

ENGLAND

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PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The following excerpt from Alice Miskimin's *THE RENAISSANCE CHAUCER* (New Haven and London, 1975) still supplies an apt epigraph for a survey of recent research in the literature of the English 15th century:

Few have entered the labyrinth of literary history between 1400 and 1600, and fewer still have emerged able to say what they saw. The phenomenon of metamorphosis takes place, but no one has yet fully understood and described how (p. 14).

The term "labyrinth" as applied to scholarship on 15th-century literature is by no means a metaphorical exaggeration. It describes rather faithfully the nature of the venture that is in store for the scholar daring enough to chart an overall survey. There is as yet no thread of Ariadne and I shall not be able to supply one. Nearly all generalizations concerning the period in question are highly controversial.

At the 15th-Century Symposium held at Regensburg in 1982, Derek Pearsall of York stressed the innovative character of the period, and Otto Gründler its clinging to traditional ways and values, while Charles Moorman regarded

inflexibility and stagnation as the main criteria of the epoch. All plenary speakers congratulated the organiser on not having resorted to the outdated formula of "The Waning of the Middle Ages," but they had even less sympathy for the motto we had actually chosen: "The Turning of the Tide." Professor Bosl of Munich argued trenchantly that the tide did not turn before the 18th century. We have to face the fact that the 15th century is still uncharted territory, not because it is unknown, but because so many explorers have drawn divergent maps. A generally accepted synopsis is not yet in sight.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY FOR ENGLISH STUDIES

And yet there is no need to give up all hope of coming to generally valid conclusions. Even a quantitative survey of research on English literature of the Middle Ages yields interesting results. According to the MLA ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY the number of publications on the 15th century has doubled since 1964. Items concerned with this period have no longer been listed separately since 1972, but they are quite conspicuous anyway (See Table).

It is clear that the overall number of publications on things medieval has not grown at the same rate as works on the 15th century. This means that the 15th century - a period undervalued during the last decades - has now become a focal point of English medieval studies. Derek S. Brewer (Cambridge) is convinced that the topical interest in the 15th century is due to a kind of "elective affinity". In other words, the explanation lies in the character of the epoch and its appeal to the modern mind. During the 15th century reality becomes a problem for the poets; fancy and imagination gain more prominence. The homologic-mimetic theory of literature is superseded by a complex perception of reality.

The sheer bulk of works on all kinds of 15th-century literature precludes an adequate assessment of the secondary literature on the subject. In preparing this survey, I have collected and classified 1430 individual titles - but of course I have not read them all. In order to avoid too much subjectivity, I have made extensive use of reviews, drawing upon some fifteen better known scholarly publications - among them SPECULUM, MODERN PHILOLOGY, MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES, PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, MODERN LANGUAGE REVIEW, ARCHIV FÜR DAS STUDIUM DER NEUEREN SPRACHEN UND LITERATUREN. And yet the overall picture which emerges, if at all, will be highly subjective in the end, due to both the criteria of selection, and the perspective of the reviews consulted.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES, CONCORDANCES

New and important works have appeared on nearly all fields of medieval research, and through them older standard works have become outdated. This is true of the NEW CAMBRIDGE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, and of course, of the MANUAL OF THE WRITINGS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH. The latter now includes a voluminous section on the 15th century. The last volume to appear was the one on ballads, carols and poetry of John Lydgate.

George Watson, ed., THE NEW CAMBRIDGE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE (Cambridge, 1972-74), 4 vols;

J. Burke Severs, A MANUAL OF THE WRITINGS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH, 1050-1500 (New Haven, Connecticut, 1967- 80), 6 vols.

A new publication with the title MEDIEVAL STUDIES presents a general annotated reference bibliography to the major collections and sources, as well as to the secondary literature. The work is ordered systematically and will be particularly useful for students in interdisciplinary

programs.

Everett V. Crosby, C. Julian Bishko and Robert L. Kellogg, eds., *MEDIEVAL STUDIES: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE* (New York, 1983)

It has been doubted whether the extension of subject matter and minor byways is really a benefit for the scholar. In respect to the *MANUAL* there is a good deal of criticism on the practice of categorization. Derek Pearsall (*MEDIUM AEVUM*, 43 [1974], 88) says of Vol. III, Chapter VII "Dialogues, Debates and Catechisms" by Francis Lee Utley:

Utley, in addition to including the 15th century material, zealously expands the range of his given genre, offering 76 headings and 183 distinct pieces, where Wells had 16 and 34 respectively.

