



THE CHAUCER NEWSLETTER

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Chaucer and His French Contemporaries

There is little doubt of the profound influence of the *Roman de la Rose* on Chaucer and the French poets of his time. Its general effect on the love narratives and their phraseology is patent, and there are countless specific uses that show how it permeated the consciousness of the writers. In *Chaucer and the French Love Poets* (1968) I traced the development of the long French love poem, the *dit amoureux*, from Guillaume de Lorris to Machaut and Chaucer. This chain of relationships is real and of major significance. However, as I have become more familiar with the Middle French poetic tradition, particularly with the verse of Guillaume de Machaut, I have increasingly realized that there is another line of development from French love poetry to Chaucer that is at least as significant, and is in many ways more basic, for almost all of his work through *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*. This involves the so-called *formes fixes* lyrics of Middle French, especially the ballade.

The evolution that was of such importance to Chaucer begins with mid-thirteenth century French lyrics and extends as far as his stanzaic work of the 1380's. In origin the *formes fixes* were highly musical. Dancing and singing combined in the origins of their chief forms—ballade, rondeau, and virelay—and their rhythmic and melodic nature remained intrinsic to them through great change. By 1300, in the work of poet-composers like Adam de la Halle and Jehan Lescurel, the various types had become fully defined. After that time, changes in the versification involved more elaboration than evolution. And, at about the same time, dancing and singing became optional features. With the increasing complexity of the early-century music that Philippe de Vitry, Guillaume de Machaut, and Jean de le Mote wrote for their lyrics, the musical fashion had progressed beyond the capacity of most poets. Even the great Machaut did not attempt to supply notation

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1990 NCS Congress Call for papers

The Program Committee for the Seventh International Congress, to be held at the University of Kent in Canterbury (6-11 August 1990) announces the following topics for paper sessions and their organizers. Papers or proposals for papers should be sent directly to the organizer of the session. In addition to the conventional sessions at which papers will be read, there will be "seminar" sessions, which are described below.

The session organizers should receive all papers or proposals for papers by 1 June 1989 and may, at their discretion, specify a date by which a draft of the paper must be received. Organizers will select the papers for their sessions by mid-August 1989, and the names of the participants and titles of their papers will be announced in the Fall 1989 *Newsletter*.

The Committee reminds everyone that the constitution of the NCS mandates that participants (except for invited speakers from other fields) must be members with their dues paid up.

The Committee is especially anxious to encourage submissions from recent Ph.D.'s or graduate students still working toward their degrees who may not yet be members of the Society. We therefore ask our members to share this announcement with graduate students and younger colleagues. Students may join the Society for two years at the student rate of \$15 per year. They should write to the New Chaucer Society, Dept. of English, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 37996, for application forms.

With most of these topics a brief explanation of what the organizers have in mind is provided, though the explanations are not intended to be limiting.

1) Historicisms Old and New. (Differences between the "old" and the "new" historicism; the relevance of historicist methodologies to literary studies; possi-

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A Chaucer Holograph

Evidence continues to mount that Peterhouse MS. 75.I of the *Equatorie of the Planetis*, in the Cambridge University Library, is a Chaucer holograph. Pamela Robinson at the Vancouver NCS Congress last August reported that she has so identified it in her forthcoming *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737-1600 in Cambridge Libraries*. The evidence she adduced was:

1. The text is a working copy in process of composition that lay for a long time unbound.

2. The "radix chaucer" date of 31 December 1392 would have been applicable in calculations for only a short period and so must have been used by the author of the treatise and compiler of the tables in connection with his immediate composition.

3. The problems were being worked out between 31 December 1392 and 1 September 1393 by the person who established the "radix chaucer."

4. There was no known person around Chaucer in 1393 who had the advanced astronomical knowledge to make such calculations. Ralph Strode, fellow of Merton College (where astronomical studies in England were based in the 14th century) before he became a London lawyer, who might have introduced Chaucer to astronomy in the first place, had died in 1387.

