

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-89467-8 - The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer  
Edited by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann  
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## The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer

*The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* is a revised version of the first edition, which has become a classic in the field. This new volume responds to the success of the first edition and to recent debates in Chaucer studies. Important material has been updated, and new contributions have been commissioned to take into account recent trends in literary theory as well as in studies of Chaucer's works, although the structure of the book has basically remained the same. Chapters cover such topics as the social and literary scene in England in Chaucer's time, the literary inheritance traceable in his works to French and Italian sources, comedy, pathos and romance in the *Canterbury Tales*, and Chaucer's style. The volume now includes a useful chronology, and the bibliography has been entirely updated to provide an indispensable guide for today's student of Chaucer.

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THE CAMBRIDGE  
COMPANION TO  
CHAUCER

Second edition

EDITED BY

PIERO BOITANI *and* JILL MANN



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## PREFACE

This second edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, like the first one, is intended for students, teachers, and all general readers who wish to approach Chaucer's works with the help of an introduction to his texts, and to the contexts in which he composed them. Its main aim is to suggest ways of reading, furnish necessary explanations, and offer first-hand literary criticism, by means of which readers may test their own responses to one of the greatest English poets. The views offered in each essay are individual and to a large extent original ones; they are not meant to be résumés of the current state of Chaucer scholarship or criticism, although Carolyn Dinshaw's contribution explores the ways in which new critical approaches to literary texts put pressure on Chaucer's works. We feel now, as we felt at the time we produced the first edition in 1986, that the reader is best served by a clearly pursued line of argument, which may set off his or her own thinking, rather than an exhaustive survey of the field.

We have kept the basic structure of the old volume, asking contributors to rewrite or update their essays as necessary, but we have also included specially commissioned new essays in order to respond to changing currents in Chaucer criticism. About half the articles in the collection are then, here as before, focussed squarely on one or more of Chaucer's major works, identifying their themes and styles, moods and tones, in such a way as to help the reader to an appreciation of Chaucer's aims and artistry in each case. Alongside these essays are others of a more general kind – focussing on literary or historical background, on style, structure, and afterlife – which not only present the major works in ever-different lights, but also explore their links with many of the minor poems and with other medieval literature. We hope that the combination of the two types of essay will not only give a sense of a larger context for discussion of the individual works, but will also make clear that there is no 'definitive' interpretation of, say, *Troilus and Criseyde* – rather, it can be constantly re-approached via fresh lines of enquiry.

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## PREFACE

Paul Strohm's essay sketches the general scene, both social and literary, in fourteenth-century England. Ardis Butterfield and David Wallace trace the impact on Chaucer of the cultural and literary reality of France and Italy. Piero Boitani leads the reader through Chaucer's early development in the dream poems, in which books are not just the sources but the subject of his poetry. Mark Lambert discusses the densely textured narrative style of *Troilus*, while Jill Mann focusses on its philosophical themes, on the questions of chance and destiny which Chaucer encountered in Boethius. Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards address the problems presented by the incomplete state of the *Legend of Good Women*, the possibility that it was a royal commission, and the uncertainties of its genre and tone. The next five essays are devoted to the *Canterbury Tales*: first, David Benson discusses the tales in relation to the pilgrimage-frame, and then the four succeeding contributions, by J. A. Burrow, Derek Pearsall, the late Robert Worth Frank Jr, and A. C. Spearing, examine selected tales grouped by mode or genre. Barry Windeatt and Christopher Cannon range widely through Chaucer's works, using comparison and contrast to engage with larger questions of structure and style. James Simpson surveys the principal English and Scots responses to Chaucer between Hoccleve and the 1542 statute permitting the reading of Chaucer's works; and Carolyn Dinshaw takes up the issues of feminist, queer, and postcolonial readings of our author.

Because this book has an introductory function, notes have been kept to a minimum, and it has not been possible to give exhaustive documentation of the history of every critical view presented or discussed. The Guide to Chaucer Studies provided by Joerg Fichte will lead the interested reader to the important works in this field whose influence has helped to shape the individual discussions in this collection, and will also clear several pathways through the dense forest of modern Chaucer criticism. The contributors to this book are the inheritors of a long and rich tradition of Chaucer scholarship, to which they feel themselves indebted. Yet in order to write freshly and freely on works which have been read and written about for six hundred years, they have inevitably had to banish from their texts and their notes many of the very works which have done most to create their own enjoyment. We hope that the final Guide to Chaucer Studies will stand as an acknowledgement of our gratitude to the labours of others. We hope also that this second edition of the *Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, the joint effort – like the first one – of an English and Italian editor, and the product of an international team of scholars, will help to foster in new generations of readers in all countries a love of Chaucer and an interest in Chaucer studies.

