

THE CHAUCEER NEWSLETTER

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New Chaucer Society Seeks New Home

Rutgers University has been the New Chaucer Society's home since 1997 and will continue to support the Society's daily operations through June 2002. At that point, the Society will need a new Executive Director and *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* will need a new Editor. Your current officers have delighted in assisting the Society's work during the years of support provided by Rutgers University. Please consider whether you could propose a plan for the Society's future operations, or whether you know of candidates you could suggest to the committee charged with choosing the Society's new home. The committee's membership, designated by the Trustees at their meeting in July, is Helen Cooper (chair), Susan Crane, A.S.G. Edwards, Linda Georgianna, and Paul Strohm.

The familiar model for this move, in force through the present, would be to house both the business office and SAC at the same institution, with one faculty member serving as Executive Director and another as Editor (or, at Rutgers, two others: Larry Scanlon as Editor and Christine Chism as Book Review Editor). All the universities that have housed the Society have committed significant funding to its daily operations: course release for the officers, office space, one or two graduate assistants, and a budget for office supplies, printing, and postage. The dollar equivalent of this support has varied from university to university, from about \$15,000 per year to about \$26,000.

A second possibility would be relocating the Executive Director's office and duties to one university, and the SAC editorship to another university. An advantage of this model is its flexibility; there are not many faculties that can generate one member interested in the Directorship and another interested in the Editorship at just the same moment. If funding could be won for a freestanding Editorship and a freestanding Executive Director's office, it should not be difficult for the two officers to coordinate their activities, even at international distances.

► **Job of the Executive Director:** About half the time in this position involves working with the Local Arrangements Committee and the Program

~Newsletter Contents~

NCS Seeks New Home—pages 1-2
Executive Director's Report from London Congress—page 3
Report on Trustees' Meeting, July 2000—page 4
Upcoming NCS Elections—page 2
Where Will the NCS Meet in 2004?—page 4
NCS Web Site Highlights—page 4
Editor's Report on SAC 22 (2000)—page 5
"Why Do We Still Study Chaucer?" Winning Essay—page 6
Talks, Parties and Calls for Papers—page 7

Committee for each congress, handling agreements for *SAC* publication and the biennial congresses, and working with the Finance Committee and the Trustees on investments, congress costs, and membership policy. Budgeting, banking and endowment accounts, producing the biannual newsletter and other scheduled mailings, running elections, and organizing the biennial Program Committee meeting make up the rest of the job. The present Executive Director estimates time on this job as the equivalent of one semester course per year.

► **Job of the Editor:** Because *SAC* is mailed directly from the printer to the current year's members, and directly from the press distribution office to both individuals and institutions, the Editor is responsible only for each volume's production. Editors circulate submissions for review, work with the authors of conditionally accepted articles in the revision process, and work directly with a copyeditor, a compositor, and a printer chosen in consultation with the press. The Editor or Book Review Editor keeps abreast of new publications that would be of interest to the membership, gathers copies from publishers, solicits reviews from within and beyond the NCS membership, and works with review authors through the editing process. The present Editor and Book Review Editor estimate time on each job as the equivalent of one semester course, that is, the equivalent of two courses per year for all the editing duties.

► **Job of the Graduate Assistant:** At Rutgers, one Graduate Assistant (half-time) manages the membership records, constructs and updates the web site, handles congress registrations, and oversees the printing and mailing of newsletters, membership directories, and other scheduled

communications. For *SAC*, the graduate assistant maintains records on articles submitted, mails offprints to authors and reviewers, checks quotations and footnotes, and generates the index.

The officers currently in these positions and the committee in charge of this move would be delighted to provide more details concerning all aspects of the Society's operations. The committee would like to receive proposals for new homes, with preliminary financial information about university support, no later than May 2001.



Upcoming Election for Board of Trustees and Finance Committee

A ballot for the election of three Trustees to serve four-year terms (2002-2006) and one member of the Finance Committee to serve a six-year term (2002-2008) will be mailed to the current (2000) membership in January of 2001. The nominating committee for this election is C. David Benson (chair), Andrew Lynch, and Nicolette Zeeman. Nominations may also be made by written petition to the Executive Director from at least ten members. Nominees must be members of the Society at the time of nomination. For more information, see the Constitution of the New Chaucer Society, Article VIII, printed at the back of the Membership Directory.