In general Pearsall criticises the highly specialized and therefore useless and at times even absurd subdivisions. Others have complained of the lack of completeness in recent scholarship, as for instance Anne Hudson (Review of Vol. II in *MEDIUM AEVUM*, 43 [1974], 200).

The new Wells is a prime illustration of the predicament of the medievalist. The individual spheres of research have become so diversified and highly developed that even the specialist has difficulty in subdividing, systematizing and ordering his materials. He thus presents the reader with oversophisticated systems and subdivisions which bar easy survey. And nonetheless, the objective critic must admit that the new Wells is the most important bibliographical instrument for English students working on medieval literature. It makes all further bibliographies easily accessible. Therefore they do not need special mention here. The only exception I would make is Neil Ker's series *MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS IN BRITISH LIBRARIES*, a comprehensive collection and inventory of ill-catalogued medieval manuscripts in British libraries. Ker died in August 1982, after having finished the third volume, beginning with Lampeter and ending with Oxford. A. G. Watson promises in

the Preface to this volume that the series will be completed as intended and organized by Ker himself. It would be sad indeed if this admirable monument of scholarship were to remain incomplete.

Several concordances have appeared, among them Michael J. Preston's *CONCORDANCE TO THE MIDDLE ENGLISH SHORTER POEMS* (1975). The textual basis consists of ten recognised anthologies, such as those of Carleton Brown, Rossell Hope Robbins, R. L. Greene and G. L. Brook. This limitation of the texts is more than deplorable. Douglas Gray points out that many religious lyrics published in the earlier volumes of the Early English Text Society cannot be found in the anthologies, and, what is worse, the scholar must turn elsewhere for the lyrics of Lydgate, Henryson, Dunbar and Kennedy (Review in *MEDIUM AEVUM*, 48 [1979], 307). Moreover there is not the slightest cross-referencing, which makes the work all but useless for the ordinary student. Preston has also published several other concordances to medieval works such as pageants, cycles and morality plays:

A COMPLETE CONCORDANCE TO THE WAKEFIELD PAGEANTS IN THE TOWNLEY CYCLE, (Ann Arbor, 1977);

A CONCORDANCE TO FOUR 'MORAL' PLAYS: 'THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE', 'WISDOM', 'MANKIND', AND 'EVERYMAN' (Ann Arbor, 1975);

A CONCORDANCE TO THE 'DIGBY PLAYS' (1977); with Jean D. Pfleiderer;

A KWIC CONCORDANCE TO THE PLAYS OF THE WAKEFIELD MASTER (New York, 1982).

There are also several titles on paleography and the editing of Middle English manuscripts. Charles Moorman has written such a book for beginners: *Charles Moorman, EDITING THE MIDDLE ENGLISH MANUSCRIPT* (Jackson, Mississippi, 1975). But Gerritsen, E. T. Donaldson and Pamela Gradon have serious doubts as to the usefulness of such a work.¹ The volume edited by A. G. Rigg, *EDITING MEDIEVAL TEXTS, ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND LATIN WRITTEN IN ENGLAND* (Toronto,

1977), was better received. It is a great help for those unfamiliar with the fine points of editing techniques.

OVERVIEWS OF THE PERIOD

Particularly useful and important for researchers and students are, of course, the overviews of the period. Several well-known literary histories have appeared in revised form, and with an enlarged chapter on the 15th century. This is true of W. F. Schirmer's *HISTORY OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE* (Tübingen, 1983) and of *EUROPÄISCHES SPÄTMITTELALTER*, ed. Willi Erzgräber (Wiesbaden, 1978), Vol. 8 of the *NEUES HANDBUCH DER LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT*, ed. Klaus von See. Derek Pearsall has presented us with a masterly history of *OLD ENGLISH AND MIDDLE ENGLISH POETRY* (London, 1977). The chapter on the 15th century belongs to the most instructive and most original sections of the book. Moreover it is eminently readable. Fred C. Robinson praises Pearsall's style, which achieves "at times an almost epigrammatic trenchancy" (*MODERN LANGUAGE REVIEW*, 76 [1981], 654).

At least as readable as Pearsall's history is Derek S. Brewer's *ENGLISH GOTHIC LITERATURE* (London, 1983). Brewer's book differs from other histories of the period insofar as it demands no specialist knowledge. It describes outstanding examples of texts, transmitting to the reader a direct feeling of actual medieval literary works.

