

"Poet and Patron in the *Fall of Princes*: Lydgate and Humphrey of Gloucester," *Anglia*, 38 (1914), 121–36.

"The Lover's Mass in England and Spain," *MP*, 14 (1916–17), 253–4.

"The Lost Quires of a Shirley Codex," *MLN*, 36 (1921), 184–5.

"How a Lover Praiseth his Lady," *MP*, 21 (1923–24), 379–95.

"Charles of Orleans and Anne Molyneux," *MP*, 22 (1924–25), 215–16.

"The Nine-Syllabled Pentameter Line in Some Post-Chaucerian Manuscripts," *MP*, 23 (1925–26), 129–52.

English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey, Being Examples of Conventional Secular Poetry, exclusive of Romance, Ballad, Lyric, and Drama, in the Period from Henry the Fourth to Henry the Eighth. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1927.

"Lydgate and Coluccio Salutati," *MP*, 25 (1927–28), 49–57.

"A Scribe of Chaucer," *MP*, 25 (1929–30), 27–33.

There are brief notes, one page or so, or less, on Chaucer and Lydgate texts in *MLN*, 22 (1907), 51–2; 23 (1908), 20–21; 24 (1909), 63; 26 (1911), 32; 27 (1912), 91–2; 31 (1916), 121; 32 (1917), 187; 36 (1921), 184, 250–51; 40 (1925), 185–6; 41 (1926), 534–5; 48 (1933), 514; also short pieces on non-medieval topics in *MLN*, 17 (1902), 33–6, 129–31; 37 (1922), 505–6.

EMBARKING WITH CONSTANCE: MARGARET SCHLAUCH

To consider the life of the prolific scholar Margaret Schlauch (1898–1986) is to open up numerous paths of inquiry into her comparative literary studies, her extensive mastery of languages both medieval and modern, her work in linguistic theory, and her political commitments. Sheila Delany's recent essay in *Medieval Feminist Forum* titled "Medieval Marxists: A Tradition" comments upon the strategies and limitations of Schlauch's politically-charged writings and briefly elucidates a fascinating convergence of life events and scholarship; explaining Schlauch's departure from NYU for a professorship at the University of Warsaw in 1951, Delany observes that Schlauch

"re-enacted the scenario of her best-known book, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, the doctoral thesis she submitted at Columbia in 1927. It is a study of the romance topos of the falsely accused noblewoman forced to flee her homeland. The difference, of course, is that the romance heroine returns; Margaret Schlauch did not."¹

In so many ways, this first book centers our understanding of Schlauch, and I take it as my guiding focus here. A pioneering study attuned to the operations of

medieval misogyny, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* remains Schlauch's most substantial feminist work, all the more so because it begins with a richly layered preface imbued with Schlauch's sense of herself as a female scholar journeying to exercise an authoritative voice.

In her opening remarks to *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, Schlauch presents the autobiographical slice we expect in those few paragraphs—part travelogue mixed with sincere acknowledgments and a touch of fulfillment and pride in a completed task. In Schlauch's hands, however, these genial formulae reveal the ways in which professional challenges were expressly gendered in the 1920s. Schlauch recalls the time she spent reading at libraries in Munich, Leiden, The Hague, Paris, and London, but with this stipulation: "Had I not, however, been enabled by a fellowship of the American Association of University Women to continue my study abroad, I could not have included a discussion of a number of unpublished versions inaccessible in America."² More specifically, *The History of the American Association of University Women, 1881–1931* pinpoints Schlauch as the 1923–24 recipient of the Anna C. Brackett Memorial Fellowship, one of the endowed fellowships designed to remember friends and teachers.³ Schlauch was both qualified and fortunate, one might say, in light of what Susan Levine writes in her more recent history of the organization: "One of the Association's most concrete programs, the fellowships were also among its most frustrating because the numbers of women seeking assistance far exceeded its funding abilities. In 1929, for example, the Association was able to fund only 11 of the 150 women who applied for fellowships."⁴ Undoubtedly, Schlauch's later notable successes stemmed from the early financial and intellectual support she received from this educational program by and for women, a crucial legacy.⁵

Slauch's preface to *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* further speaks to the imbalance in professional opportunities for men and women in the academy. She tells of her indebtedness to several mentors and readers, all male, including the especially prominent names of Franz Boas and George Lyman Kittredge, and she continues with thanks to "Professor Arthur H. Nason, Director, and Miss Hannah E. Steen, of the Press, for their editorial and typographical oversight of [the manuscript's] publication" (viii). As the last person thanked, "Miss Steen" is a subtly ironic counterpoint to the procession of men with their institutional titles. The reviews of the book inevitably turn the cultural uneasiness about women's titles back on Schlauch herself. One review from the August 27, 1927 issue of *Notes and Queries* correctly designates the author as "Professor Schlauch," though two reviews from subsequent years choose "Miss Schlauch."⁶