5. The hand, punctuation, and spelling are sufficiently like those which have been advanced as Chaucer's.

Since Pamela Robinson's presentation, J.D. North's *Chaucer's Universe* has appeared (Clarendon Press, 1988), reversing North's own earlier doubts, arguing that the astronomical data and calculations in the *Equatorie* are by Chaucer and the holographic evidence is strong, and concluding, "But it is in any case, in my opinion, a moral certainty that it [the *Equatorie*] dates from the first eight months of 1393, and is Chaucer's." North's arguments (pp. 157-81) may be summed up in the following points:

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Chaucer and French

for all of the lyrics he composed, thereby providing a potent model for those less musically gifted than himself. They could employ the forms alone, designing their poems for recitation rather than singing. Machaut's *Louange des dames* is a collection of 282 ballades, rondeaux, and virelays whose texts lack accompanying notation.

The major French poets after Machaut were not composers, but their lyrics retained important musical features. The forms which they continued to use all had underlying musical structures, whether or not realized in notation, and they had complex sound patterns evinced in strictly observed syllable counts and caesuras, demanding rhyme schemes, and refrains. Conscious of the affinity of his lyrics without notation to those which had it, Deschamps, in the only extant fourteenth-century French "art of poetry," referred to recited lyrics in the fixed forms as "natural music." Melody, when added, he called "artificial music." This notion of "natural music," which is quite foreign to modern conceptions, has been seen as Deschamps' rationalization of his inability to compose music, but I believe that it should be taken as embodying a valuable insight.

What has particularly confirmed my conviction of the importance of music for medieval verse, whether or not notation is provided, is Dante's treatment of versification in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. In the extant parts of the work, Dante did not get around to analysis of the *ballata*, the Italian form of the ballade, but his treatment of the *canzone* extends to the *ballata*. His assumption is that the lyric text will accommodate a potential musical setting, but he does not assume that singing is essential. He notes that while a text may be referred to as a "canzone," the music cannot be so called. A *canzone*, he concludes, consists of "harmonized words for a musical setting. Therefore we call 'canzoni' not only the canzoni we are now discussing, but also ballades and sonnets and all metrical forms of whatever kind in which there are harmonized words..."¹

Dante's observations accord well with Deschamps' treatment, and the coincidence of the Italian and French poets' analysis has led me to take Deschamps' *Art de dictier* much more seriously. By itself it is not an impres-

sive work, and its emphasis on phonetic effects makes it particularly suspect to modern prosodists. Yet *De Vulgari Eloquentia* shows the same emphasis. It has become increasingly clear to me that modern analysts, particularly critics of Chaucer, simply do not begin where medieval poets began—at the formal, phonetic level—and this has led to severe distortions.

What, more precisely, does Deschamps' "natural music" have to do with the development of Chaucer's work? For me, it stands to reason that a young poet would begin his career using the forms, probably the language, that were standard in his literary environment. Chaucer certainly was familiar with English forms of tail-rhyme romance and popular songs like "Gabriel from heaven-king" ("Angelus ad Virginem"), but it is hard to imagine that these would have been his primary models in a court in which French forms were the standard. All evidence points toward the French. Of Chaucer's short lyrics, virtually all are ballades, ballade-like, or rondeaux. And a very high percentage of his later stanzaic work is in the stanza units most popular in the *formes fixes* ballades. Rime royal was Machaut's choice in 109 of his 248 ballades, and the Monk's Tale stanza was the favorite of both Froissart and Granson, while Eustache Deschamps employed it in 495 ballades! The influence of the ballade form on the English poet is further indicated by the impressive number of developed lyric passages in *Troilus and Criseyde* that have or approximate the three-stanza ballade length.

For me the fact that Chaucer's ballade stanzas represent musical forms has been of growing importance. My analysis of all of his extant lyrics, long and short, and of the *Parliament of Fowls* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, shows that his lyrics have the standard features of "artificial music" composed for the *formes fixes*—syntax, rhyme, and characteristic stanza construction. An interesting feature of Chaucer's development is that the *Canterbury Tales*, including the parts in stanzaic form, show much less "natural music." This work is much less lyric and its formal features reflect this change. Yet when the lyricism of love poetry is present in the *Tales*, the French mode still asserts itself. Thus, when Arcite sings his observance to May one spring morning, rhythms and repetitions characteristic of the rondeau refrain imbue the three-line lyric

that he chants "loude ayein the sonne shene":

May, with alle thy floures and thy grene,
Welcome be thou, faire, fresshe May,
In hope that I some grene gete may.

(A 1510-12)

Indeed, it seems to me that Chaucer's pentameter couplets represent in the first place a cross-fertilization of the dominant ballade decasyllables with the shorter couplets of French narrative poetry.