Similar in approach and tendency, but on a lower level of scholarship and style, are dozens of introductions to medieval literature and overviews of the period. A great many of them aim at popularising this subject at the cost of sound scholarship and reliability. The same is true of text editions directed at "an intelligent but unformed readership." This is how John Burrow describes the target audience of his anthology *ENGLISH VERSE 1300-1500* (London, 1977).

Purely literary studies of late medieval literature seem to be increasingly superseded or even replaced by interdisciplinary treatments. This is a tendency which can be seen in all centers of medieval studies. In most cases this can only be accomplished through collaborative cooperation, which means that a specific problem is approached from the perspectives of several disciplines and, of course, by several researchers. This is true of Stephen Medcalf's collection, *THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE: THE LATER MIDDLE AGES* (London, 1981). It applies also to C. T. Allmand, ed., *WAR, LITERATURE AND POLITICS IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES* (Liverpool, 1976) and to Jennifer Brown, ed., *SCOTTISH SOCIETY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY* (New York, 1977). The latter volume contains an interesting paper on Scottish literature of the period.

Perhaps it can be said that the necessity of an inter-disciplinary approach and method is generally felt and voiced, but that for obvious reasons interdisciplinarity has either been teamwork or wishful thinking. There are evidently only very few scholars with a firm footing in two or more disciplines. The interdisciplinary lone wolf is thus in danger of failing to reach the standard of both disciplines, if there are two, and even worse, of erring unduly if there are three or more. Thus A.S.G. Edwards (in *SPECULUM*, 49 [1974], 373) says on Scattergood's *POLITICS AND POETRY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY* (New York, 1972) that "... it falls sadly between two stools: it has little to say that has not already been made known to the student of history and it does nothing to assist the student of literary history." The theory of interdisciplinarity has yet to be written.

Relatively many publications do not claim to be interdisciplinary, but analyze their subject against the foil of its socio-historical background. In such cases, history is only an ancillary subject which contributes useful knowledge on the historical premises and

contingencies of the literary work. Thus, John Burrow has submitted a volume on MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE AND ITS BACKGROUND, 1100-1500: MEDIEVAL WRITERS AND THEIR WORK (Oxford, 1982) and another volume called ESSAYS ON MEDIEVAL LITERATURE (Oxford, 1984). Burrow stresses the "otherness" of medieval literature, particularly the differences concerning the notion of literature, the circumstances under which it was produced and the specific meanings to be found in it.

More limited in scope but very rewarding and useful is A.C. Spearing's book on MEDIEVAL DREAM POETRY (Cambridge, 1976). In spite of its vague theoretical framework combining Freud, Jung and Macrobius, the book will be regarded as a standard work on a very important type of medieval English literature. The same is true of T. Turville-Petre's book on THE ALLITERATIVE REVIVAL (1977) which is particularly relevant for research on the 15th century. Turville-Petre demonstrates that the impetus of alliterative literature waned in England during the 15th century, but that the Scots took it up after 1450 and that they produced interesting alliterative works with a distinctively Scottish flavour. Mention should also be made of two recent volumes of essays edited by Paul Szarmach and David A. Lawton with a similar emphasis: Bernard S. Levy and Paul B. Szarmach, THE ALLITERATIVE TRADITION IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY (Kent, Ohio, 1981), and David Lawton, ed., MIDDLE ENGLISH ALLITERATIVE POETRY AND ITS LITERARY BACKGROUND (Cambridge, 1982).

There are several other accounts of "the great age of Scottish poetry," some restricted to particular authors, others to specific problems such as politics and poetry, style and rhetoric and Scottish attitudes to poetry, most notably R. J. Lyall, "Politics and Poetry in 15th-and 16th-Century Scotland," SCOTTISH LITERARY JOURNAL, 3/4 (1976/77), 5-29; Ian Jamieson, "Some Attitudes to Poetry in Late 15th-Century Scotland," STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE,

15 (1980), 28-42; A.M. Kinghorn, "Death and the 'Makars': 'Timor Mortis' in Scottish Poetry to 1600," *ENGLISH STUDIES*, 60 (1979), 2-13; Adam J. Aitkin, Matthew P. McDiarmid and Derick S. Thomson, eds., *BARDS AND 'MAKARS': SCOTTISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE* (Glasgow, 1977). The strong moralising character of this kind of poetry is generally stressed.

