IMPORTANT NOTICE: ELECTION OF PRESIDENT AND 3 TRUSTEES

The election for President and three Trustees of the New Chaucer Society will be held online and organized by Arts and Sciences Computing at Washington University. You will be sent by email a unique password to enable you to vote on a secure site. Should you experience any difficulty, please email Jessica Rezunyk (chaucer@arts.wustl.edu). Our email will be sent to the one you supplied with your membership information. If this has changed, please let us know at once on chaucer@arts.wustl.edu.

Online voting will be open from Monday, May 3 to Sunday, May 23. This is the preferred mode of voting, and we urge all members who can do so to use it. Online voting should materially increase the level of participation.

We are aware, however, that a few members may be unable to access an electronic process. The Executive Director will therefore accept votes by email (dalawton@wustl.edu) or letter sent to:

David Lawton OR The New Chaucer Society
c/o Faculty of English University of Oxford Language and Literature St Cross Building Manor Road
Oxford OX1 3UQ UK

The New Chaucer Society
Washington University in Saint Louis
Department of English
Campus Box 1122
One Brookings Drive
Saint Louis, MO 63130
USA

If you are intending to vote by mail or email, you will need to identify yourself in order for your online password to be canceled. If you wish your postal ballot to be strictly confidential, please enclose it inside a second envelope. Letters or emails will need to be received by Sunday, May 23.

The election for President is by preferential voting. You will be asked to rank the candidates in order of preference, with 1 as your first preference. If your first preference candidate receives fewest votes, her votes will be distributed according to preferences between the other two candidates.

Candidates for President (in alphabetical order) are
Ardis Butterfield
Carolyn Dinshaw
Stephanie Trigg

The election for Trustees will be by simple majority. You will be asked to vote by placing an X beside the names of your three preferred candidates. The three with the highest number of primary votes will be declared elected.

Candidates for Trustee (in alphabetical order) are
Alcuin Blamires
Mishtooni Bose
Glenn Burger
Marilynn Desmond
Frank Grady
Larry Scanlon

David Lawton
Executive Director and Returning Officer

INSIDE:

Election of President and 3 Trustees . . . . 1
Conferences and Calls ............... 5-7
Tribute to Charles Muscatine . . . . 2-3
Publication Announcements .......... 7
Siena Update . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 4
Other News . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 7-8
Charles Muscatine 1920-2010

Charles Muscatine died in his ninetieth year on March 12 in Oakland California, not far from the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, which he served so long and so well. Charles also had a long association with the New Chaucer Society: he was one of its Founding Trustees and served as its second President from 1980-82. Charles’s fame in the wider world, as emphasized in the many obituaries that appeared throughout the country, derived from a signal act of bravery in 1950 when, as a new Assistant Professor with a growing family and a mortgage, he with some thirty other colleagues refused to sign the anti-Communist loyalty oath then required by the UC Regents. He was fired, unemployed for a year, taught at Wesleyan for two years, joined in a legal suit that succeeded, and returned happily to Berkeley. With his usual modesty, he rarely talked about this moment of courage (he always insisted he wasn’t a very political person). His stand for academic freedom, prompted by the sense of decency that was one of his core qualities, took place just a few years after he participated in naval landings on the coasts of North Africa and Sicily, at Salerno, and on Omaha Beach on D-Day (for which he was officially recognized for bravery). It was followed a few years later by the publication of his first book, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*.

These are just a few incidents in a remarkably rich and full life. For example, he was an avid golfer and skier (into his eighties), he learned to pilot a small plane (at the UC Flying Club), which he sometimes flew to academic conferences, and he co-owned a vineyard whose grapes were used to produce, among other wines, a superb Ridge Zinfandel. His wife Doris, who was his childhood sweetheart in New Jersey, was a well-known writer on food and wine, and the dinner parties held at their striking house high in the Berkeley Hills (at one time such scenic plots could be afforded by Assistant Professors) will be remembered by the many who attended them as occasions of great food (and wine), good conversation, and easy laughter, where one might meet a young pastry chef, a writer on time and creativity, an opera coach, a Classics scholar, a former student, and even the Muscatines’ elusive Siamese cats.

