

In sondry ages and sondry londes:
Global Chaucer in the XXIst Century

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We may have been living in the XXIst century for two decades but the challenges of keeping medieval literature relevant for another hundred years have yet to be addressed. In this conference, we thus offer to consider what academics can do to continue transmitting a universal linguistic and literary inheritance that has survived since the Middle Ages.

The fact that this conference will be held in Japan is proof enough of the universality of the cultural relevance of medieval literature in a culturally diverse environment. Yet, in large parts of the world, medieval studies have started to disappear from universities, showing in a way our failure to keep our inheritance alive. Such is for instance the case in France where the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, the most French of English poets, have almost disappeared from memories.

During this conference, we accordingly invite colleagues from Asia to reflect on how we may encourage a new generation of readers and scholars to support medieval studies in a non-Anglophone environment. The translation and re-translation of the works of medieval poets might, for instance, be a way to reintroduce poets to a new audience – see for instance the recent translation of the *Canterbury Tales* in Japanese by a team of scholars, or the work accomplished by non-Anglophone translators throughout the world. This would lead us to question the difficulties (linguistic, but not only) of translating/adapting Middle English in different languages, and of finding audiences. Why does a medieval English poet speak to us? How do we make him our own? Likewise, we might show the relevance of medieval poetry by emphasizing its polyphonic and polysemic nature, thus establishing a clear connection with the modern novel – a concrete way of abolishing a form of periodization that condemns a rich literature to its medieval past.

These are only a few possibilities, and different approaches are possible to the question at hand, namely: how shall we keep Chaucer relevant for the next hundred years in non-anglophone communities?