In the course of scholarly work in which I have come back time and again to the kinship of Chaucer to his French contemporaries, far from being fatigued by their great conventionality, my appreciation of their work has continually increased. My "horizon of expectations" has come more and more to agree with that of the coterie of courtiers attached to the great courts of France that nourished the Middle French lyric in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Chaucer began as part of that coterie; his land was England, but his music and poetry were predominantly French. I do not doubt that he found magic in this melodic and verbal art; he surely produced magic from it.

James I. Wimsatt
University of Texas at Austin

¹Robert Haller, trans., *Literary Criticism of Dante Alighieri* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 49.

The Chaucer Newsletter, distributed twice a year to members of The New Chaucer Society, is intended primarily as a vehicle for Society business. Its ephemeral character makes it an unsuitable repository for substantive articles, but it is happy to publish discussions of research in progress and other activities of interest to Chaucerians. Deadline for the Fall issue is 1 September; for the Spring issue, 1 January. Materials should be sent to the editor, John F. Fisher, Department of English, University of Tennessee, Knoxville 37996.

Call for Papers

- ble differences between historical approaches to medieval and Renaissance texts; what -isms are present in historicisms, new and old.) Sheila Delany, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby 2, V5A 1F6
- 2) *Imagining the City*. (Artistic, historical, social and political implications of the fictive Troy, Athens, London, Canterbury in Chaucer's works, but possibly also in the works of his contemporaries.) David Wallace, University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712.
 - 3) *Legal Themes in Chaucer*. (Legal themes from the perspective of the common lawyer, rather than that of the canonist or the civilian, in order to explore the influence of contemporary legal thought on the poet.) Richard F. Green, University of Western Ontario, London, N6A 3K7.
 - 4) *Chaucer and Fourteenth-Century English Religious Dissent*. Alcuin Blamires. St. David's University College, Lampeter, Dyfed SA48 7ED.
 - 5) *Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Authorship*. (Assumptions about Chaucer as author—about the boundaries of authorship as he thought of himself as an "auctour," as we think of authors when we name societies and journals for them, and about the challenge to the concept of authorship by post-modern literary theory.) Paul Strohm, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405.
 - 6) *Psyche, Culture, Difference*. (Theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches.) John M. Ganim, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521.
 - 7) *Pilgrimage*. (Primarily the history of pilgrimage in the late fourteenth century, though other approaches would also be considered.) Peter Brown and Andrew Butcher, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NY.
 - 8) *Literary Patronage and Service*. (Authors' views of patrons and patrons' views of authors, taking a broad view of what is meant by the terms "patronage" and "service".) John V. Scattergood, University of Dublin, Trinity College, Dublin 2.
 - 9) *Fabricating the Book*. (The literary, aesthetic, and commercial contexts of book-making and bookselling in the age of the manuscript transmission of Chaucer's work in the fifteenth century—e.g., the commercial contexts for the production and dissemination of Chaucerian texts, the decoration and illumination of Chaucer manuscripts—as well as on "the idea of the book" in Chaucer's own poetry and in the literature, philosophy, and art of the time.) Seth Lerer, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544.
 - 10) *Chaucer's Sense of an Ending*. (The meaning and significance of Chaucerian closure and/or inconclusiveness.) Barbara Nolan, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
 - 11) *Gower and Chaucer: Evidences of Interaction*. (Common tales and sources; common attitudes toward antiquity, language, and history; their involvement in political events; possibly whimsical notions about each other's artistic careers—both broad and narrow focuses.) R. F. Yeager, University of North Carolina, Asheville, NC 28804.
 - 12) *Formalism, Hermeneutics, and Ideology in Chaucer Criticism*. (Applications of twentieth-century aesthetic theory and their relation to medieval aesthetics.) Robert M. Jordan, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC V6T 1W5.
 - 13) "Chaucer the Poet" and "Chaucer the Man". (The fashioning of Chaucer by his biographers and by himself.) Lisa J. Kiser, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210.
 - 14) *Intellectual, Social, and Literary Contexts of *Troilus and Criseyde**. C. David Benson, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268.
 - 15) *Interpretations of Chaucer after Lydgate up to Furnivall*. (Chaucer's popularity tests the theory that different readers, under different socio-historical condition, respond differently to the same text. Such an approach provides insight into our own conditioned responses to Chaucer.) Betsy Bowden, Rutgers University, Camden, NJ 08102.
 - 16) "Lerned" and "Lewed" Responses to Chaucer from Furnivall to the Founding of the New Chaucer Society. (Responses, whether learned or popular, English or international, reflect differing attitudes toward language, the past, education, and the academic profession.) Mark Allen, University of Texas, San Antonio, TX 78285.
 - 17) *Chaucer's Imagery in Illustration and Other Arts in the Post-medieval World*. (The ideas that artists in later times formed of Chaucer's world, his pilgrims, and/or his stories, as shown in their own representations of them.) Donald C. Green, California State University, Bakersfield, CA 93311.
 - 18) *The History of the Expression of Emotion*. (To what extent are the artistic conventions governing expressions of feeling culturally determined? Are our own responses to what we call "sentimentality" in Chaucer stock-responses, determined by responses to later literature? Would Chaucer and some members of his 14th-century audience have perceived certain displays of emotion as excessive and perhaps humorous?) Jill Mann, 143 Sturton St., Cambridge CB1 2QH.