PIERO BOITANI

*Cambridge, June 2002*

JILL MANN



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## NOTE ON THE TEXT

The text of Chaucer used throughout for quotation and reference is the *Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. L. D. Benson (Boston, 1987/Oxford, 1988). References are normally to individual works, with Book- and line-number; for the sake of concision, however, references to the *Canterbury Tales* are occasionally given by Fragment- and line-number (e.g. 1, 3450 = *Miller's Tale*, 3450).

### Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CFMA	Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age
EETS os, es	<i>Early English Text Society</i> original series, extra series
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> , eds. H. Kurath, S. M. Kuhn, et al. (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1954-)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus</i> , series latina, ed. J. P. Migne
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>

## CHRONOLOGY

- c.1240–c.1280 *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Lorris, continued by Jean de Meun
- 1309 Pope Clement V moves papal capital to Avignon
- 1321 Death of Dante Alighieri
- 1327 Edward III (aged 14) crowned
- 1335–41 Boccaccio, *Filostrato*, *Teseida*
- 1337 Edward lays claim to French crown; beginning of Hundred Years War
- 1337 Birth of Froissart
- c.1340 Birth of Chaucer
- 1342–3 Petrarch begins *Canzoniere*
- 1343–4 English knights take part in siege of Algeiras (*Gen. Prol.* 56–7)
- 1346 Victory over French at Crécy; victory over Scots at Neville's Cross
- 1348–9 Black Death
- 1349–52 Boccaccio, *Decameron*
- 1356 Victory over French at Poitiers; John II of France taken captive
- 1357 Chaucer in service of Countess of Ulster
- 1359–60 Chaucer taken prisoner in Normandy; ransomed by Edward III
- 1360 Peace of Bretigny leaves Edward in control of one-third of France
- 1361 Black Death reappears
- 1361–5 Pierre de Lusignan (Peter of Cyprus; *Monk's Tale* 2391–8) takes 'Satalye' (Adalia), Alexandria, and 'Lyeys' (Ayas) (*Gen. Prol.* 51, 57–9)
- 1365/6 Chaucer marries Philippa, daughter of Paon de Roet

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1367 Black Prince defeats mercenary army under Bernard de Guesclin at Najera, Spain, gains throne for Pedro the Cruel (*Monk's Tale* 2375–90)
- 1367 Chaucer granted life annuity by Edward III
- 1368 Possible first visit of Chaucer of Italy
- c.1369–70 *Book of the Duchess*
- 1371 French reclaim Gascony, Poitiers
- 1372–3 Chaucer visits Genoa and Florence
- 1374 Death of Petrarch
- 1374 Chaucer appointed Controller of Customs in London
- 1375 Death of Boccaccio
- 1376 Good Parliament condemns waste and profiteering by high government officials
- 1377 Rye and Hastings burned by French
- 1377 Death of Edward III; succeeded by Richard II
- 1377 Chaucer travels to France for negotiations toward marriage of Richard to Princess Marie of France
- 1378 Chaucer visits Lombardy; appoints John Gower as attorney in his absence
- 1378 Great Schism in Papacy; Urban VI at Rome (recognized by England); Clement VII at Avignon (recognized by France)
- c.1378–80 *House of Fame* and *Anelida and Arcite*
- c.1380–2 *Parliament of Fowls*
- 1380–6 Gower, *Vox Clamantis*
- 1380s First version of Lollard Bible
- 1381 Peasants' Revolt (*Nun's Priest's Tale* 3394)
- 1382 Wycliffe's teachings condemned by Blackfriars Synod
- c.1382–6 *Boece* and *Troilus and Criseyde*
- 1385 Death of Bernabò Visconti of Milan (*Monk's Tale* 2399–406)
- c.1385–7 *Legend of Good Women*
- 1385–7 Thomas Usk, *Testament of Love*
- 1386 Chaucer a Member of Parliament for Kent
- 1387 Death of Philippa Chaucer
- c.1387 Chaucer begins *Canterbury Tales*
- 1388 Chaucer's annuity transferred to John Scalby, perhaps at instigation of Merciless Parliament
- 1388 Merciless Parliament; Appellants gain impeachment of officials close to Richard

## CHRONOLOGY

1389–91	Chaucer appointed Clerk of the Works, Commissioner of Walls and Ditches
c.1390?	Gower, <i>Confessio Amantis</i> , dedicated to Richard II
1393	Gower rededicates <i>Confessio</i> to Henry Bolingbroke
1394	Richard II renews Chaucer's annuity
1396	Truce with France; England retains only Calais
1397	Parliament undoes work of Merciless Parliament
1398	Banishment of Henry Bolingbroke
1399	Deposition of Richard; succeeded by Bolingbroke as Henry IV
1399	Henry IV supplements Chaucer's annuity 'for good service'
1400	Death of Chaucer