Although celebrated as a critic of literary style, Charles made early contributions to situating Middle English poetry in its wider cultural contexts, specifically Continental writing (French and Italian in particular), and in contemporary politics (*Poetry and Crisis in the Age of Chaucer* [1972]). It was as an exceptional reader of poetry that his genius lay. He wrote relatively little about *Piers Plowman*, yet his understanding of that difficult poem has been widely influential, including his comments on the poem’s narrative disintegration, its "surrealistic" spaces, and the sense it gives that “anything” might happen. Although he also published a book on the French fabliaux (1986) and his collected essays appeared in 1999, Charles is best known among Chaucerians for his first book, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (1957). After more than fifty years it remains in print and continues to be one of the best and most useful books on the poet. Although sometimes grouped with New Criticism, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* has perhaps more in common with the sparkling prose, wide learning, and original yet utterly convincing

*(continued on page 3)*
readings of Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis. Chaucer and the French Tradition* offered a bracing new approach to the poet: the emphasis is not on Chaucer the man, still less Chaucer the Englishman, or even Chaucer the creator of great characters, but on Chaucer the endlessly inventive artist, who drew on two traditions of Continental literature (the courtly and the naturalistic) to produce works of great variety and subtlety. Charles showed Chaucerians new ways to understand tales often neglected or misapprehended (such as the *Knight’s Tale* or the *Clerk’s Tale*, not to mention the fabliaux), and he blazed critical trails that are still being explored by those of us who limp after. His interpretations are always generous: concerned with meaning, they do not proscribe or compel, but open up the possibilities and delights of the text, which is why the book is still so often read and reread today.

Over the years *Chaucer and the French Tradition* has helped many to read and teach Chaucer. And that must have especially pleased Charles because he was a teacher above all. In a symposium on the loyalty oath fifty years later, he explained that decision in terms of his students: how could he ask them “to tell it like it is, if I had signed something that went so much against my conscience.” Believing in a literate and thoughtful public as the basis of democracy, he was perhaps unique among full professors at Berkeley in teaching Freshman English yearly until he retired in 1991. In response to the troubles at Berkeley during the mid-1960s, the university senate set up a committee chaired by Charles to suggest how things might be fixed. Its findings, known as the “Muscatine Report,” recommended, among other changes, more personal and individualized teaching for undergraduates. Charles then followed his own advice by leading an educational experiment at Berkeley known as “Strawberry Creek College” (officially, the Collegiate Seminar Program), in which faculty and graduate students created innovative courses for small groups of undergraduates emphasizing interdisciplinary topics and critical thinking. Charles directed Strawberry Creek for six years until 1980, when the university declined to continue funding it, not because it had not been a success, but because of institutional inertia and stinginess. By that time Charles was enjoying what he called “a second career” as a proponent of higher-education reform. He visited colleges throughout the country, learning from successful experiments and advising others to create their own. This resulted in his last book, published in the final year of his life, *Fixing College Education: A New Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century*.

Anyone who ever took a class from Charles knows what a gifted teacher he was. Indeed, at the very end of his life he was still at it, tutoring weekly a man trying to improve his life and advising a Cal undergraduate on writing and reading. Charles had a way of discovering the best in others’ work and showing them how to develop it. I saw this during an NEH Summer Institute for College Teachers on the *Canterbury Tales* held at the University of Connecticut in 1987. Charles agreed to visit Storrs for a week and the participants were eager to hear what this distinguished Chaucerian had to say. When he arrived, they were pleasantly surprised at how friendly and unassuming he was and then astonished that he spent most of his time simply listening to them, keen to hear their ideas and inspiring them by his appreciation. He also won the group’s afternoon croquet game with a casual shot of rare daring and precision. Charles encouraged others in and out of the classroom, especially the young. He always sparkled when he talked about his own son and daughter and his six grandchildren, all of whom remember him as their biggest cheerleader, and he treated the minor children of his friends with unfeigned respect.

