

Call for Papers
International *Piers Plowman* Society Meeting
Miami, April 4-6, 2019
Due Date for Submissions: September 7, 2018

- Applicants are invited to submit paper abstracts either to the General Call or to an Individual Session. Each applicant may submit one abstract.
- All abstracts should be sent to the conference general mailbox ippsmiami2019@gmail.com rather than to session organizers. If you are sending your abstract to an Individual Session, please put the name of the session in the subject line of the email.
- Abstracts should be no longer than 300 words and should include the name and email address of the applicant.
- Questions about particular sessions should be directed to the organizers. If you have more general questions or concerns about the program, please feel free to contact Professor Emily Steiner at steinere@sas.upenn.edu.
- The program committee for this year's conference is:
 - Chair: Emily Steiner, University of Pennsylvania (steinere@sas.upenn.edu)
 - Ian Cornelius, Loyola University Chicago (icornelius@luc.edu)
 - Michael Johnston, Purdue University (mjohnst@purdue.edu)
 - Wan-Chuan Kao, Washington and Lee University (kaow@wlu.edu)
 - Noëlle Phillips, Douglas College (phillipsn2@douglascollege.ca)
 - Fiona Somerset, University of Connecticut (fiona.somerset@uconn.edu)
 - Arvind Thomas, UCLA (arvindthomas@ucla.edu)

List of Individual Sessions

1. Romance in the Age of Langland

Organizer: William Biel, University of Connecticut (william.biel@uconn.edu)

Piers Plowman time and again draws upon the generic conventions of romance. As the poem opens, the dreamer declares he has gone “wide in this world wondres to here,” not unlike King Arthur’s custom that he must hear a marvel before dining in his court. Langland is not alone in engaging with romance, with Chaucer also revisiting romance, from the farcical *Sir Thopas* to the magisterial *Troilus*; Gower building his *Confessio Amantis* around the plight of lovers; and the *Pearl*-poet adopting the framework of popular romance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Such a sustained engagement with romance motifs implies Langland and other fourteenth-century authors looked to romance for more than mere ornamentation. This panel session calls for papers of 15–20 minutes exploring the stakes and consequences of romance in *Piers Plowman* and its world. When does Langland overtly or subtly employ romance motifs, and what impact might continental romance have had on Langland? What can manuscript study reveal about Langland and his contemporaries’ interest in romance? To what extent might popular romance participate in the visions of reform current through the late fourteenth century? A wide spectrum of

approaches is invited, and comparison with texts across the geographical range of medieval romance is encouraged.

2. Langland's Library

Organizers: Liam Cruz Kelly, Boston University (liamck@bu.edu) and Ann E. Killian, Yale University (ann.killian@yale.edu)

The intertextual quotations in *Piers Plowman* embed the dream vision within the Latinate discourses of Scriptural commentary and legal jurisdiction, to name only two. While John Alford's "*Piers Plowman*": *A Guide to the Latin Quotations* (1991) made a significant contribution to identifying their sources, the means by which Langland encountered these texts demands further study. In the case of quotations that frequently show up in commentaries, it seems nigh impossible to point to any single work as Langland's definite source. Scholars have commonly assumed that Langland relied upon the textual resources designed to aid pastors in their care for souls, such as confessional manuals and theological compendia. For example, Ralph Hanna has demonstrated that Langland knew the *Speculum vitae*, and Nicholas Watson has posited his familiarity with Robert Grosseteste's *Le Château d'Amour*. Taking another approach, Anne Middleton has traced a vernacular dictum, the proverb "Dowel," back to a Latinate pastoral handbook. Whether or not Langland had access to this particular work, Middleton's study richly contextualizes our understanding of the associations this formulaic utterance evoked for Langland and his readers. Looking beyond pastoralia, scholars such as Nicolette Zeeman have explored Langland's evocations of romance conventions.

This session calls for papers that explore the wider literary contexts in which the quotations of *Piers Plowman* circulated, the textual vehicles through which Langland encountered them, and their function and rhetorical effects within the poem. How does Langland re-contextualize quotations and conventions found in other genres to produce this most innovative and challenging work of Middle English literature?

