evening of Saturday 4 July. The separate cost of the conference dinner is £50 and includes wine.

Bed-and-breakfast en-suite accommodation is available at St Anne’s College on the nights of Thursday 2, Friday 3 and Saturday 4 July. This must be booked separately from the College’s website: <http://www.st-annes.ox.ac.uk/conferences/accommodation/conference-accommodation>

It is essential that, when booking, delegates give the promotional code EBS17750, when asked, to obtain our reserved rooms and rates. The charge is £75.00 per night. During the conference itself, ‘left luggage’ facilities will be available with the conference team.

Further information about the Early Book Society and the conference can be found in the Society’s website at <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/EBS>

Sixth International Piers Plowman Conference U of Washington, Seattle in July (23-26) <http://www.piersplowman.org/conference/about.htm>

The IPPS meeting will be held in conjunction with a workshop (23 July) of the Piers Plowman Electronic Archive: <http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/index.html>

The Learned Clerk in Late Medieval England
Neglected Sources, New Perspectives
A Symposium at Bates College: 9-10 July 2015
Lewiston, Maine

The Learned Clerk Symposium brings together leading scholars in the fields of medieval literature and history, editing and manuscript studies, and digital humanities, whose research variously engages the forms and modes of late medieval textual culture. The years just before the advent of print, and immediately afterwards, witnessed a burgeoning of secular learned manuscript production in England. Through a focus on these texts, the symposium's series of presentations will explore two interlacing threads — neglected sources and new perspectives.

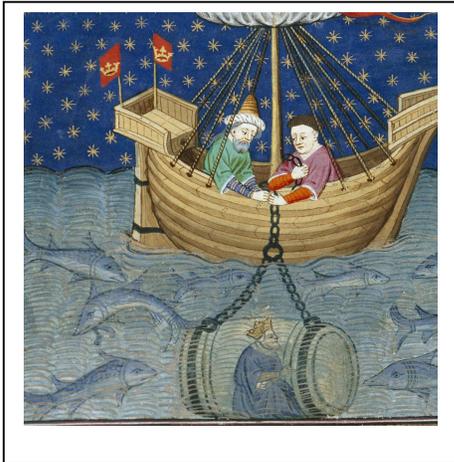
Papers will be grouped according to a number of themes highlighted in the most recent research:

- Recovering the sources and the scope for digital renewal;
- The learned clerk: contexts and outlooks;
- Authorities;
- Humanist gestures;
- Publication & transmission;
- Coteries & networks;
- Modus compilandi libellos: modern editorial approaches to late medieval authorial practice.

The Huntington Library
San Marino, California
“The Provocative Fifteenth Century”
October 15-17, 2015

It may be no coincidence that the word “provocative” first appears in English in the fifteenth century, for the term carries within itself all the vibrant multivalence that lies at the heart of the epoch and its literature. For fifteenth-century writers and thinkers, this word spoke to ideas about both worldly and otherworldly kinds of response, arousal, and activity. It was used on the one hand to reference the stimulation of the human body and its sensual appetites, and on the other the stimulation of divine action: the “provocative means,” or methods and modes by which a person might stir God into action on his or her behalf. More broadly, the idea of the provocative fifteenth century characterizes well the aesthetic position taken up by many writers and texts of this era, and upon which this conference will primarily focus: positions from which to provoke and stimulate ideas about, among other things, categories of literary value and technical knowledge, the material and phenomenological world that stimulates the quest for such knowledge, and the sensory experiences that mediate the material world. The four main sessions of this conference—Aesthetic Misbehavior, Evocative Objects, Sensory Displacements, and Technical Exhilarations—will be taken up by twelve scholars, international leaders in the field as well as critical newcomers. The conference will begin with a public reading by British poet and translator Simon Armitage. For additional information, please contact Andrea Denny-Brown (andreadb@ucr.edu) or Lisa H. Cooper (lhcooper@wisc.edu).

Biennial London Chaucer Conference: Science, Magic and Technology



10-11 July 2015

Institute of English Studies, Senate House,
University of London

Image: Alexander in a diving bell; Shrewsbury Talbot Book of Romances. Royal 15 E. VI, f. 20v. © The British Library Board.

Generously supported by the New Chaucer Society and by Boydell & Brewer

This year's Biennial London Chaucer Conference comprises a full two days of current scholarship on the topics of science, magic and technology within and around Chaucer studies. We have keynote papers from two leading scholars of Middle English literature and culture, J. Allan Mitchell and Lisa H. Cooper. The conference reflects an on-going trend in literary studies towards interdisciplinary approaches and an incorporation of non-literary, less canonical writing and aspects of material culture. The themes of science, magic and technology foreground discussions of what late medieval people knew about their world, the sources of that knowledge, and the uses to which that knowledge was put. The conference has several key threads, covering medieval understandings of the human person, the natural environment, cosmology and metaphysics. Further, a significant group of papers reconsider literary texts as technologies and position them in relation to other practical skills, machines and tools. In this way the conference doesn't so much look at literature as a reflection of medieval scientific knowledge, but asks about the ways in which literature participates and shapes scientific heuristics. This international conference offers a forum for scholars at all levels to participate in discussions of very current interest within the field of late medieval literary studies.