It is hard to lament such a long life lived so well, but those who met Charles over the years and benefited from his original mind, his skill and dedication as a teacher, and his unfailing decency and good humor, will recall him with fondness and long regret our loss.

*C. David Benson*
News of – and from – Siena

Congress planning is now in full swing. The congress website (http://chaucer.wustl.edu/Congress2010/) has been up and running since January, and we are pleased to see that it has received many hits so far. The website contains all information relevant to the program, congress events, details on how to reach Siena, accommodation and other helpful information regarding both the congress and its location this year. It will be updated regularly as we approach July, so please check for updates.

Please register as soon as possible: failure to do so seriously impedes our NCS planning and cash flow. Congress hotel discounts have now run out, and hotels in the vicinity of the congress site are mostly booked, but many of the hotels a bit further from the university still have availability. This is high season in Siena and the city is a popular tourist attraction, so you may find it difficult to find accommodation later on.

We hope to have an update soon on the congress events, but we are pleased to announce that the local committee has managed to secure the magnificent Palazzo Pubblico, Cortile del Podestà, for a civic reception. There is a dinner included in the registration fee for Saturday night, and the congress dinner on Monday will take place in a superb Tuscan setting, Tenuta di Monaciano (http://www.monaciano.com). The events will also include two optional excursions. A choice of half-day excursions will take place in the afternoon on Sunday, July 18. Delegates can choose between either a visit to the well-known and picturesque medieval hilltop towns of San Gimignano and Colle Val D’Elsa or the stunning remains of a thirteenth-century abbey at San Galgano and the Montesiepe chapel. The San Gimignano excursion already has over 100 participants registered, so we again encourage delegates to register for those as soon as possible. The second all-day excursion will take place after the congress on Tuesday, July 20. Information on both can be found on the website.

The NCS has awarded travel grants to over 30 graduate students this year, an unprecedented number. The grant this year includes participation in the graduate workshop, which will take place on Wednesday, July 14. This is limited to graduate students only, but is turning out to be a welcome addition to the congress and has attracted much interest. We are grateful to all those offering their time and knowledge to assist in training the next generation of Chaucerians.

We still have a few rooms available for graduate students, the unsalaried or retired so please contact Sif Rikhardsdottir, Assistant ED for the Siena congress, sifr@hi.is, in order to request university accommodation. We are receiving reports of changes to airline schedules, for example from Leeds, so please check your flight information regularly. Information on how to reach Siena and bus transport from Pisa and Florence can be found on the website (under Venue, Transport Connections).

For questions about Siena and local arrangements please email the chair of the local arrangements committee, Stefania D’Agata D’Ottavi, agata.ottavi@gmail.com. For questions about the program please email the chair of the program committee, Thomas Hahn, thomas.hahn@rochester.edu. For questions about NCS or about the congress in general please email the Executive Director, David Lawton, dalawton@wustl.edu.
Conferences and Calls

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
MEDEIVAL AND RENAISSANCE CENTER
SPRING 2010 CONFERENCE

Medieval Nature and its Others
Organized by
Christopher Cannon and Carolyn Dinshaw
Friday, April 23, 2010
13-19 University Place, room 102
1:30 - 6:00 pm

Dame Nature descends from heaven, regal but perturbed with her creations. A green man rides into Camelot on a green horse. Birds speak. Deserts are provocatively crowded. What can the styles, preoccupations, and categories of analysis opened up by environmental studies, ecocriticism, animal studies, and post-humanism tell us about such occurrences in medieval literature and culture? And what can medieval literature and culture tell us about these latter-day styles, preoccupations, and categories? This workshop will bring a variety of voices, medieval and non-, into conversation about the potentials of a critical practice in which the human is de-centered. We will touch on (among other things) interrelations between human and non-human nature; the mind-body-environment circuit; subject-object relationships and the refusal of the subject-object divide; the "prehistory of the posthuman" (to quote Joanna Picciotto). Following Donna J. Haraway, herself following Bruno Latour, we may ask, have we ever been human?