Executive Director's Report from the London Congress

Susan Crane

This congress marks the beginning of the New Chaucer Society's fourth year at Rutgers University. We were fortunate to receive substantial funding from Rutgers for a total term of five years, ending in July 2002. Let me urge each of you to think about potential new homes for the Society, and to convey all your thoughts and suggestions to the committee charged with executing this important move. (Further information about the move appears on page one of this newsletter.)

The New Chaucer Society is in excellent financial shape at this point, thanks to the extraordinary U.S. economy and the fiscal caution shared with me by my co-officers, Larry Scanlon, Editor of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, Christine Chism, Book Review editor for *SAC*, and Graduate Assistant Susan Arvay. The Society's budget has two distinct parts, an endowment reserved for supporting our long-term goals and security, and an operating budget consisting of income from dues and sales of *SAC*. To begin with the endowment, I am delighted to report that it has nearly doubled in size since coming to Rutgers, from a starting total of \$81,935 to a current total of more than \$154,000. I have made building the endowment a particular priority because it may be needed in times of crisis for the operating expenses of the Society—for example, if we are unable to locate a new home that can subsidize our daily operations as Rutgers has done. But my hope is that the endowment will continue to grow and to produce more and more interest income for discretionary expenses that support the Society's long-term goals, such as the support of young medievalists and subventions for publications in medieval fields.

As for the operating budget that comes from dues and sales of *SAC*, it too is in good shape despite some large withdrawals I have

made to build up the endowment. Our surplus has allowed us to hold full dues at \$45, and we have expanded the subsidized dues category of \$25 by removing the two-year cap for students and by adding a new \$25 membership for unsalaried and part-time salaried members. The NCS Finance Committee has reviewed all the Society's expenses and financial decisions, and I would like to thank committee members John Fyler, Paul Strohm (ex officio), and Robert Yeager for their advice and assistance.

Just under three quarters of our members pay the full dues of \$45 per year. Ten per cent of our members are students, eleven per cent are retired, and five per cent have joined for 2000 in the new unsalaried/part-time salaried category. Sixty-eight per cent of our members live in the United States; we currently have 216 non-US members, an impressive 34 members in Japan, 27 in Canada, 24 in the UK, 12 in France, 10 in Spain, and somewhat fewer than 10 in Australia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Singapore, South Korea, and Switzerland. Our total membership on July 6 was 685, and here at this congress we have 367 registrants. We are thus a smaller society than so many, and I hope you will take advantage of our artisanal, small-scale operation by talking with NCS officers about how the Society can better serve its membership.

President Paul Strohm's term ends with this congress, as do the terms of Trustees David Aers, John Ganim, Linda Georgianna, and Anna Torti. After this meeting, current Trustees David Benson, Carolyn Dinshaw, and Robert Hanning will be joined by newly elected Trustees Julia Boffey, Anthony Edwards, Stephen Knight, and Toshiyuki Takamiya. Our next President, Helen Cooper, takes office at the end of this congress. She will preside at the 2002 congress, which will be held at the University of Colorado in Boulder, on the welcome invitation of Elizabeth Robertson and Bruce Holsinger. The call for papers for this congress will appear in the Spring 2000 *Chaucer Newsletter*.

Report on the Trustees' Meeting, July 2000

At their meeting on July 13 in conjunction with the London congress, the Trustees of the New Chaucer Society accepted an invitation from Elizabeth Robertson and Bruce Holsinger to hold the Thirteenth Biennial Congress at the University of Colorado in Boulder from July 17-21, 2002, with the proviso that the registration fee should be kept under \$100. The Trustees approved a Program Committee consisting of Lisa Kiser (chair), Steve Ellis, Lee Patterson, Fiona Somerset, Helen Cooper (ex officio), and Susan Crane (ex officio). In addition, they moved that the President could

appoint a member of the Local Arrangements Committee to the Program Committee; the President appointed Elizabeth Robertson to this liaison position.

The Trustees reviewed the Society's finances and agreed to hold dues at their current rate for the next two years. They discussed *SAC* editorial policy with Editor Larry Scanlon and asked him to draft a non-binding description of his policy for *SAC*'s next editor, and for the Trustees' discussion at their meeting in 2002. Mark Allen reported that the on-line bibliography will soon be more easily accessible; Trustees voted to continue subsidizing entries in the on-line and annual printed bibliography at the rate of \$1 per item.

Where Will the NCS Meet in 2004?



