

THE CHAUCER NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the New Chaucer Society

<http://ncs.rutgers.edu>

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University of Colorado Hosts Thirteenth International Congress July 18-21, 2002

The University of Colorado will host the Thirteenth International Congress of the New Chaucer Society in Boulder, Colorado from Thursday, July 18 through Sunday, July 21, 2002. Beth Robertson and Bruce Holsinger are handling the local arrangements. The paper sessions, plenaries, and publishers' exhibit will take place on campus. Receptions are planned at the Koenig Alumni House and the Center for British Studies and Special Collections in Norlin Library, with an exhibit of manuscript fragments catalogued by Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards. In keeping with the congress theme "Chaucer and After," Derek Brewer will chair an opening plenary panel on Chaucer in contemporary media with writer-directors Brian Helgeland, Terry Jones, and Jonathan Myerson. Special programs will feature screen adaptations of Chaucer and a panel of contemporary experimental poets—several of them affiliated with Allen Ginsberg's Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics of Naropa University—on their relationship to Chaucer and the poetry of the Middle Ages. The optional "banquet" will be a barbecue at Judith Kellogg's family's ranch in the mountains above Boulder. More paper sessions and a closing address from Derek Pearsall will end the congress on Sunday. Informal afternoon hikes will be arranged to follow the congress's scheduled sessions.

Members wishing to take advantage of low airfares before preregistration will want to know that the congress begins at 9:00 on Thursday morning with the meetings of Special Groups and Trustees. The welcome and business meeting is at 1:30 on Thursday, followed immediately by the Presidential Address and the opening plenary session. Paper sessions run through Sunday morning; the congress will close in the early afternoon with Derek Pearsall's address.

Boulder is about one hour's drive from the Denver airport. Cars can be rented at the airport, and

parking is available at the hotels and on campus for a small fee. In addition, there is an hourly inexpensive bus service between the airport and the university campus in Boulder (the AB bus: schedule available at <http://www.rtd-denver.com/Routes/RouteAB>). Door-to-door shuttle service is available through SuperShuttle (for reservations call 303-444-0808; the fee is \$18 one way, \$36 round trip).

Boulder makes an excellent base or starting point for visits to Rocky Mountain National Park (45 minutes from Boulder), Dinosaur Ridge, and the Rocky Mountains as well as Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico (a day's drive). For general information about Boulder and the surrounding areas, including links to restaurants, points of interest, transportation, etc., consult the Boulder Community Network's website at <http://bcn.boulder.co.us/>.

Preregistration forms will be mailed to all 2002 members in April. Members will have a choice of hotel and inexpensive dormitory rooms to reserve for the congress. (Dormitory rooms do not have air conditioning.) Accommodations are within 10 minutes' walk of the meeting rooms.

CONFERENCE HOTEL

The official conference hotel is the Millennium Hotel Boulder, with rooms reserved at the special group rate of \$132 single, \$145 double per night including a breakfast buffet.

To make reservations in advance of preregistration, call 303-443-3850 or toll-free 1-800-545-6285 and request the New Chaucer Society group rate. To make reservations via the internet, visit www.millenniumhotels.com, select The Americas, then select reservations for the Millennium Hotel in Boulder. The group ID/Event Access Code is 250.

☀ Altitude and Weather Advisory 🌧

Boulder's elevation is one mile, 5280 feet (1610 meters). The Kellogg ranch is about 500 feet above Boulder. Reading up on altitude sickness or consulting your doctor, particularly if you have circulatory problems, would be wise. Some medications counteract altitude sickness.

The weather is extremely changeable and can be very hot during the day, cool at night, and significantly cooler in the mountains. If you plan to hike in the high mountains, bring appropriate clothing and boots, including jackets for possible snow.

Book Exhibit at Boulder

A publishers' exhibit will be centrally located adjacent to the plenary hall and breakout session rooms throughout the congress. Members wishing to have their books displayed by Scholar's Choice (<http://www.scholarschoice.com>) should contact their publishers to arrange for a display copy to be shipped to the Scholar's Choice exhibitor.