Featuring: N. Katherine Hayles (Duke University), Bruce Holsinger (University of Virginia), Eileen Joy (Southern Illinois University), Mark Miller (University of Chicago), Kellie Robertson (University of Wisconsin)
NYU graduate student respondents: Liza Blake (English), Maile Hutterer (IFA), Dan Remein (English), and Gerald Song (English)
Moderated by Susan Crane (Columbia University)

Paper proposals are invited for
NATIO SCOTICA
The Thirteenth International Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Scottish Language and Literature
To be hosted by the Università degli Studi di Padova
Italy - 22-26 July 2011

The definition of a literary canon in medieval and early modern Scotland is closely connected with the definition of the Scottish nation. Attempting an assessment of medieval and early modern Scottish literature means above all dealing with a definition of this literature within a strongly defined national context: literature and nation grow together, and each contributes to the other’s definition. Following these suggestions, we welcome papers addressing (but not necessarily restricted to) the following topics:

- Redefining the canonical in early Scottish literature
- One nation, many languages: issues of language and time range
- New canons of neo-Latin and Gaelic poetry
- Defining Older Scots
- The ongoing circulation and adaptation of Older Scots literature
- A tale of two nations: Scotland and England
- Scottish-Italian relations
- Local cultural centres: the influence of religious, educational, and legal institutions
- The invention of literary tradition in seventeenth-century Scotland
- Literary and linguistic theories and practices in seventeenth-century Scotland
- Building a national epic
- Poetry deriving from strands of Protestantism
- Personal and political satire
- The poetry of quietism
- Medieval universities and the progress of learning

Papers should be twenty minutes long. Please send a 500-word abstract and brief curriculum vitae by 31 August 2010 to:

Alessandra Petrina
Dipartimento di Lingue e Lett. Anglo-Germaniche e Slave
Via Beato Pellegrino, 26
35100 Padova - Italy

Or as an email attachment to alessandra.petrina@unipd.it
Medieval Translator Conference
(Padua, 23-27 July 2010)
Registration is now open. All information and the registration link can be found at the conference website:
http://www.maldura.unipd.it/mt2010/index.html

The Third London Chaucer Conference
Chaucer and Celebrity
7th-8th April 2011

With keynote lectures from Alexandra Gillespie (University of Toronto) and Thomas Prendergast (College of Wooster)

Our current obsession with celebrity has had a profound,
even distorting effect on the contemporary literary market
and cultures of reading. A new reliance on ghost-writing
and a fascination with fame and scandal, for example,
have disrupted post-enlightenment fixations on the author-
category and literary merit, bringing us to an interesting
point of contact with earlier cultures of literacy. As the
reputation of Geoffrey Chaucer himself demonstrates, the
simultaneously repellent and fascinating nature of modern
celebrity culture presents clear parallels with that of the
late medieval world. From the seemingly reverent
imitations of his contemporaries and followers – like Usk,
Hoccleve and Lydgate – through the popularity of
Chauceriana in early modern print, to the countless
appropriations and adaptations of his work in our own
times, Chaucer has been a more or less constant star
within the English literary canon. And Chaucer was deeply
interested in questions of celebrity: in the relationship
between fame and authority, in the fame of literary
creations such as the Wife of Bath, in legends and lives.

Chaucer and Celebrity, the third London Chaucer
Conference, invites paper submissions on any aspect of
celebrity in late Middle English literature.

Please email 250 word abstracts by 1st September 2010 to:
Isabel Davis ati.davis@bbk.ac.uk, Institute for English
Studies, Senate House, London, WC1E 7HU
http://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/2011/Chaucer/
/index.htm

Jointly organized by Isabel Davis (Birkbeck), Catherine
Nall (Royal Holloway) and Alfred Hiatt (Queen Mary).