Proposals are sought from members willing to host the Society's Fourteenth Biennial Congress, to be held in 2004. Since the 2002 congress will meet in Boulder, Colorado, the following congress would normally be located outside North America, or at least outside the United States. Please contact President Helen Cooper or the New Chaucer Society office at Rutgers if you are interested in making a proposal, or if you have suggestions about venues for the 2004 congress.

NCS Web Site Highlights

The NCS web site <<http://ncs.rutgers.edu>> is regularly updated to provide members and others interested in the Society with information about our activities. A collection of photos from our London congress last July is the latest addition to the site. We welcome more photos from congress attendees! If you have photos you would like to share, please send them to the NCS office at the return address on this newsletter. Information about our next congress at the University of Colorado in July 2002 will be posted as soon as it becomes available. The web site's *SAC* page details submission guidelines and instructions for ordering back volumes. We've also recently added a table of contents listing articles for all volumes of *SAC* up to this year's volume. By using the web browser's "Find"

function users can search the table of contents by title words or author's name to locate a particular article. Our "Links" page features an updated list of Chaucer's texts available on-line as well as hyperlinks to journals, organizations, calls for papers, and many internet resources of interest to both undergraduates and advanced scholars of the Middle Ages. The On-Line Chaucer Bibliography, maintained by Mark Allen at the University of Texas at San Antonio, can be accessed via the "Bibliography" page, which has links to both its Telnet and Java interfaces. And as always, our membership form is available on the web site, as well as information on how to contact us by mail, e-mail, phone, and fax. Members are invited to suggest ways we can make our web site even more useful and informative by sending comments to Susan Arvay at <arvay@eden.rutgers.edu>.

Report from the Editor of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*

Larry Scanlon

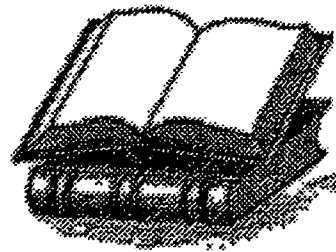
Allow me to begin with a bit of reflected glory. Catherine Sanok, Assistant Professor at the University of Washington, has been awarded The Medieval Academy of America's Van Courtland Elliot Prize for "Criseyde, Cassandre, and the *Thebaid*: Women and the Theban Subtext of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," which appeared in the twentieth volume of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*. The prize is awarded annually for an outstanding first article in the field of medieval studies. Enthusiastic congratulations to Professor Sanok!

To move now to slightly less happy news. Unfortunately, this year I must once again report production delays for the forthcoming volume of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* (SAC 22). However, this report is accompanied by a production development of an even bigger sort: we are changing publishers to the University of Notre Dame Press. We will be rejoining Barbara Hanrahan, the managing editor at Notre Dame, who moved there from Ohio State University Press in 1999. Barbara is not only one of the ablest academic press editors in the country, she is also a medievalist by training, and in the past two decades has edited a number of the most important titles on Chaucer and Middle English literature. It will be a pleasure for us to be working with her again. It will also be a pleasure to be at the Notre Dame Press, which has a long and distinguished tradition in medieval studies. Barbara is committed to strengthening that tradition and we are proud to be part of the effort.

SAC 22 will be even bigger than last year, and we hope equally significant. The first article is by Peter Travis. Entitled simply "White," it is a philosophic meditation on *The Book of the Duchess*, and it argues, among other things, that the poem is a philosophic meditation on subjectivity, gender, and language. Next we have Christopher Cannon, and "Chaucer and Rape: Uncertainty's Certainties," which resituates Cannon's own groundbreaking work on this topic with an extended consideration of the similarities and differences in conceptualizations of rape between medieval and modern law. This essay is followed by David Matthews's fascinating account of twentieth century translations of Chaucer, "Infantilizing the Father: Chaucer Translations and Moral Regulation." In "The Engaged Spectator:

Langland and Chaucer on Civic Spectacle and the *Theatrum*," Lawrence M. Clopper takes up the issues of spectacularization and performance, lately of great interest to students of Middle English culture, and traces their treatment in the work of the period's two most important poets. Alan Fletcher and Frank Grady explore two under-explored aspects of two under-explored poems in "Sir Orfeo and the Flight from the Enchanters," and "St. Erkenwald and the Merciless Parliament," while Joel Fredell affords magisterial treatment to the humble paraf in "The Lowly Paraf: Transmitting Manuscript Design in *The Canterbury Tales*." Sarah Tolmie adds to the growing body of good new work on Thomas Hoccleve in "The *Prive Science* of Thomas Hoccleve." And the articles are rounded out by two different sorts of intertextual studies of *The Parliament of Fowls*. Daniel Pinti's "Commentary and Comedic Reception: Dante and the Subject of Reading in *The Parliament of Fowls*" situates the poem in relation to the already extensive tradition of Dante commentary contemporaneous with Chaucer, while Theresa Tinkle's "The Case of the Variable Source: Alan of Lille's *De planctu Naturae*, Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, and Chaucer's *Parlement of Fowles*" examines the extremely intricate textual history of the *De planctu*, and the differences it makes to our understanding of Chaucer's poem.

