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THE BLUE KING AND THE POWER OF WATER IN GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

Thursday 6 February | 4:45 - 6:15

Voorhies 126, UC Davis

The Book of the Duchess begins with storm, shipwreck, and revenant - the body of drowned King Ceyx is taken from the seafloor to speak with Queen Alcyone. This talk will argue that this aquatic beginning disrupts the text's aspirationally anthropocentric preoccupations and puts the power of water at the beginning of Chaucer's poetic making. In Chaucer's poem we find a late fourteenth century conception of water as agentic, omnipresent, and estrangingly active on human bodies. Ceyx, the drowned king subject to inanimate forces, is a "Blue King" who provides us with a watery counterpart to the terrestrial Green Knight.