Call for Abstracts
Theorizing the Law of God and the Law of Man
in Late Medieval Literature

We are inviting interdisciplinary contributions on
law and literature for a collection of essays that
theorize the law of God and the law of man in late
medieval literature (English and continental). We
hope to receive submissions that explore various
aspects of law: common, canon, civil, or customary
law. We welcome theoretical angles that are in
themselves interdisciplinary, such as cultural
anthropology, social/cultural history, or critical
theory.

We see this volume as a contribution toward what
Anthony Musson calls “the new legal history” – an
exciting emerging field that values the intersection
of law, literary texts, and culture. Interested
contributors might consider the following topics,
though these are guidelines and in no way
limitations: • Questions of Gender, Identity, and
Subjectivity • Construction of the Self (legal,
social, philosophical, anthropological) • Legal
Spaces (geographical, urban, liminal) • Legal
Performances and Legal Language • Discourses of
Truth and “Truthiness” • Crimes as Sins and Sins
as Crimes • Limits of the Law (precedents,
conflicts of jurisdiction)

Brill has agreed to consider publishing the volume,
and the paperwork will be finalized once abstracts
have been selected. The deadline for 150-200 word
essay abstracts is September 15, 2010. Initial
publication decision will be made based on the
abstracts and contributors will be notified by
November 15; however final selections will be
made following receipt of complete essays. Final
submissions of complete essays will be due March
1, 2011, should follow The Chicago Manual of
Style (15th edition), and should be about 9000
words.

Please email abstracts to Andreea Boboc,
aboboc@pacifc.edu, and Kathleen E. Kennedy,
kek16@psu.edu.
**medievally speaking: medievalism in review**

```
medievally speaking: medievalism in review, invites colleagues to contribute to the critical negotiation of the quickly growing subject of Medievalism. As the review arm of Studies in Medievalism, the leading journal in the study of medievalism worldwide, and The Year’s Work in Medievalism, the conference proceedings from the Annual International Conference on Medievalism, this new review journal is interested discussing all substantial contributions to the study of the ongoing reception of medieval culture in postmedieval times.
```

For more information, please go to: http://web.mac.com/ricutz/iWeb/medievally%20speaking/medievally%20speaking.html, or contact the editor, Richard Utz, at richard.utz@wmich.edu.

---

**OTHER NEWS**

**Disseminal Chaucer to receive 2009 Warren-Brooks Award**

- The Robert Penn Warren Center at Western Kentucky University announces that the award jury has chosen Disseminal Chaucer: Rereading The Nun’s Priest’s Tale by Peter W. Travis of Dartmouth College for the 2009 Warren-Brooks Award for Outstanding Literary Criticism.

- Among 42 books submitted for this year’s contest, Travis’s book, published by the University of Notre Dame Press, was chosen for the breadth and depth of Dr. Travis’s scholarship, and the wit and originality of his writing, according to the jury.

- The award is given in honor of Warren and Cleanth Brooks. It was established in 1994 by the Center for Robert Penn Warren Studies. Each year it goes to an outstanding work of literary scholarship or criticism that exemplifies in the broadest sense the spirit, scope, and standards represented by the critical tradition established by Warren and Brooks. It is intended to recognize and honor work that employs in a significant way the methods associated with a close reading of texts.