3. Copying *Piers Plowman* in Late Medieval England: In Memory of A. I. Doyle

Organizers: Simon Horobin, Magdalen College, Oxford (simon.horobin@magd.ox.ac.uk), and Michael Johnston, Purdue University (mjohnst@purdue.edu)

A. I. Doyle's "Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*" (1986) remains the most comprehensive overview of the copying and circulation of Langland's poem. But much has changed in our knowledge of Middle English book production since this landmark piece of scholarship. In the spirit of Doyle's wide-ranging and influential study, papers in this session will seek to contextualize the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* within larger trends in late medieval English book production. Questions that papers might address include, but are not limited to:

- What can the study of dialect tell us about patterns of copying and dissemination of *Piers Plowman*?
- Were *Piers* manuscripts copied disproportionately by London commercial copyists, compared to contemporary literary texts? Why or why not?
- What role did religious houses play in disseminating Langland?
- How does the production and circulation of Langland manuscripts compare to other contemporary corpora (e.g., Chaucer, Gower, *The Prick of Conscience*, *Mandeville's Travels*, etc.)?

In the spirit of Doyle (a scholar who rarely feared to range across large manuscript corpora), this session encourages papers that engage multiple manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* and that ask large questions about the dissemination and circulation of literary texts.

4. Langland among Lawyers

Organizer: Arvind Thomas, UCLA (arvindthomas@ucla.edu)

Langland's familiarity with lawyers has long been established by pioneering studies such as John Alford's *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction*. More recently, in the wake of Emily Steiner's *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature*, Andrew Galloway's reflections on the subject of law in *Piers Plowman*, and Conrad van Dijk's and Stephen Yeager's explorations of Langland's conceptual and metrical debts to legal treatises, we have acquired a sharper and deeper understanding of the poem's debts to the discourses of the common law, Roman and canon law. This panel invites us to explore the extent to which the poem (in any of its versions) might not just take from but also reciprocally give back to any of these discourses. How does Langland contribute to or coproduce the work of secular jurists and/or canonists, and how might that help us rethink medieval legal history? What might attention to the poem's recourse to forms of legal expression (such as legal maxims, charters, and canons) reveal about the intersections of the literary and the legal at the levels of both form and content? What are the implications for reading the poem when we regard the poet *also* as a legislator not unlike secular jurists and canonists who *also* shared the poet's penchant for fictional narrative, word-play and meter? Or, conversely, what can Langland's poetics reveal about the poetics that shape the diverse legal treatises that scholars have long identified as among his sources? And, more broadly, how might *Piers Plowman* enable us to rethink and redefine the categories of "law" and "literature"?

Exploring such questions, this panel asks how we might contribute to the field of "law and literature." We invite proposals that take an interdisciplinary or intersectional approach (however broadly defined) to Langland's poem and any of the legal traditions it engages.

5. Editing Scribal Texts

Organizers: Ian Cornelius, Loyola University (icornelius@luc.edu), and Jim Knowles, North Carolina State University (jrknowle@ncsu.edu)

Writing in 2001 in a combined review of the last installment of the Athlone *Piers Plowman* and the first installment of the *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive, Anne Middleton ventured that the salient feature of scribal texts is neither copying error nor intelligent intervention, but the "reciprocity of idiom and knowledge between [an] author and a textual community." Middleton concluded with what might still, two decades on, be taken as a challenge: "The editorial search for the original text," she says, "is inseparable from the pursuit of the immediate verbal and institutional conditions that motivated and informed it, but thus far the latter has surprisingly few takers."

Has this situation changed at all? Much editorial activity in recent decades has been devoted to presentation of scribal versions of literary texts; have editors taken up the programmatic focus articulated by Middleton—namely, to disclose and map the limits of "reciprocity of idiom and knowledge" within textual communities? If yes, how does this endeavor work in practice and what are its most important results? If other research priorities have emerged, what are they and how are they pursued?