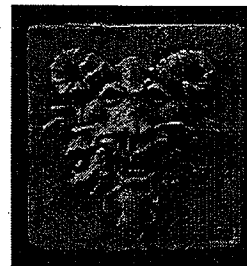


NEW CHAUCER SOCIETY WILL MOVE TO MISSOURI

The Trustees are pleased to announce that the New Chaucer Society will move to new quarters in Missouri at the end of its five-year support package from Rutgers University. The move will take place in the late summer and fall of 2002, after the Boulder congress. David Lawton is the new Executive Director, and Washington University in St. Louis will provide a generous support package of staff, office space, graduate assistance, and financial backing. The new Editor of Studies in the Age of Chaucer will be Frank Grady of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and the Book Review Editor will be Emma Lipton of the University of Missouri-Columbia. Full details of the move will appear in the Fall 2002 Chaucer Newsletter.

Endowment Contributions in 2001

Members contributed a total of \$1925 to the New Chaucer Society's endowment in 2001. The endowment provides long-term security for the Society, and in the short term, income from the endowment supports the travel expenses of younger Chaucerians to the biennial congresses. The top ten contributors to the endowment in 2001 were Christopher Baswell, Larry Benson, Mary Carruthers, Howell Chickering, Larry Clopper, Helen Cooper, Alan Gaylord, Robert Haller, Monica McAlpine, and Karla Taylor. The Society is stronger for the generosity of all contributing members.



Studies in the Age of Chaucer

Volume 23 (2001) of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* has just been shipped from Notre Dame University Press. Overseas members should receive their copies approximately eight weeks after the shipping date, about April 30, 2002. We apologize for the delay.

A Brief History of the NCS

Susan Arvay

The New Chaucer Society (NCS) has its origin not only in the "old" Chaucer Society of late nineteenth-century Britain but also in the emergence of the field of Chaucer studies itself. Before English literature received serious attention in the universities as a legitimate field of academic study, it was left to private scholars working outside the university system to research and edit the texts that today constitute the "classics" of English literature. Frederick J. Furnivall (1825-1910) was perhaps the most energetic and prolific of these independent scholars. A lawyer by training, he spent most of his time in activities that combined his desire for social reform with his passion for the literary heritage of England. He ardently believed in the power of a liberal education to reform the individual and improve the lot of the working classes and regarded the study of English literature as the means by which readers could connect with both their national heritage and the "great minds" of the past. This blend of humanitarian and patriotic impulses drove Furnivall to found no fewer than six literary societies, including the Chaucer Society in 1868.

The Chaucer Society was indirectly the offspring of Furnivall's work with the Philological Society some years earlier. In 1858 the Philological Society began work on the massive New English Dictionary (later the Oxford English Dictionary) for which Furnivall served as editor and later as a principal reader and contributor. The need for materials for the dictionary led members of the Philological Society to edit many previously neglected texts of English literature, which were then printed at the Society's expense. Complaints that the project was seriously draining the society's resources and forcing it to focus too much on English philology to the exclusion of other languages led Furnivall to found the Early English Text Society (EETS) in 1864 and charge it with the duty of editing and printing

the entire corpus of extant Old and Middle English texts. The EETS was an immediate success under Furnivall's direction but, in his estimation, simply could not cover so wide a field and still do justice to the "great men" such as Geoffrey Chaucer, so in 1868 he founded the Chaucer Society "to do honour to Chaucer, and to let lovers and students of him see how far the best unprinted manuscripts of his works differed from the printed texts."¹

Henry Bradshaw, Cambridge University librarian, was as important as Furnivall in the founding of the Chaucer Society and was particularly important in its early years. One of the principal purposes of the nascent society was to collect the materials necessary for Bradshaw to create a standard edition of Chaucer's work. The first publication sponsored by the Society was the Six-Text Edition of The Canterbury Tales (1868-1877), a collection of the best unpublished manuscripts of the tales, including the Ellesmere and the Hengwrt manuscripts. In its First Series the society published ninety-seven volumes in all, including The Romaunt of the Rose, Boece, The Treatise of the Astrolabe, and parallel-text edition of the Minor Poems and Troilus and Criseyde.

The founding of the Chaucer Society contributed immensely to the initiation and development of the critical study of Chaucer in Britain and the United States. Its accomplishments include the printing of all the best Chaucer manuscripts, the establishment of a chronology of Chaucer's works, and an order of the fragments of the Canterbury Tales, the winnowing of apocryphal works from the Chaucer canon, and the expansion and correction of earlier Chaucer biographies. Between 1851 and 1901, one hundred editions of selected or single poems and twenty-five editions of the Canterbury Tales were published, compared to thirteen editions of all of Chaucer's works combined in the previous

¹ Quoted in William Benzie, Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian Scholar Adventurer (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983) 162.

half century. Furnivall served as head of the Chaucer Society until his death in 1910. By the time the Society was dissolved in 1912 it had produced a series of texts and treatises unequaled by any organization except the EETS.