Slauch's study of accused women and her judicious use of descriptive phrases about the absurdity of those accusations evince a feminist purpose, a purpose Delany confirms as she quotes a personal letter from Schlauch pointing to her work for women's rights in the 1920's (11–12). In the book, Schlauch's meticulous 1920's application of the labyrinthine sources-and-analogues approach simultaneously enlivens and veils her discussion of representations of women; of

course, her work was complimented more for its method and exhaustiveness than for its subject matter. Carving out rhetorical space in her preface, she claims that although much writing has been done on the sources and analogues of Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, "that part of his story which treats of an accused and innocent queen exiled and restored, has not yet been considered in relation to all other families of stories containing this general formula" (vii). In the body of the text she promises her readers "three new heroines" of an unpublished romance (7). Her investigations of the accusations of witchcraft and animal birth prefigure future scholarly arguments on the fear of women's bodies and experiences. And drawing upon anthropology, Schlauch considers the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, suggesting that the maligned women trace back to a defunct system in which a princess or queen embodied royal status and matrilineal connections came to the fore: "The woman may not be the actual sovereign, but she confers the title on her consort *because she is her mother's daughter*" (Schlauch's emphasis, 41). Schlauch's contribution rests, in part, in her precise understanding that family romances center themselves largely on what happens to women, as seen in a wide network of Middle English texts, including those by Gower and Trevet, as well as *Octavian*, *Emaré*, and *The Erl of Tolous*.

As we return to the end of her preface with this assessment in mind, we are struck by a particular echo in her personal remark that "The study now completed has been a delightful adventure to me" (viii). Here the author plays with the medieval concept of *aventure*, women's *aventure* especially, as she direct attention back to her own experience and effort rather than that of her male teachers. Indeed, the young female scholar who traversed the sea and the cities of Europe in order to study medieval literature depicting exiled, set adrift, and restored queens would know full well that adventure is not limited to knights on horseback. She later tags the study of linguistics an "intellectual adventure" in her preface to *The Gift of Language*.⁷ Looking at her career through the lens of her first preface, we can view Schlauch's scholarly breadth—her persistent and willful explorations in multiple languages, literatures, and disciplines across six decades—as a determined feminist endeavor designed to manifest repeatedly her ability in the predominantly masculine worlds of research, publication, and teaching.

Although her other prefaces do not confront gender roles quite as thoroughly as her first one does, in them Schlauch nonetheless tacitly narrates her feminist "adventure" through her running commentary on the complex burdens of correct and meaningful academic work. She advertises her knowing engagement with the rules of the game and offers confident criticisms when she sees fit. She castigates the student body for its linguistic incompetence in the preface to her 1928 *Medieval Narrative: A Book of Translations*:

Any student who would work in this field must have no inconsiderable linguistic equipment; but the requirement is, unfortunately, an insuperable barrier in the case of most American undergraduates. One would like to assume, for instance, that all of them can read at least modern French and German by their junior and senior years, but many

of them fail to meet even this modest qualification, to say nothing of Old French and Middle High German. . . . But enthusiasm is not enough when one is dealing with texts in Old French, Old Icelandic, Middle Dutch, and Medieval Latin; and in the face of the linguistic deficiency of college students a teacher is forced to rely on translations for class use.

The preface to *Romance in Iceland* lays down one of her many salient challenges and calls for further research, as Schlauch clarifies that she wrote the survey “to call the attention of students in Germanic and Romance philology to the existence of new worlds to conquer,” all the while aspiring herself “to achieve accuracy while avoiding pedantry.” Yet in the foreword to *English Medieval Literature and Its Social Foundations*, she is captured by her own critical eye: “Writing in a country still handicapped by the effects of war-time destruction, the author was not able to check on the accuracy of all citations and references at first hand, nor to obtain fresh materials for the purposes of illustration. For all such inadequacies she asks pardon in advance.”⁸ This request is the keenest moment of writer’s humility in her works, insofar as I have found, and the taint of improper scholarship must have been a vexing shadow for one who had declared that enthusiasm is not enough.