We will also schedule up to fourteen seminar sessions, which may deal with any topic, broad or narrow. These will be planned jointly by an organizer and three or four invited participants, who will lead a general discussion. Seminars can be based on new papers or on previously published research, but no papers will ordinarily be read and time-limits will be imposed on opening statements by the organizer and invited speakers. The announcement of the final program will invite registrants to write to the organizer of a seminar they wish to attend for bibliographical information, drafts or abstracts of papers, or other materials that may come up for discussion. A modest fee will be charged to cover the costs of duplication and postage. We have received proposals for the following seminars:

- 1) *The Chaucerian Simile and its Antecedents*. (David Anderson and John McGavin)
- 2) *The Development in Plan of *Canterbury Tales**. (Charles A. Owen)
- 3) *Dante, Chaucer, and the Labyrinth of History*. (Richard Neuse)
- 4) *Chaucer's Sources: New Discoveries, New Approaches*. (Robert Correale)
- 5) *Dialect Analysis and Chaucer's Texts*. (Jeremy Smith)
- 6) *The Influence of Robert Grosseteste on Chaucer*. (James Rhodes)
- 7) *Modern Punctuation as an Impediment to Understanding Chaucer*. (Emerson Brown)

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Call for Papers

8) Reading Chaucer Aloud: a debate and demonstration featuring different approaches to pronunciation. (Thomas Burton and Michael Murphy)

9) Gender Games, (John Fyler)

The Program Committee invites proposals of other seminars.

Alfred David

Indiana University Bloomington, IN 47401
Co-Chair 1990 Program Committee

Columbia NEH Seminar

Robert W. Hanning will conduct an NEH seminar on "Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Literature of Love, Ovid to Boccaccio," at Columbia University, 12 June-4 August 1989. The aim of the seminar is to explore how Chaucer inherits and manipulates a rich legacy of classical and medieval representations of love, and exploits this textual tradition to dramatize the triumphs and difficulties of both lovers and poets. Participants will receive stipends of \$3500. Application deadline: 1 March 1989. Address inquiries to Robert Hanning, Summer Session, 418 Lewisohn Hall, Columbia University, New York 10027.

Newberry NEH Seminar

The Newberry Library in Chicago will sponsor an NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers entitled "The Poetics of Sign and Discourse in Medieval Literature," to be given from 19 June-11 August 1989 by Eugene Vance, Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Emory University. Beginning with the semiotic and rhetorical theories of Augustine, this interdisciplinary seminar will deal with both medieval and modern theories of sign and discourse as ways of approaching the poetics of selected medieval texts. Works and authors will include the *Chanson de Roland*, Chrétien's *Yvain*, and selections from the writings of Dante and Chaucer. All participants will receive stipends to cover cost of travel, housing, and books. Application deadline: 1 March, 1989. Address inquiries to: The Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610.

Chaucer Holograph

1. The *Equatorie* shows the same, if more advanced, knowledge of astronomy as the *Astrolabe*. The technical vocabularies of the two works are similar.

2. The subject matter of the tables in the Peterhouse MS in the same hand as the text, and others annotated by that hand, are related to the subject matter of the text. The tables refer repeatedly to the same radix date as that chosen for the instrument, and once call it Chaucer's. No other name is attached to it.

