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## Foreword


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## Foreword

We welcome our readers to the second issue of the second volume of *Accessus*. In this publication, with unforeseen numerological alignment, we showcase two articles, each representing one of two strands of scholarship to which this journal is dedicated: literary interpretations derived from cutting edge theoretical perspectives *and* investigations of how new media affect academic work on early texts. Each essay provides a pathway into uncharted interpretive territory: Conrad J. van Dijk contributes to our understanding of the legal concept of “need” in poems by John Gower and William Langland, while Candace Barrington and Jonathan Hsy chart the progress of their Global Chaucers project and translations of *The Canterbury Tales*. The new theoretical and new media endeavors by our authors look forward to future constructions of meaning and methods, while they are firmly grounded in the language and literature of the past. When Gower declared, as he did so often in his poetry, the future to be integrally related to the writings of the past, he adapted classical thought and literature not only to his own time but well beyond. We take Gower's declaration to be a guiding principle of *Accessus*, where old texts meet new readers and innovative approaches yield fresh interpretations. As the real-time tracking of downloads on our homepage suggests, the works in this journal are reaching an audience worldwide.

In “‘Nede hath no law’: The State of Exception in Gower and Langland,” Conrad J. van Dijk reveals how postmodern theory can shed light on enduring questions concerning medieval law and its characterization in fourteenth-century literature. Delving into John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, van Dijk answers the question of whether these authors present necessity as an exception to the law. Does the lover's need in Gower or the hunger of the poor in Langland create a necessity that may circumvent the rule of law? Tracing

the history of exception to the law through the work of Giorgio Agamben, van Dijk finds a pathway to interpretation in Jacques Derrida's association between the exception and aporia. Van Dijk's article demonstrates the fascinating and innovative conclusions that can be drawn from postmodern analyses of issues that have preoccupied critics of fourteenth-century poetry for generations.

While van Dijk explores old questions with current theories, Candace Barrington and Jonathan Hsy describe the engaging scholarly community that has arisen from their new media work on non-Anglophone translations and adaptations of *The Canterbury Tales*. In "Global Chaucers: Reflections on Collaboration and Digital Futures," Barrington and Hsy recount how their efforts to translate and archive multilingual Chaucerian works from Jamaica to Turkey blossomed into a worldwide network of scholars and authors. In establishing a digital commons, they extend the efforts of other web-based transmission and translation projects such as Danteworlds, The Gower Project Translation Wiki, or Global Shakespeares in providing online resources and making them available to multiple language communities. Through international collaborations on their website and blog postings, Barrington and Hsy highlight both the global appeal of Chaucer and the impact of various cultures on Chaucer studies.

Following Barrington and Hsy's generosity in providing access to multicultural resources for *The Canterbury Tales*, we are delighted to present the very latest thinking and practice in fourteenth-century English literary and cultural studies. We hope that these contributions will spark conversations and support additional research, making Gower's futurist philosophy (and ours as editors of *Accessus*) a present-day reality.

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