MEDIEVAL DRAMA

No other genre has marked the physiognomy of the 15th century to the same degree as drama: mystery plays, moralities and interludes. This fact is clearly mirrored in the wealth of secondary literature. The state of research is nearly impossible to summarize. Only a few exemplary tendencies can be sketched here.

First of all mention must be made of Glynn Wickham, who has published a number of smaller articles in diverse periodicals, but whose longer works are most worthy of note: *THE MEDIEVAL THEATRE* (1974), *EARLY ENGLISH STAGES 1300-1660: PLAYS AND THEIR MAKERS TO 1576* 3 vols. (1959-81), as well as his edition of *ENGLISH MORAL INTERLUDES* (1976). Criticism of these three works has been rather ambivalent. *EARLY ENGLISH STAGES* has generally been regarded as a pioneering work which breaks new ground. *THE MEDIEVAL THEATRE* has been suspected of "potboilerism" (See review by Alan H. Nelson in *MEDIUM AEVUM*, 45 [1976], 223-26). *ENGLISH MORAL INTERLUDES*, finally, is a very helpful edition for the student audience, for which it is obviously designed. Wickham is, however, according to all standards, one of the leading professional scholars in the field of medieval drama and theatre.

Equally important, and in certain chapters even more useful, is Stanley Kahrl's book on *TRADITIONS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLISH DRAMA* (London, 1974). Kahrl is clearly abreast of modern scholarship and has also a certain intuition or

feeling for medieval plays as theatre. I have recommended this book to my students as the most reliable work on medieval drama.

On the narrower field of moralities Robert Potter must be regarded as an authority. Potter is himself a skilled playwright, which explains his tendency to interpret the printed text only in conjunction with its function as theatre and thus with a view to actual historical performances and their conditioning influences (See Potter, *THE ENGLISH MORALITY PLAY: ORIGINS, HISTORY AND INFLUENCE OF A DRAMATIC TRADITION* [London, 1975]).

The tendency to take functional aspects into consideration is also recognisable in William Tydeman's *THE THEATRE IN THE MIDDLE AGES: WESTERN EUROPEAN STAGE CONDITIONS, c. 800-1576* (1978). His account of theatre resources is perhaps a bit too self-contained and not closely enough connected with the analysis of text and function (cf. the review by D. Mills in *REVIEW OF ENGLISH STUDIES*, 31 [1980], 328-30). And yet this book is a readable introduction for the "non-specialist reader."

One weak point of works such as this is that they do not clearly distinguish between the introductory-level material designed for non-professionals, and those highly specialized problems of research which are only meaningful for experts in the field. Thus John Gardner's work, *THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WAKEFIELD CYCLE* (Carbondale, 1974) is explicitly designed for the "generalist, people whose chief concern is aesthetic," and yet he painstakingly analyses research problems connected with the Wakefield canon. Introductory and revisionist tendencies stand side by side and in each other's way (See the review by D.P. Poteet, II, in *JOURNAL OF ENGLISH AND GERMANIC PHILOLOGY*, 74 [1975], 572-74).

More clearly focused upon aesthetic problems is Richard J. Collier's *POETRY AND DRAMA IN THE YORK CORPUS CHRISTI PLAY* (Hamden, 1978). Collier establishes poetry as the most crucial element of the drama's effectiveness (See the

review by David Staines in *SPECULUM*, 54 [1979], 789-90).

Alan H. Nelson is more interested in factual and historical conditions of medieval performances. In his work *THE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH STAGE: CORPUS CHRISTI PAGEANTS AND PLAYS* (Chicago, 1974), he baffles his reader with the truly revolutionary thesis that the York Cycle was played at only one site, and was not mounted on pageant wagons. A true processional production with free advances was not possible at York within the limits of a day, so he maintains (cf. the review by G. C. Britton in *NOTES AND QUERIES*, 22 [1975], 416-18). The reviews have wavered between reservation and rejection. "It (this book) will surely engender long and serious debate," says Richard Beadle in *MEDIUM AEVUM*, 45 (1976), 350. Michael R. Kelley takes the reception theory as his point of departure. His book *FLAMBOYANT DRAMA: A STUDY OF 'THE CASTLE OF PERSEVERANCE', 'MANKIND', AND 'WISDOM'* (1979) tries to demonstrate a premeditated design in the three plays under scrutiny. But it has been questioned whether this design is really as elaborate as Kelly has argued (For example, by D.C. Baker in *ENGLISH LANGUAGE NOTES*, 17 [1980], 208-09).