3. The style and air of the unfinished work leave us no doubt that the text is an author's holograph.

4. The "radix Chaucer" was a date-limited factor. There would have been no point in using it long after December 1392 and it would probably have been replaced after 31 December 1393. There is evidence that the writer was in the habit of bringing his radices up to date because on the same page as "radix Chaucer" there is a 1395 radix.

5. There is no reason to suppose that the reference to Chaucer's radix was not by Chaucer. There is no conceivable motive for or identity of someone else close enough to Chaucer to make such a reference.

Both Robinson and North draw upon M.L. Samuels, "Chaucer's Spelling" (*Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis*, Clarendon Press, 1983), which derives evidence of Chaucer's own spelling from scribal variants in Hengwrt and Ellesmere and argues that because the *Equatorie* uses this spelling consistently, without scribal variants, it must be from Chaucer's own hand.

These agreements by a codecologist, a historian of science, and a linguist corroborate the evidence set forth by D.J. Price in his fine edition of *The Equatorie of the Planetis* (Cambridge University Press, 1955) and its linguistic analysis by R. M. Wilson. This example of Chaucer's hand and process of composition, and of his spelling, vocabulary, and syntax will be of consummate importance to textual criticism. Along with *The Treatise on the Astrolabe*, *The Equatorie of the Planetis* will stand as evidence of Chaucer's breadth of knowledge and interest—as broad as any author in English. The biographical implications remain as tantalizing as ever. Why in the 1390s didn't he get on with the *Canterbury Tales*? What made him get caught up in this (to us) abstruse science? A facsimile of

Ellesmere Facsimile Projected

Daniel Woodward, Librarian of the Huntington Library, writes:

Over the last ten years we have given a great deal of thought to a project for publishing a new, high quality facsimile of the Ellesmere Chaucer, a justly famous landmark in English literature. This manuscript also happens to be the principal treasure of the Huntington Library. I hope that you can understand our strong desire to do the job as well as possible.

After making a tentative—but ultimately abortive—agreement with a publisher several years ago, we are now of the opinion that the Huntington itself should publish the facsimile, almost certainly with a companion volume containing an introduction to the facsimile and a number of essays on the Ellesmere Chaucer. These would include discussions of paleography, iconography, text, relationships to other manuscripts and other texts, and literary significance. Undoubtedly we would ask a number of leading scholars in different fields to participate. Conceivably the publication would be in several issues so that the facsimile could be made available to scholars at a tolerable price, and to collectors and supporters of the Huntington in an appropriately grand format.

All of this is likely to take time. And the technology for making facsimiles is changing. There are, in addition, several difficult conservation problems to be solved. Clearly it would be unwise to rush a project which means so much to the Library as well as the scholarly world.

the *Equatorie* is available in Price's edition; the text is included in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Holt, Rinehart, 2nd ed. 1988).