The re-founding of the organization as the New Chaucer Society was spearheaded by Paul Ruggiers at the University of Oklahoma in 1977. Backed by support from the university and the National Endowment for the Humanities and displaying an energy and enthusiasm worthy of Furnivall, Ruggiers organized a Board of Trustees from among the leading Chaucerians, oversaw the drafting of the society's constitution, selected Roy Percy to be the first editor of the society's yearbook, Studies in the Age of Chaucer; launched the Chaucer Newsletter; and became the first Executive Director of the society. The form and activities of the present society derive directly from the work of Ruggiers and the founding trustees. Studies in the Age of Chaucer premiered in 1979, which was also the year of the society's first biennial congress.

Today the New Chaucer Society is a growing organization of more than seven hundred members, ranging from undergraduates to life-long Chaucer scholars. The predominately Anglo-American cast of Furnivall's Chaucer Society has diversified to include individuals from nineteen countries, including Japan, South Korea, the Czech Republic, Spain, Turkey, and Israel. The society's biennial congresses regularly attract more than three hundred attendees who come together to share their latest research and to keep abreast of projects such as the Variorum Chaucer, the new Sources and Analogues to the Canterbury Tales, and the On-line Chaucer Bibliography, sponsored by the NCS and compiled by Mark Allen at the University of Texas at San Antonio <telnet://libcat.utsa.edu>.

The yearbook Studies in the Age of Chaucer includes the latest critical thinking and writing on Chaucer and his contemporaries, their antecedents and successors, and their intellectual and social contexts in its articles, book reviews, and annotated bibliography. Unlike Furnivall's focus on the "great man" Chaucer, the New Chaucer Society fosters a wide variety of theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches to both Chaucer's work and the culture and writing of later medieval Britain in general. The July 2000 congress in London featured sessions on such varied topics as "Chaucer and Europe," "Framing Chaucer: Image, Film, Commemoration," "Pedagogy: Chaucer in the Curricula," "Cultural Geography," "Medieval Performance," and "Computers in Research and Teaching."

At the beginning of this new century of Chaucer studies, the NCS remains active in its aims to foster scholarly research, to publish the best in new approaches to late medieval literature and culture, and to bring students and scholars at all stages of their careers into the on-going conversation about Chaucer and his period. Individuals interested in joining the NCS should visit its website at <<http://ncs.rutgers.edu>> or call (732) 932-8703.

Sources:

William Benzie, Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian Scholar Adventurer (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983).

Derek Brewer, "The Annual Chaucer Lecture: Furnivall and the Old Chaucer Society," The Chaucer Newsletter 1.2 (1979) 2-6.

I would also like to thank Derek Brewer and Roy Percy for generously sharing with me their recollections of the founding of the New Chaucer Society in the late 1970s.

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Remembering Martin Stevens, One Year Later

James J. Paxson

Martin Stevens died on the night of March 24, 2001, after many years of suffering through heart and aortal surgeries, cancer, a stroke, paralysis. But he, one of the finest scholars ever of Chaucer and the medieval drama produced by this nation, kept on with his work after he retired to San Francisco in the mid-1990s, kept in contact with people such as myself whose own work he'd inspired and directed, and continued to spur thinking about medieval studies through his difficult end. At the time of his death, it was too late to produce an announcement or encomium for the spring 2001 Newsletter; while for the fall issue, it was decided that we should wait further since a memorial colloquium on his behalf had been planned for late in the year 2001 by the City University of New York. That colloquium, held on 2 November, spoke well to his accomplishments and influences and affections in the academic world. It is fitting thus to remember him a year after his death with some thoughts on his achievements and on our celebrations of him.