Speakers are invited to explore questions such as the following: How are the distinctive aims of a documentary edition realized in its component parts—the introduction, annotations, and critical apparatus, for example—and how have digital technologies changed the production, presentation, and use of such editions? How does an edition of a scribal text negotiate its responsibilities to a scribal document, an authorial work, and a contemporary readership? What lines of connection obtain between an edition of a scribal text and the standard/critical edition of

that literary work? Who are the projected readers/users of such editions, and what do editors supply to them? What is the value of scribal versions of texts produced at a significant temporal or geographical remove from the context of composition?

Proposed papers need not be devoted to *Piers Plowman* or to Middle English texts. We welcome proposals concerned more widely with editorial theory and documentary editing of medieval texts.

6. Thinking with Drama and Performance

Organizers: Rebecca Davis, UC-Irvine (radavis@uci.edu) and Ellen K. Rentz, Claremont McKenna College (ellen.rentz@claremontmckenna.edu)

Drama was part of the mainstream of medieval culture, but in the context of medieval literary studies it has often been siloed as a field unto itself. This panel seeks to re-center drama by exploring its intersections with other texts, genres, and forms. How were poets engaging with aspects of drama and performance? What can performativity do in or for a non-dramatic text? How might drama help us explore the blurry line between “the literary” and “the devotional” in non-dramatic texts? We encourage submissions that think about and think with drama alongside one or more non-dramatic texts, including but not limited to *Piers Plowman*. Some topics to consider include: the uses of drama, performativity, and/or performance theory; models of staging; framing bodies, subjects, characters; questions of embodiment, movement, gesture; aurality and sonority; narrative temporalities; biblical, liturgical, and devotional forms and genres; the reading theatregoer, the performative poet.

7. Medicine and the Body in *Piers Plowman*: A Roundtable

Organizer, Laura Godfrey, University of Connecticut (laura.godfrey@uconn.edu)

Scholars have traditionally read the medical language, characters, and practices in *Piers Plowman* as symbolic of salvation, reducing actual medical practice to metaphor and symbolism. Recent scholarly turns to the body recenter the body in literary texts through attention to the somatic experiences described through allegory, satire, and personification. This roundtable invites papers that interrogate illness and remedy, the body and embodiment, the senses, and the theory and practice of medicine in *Piers Plowman* and alliterative poetry.

8. Micro/Macro Langland or Questions of Scale: A Roundtable

Organizer: Katharine Jager, University of Houston-Downtown (jagerk@uhd.edu)

Langland’s *Piers Plowman* is a notoriously complex and lengthy poem whose study and criticism depends on deep historical knowledge, careful close-reading, Biblical exegesis, Latin and Middle English fluency, and scholarly time. These factors, as well as the poem’s existence in multiple versions and revisions, often act as impediments to accessibility at both the graduate and undergraduate level. This roundtable considers questions of scale in *Piers Plowman*, in order to address the problems (and opportunities) afforded by the poem’s complicated size. How might *Piers* be miniaturized or made local, by using excerpts, portions, or compressions, and what benefits might a microscopic view provide? Conversely, how might encounters with the poem be expanded, via bird’s-eye perspectives of the entire *Piers* corpus for instance, and what might be lost or gained in seeing the poem globally? This roundtable seeks a variety of papers on questions of scale in both scholarship and pedagogy. Of particular interest are papers considering: the teaching of *Piers* as part of general education requirements; teaching *Piers* at teaching institutions; teaching *Piers* to immigrant, multilingual, working class and/or Generation 1.5 students; teaching *Piers* outside of the academy; the powers of the global approach. Screeds and manifestoes welcome.

9. Theology I: Langland's Theology and the Visual Arts

Organizers: Thomas Goodmann, University of Miami (tgoodmann@miami.edu), and Elizabeth Robertson, University of Glasgow (elizabeth.robertson@glasgow.ac.uk)

Studies such as *Iconography and the Professional Reader* (Kerby-Fulton and Despres) examine the relations of text and illustration in the unique Douce 104 C text manuscript, and certainly *Piers Plowman* studies has created close engagements with the material manuscripts of the poem. What of the visual and material world of the poet and of primary readers-cum-copyists? This session seeks papers examining aspects of Langland's verbal registers for visual experience relating to currents and commitments of theology—practical, pastoral, speculative, and vernacular—as well as engagements with art, such as church wall paintings; the material arts, such as clothing and everyday objects; built spaces, such as the market, the tavern, and the tithe barn, and managed landscapes, such as fields, and the Malvern Hills. Participants might address visualizations of sin, salvation, agency, antifraternalism or the life of Christ as framed in visual and material terms. Papers examining late medieval theology and visual arts in sources influential to or contemporary with *Piers Plowman* are most welcome.

