

CHAUCER IN DENMARK:  
A Study of the Translation and Reception History  
1782-2012

Roskilde University, The English Programme,  
Department of Culture and Identity

*To the memory of Jørgen Erik Nielsen*

Ebbe Klitgård

# CHAUCER IN DENMARK:

A Study of the Translation and Reception History

1782-2012

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was first begun in 2000, when I attended the New Chaucer Society conference at the University of London. I had arranged a meeting with series editor of the *Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe* Elinor Shaffer, who also attended the conference. I knew the series well from my wife Ida Klitgård's contribution to the Virginia Woolf volume, which was published a couple of years later (Caws and Lockhurst, eds., 2002, Shaffer, series ed. 2002-). My plain question to Dr. Shaffer was would she be interested in a volume on Chaucer reception, and would she like me to edit it? She was encouraging, and we had a meeting, but some weeks later she informed me that Continuum Press had turned the offer down for commercial reasons. I still thank Elinor Shaffer for her encouragement and a pleasant meeting.

I started looking for alternative ways of approaching my subject, and at the New Chaucer Society conference in Boulder, Colorado in 2002 I gave my first paper on Chaucer reception and translation, outlining the main Danish publications and giving examples from the 1950s *Canterbury Tales* translations by Boisen and Johansen (Boisen 1951, Johansen 1958). The session on Chaucer in translation was chaired by Steve Ellis, whose *Chaucer at Large* (Ellis 2000) remains a major inspiration for my own work. At the same session there was also a paper given by Susan Yager on R.M. Lumiansky's American Chaucer translations from the 1940s and 50s, and this paper turned out to be even more inspiring than I had first thought, as will be revealed when it is acknowledged more specifically in chapter 9 of this study. Betsy Bowden has kindly commented on the first part of chapter 3 and let me see her forthcoming work on the afterlife of the Wife of Bath. My thanks go to these Chaucerians and to the former New Chaucer Society President David Wallace, who read my paper and suggested publication in *The Chaucer Review*, where it was published under the competent editorship of Susanna Fein and David Raybin (Klitgård 2005).

A Danish version of the article appeared the year before (Klitgård

2004), edited by Viggo Hjörnager Pedersen, who then and later came up with useful feedback, for which thanks. In 2004 I was still considering a major study in Danish for the degree of Dr. Phil. What convinced me that I wanted to write a study for this degree in English was the growing interest in the academic world in reception studies generally, but more specifically the rise of the field of *medievalism* in Chaucer studies, not least with Richard Utz's important book on the German philological tradition in Chaucer studies published in 2002 (Utz 2002). I want to acknowledge this inspiration, and specifically that Utz also expressed an encouraging attitude to my work when I contacted him in 2010.

In 2008 I turned to the present doctoral dissertation more intensively, while at the same time working on an edited volume with Dr. Gerd Bayer, Erlangen University. This was published with the title *Narrative Developments from Chaucer to Defoe* in 2011 (Bayer and Klitgård 2011). Let me express my sincere thanks to Gerd for his continuous encouragement in my work also with the dissertation.

In my many years in Chaucer studies I have had brilliant teachers who later became colleagues and friends, and let me take the opportunity here to mention specifically Graham Caie and Dorrit Einersen, who since I was first brought up with Chaucer at the University of Copenhagen from 1981 have always been my ideals of good teachers. Also in the early 1980s I studied at the University of York with Derek Pearsall, one of the grand old men in Chaucer studies. He will be acknowledged here along with another important figure in Chaucer studies who has helped me greatly over the years, A.C. Spearing. Pearsall's and Spearing's examples are daunting for anyone who aspires to get to know and understand Chaucer's universe.

Besides the pleasure I feel in being part of the New Chaucer Society's invaluable network, let me also acknowledge the Danish network in the University of Copenhagen-based *Middelalderkredsen* [The medieval circle], where I have both received feedback on my own work and heard many fine informal and formal presentations over the years. My thanks also go to Hanne Jansen and Anna Wegener of the University of Copenhagen for arranging the splendid conference "Authorial and Editorial Voices in Translation" in November 2011. Also here I received important feedback and found inspiration from several papers.

As for my former colleagues from the English Department at the

University of Copenhagen, now the Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies, I acknowledge them best by using their work on English in Denmark, which happens frequently in this study. I will not mention their names here, except that I must single out the late Dr. Jørgen Erik Nielsen. His doctoral dissertation *Den samtidige engelske litteratur og Danmark 1800-1840* [The contemporary English Literature and Denmark 1800-1840] (Nielsen 1976-1977) is a milestone in the field of English in Denmark, and I draw on it heavily in chapters 3 and 4. Jørgen Erik gave me feedback on the first articles and drafts in this project, and until his far too early death was the most kind and competent critic one could imagine. I dedicate this study to his memory.

As with all research projects that run over several years, costs of several kinds have been involved. The expenditure involved in using libraries as frequently as I have for this project means I owe many thanks to the Royal Library of Copenhagen, Tårnby Hovedbibliotek, and a number of other Danish libraries, as well as the University Library and the Minster Library in York. I thank Peter and Gitte Rannes at Hald Hovedgaard for keeping my own financial costs down by accepting me for four funded author visits in the grand natural surroundings of Hald. I also thank Garry Keyes at Ørslev Monestary near Hald for accepting me for a further research visit. To my department of Culture and Identity at Roskilde University, thanks for travel funding, and for flexibility with my research time in a strange period of research policies in Denmark, where extra research leave and funding is reserved for groups of researchers, not for individuals, and least of all for those daring to take years to write the once so celebrated Danish Dr. Phil. *disputats*, a senior doctoral dissertation corresponding to the German *Habilitation*. I also thank the Head of my department Martin Bayer and the Rector of Roskilde University Ib Poulsen for publication support. A final contribution by Landsdommer Giese's Foundation completed the publication budget, for which many thanks. Moreover I thank everyone at the University of Southern Denmark Press for their great help in preparing the dissertation for publication.

My final thanks go to my former wife Ida and my beloved daughters Louise and Laura.