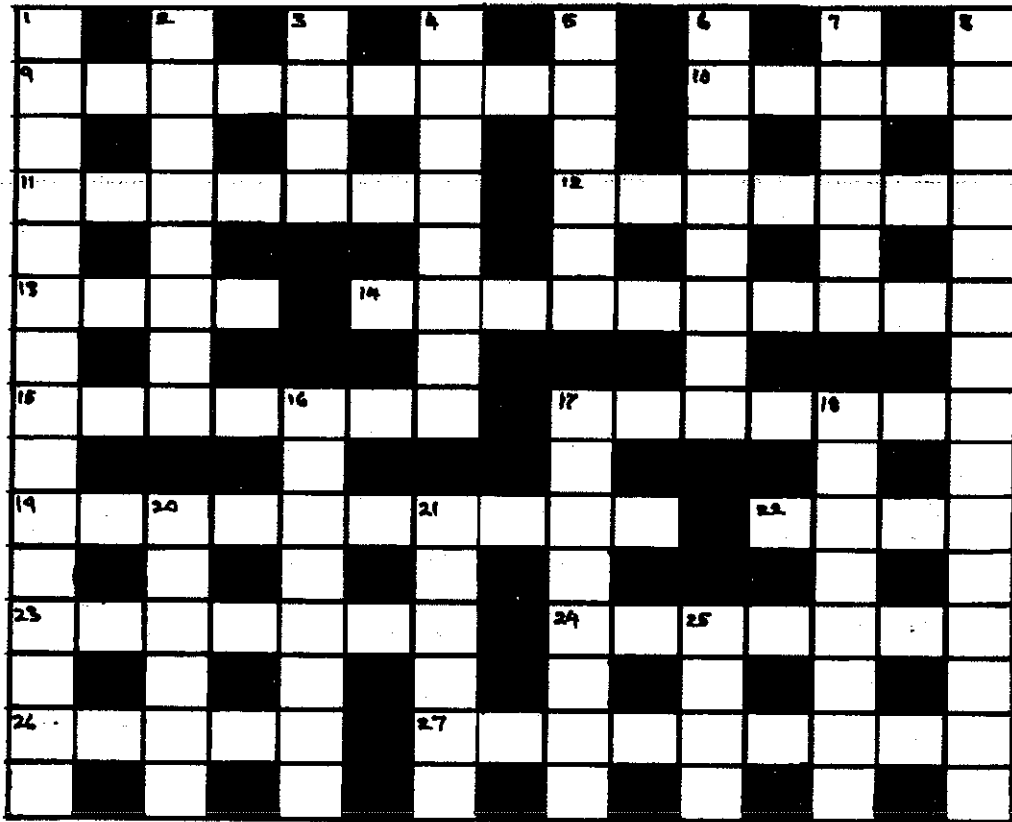
John H. Fisher

Chaucer Crossword

Richard F. Green has devised this delightful Chaucer crossword. We will be glad to publish the names of the successful solvers in the October *Newsletter* if you will send him a xerox of your solution by 1 September: Department of English, University of Western Ontario, London, N6A 3K7.

The words and phrases which make up the answers are all to be found in Skeat's seven-volume Chaucer. For the most part other editions differ in only minor ways (the occasional final *e*, or *i* for *y*), but with 8 DOWN the possible variation is more marked.

CHAUCER CROSSWORD



Across:

9. The Nun's Priest's upset; the host says 'e was rude in the loft. (9)
10. Philosopher Dan ... (5)
11. ... Was a labouring man. (7)
12. The confused scorn it, but the converted believe ... (2,5)
13. Choice of spirit? Rye for me! (4)
14. Did Absolon's mother cause this? (4,3,3)
15. Mr. Steed, you're asleep! (7)
17. Ten pets have shown contempt. (7)
19. Which Italian among you French is on German grant? (10)
22. Suffer when you hear of drought. (4)
23. Island's the problem. Noun's the solution. (7)
24. Sounds like the one Theseus could answer. (3,4)
26. Russell's home? (5)
27. Oswald's lord's too trusting for his... (5,4)

Down:

1. A damned quick score! (1,6,5,3)
2. Surveyed non-u hundred! Picture it. (8)
3. An actual king? (4)
4. Steady under tons of cant. (8)
5. It's all one to Arcite in his grave. (6)
6. The papelard priest, for instance. (8)
7. Crowing at daybreak? (6)
8. Fine! But burrow under the clothes for better reading. (6,5,4)
16. Out of Africa and on the pie. (8)
17. The Parson's point? (8)
18. Constance's birthright. (8)
20. Tune me! I may be discordant. (6)
21. An older writer on alchemy? (6)
25. Alan's happiness in "lusty lese"? (4)

The Chaucer Studio Recordings

The following cassettes are available to date from the Chaucer Studio (see *The Chaucer Newsletter*, 9.2 [Fall 1987], 5-6) at a cost of \$5.00 each for individuals (prepaid) or \$10.00 each for institutions (payment on invoice): *The Parlement of Foules*, *The Book of the Duchess*, *Sir Thopas*, *The Merchant's Tale*, *Dame Sirith*. Orders paid in U.S. dollars should be sent to Paul R. Thomas, Department of English, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; orders paid in other cur-

rencies (at the prevailing exchange rate) should be sent to Tom Burton, Department of English, University of Adelaide, Box 498 G.P.O., Adelaide, South Australia 5001.

Scholars who would like to read in future recordings are invited to send Tom Burton an audition cassette containing several different kinds of reading according to their interests (e.g., narrative poetry, dialogue, prose, alliterative poetry, Old English poetry and prose, etc.).

THE NEW CHAUCER SOCIETY



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