

# University of New Brunswick

## *Anne Klinck*

Medieval studies are not one of the areas that the University of New Brunswick emphasises. It is only in the English Department that they are substantially taught, and the department does not require either Old or Middle English for the doctorate. We do have three medievalists: an Anglo-Saxonist (myself) and two middle English specialists—Christa Canitz at the Fredericton campus and James Noble at Saint John. It is likely that Old English will disappear from our offerings when I retire in five years.

Christa Canitz teaches an upper-level survey, “Chaucer & Co.,” in alternate years, with a new upper-level course on “The Middle Ages in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century” scheduled for next year. She also teaches frequent Honours seminars, on such topics as the representation of women in medieval literature (including Latin and continental vernacular texts in Middle English translation) and the story of Troilus and Criseyde in its various medieval (continental and insular) and modern versions. Her graduate seminars on the critical reception of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* and on 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century medievalism have been very popular, but she notes that a graduate seminar on medieval (re)visions of classical antiquity suddenly lost its students after she mentioned that they would begin by actually looking at some classical texts. She publishes and presents conference papers on Middle Scots poetry and on contemporary medievalism.

At Saint John, James Noble regularly teaches “Chaucer and His Contemporaries” and “Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales,” with a course on Arthurian literature in alternate years. He also occasionally teaches a graduate seminar on the Arthur story; in 2004 he will be teaching “Feminist Perspectives on the Arthurian Legend.” He has had a couple of M.A. theses in the past five years. His publications and presentations in recent years have been mainly on Layamon’s *Brut* and on modern responses to Malory.

In my own area of specialisation, a few students continue to be interested in Old English, but many find the language hurdle insuperable. As our students read less and less of Early Modern, let alone Middle, English, this becomes increasingly so. And of course they know nothing of inflected languages and traditional grammar. Thus far I am still teaching upper-level undergraduate courses, Old English I and II, alternating with a graduate seminar every other year, but the demand for a graduate seminar is small, and I would not be surprised to see this offering dropped. As the graduate seminar is also introductory, students are whisked through the grammar and urged to read more widely in translation. At the undergraduate level, students get a more solid foundation. But with our university emphasising sheer numbers more and more, the only way that interested students can get a thorough grounding in Old English is by my teaching overload, which I regularly do. My scholarly work has moved away from Old English in the past ten years—though I plan to return to it—and I have published mainly on woman's voice lyric, classical and medieval. I do have two doctoral students, one working on *Beowulf* in the context of ancient and medieval epics, the other on the Old Saxon *Heliand*.

I should mention that Old English is thriving at our neighbour university, St Thomas, where Andrea Schutz has attracted very large numbers of students. Rodger Wilkie, one of our graduate students, is sharing the teaching of it with her this year.

Medieval history at UNB is covered by our Early Modern historian, Gary Waite. He teaches a second-year medieval survey in alternate years, and a very popular upper-level course called "Heretics and Witches in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe." His research is on the Netherlands from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, and his *Heresy, Magic, and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* is forthcoming from Palgrave Press. Kathryn Taglia, who is involved in the teaching of Arts 1000 "The Development of Western Thought," has just completed a dissertation at the University of Toronto on the socialisation of children in late medieval France. She is a publishing scholar, but has not so far taught any medieval courses at UNB.

As far as I know, medieval studies are not taught in any of the language departments at UNB. Our library holdings are respectable as regards English, and, I gather, adequate for undergraduates in History. In other languages our holdings are very thin, and tend to be concentrated around works which have influenced English writers, like Chaucer.

By and large, the traditional training in medieval studies is disappearing at UNB. Chaucer remains strong, with Arthuriana second; women-focused studies are also popular—as in all periods. Medievalism represents a growing field of interest. And there is an increasing trend towards creating courses that are marketable to non-specialist students. This seems to be where the future lies.