In addition to thirty reviews and the annual Chaucer bibliography, this issue of SAC institutes a new feature: the colloquium, a collection of shorter contributions on an important current topic. In the inaugural colloquium, seven prominent Chaucerians, Stephen Knight, Terry Jones, Ann W. Astell, Henry Ansgar Kelly, Richard Neuse, Helen C. Cooper, and L. O. Aranye Fradenburg offer their take on *The Monk's Tale*, that long-maligned tale now finally coming into its own. We expect SAC 22 to be released by January 15.



Essay Contest Winner Announced at London Congress

The NCS is happy to announce that Robert Meyer-Lee (English, Yale University) is the winner of our recent essay contest, "Why, after 600 years, are we still studying the works of Chaucer?" President Paul Strohm announced the judges' selection at the London Congress this past July. We reproduce the winning essay here with the author's kind permission.

"The Allure of the Phantom Popet"

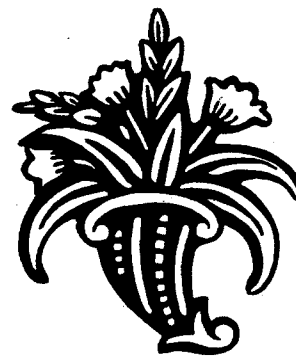
This were a popet in an arm t'embrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.

This couplet, spoken by the redoubtable host of the *Canterbury Tales* about the poet's own pilgrim alter-ego, is, in the fullest sense of the word, charming. Endearingly elusive, it captures in its thematic play and formal *sprezzatura* the essential reason why, after 600 years, we are still so interested in—and so mystified by—Chaucer's poetry. The lines are at once self-deprecating, self-aggrandizing, and self-effacing. Apparently submitting himself to the mockery of the host, the poet is in fact ostentatiously making his own person the topic of his verse—only to leave us with both a remarkably concrete image and an utter befuddlement as to what the image ultimately suggests. Does he intend it to be a faithful self-depiction, or merely another example of the host's crude and sometimes cruel jocularities? Is his self-identification as a womanish object of woman's affection a reinforcement of gender stereotypes, or, by placing both himself and woman in opposition to the voice of the host, an ironized subversion of these stereotypes?

These and countless other questions exist, however, only in the readerly aftermath of the couplet. Initially, we seem to gain such an intimacy with the author that we, too, wish to embrace him. Only upon reflection may we feel completely hoodwinked into this desire. Once again we have

been nudged into mistaking fiction for presence, and, despairing of discovering the latter, we interrogate the former. We unearth dramatic complexity. We notice that underneath the apparently natural, colloquial speech of these lines is a virtually flawless iambic pentameter. And yet, finally, what we most relish is the initial trickery, and behind this we imagine once more an authorial presence—precisely that 'elvish' personality that forms the other half of the host's characterization of the narrator. Like the prodigal son, we return, wiser and wized, to the scene of our former interpretive innocence.

I may be accused in this appreciation of focusing too narrowly on the immanent qualities of Chaucer's verse, failing to call attention, for example, to the immense cultural importance of his work as revealed by not only the texts themselves but also by the institutions that perpetuate their canonicity. Certainly, we continue to study Chaucer's works because we believe we may understand better the anglophone cultures which they both represent and have helped to produce, and—just as certainly if more cynically—because we have already invested so much in this study. Yet I believe that the fundamental reason we remain drawn to Chaucer is the magnetic sense of authorial presence that lurks around the corners of the verse. Over and over this presence reveals itself to be an illusion, yet we cannot make it go away, and the more we pursue it the more it eludes our grasp.



Talks, Parties, and Calls for Papers

MLA Chaucer Division Announces Sessions and Party

The Chaucer Division is sponsoring three sessions at the 2000 MLA convention in Washington, D.C.