The International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo) and the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo) have also contributed important works on medieval English drama. The point of emphasis was apparently the relation between art history and the history of drama. The following titles should be mentioned:

Clifford Davidson, *DRAMA AND ART: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE USE OF EVIDENCE FROM THE VISUAL ARTS FOR THE STUDY OF EARLY DRAMA* (Kalamazoo, 1977);

Patrick J. Collins, *THE N-TOWN PLAYS AND MEDIEVAL PICTURE CYCLES* (Kalamazoo, 1979);

Sally-Beth MacLean, *CHESTER ART: A SUBJECT LIST OF EXTANT AND LOST ART, INCLUDING ITEMS RELEVANT TO EARLY DRAMA* (Kalamazoo, 1982).

ARTHURIAN LITERATURE AND ROMANCE, INCLUDING MALORY

An account of research on Arthurian literature would fill volumes. 15th-century English Studies in Germany have contributed numerous publications on the Arthurian romances. More and more of them are being published in English, as for instance Dieter Mehl's book on the romances, *THE MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES OF THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES* (London, 1968).

The flood of secondary literature on Sir Thomas Malory has grown quite overwhelming. This is due to the fact that Malory's work has been translated and edited by scholars from every country imaginable from Hungary to Japan. It has been paraphrased, condensed, retold and made into children's books, as well as forming the basis for several films. Derek Brewer comments:

The reason for the English-speaking world's continuing interest in Arthurian romances is surely due to Malory, the pivot, or bridge, in this respect, between the old and new.²

The number of monographs on the subject is impressive. Nearly every year of our given period new and valuable works have appeared. I can only name the most important ones here:

Tomomi Kato, *A CONCORDANCE TO THE WORKS OF SIR THOMAS MALORY* (Tokyo, 1974);

Mark Lambert, *MALORY: STYLE AND VISION IN 'LE MORTE DARTHUR'*, Yale Studies in English 186 (New Haven and London, 1975);

Larry D. Benson, *MALORY'S 'MORTE DARTHUR'* (Cambridge, 1976);

Bert Dillon, *A MALORY HANDBOOK* (London, 1978);
Richard Barber, ed., *ARTHURIAN LITERATURE*, I (Woodbridge, 1981);

Kunio Nakajima, *STUDIES IN THE LANGUAGE OF SIR THOMAS MALORY* (Tokyo, 1981).

Several editions and facsimile editions have appeared:

James W. Spisak and William Matthews, eds., **MALORY: A NEW EDITION OF 'LE MORTE DARTHUR' BASED ON THE PIERPONT MORGAN COPY OF WILLIAM CAXTON'S EDITION OF 1485**, 2 vols. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1983);

Eugene Vinaver, ed., **KING ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS: SELECTED TALES** (London, 1975);

Paul Needham, ed., **'LE MORTE DARTHUR' PRINTED BY WILLIAM CAXTON, 1485**, Facsimile of Pierpont Morgan Library Copy (London, 1976);

N. R. Ker, ed., **THE WINCHESTER MALORY: A FACSIMILE**. Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series 4 (London, 1976);

P. J. C. Field, ed., **'LE MORTE D'ARTHUR': THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH TALES** (London, 1978);

Dan Grigorescu, ed., **MOARTEA REGELUI ARTHUR. LE MORTE DARTHUR** (Bucharest, 1979), 5 Vols;

Michael Senior, ed., **SIR THOMAS MALORY'S TALES OF KING ARTHUR**, abridged (London, 1980).

Articles in periodicals, "Festschrift"- anthologies and dissertations on Malory raise insurmountable difficulties for the reviewer. Nearly every aspect of Malory's achievement has been diligently scrutinized: style and language, sources and their treatment, narrative structure and method, sequence, Malory's women, his Arthur, his symbols, his "Englishness," his chivalric ethos - and last not least, Malory's Holy Grail. A complete view of the material is difficult, an evaluation impossible.