10. Theology II: The Language of Theology in *Piers Plowman*

Organizers: Thomas Goodmann, University of Miami (tgoodmann@miami.edu), and Elizabeth Robertson, University of Glasgow (elizabeth.robertson@glasgow.ac.uk)

This session seeks participants for a panel of shorter inquiries into modes, registers, and figurative language for theological issues in *Piers Plowman*. As literary respondents in essays and commentaries, do we privilege by selection those passages offering aesthetic appeal, and most apparently responsive to stylistic analysis, and those offering historical resonance to theological matters and controversies? What do we see as distinguishing elements in the poems' language for issues of ecclesiology, liturgy, and practical theology, such as sin and penance, as well as more abstruse questions regarding Christology and economies of salvation? Although by no means limited to the work of M. Clemente Davlin, the session is dedicated to her memory as among the leading explorers of the topic.

11. A *Visio* of a Better World: *Piers Plowman* and Activism

Organizers: Micah Goodrich, University of Connecticut (micah.goodrich@uconn.edu); Mariah Min, University of Pennsylvania (mmariah@sas.upenn.edu); and Seth Strickland, Cornell University (sjs437@cornell.edu)

For the Great Rising of 1381 and in the literature of the plowman tradition that followed, *Piers Plowman* served as a touchstone text in considering what it meant to lead a politically and ethically conscious life, and how to intervene in social structures with intent and impact. As hate groups increasingly co-opt the medieval to fabricate abhorrent visions of the past and future, and as it becomes clear that the option to remain apolitical is a luxury not allowed to many, we find ourselves at a moment when the boundaries between our work and our world are more porous than ever before—perhaps in radical, productive ways. In this session, we seek to explore how *Piers Plowman* invites us to reconsider our role as activists in the academy and center concerns of class and labor, gender and sexuality, racial equity, disability rights, and environmental justice, as well as coping with and resisting institutional state violence in our pedagogy and our research. We envision this panel as a collaborative arena to imagine how the study of *Piers Plowman* is in dialogue with transformative and restorative justice and social mercy, that is, how justice works alongside compassion. This panel welcomes papers of twenty minutes across disciplines,

methodologies, and theoretical approaches that address the intersections between *Piers Plowman* and social activism both within the text and beyond it. As such, we encourage papers that look to *Piers Plowman* as a textual, meta-textual, and extratextual activist experience.

12. Queer Langland

Organizers: Micah Goodrich, University of Connecticut (micah.goodrich@uconn.edu), and Wan-Chuan Kao, Washington and Lee University (kaow@wlu.edu)

This panel invites papers that reassess the structures and experiences of gender, sexuality, and embodiment in *Piers Plowman* through engagements with the latest critical conversations in LGBTQI2 studies. We ask not only if it is possible to queer and trans* Langland but also what difference a queer or trans* Langland makes in our reading practices and in our understanding of the poem's various personal and collective projects: salvation, social justice, labor, the household, to name a few. If trans* studies asks us to rethink matters of gender, how would trans-embodiment offer new insights into personification, allegory, and dream vision? What sort of queer or trans* futurity is possible in Langland's dream vision and its larger tradition? *Piers Plowman* is a poem preoccupied with *in-betweenness*; spaces and intervals that mark moments of transition. How might queer and trans* perspectives open, extend, and challenge those spaces? For instance, queer cavities are found throughout *Piers Plowman* as sites of decay, hollow bodies, hoarded material, or deep, porous channels of movement. Cavities may operate as apertures or spaces of refuge, but they also exclude, hide, imprison, and entomb. Similarly, the dreamer's episodes of sleeping and waking are set against movement—both wandering and still—and the fair field of folk located between the tower of Truth and the deep dale below is bristling with bodies. It is these moments of queer transition that keep the *Piers Plowman* project on the move. We encourage submissions from various intersectional, theoretical, and methodological perspectives.