---

**PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Chaucer and Petrarch**

- William T. Rossiter

Despite the fact that Chaucer introduced Petrarch's work into England in the late fourteenth century, Petrarch's influence has been very little studied. This book, the first full-length study of Chaucer's reading and translation of Petrarch, examines Chaucer's translations of Petrarch's Latin prose and Italian poetry against the backdrop of his experience of Italy, gained through his travels there in the 1370s, his interaction with Italians in London, and his reading of the other two great Italian medieval poets, Boccaccio and Dante. The book also considers Chaucer's engagement with early Italian humanism and the nature of translation in the fourteenth century, including a preliminary examination of adaptations of Chaucer's pronouncements upon translation and literary production. Chaucer's adaptations of Petrarch's Latin tale of Griselda and the sonnet 'Samor non', as the Clerk's Tale and the Cantus Troili from Troylus and Criseyde respectively, illustrate his various translative strategies. Furthermore, Chaucer's references to Petrarch in his prelogue to the Clerk's Tale and in the Monk's Tale provide a means of gauging the intellectual relationship between two of the most important poets of the time. William T. Rossiter teaches at Liverpool Hope University.

---

**2010 Haskins Medal Recipient**

NCS member Kathryn Kerby-Fulton has been awarded the Charles Homer Haskins Gold Medal by the Medieval Academy of America for her recent book, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Toleration of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

The Haskins Medal is awarded annually by the Medieval Academy of America for a distinguished book in the field of medieval studies. First presented in 1940, the award honors Charles Homer Haskins, the noted medieval historian, who was a founder of the Medieval Academy and its second President. The award is announced at the annual meeting of the Academy each spring.
Chaucer in Translation

The New Chaucer Society would like to recognize Alireza Mahdipour for his efforts in the translation of Chaucer's works in Iran:

Alireza Mahdipour's translation of some parts of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales into Persian is poetic, and has occurred for the first time in Iran. He has translated the General Prologue, the Nun's Priest's Tale, and the Pardoner's Tale (first volume, 416 pages), and the Wife of Bath's Tale, the Friar's Tale, and the Summoner's Tale (second volume, 458 pages). These translations are published by Cheshmeh Publishers (in 2008) in two volumes of side by side bilingual editions, and are annotated. For the Middle English text, Larry D. Benson's edition of the Riverside Chaucer is used, along with the modernized English text, for the convenience of non-native readers. Three other tales are also translated recently, and are ready to be submitted to the same publisher: the Knight's Tale, the Miller's Tale, and the Reeve's Tale.

For the Persian verse form, Mathnavi is used, which is the nearest to Chaucer's heroic couplet, and the most convenient for narrative poetry. In fact, Mathnavi has been a long traditional form for Persian narrative poetry, used by great poets such as Firdowsi, Nizami, Moulavi (Rumi), and others. The naturalness and ease of the translated lines are so alluring that some critics had taken them as original Persian poetry until they matched them with the source language. For this reason, and in order to indicate the translator's loyalty to the source language, Alireza Mahdipour insisted on the side by side bilingual edition of his work.

The Canterbury Tales translation project, if carried out completely, will probably end in seven or eight volumes. It will also enjoy some pedagogical merits in teaching comparative literature for Farsi speaking students, including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan (if they use Arabic alphabet, of course), India, and Persian diaspora all over the world, especially in USA and UK.

The International Piers Plowman Society

Members of NCS are invited to join the International Piers Plowman Society. Benefits of membership include receiving The Yearbook of Langland Studies, access to a searchable online bibliography on the Society's website, and emailed newsletters and announcements of interest to scholars in the field.

Annual dues are $35 and maybe paid online at www.piersplowman.org; upon joining please send your preferred mailing address, institutional affiliation, and preferred email contact address to piersplowmansociety@gmail.com. This is also the email contact address for any queries, changes of address, etc.

The New Chaucer Society

President: Richard Firth Green
Executive Director: David Lawton

2006-2010 Trustees: Susanna Fein, Rosalind Field, Laura Kendrick
2008-2012 Trustees: Christopher Cannon, Juliette Dor, Ruth Evans and Stephanie Trigg

Editor, Studies in the Age of Chaucer: David Matthews
Book Review Editor, Studies in the Age of Chaucer: Alfred Hiatt

Graduate Assistant: Jessica Rezunyk

Email: chaucer@artscl.wustl.edu

The New Chaucer Society
One Brookings Drive
Washington University, Campus Box 1122
Saint Louis, MO 63130
USA