Slauch often represents herself in these prefaces in the ostensibly polite third person as “the author” and “she,” and in doing so she asserts her professional female identity, especially when she also defines her reader as male. Using the conventional “he” of patriarchal speech to indicate a human being is a strategy of reversal in Schlauch’s writings, with pointed effect: “The materials on this subject may be regarded from the point of view of the general reader as an appendix which he may take or not, as he likes. It is recommended, however, that he take it”; if her audience is a “layman,” Schlauch is clearly the authority to guide and instruct that layman. As a textbook writer, Schlauch refers to the student as “he” as well.⁹

Toward the end of her career, Schlauch’s embarking with Constance resonates powerfully in two ways. First, *Chaucer’s Constance and Accused Queens*, originally published by the NYU Press in 1927, was reprinted in 1969 by the Gordian Press. The reprint testified to the value of her textual scholarship and enabled a wider readership even as the book’s feminist scholarly vision became increasingly recognizable and vital in the latter third of the twentieth century. Through this reprint the book became comfortably familiar to so many of us who have passed through courses in Chaucer or medieval romance, and her preface—reprinted along with the main text—generates insight into the history of our precursors. Second, Schlauch herself returned to Constance in her two-page 1973 article “Chaucer’s Constance, Jonah, and the *Gesta Romanorum*,” which considers the popular *Gesta* as a source of inspiration for Trevet and/or Chaucer, and in “A Polish Analogue of the *Man of Law’s Tale*,” published one year later. Most strikingly, in the first of the two pieces Schlauch reminds us that “Constance makes her voyage alone.”¹⁰ As Delany notes, Schlauch did make a remarkable

voyage as well, leaving her tenured professorship at NYU for a position in Poland, and her revisiting of Constance frames her scholarly life and illuminates the significance of her beginnings. As the author of the foundational volume on Constance's literary sisters and mothers, Schlauch not only established herself professionally in the 1920s with an emphasis on women, but she also seized upon the scholarly preface as an opportunity to document her own history and shape her own future—even her legacy—as a woman in the academic realm.

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1 Sheila Delany, "Medieval Marxists: A Tradition," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 30 (fall 2000): 11. For further recent mention of Schlauch see Julia S. Falk, "Women, Language and Linguistics: Three American Stories from the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Routledge Studies in the History of Linguistics* 2 (London: Routledge, 1999), 4, 52, 269.

2 Margaret Schlauch, preface to *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens* (1927; reprint, New York: Gordian Press, 1969), vii. References to the main text are also from this edition.

3 Marion Talbot and Lois Kimball Mathews Rosenberry, *The History of the American Association of University Women, 1881-1931* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 161, 443.

4 Susan Levine, *Degrees of Equality: The American Association of University Women and the Challenge of Twentieth-Century Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 20.

5 For example, her 1934 preface to *Romance in Iceland* recognizes the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship as integral to that undertaking (Princeton: Princeton University Press; American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1934), v.

6 Review of *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, by Margaret Schlauch, *Notes and Queries* 153 (August 27, 1927): 161; review by C. H. Herford, *Modern Language Review* 23 (1928): 65–66; Gordon Hall Gerould, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 28 (1929): 285–86.

7 Margaret Schlauch, *The Gift of Language* (1942 as *The Gift of Tongues*; New York: Dover, 1955), vi.

8 Margaret Schlauch, preface to *Medieval Narrative: A Book of Translations* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1928), v; Schlauch, preface to *Romance*, v; Margaret Schlauch, foreword to *English Medieval Literature and Its Social Foundations* (Warsaw: PWN—Polish Scientific Publishers; London: Oxford University Press, 1956), xvi.

9 Margaret Schlauch, preface to *Modern English and American Poetry: Techniques and Ideologies* (London: Watts, 1956), v-vi; foreword to *English Medieval Literature*, xv.

10 Margaret Schlauch, "Chaucer's Constance, Jonah, and the *Gesta Romanorum*," *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny* 20 (1973): 306.

11 Mieczyslaw Brahmer, Stanislaw Helsztynski, and Julian Krzyzanowski, eds., *Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Margaret Schlauch* (Warsaw: PWN—Polish Scientific Publishers, 1966), 9–20.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS BY MARGARET SCHLAUCH

For a more complete bibliography from 1923 to 1964, with citations of reviews written by Schlauch, her articles composed in Polish, her bibliographical compilations, and several other items omitted here for space, see the volume *Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Margaret Schlauch*.¹¹ Schlauch continued to publish well into the 1970s, however. Within the remainder of her writings not listed here, one finds essays on Shaw, Joyce, Pound, Dickinson, Skelton, Usk, and Lydgate, as well as further work on Chaucer, Icelandic literature, and linguistics.

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THE AGONY OF INFLUENCE

Faced by the prospect of identifying (let alone discussing) the influence of my work on others, I was at first nonplussed. How could I tell? Surely others are better placed to do this than I am. After some reflection I realized that the problem I was having had more really to do with how my work has been shaped by my experiences, both as a scholar and as a professor (the two are not synonymous, as we all know) in the American academy at a certain time and place. So I'm going to start by talking about the influences on me, and then I can perhaps begin to suggest some ways my own work has shaped others.

About a year ago, I was asked by a graduate student in art history for some "insight" (as she was pleased to call it) into my methods and approach to my work. She was writing a paper for her Methodology course, and was focusing on *The Book of Memory*. Flattered as I was, I also quickly realized that I hadn't ever actually thought out systematically either my "methodology" or my approach,