Martin Stevens embodied the stock *récit* of the scholar who overcame great adversities from the start to become a great teacher and important professional force who ever remained modest, humble, kind, dignified. He was born in 1926 in Germany (where the family name, later changed, had been Steinberg); escaped the Third Reich with his family to America in the 1930s—though his family had also tried to settle in Palestine during the very dangerous years of the 1940s; lived in several US states as a young person, from New York to Florida; took his Ph. D. at Michigan State University; worked at a variety of posts (some bearing the infamous 5/5 teaching loads that the 1950s were still known for—although those had as well been heady years for Chaucer studies, as good friends of his since those days such as Alfred David

would attest) including the University of Louisville, Ohio State University, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook; and he ended up from the late 1970s on with CUNY, serving for many years as Dean of Baruch College and as a Distinguished Professor of English renowned for his many articles on Chaucer as well as his EETS edition (completed with A. C. Cawley) of The Towneley Plays and his *opus magnum*, Four Middle English Mystery Cycles (Princeton), which is unsurpassed as a totalizing study of the subject for students of medieval and Renaissance drama. He touched many who came to the Graduate Center (which had been located for years on 42nd Street in Manhattan) to study the Middle Ages; and he conducted memorable NEH seminars—one, which I was lucky to be part of in 1991, that did much to promote the Ellesmerite claim in Chaucer ms studies.

Martin came to work readily with new theories regarding Chaucer—especially the anthropological thinking of Victor Turner and, more importantly, the “sociological poetics” of Mikhail Bakhtin; and, to be sure, his CUNY student William McClellan went on to make a singular mark in the area of Chaucer and Bakhtin. For Martin, the Ellesmere ms, though produced thirty years after Chaucer's death, was the “definitive” Chaucer precisely because it was not only a (Bédierian) best-text and an aesthetic *objet d'art*; but because it “performed,” like a stage of dialogically disposed voices, the energies and tensions—between placed tales, within head- and end-links, among illuminational images and text—that he saw in Chaucerian poetics. One need look to the facsimile Martin produced with Daniel Woodward and its impressive companion anthology of essays (both published by Huntington Library and Yushodo Co., Ltd. in 1995). When I, Lawrence Clopper, and Sylvia Tomasch commissioned eleven essays for a festschrift in honor of Martin's 1994 retirement from CUNY, we used the broad theoretical framework of dialogism and performativity for collectively reflecting upon

and fusing together the innovations in Martin's work. The result was The Performance of Middle English Culture: Essays on Chaucer and the Drama in Honor of Martin Stevens (Brewer), which we presented to him in published form at a gathering held during the 1998 MLA convention in San Francisco.

The memorial colloquium of November 2001 continued that recognition of Martin Stevens's impact on medievalists, both personally and professionally. Moving testimony about Martin's friendship and guidance from his CUNY colleagues Joseph Wittreich and Pamela Sheingorn opened an afternoon of formal and informal discussion before a room-full of people at the CUNY Graduate Center's new quarters (in the old B. Altman Building, further south on Fifth Avenue). Scott Pilarz, a former student of Martin's too at the Grad Center and current faculty at Georgetown University, spoke

vividly in a formal presentation of the dramatic and iconographic elements in sixteenth-century Counter-Reformational martyrologies. A long round of responses and questions seemed to come back to the dramaturgical and iconographical models proffered by Martin's work; and a sumptuous dinner at Joe Wittreich's didn't see a curbing of this spirit of inquiry and commemoration, though conviviality ruled—an effect that Martin, one-time President of the Medieval Club of New York which to me had always been known for its spirit and its spirits of conviviality, had always cultivated among the scholarly community.

Martin Stevens will be long missed; and he will be remembered longer for his vigorous work in and his care for Chaucer, the drama, and literary theory. We remember too his care and love for friends, students, colleagues.

Updates to the 2001 Membership Directory

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Annual Chaucer Bibliography

The Bibliographers of the New Chaucer Society encourage you to inform them of publications that pertain to Chaucer. Please use the form below (or separate paper if more convenient) to report your Chaucer publications of the past calendar year. Offprints are welcome. Submissions will appear in the annual Studies in the Age of Chaucer bibliography and the On-line Chaucer Bibliography. Please send to Mark Allen or Bege Bowers by October 15, 2002.

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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 hard copy 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 the Spring issue is January 1; the deadline for the Fall issue is September 1. Send materials to Susan Crane, Executive Director, or Nicole Smith, Graduate Assistant, at the address below. You may also reach the NCS office by phone or fax at (732) 932-8703 or by email at ndsmith@rci.rutgers.edu

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