13. Langland's Manual Labor: *Piers Plowman* and the Forms of Pastoral Care

Organizer: Denise Baker, University of North Carolina at Greensboro (dnbaker@uncg.edu)

Works of pastoral care in a variety of genres addressed to clerical and lay readers comprise a high proportion of extant medieval manuscripts from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries. As Leonard Boyle, O. P., observes, these manuscripts include “a remarkable array of manuals of confession, *summae* of moral teaching, expositions of the Ten Commandments, compendia of vices and virtues, collections of sermons and sermon exempla, and general manuals of the pastoral care, in Latin and in various vernaculars.” From G.R. Owst in the 1930s to, more recently, Vincent Gillespie, Ralph Hanna, Anne Middleton, and Nicolette Zeeman, scholars have acknowledged the influence of such *pastoralia* on *Piers Plowman*. This session invites papers which contribute to this scholarship by investigating specific textual examples of genres, techniques, strategies, rhetorics, or themes to demonstrate how Langland adopts, adapts, or diverges from this archive of manuals to express the political, religious, and ethical stakes informing *Piers Plowman*.

14. Langland and the Fifteenth Century

Session Organizer: Elizaveta Strakhov, Marquette University (yelizaveta.strakhov@marquette.edu)

The last few years have seen several conference panels seeking to bring Langland into deeper conversation with his contemporaries, such as the session on Langland and the French Tradition at the last IPPS conference in Seattle in 2015 or the session on Chaucer and Langland at the New Chaucer Society Congress in London in 2016. In line with those dynamic and well-

attended sessions, this session proposes to explore affinities and convergences between the work of Langland and that of the major fifteenth-century successors to England's as well as France's poetic tradition, who wrote in a period that saw the circulation of numerous manuscripts of Langland's work. As such, the session welcomes papers on topics including but not limited to the following: allegory, especially personification allegory, and/or estates satire in Langland and authors such as Deguileville, Pizan, and Lydgate (particularly as revolving around questions of death, the afterlife, and religious devotion); Langland's dialogic didacticism and the fifteenth-century vogue for dialogically structured mirrors-for-princes literature; Langland's emphasis on pilgrimage and the visionary literature of pilgrim and wanderer figures such as Margery Kempe or the allegorically spatial didacticism of Alain Chartier; or Langland's interest in the middle-class and Hoccleve's emphasis on middle-class clerical bureaucracy. In so doing, the session aims both to pull Langland forward into the wider late medieval literary landscape, to trace lines of convergence between fifteenth-century writers and fourteenth-century figures other than Chaucer, and to continue exploring late medieval Anglo-French connections.

15. Post-Humanist Langland

Organizers: Wan-Chuan Kao, Washington and Lee University (kaow@wlu.edu), and Adin Lears, SUNY-Oswego (adin.lears@oswego.edu)

This panel asks how Langland Studies might contribute to the emerging field of post-humanism, which seeks to question the category of the "human" and to broaden critical focus beyond the rational mind as the sole seat of consciousness. Can we conceive of Will as a cyborg? How do we interpellate Langland as a (post-) humanist, and what might it mean to do so? What critical and/or historical problems might this designation address or raise? We invite papers that explore and identify how *Piers Plowman* and its intellectual, cultural, and social contexts engage with topics including, but not limited to: animals and animality, technology and mechanical knowledge, gendered and racialized ontologies and epistemologies, embodiment and materialism, biopolitics, plant life and intelligence, vibrant matter, animation and animacy, media and mediation, voice and language.

16. Disability in the Age of *Piers Plowman*

Organizer: Rick Godden, Louisiana State University (rgodden1@lsu.edu)

This session will explore the representations of disability and impairment in the fourteenth century, especially within *Piers Plowman* or related texts. Langland reveals the fourteenth century's ambivalent and multifaceted attitude toward disability and impairment. Characters in the poem often treat disabled figures with either love or skepticism. On one hand, those who are too infirm to work are excused from the demands of labor, and are deemed worthy of charity and God's love. On the other, there are "faitours" who readily assume the guise of impairment in order to deceive and evade the duty to work. Will himself is interrogated by Reason in the C-Text about his inability to work, and he cites his own embodied difference, being too tall, as a justification.