Registration:

Standard fee: £65

IES students/members concessionary fee: £45

Enquiries: Events Officer, Institute of English Studies, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU; tel +44 (0) 207 862 8826; Email: IESEvents@sas.ac.uk

**Religion and (the Master) Narrative: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Medieval and
Early Modern Belief and Practice
CALL-FOR-PAPERS
University of Colorado Boulder | Second Annual CMEMS Conference
October 22-24, 2015**

Recent scholarship on medieval and early modern religion has begun to question fundamental categories and to destabilize the meaning and chronological divisions between medieval Europe and Reformation Europe, the pre-Christian and the Christianized. A more complex and nuanced portrait of belief and practice has emerged. Where there was once a monolith – the homogeneity of medieval and Catholic Christianity – now we have a sense of the vitality of popular movements (cults of saints, poverty, Apostolic, and women’s movements) interfaith exchanges (among Jews, Muslims, Christians), and heresies (Wycliffites and Cathars). In addition, the Reformation has come to be seen less as an end to the Middle Ages than inextricably connected to it, another manifestation of religious reform. This conference seeks to bring together scholars from a wide range of disciplines to ask how we might best understand medieval and early modern religion and the narratives generated to explain religious change and continuity. Given that the legacy of the Middle Ages and Reformation persists in our own time, this topic is pressing and particularly timely. To this end, bringing medieval and early modern ideas about religion into conversation with twenty-first century accounts of secularity and religiosity, globalization, and religious plurality is one of the overarching goals of this conference.

Plenary Speakers Include:

Sarah Beckwith (English, Duke University), Kenneth Mills (History, University of Toronto/University of Michigan), Nina Rowe (Art History, Fordham University) and John Van Engen (History, University of Notre Dame)

We invite abstracts for papers (20-minutes in length). Potential lines of inquiry may include: the language(s) and categories of belief and practice (including visual languages); changing narratives of religious reform; the translation and/ or interpretation of religious texts; the creation and proliferation of images and material objects; drama, ritual, and performance; defining or redefining the Reformation; the relationship between gender and religious practice; the relationship between Jews, Muslims, and Christians; the dissemination of doctrine and theology among elites and non-elites; narratives about individuals or groups in text and image (one thinks of saints' lives and foundation narratives as well as art concerning these); narratives that define or defy heresy; images and structures that index religious skepticism or heterodoxy; the printed image and religious dissent; religion in the early modern New World. We also welcome papers that address how narratives about medieval/ early modern religion have informed and continue to inform our contemporary moment.

Submission Deadline for Abstracts: May 15, 2014

Abstracts (of 300 words) accompanied by a brief biographical paragraph should be sent to:

Anne E. Lester, Department of History, alester@colorado.edu

OR

Katie Little, Department of English, Katherine.C.Little@colorado.edu.

More information can be found at <https://cmems.colorado.edu>

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Chance, Jane. *Medieval Mythography, vol. 3: The Emergence of Italian Humanism, 1321-1475*. UP of Florida, 2014.
- Connolly, Margaret and Raluca Radulescu, eds. *Insular Books: Vernacular Manuscript Miscellanies in Late Medieval Britain*. Oxford UP, 2015.
- Contzen, Eva von and Anke Bernau, eds. *Sanctity as Literature in Late Medieval Britain*. Manchester UP, 2015.
- Fein, Susanna, ed. and trans., with David Raybin and Jan Ziolkowski. *The Complete Harley 2253 Manuscript, Volumes 1-3*. Medieval Institute Publications, 2014-15.
- Gerber, Amanda J. *Medieval Ovid: Frame Narrative and Political Allegory*. Palgrave, 2015.
- Hardwick, Oz, ed. *New Crops from Old Fields: Eight Medievalist Poets*. Stairwell Books, 2015.
- Kerby-Fulton, Kathryn, John J. Thompson, and Sarah Baechle, eds. *New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies and Reading Practices: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*. U of Notre Dame P, 2014.
- Lawler, Traugott, and Ralph Hanna, eds. *Jankyn's Book of Wikked Wyves, vol. 2: Seven Commentaries on Walter Map's "Dissuasio Valerii."* U of Georgia P, 2014.
- Mitchell, Allan. *Becoming Human: The Matter of the Medieval Child*. U of Minnesota P, 2014.
- Perkins, Nicholas, ed. *Medieval Romance and Material Culture*. D.S. Brewer, 2015.
- Richmond, Velma Bourgeois. *Chivalric Stories as Children's Literature: Edwardian Retellings in Words and Pictures*. McFarland, 2014.
- Sobecki, Sebastian. *Unwritten Verities: The Making of England's Vernacular Legal Culture, 1463-1549*. U of Notre Dame P, 2015.
- Sturges, Robert S. trans. *Aucassin and Nicolette*. Michigan State UP, 2015.

OTHER NEWS

The Future of Medieval Studies and the Academy

You can hear an audio recording of the following roundtable that was held at this past meeting of the Medieval Academy of America "The Future of Medieval Studies and the Academy": bit.ly/1AneEqp #tbt

Participants: Mary Carruthers (NYU and President of the Fellows), [Irina Dumitrescu](#) (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn), and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Loyola U Chicago). The session was sponsored by TEAMS and the MAA, and co-organized by Tom Goodman (U of Miami) and Ben Ambler (Arizona State U). Moderated by Tom Goodman (U of Miami).

***Public Declamations: Essays on Medieval Rhetoric, Education, and Letters in Honour of
Martin Camargo***

Brepols will soon be producing a festschrift for Martin Camargo, long time member of NCS. Information about the book can be found here:

http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod_id=IS-9782503547770-1

Those interested in being listed in the *tabula gratulatoria* and purchasing the book at a discount can send their name and institutional affiliation to:

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The New Chaucer Society

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