1. "Trilingual Chaucer." Organizer and presider: Christopher Baswell. Papers include "An Origin of Species: Chaucer and the Trilingual Miscellany," George G. Shuffelton; "Chaucer's Trilingual Griselda," Susan Crane; "'Go, litel bok!': or, Why Didn't Chaucer Publish in the French Fashion?" Andrew Taylor. Thursday, Dec. 28, 1:45-3:00 p.m., Thomas Paine Room, Marriott Wardman Park.

2. "Chaucer and Late Fourteenth-Century *Mentalités*." Organizer and presider: Peter W. Travis. Papers include "Chaucer and the Pursuit of Perfection," R. James Goldstein; "Regulation and Representation: Chaucer's Practice of Everyday Labor; or, Why the 'Lost Years' in Kent Matter," Kellie Paige Robertson; "Cool Britannia? Representations of Urban Life in Some Late Fourteenth-Century Texts," Marion E. Turner. Thursday, Dec. 28, 7:15-8:30 p.m., Virginia Suite B, Marriott Wardman Park.

3. "The Making of Chaucer in the Twentieth Century." Organizer and presider: R.W. Hanning. Papers include "Allegories of Chaucer Studies in Chaucer: Intersections of Historicism, Textuism, Psychoanalysis, and Tropological Poetics," James J. Paxson; "The New Critics' Geoffrey Chaucer: 'Appreciated,' Never 'Understood,'" Alan T. Gaylord; "J. M. Manly, Edith Rickert, Geoffrey Chaucer," Sealy Ann Gilles and Sylvia Tomasch. Friday, Dec. 29, 10:15-11:30 a.m., McKinley Room, Marriott Wardman Park.

All Chaucerians are invited to attend the annual party co-sponsored by the New Chaucer Society and the Chaucer Division Executive Committee on Thursday, Dec. 28, starting at 8:30 p.m. The party will be hosted by Chaucer Division Chair Bob Hanning; details will be announced at the first two Chaucer Division sessions, or you can contact Bob at the convention.

Maternal Legacies: Female Medieval Scholars and the Academy

A special issue of the *Medieval Feminist Forum* will be devoted to essays and biographical sketches that take as their focus the professional life-stories and legacies of female medieval scholars, both in the 19th and 20th centuries. Particularly welcomed are biographical articles and memoirs about "off ladder" female medieval scholars as well as "on ladder" medievalists who have made significant contributions to professional opportunities for women in our field. We are also interested in essays, theoretical or statistical, that address the politics of citation: who gets cited, and by whom; how does gender play a role in citational pressures? Deadline: April 1, 2001. Send to Sarah Stanbury, Department of English, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester MA 01610; or query <sstanbury@holycross.edu>.

Graduate Journal Invites Submissions for Special Chaucer Issue

Henry Street: A Graduate Review of Literary Studies invites submissions for its upcoming "Olde Appreved Stories" special issue on Chaucer. Now entering its tenth year of publication, *Henry Street* is an international forum for graduate students of English and related disciplines that publishes original and scholarly contributions to current research on literatures in English from all historical periods, as well as on material culture, pedagogy, and critical theory. The journal invites essays on any aspect of Chaucer or Chaucer studies for this special issue. Topics might include, but are not limited to: Chaucer through history; oral/aural Chaucer; BBC animated Chaucer; Chaucer on film, video, e-text, the Web; Chaucer in variorum, in translation, in modernized English; teaching Chaucer; Chaucerian apocrypha. Deadline: January 1, 2001.

Send submissions to: Steve McCullough, Editor, *Henry Street*, c/o Department of English, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3H 3J5. For more information, visit <<http://is2.dal.ca/~henryst>> or send inquiries to <henry.street@dal.ca>.

Newsletter Submissions

The New Chaucer Society accepts both computer and traditional printed submissions to the *Chaucer Newsletter*. If computerized, the submission may be in WordPerfect or Microsoft Word format; it must be stored on a 3.5-inch IBM compatible diskette. Computerized submissions should be accompanied by a hardcopy of the text. Please include your address, phone number, and e-mail address with any submissions.

The *Chaucer Newsletter*, distributed twice a year to New Chaucer Society members, is intended primarily as a vehicle of Society business. Its ephemeral nature makes it unsuitable for substantial articles, but we are always happy to publish discussions of research in progress and other activities of interest to Chaucerians. The deadline for submissions for the Spring issue is January 1; the deadline for the Fall issue is September 1. Send materials to Susan Crane, Executive Director, or Susan Arvay, Graduate Assistant, at the address below. You may also reach the NCS office by phone or fax at (732) 932-8703 or by e-mail at arvay@eden.rutgers.edu.

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