This session invites papers that examine disability in medieval literature from a variety of methodological approaches. Are there different representations of disability across the versions of *Piers Plowman*? How do representations of disability in the poem intersect with legal, theological, or social concerns in the fourteenth century? How do writers contemporary to Langland treat disability? What is the role of physical, cognitive, or somatic impairment in the poem? How can we put the poem into conversation with Disability Studies? How does a consideration of disability in *Piers Plowman* reorient or contribute to current work on Langland? To medieval Disability Studies?

17. New Directions in Middle English Alliterative Poetics

Organizer: Mike Rodman Jones, University of Nottingham
(mike.rodmanjones@nottingham.ac.uk)

Whilst studies of Middle English alliterative poetry have been enriched by continuing interest in matters such as textual history and historicist and ethical criticism of various kinds, this panel seeks to explore how more “formal” approaches (broadly conceived) to this writing might continue to offer insights.

In the past, a rich tradition of scholarship on, for example, word play, rhetoric, metrics, and vocabulary have all benefited the wider readership of alliterative poetry. What shape might the formal investigation of Middle English poetry take now, alongside (or interacting with) other critical traditions? Might the wider interest in “new formalist” approaches to Literature have some significance for the study of such texts?

This panel seeks papers with a focus on (but not exclusive to): studies of particular tropes, metaphors, and images in *Piers Plowman* and its contexts; the place of formalism more generally in the field of late medieval literary studies; linking or comparing Langlandian writing with the wider corpus of Middle English writing or alliterative poetry more specifically.

18. Voice

Organizers: Katharine Breen, Northwestern University (khbreen@northwestern.edu); Tekla Bude, Oregon State University (tekla.bude@oregonstate.edu); and Adin Lears, SUNY-Oswego (adin.lears@oswego.edu)

The term “voice” is an integral part of literary criticism, yet it is simultaneously fraught and necessarily inchoate. For Aristotle, voice refers to a sound made by a being with a soul; in Donatus' *Ars grammatica*, voice is linked to (il)legibility; for Barthes, voice is that which escapes language and registers the presence of the body.

This panel asks how Langland studies can contribute to this conceptual history of the voice and vice versa. What does it mean for Langland to give voice to abstract faculties of mind, to social institutions, and more? How does doing so contribute to the embodiment and/or animacy of these entities and how does this embodying or incarnational impulse suit Langland's poetic and ethical project? How does voice distinguish itself from sound in the poem, as for example the singing of birds or the babbling of a brook? What are we to make of instances where the boundaries of speeches are ambiguous, or shift, or when a speech is reassigned from one character to another? To what extent does “Langland” have an authorial voice, either distinct from or overlapping those of his characters? What about the poem itself? What do these voices sound like? What can Langland's voices tell us more broadly about medieval theories of language and knowledge, hierarchies of intelligence, and/or the material circumstances of reading in the Middle Ages? Panelists are invited to respond to some, all, or none of these questions.

19. Crowdsourcing Crowley

Organizer: Lawrence Warner, King's College London (lawrence.warner@kcl.ac.uk)

This session is perfect for those who want to go to the conference but just don't have some amazing argument to present. It asks you to find your closest Crowley or Rogers edition and report back in the form of a short “lightning” talk. That's it. It's almost guaranteed there is one near you: over 200 are known to survive, and they're in collections across the States and UK, yes, but also in Australia, Japan, France. (Working list at <https://langlandinsydney.blogspot.com/2018/08/a-census-of-crowley-and-rogers-editions.html> ; there are undoubtedly others out there which it would be great to bring to light.) Among the weird things about Langland scholarship is the idea that the era between 1550 and 1814 was desolate

since there were no editions. Nope: those hundreds of copies were being read a lot. But only a few have been discussed (e.g. at the IPPS in Seattle conference by Spencer Strub). What annotations are there? Who owned this stuff? Any hidden copies on vellum out there? Is your local copy a combination of different editions, or does it perhaps have variant quires?