The verse romances of the 15th century have received comparatively little critical attention. Several authors have pointed out that the great age of the verse romance is the 14th century. But paradoxical as it may seem, it is the 15th century which is "the great age of 14th-century romance ... Widespread copying of the old romances combined with paucity of new composition suggest that the demand for popular romance was still strong but was mostly satisfied by variations on a few favourite models" (thus Derek Pearsall in "The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century," **ESSAYS AND STUDIES** 29 [1976], 58-60).

The question, however, of a definition of romance, is even today far from clear. Recent articles by such scholars as Pearsall, Fisher, Brewer and Finlayson have brought us a step further in this direction. Brewer lists a number of characteristics of medieval romance as opposed to the modern novel (Derek Brewer, "The Nature of Romance," *POETICA* [TOKYO], 9 [1978], 9-48). Finlayson distinguishes between the romance and medieval heroic poetry by establishing different attitudes towards their respective subject matter. Romances are directed at an audience which imitates their social superiors, "but, as with most social climbers, they mistake the manners of their superiors" (John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance," *THE CHAUCER REVIEW*, 15 [1980], 178).

Several publications deal with particular aspects of romance literature, as for instance narrative structures (Susan Wittig, *STYLISTIC AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES* [London, 1978]). The effects of oral transmission on the romance have been analyzed several times. Ballads and carols have also been studied in this regard.

Doctoral dissertations on the romances mainly feature aspects of content and motif. Formulaic phrases have been collected and listed, and there is a great deal of literature on mythological problems, folklore, humour, Jungian archetypes, the supernatural and the main characters. In the latter case there are evident preferences for certain figures; Guinevere, for instance, looms large in the lists.

CHIVALRY AND WARFARE IN LITERATURE

One major tendency in medieval studies has been the increased attention to the effects of changing political and mental attitudes on literature. A number of publications have found new notes of ironic criticism of a decadent and

outdated chivalric practice. Others have concentrated on the growth of anti-war sentiments and understanding for the innocent victims of both warfare and social corruption.

Literary scholars should be aware of the progress made by historians in specialized studies of knighthood and warfare. Recent attempts to present a synthesis of that research have appeared during the last five years - above all, Maurice Keen, *CHIVALRY* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1984).

Courtly love has also become a controversial topic, though the novelty of the question whether there ever was something like courtly love has gradually given way to more serious scholarly discussion of the subject; see Joan M. Ferrante, George D. Economou et al., eds., *IN PURSUIT OF PERFECTION: COURTLY LOVE IN MEDIEVAL LITERATURE* (London, 1975).

LYRIC POETRY

There are relatively few publications on late medieval English lyrics. Some hitherto unpublished poems have been edited by:

Edward Wilson, "Two Unpublished Fifteenth-Century Poems from Lincoln College, Oxford, MS. Lat. 141," *NOTES AND QUERIES*, 27 (1980), 20-26;

Siegfried Wenzel, "Unrecorded English Verses," *ANGLIA*, 92 (1974), 55-78.

Several anthologies have appeared, most of them only supplementing the standard editions. Two of them deserve mention:

Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L. Hoffman, eds., *MIDDLE ENGLISH LYRICS: AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS; CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS; PERSPECTIVES ON SIX POEMS* (New York, 1975);

Douglas Gray, *A SELECTION OF RELIGIOUS LYRICS* (Oxford, 1975).

WOMEN'S STUDIES

A popular new subject is the role of women in medieval literature. One can even say a fundamentally new kind of approach has been created which can be called Women's Studies. This field of research is based on the conviction that medieval literature was generally written by men and from a male perspective. The presentation of women has thus been distorted or falsified by male prejudice. In addition reception, tradition and literary canons were always part of the male prerogative. The result is that late medieval literature has been viewed from a very one-sided perspective. Women writers, such as Christine of Pisa, who was widely read in England, have been neglected and underestimated. But now aspects of women's life, marriage and married life, the education of children and the erudition of women have become important and promising objects of research.

Secondary literature on the subject is easily accessible through excellent bibliographies. The best of them, in my opinion, is Linda Frey, Marsha Frey and Joanne Schneider, *WOMEN IN WESTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY* (Brighton, 1982). This book is systematically subdivided, and thus easy to use. About a hundred items on women in the 15th century are listed. Also extremely useful is the "Working Bibliography" by Carolly Erickson and Kathleen Cagey entitled "Women in the Middle Ages," *MEDIEVAL STUDIES*, 37 (1975), 340-59.

For my graduate seminar on *LOVE, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND* I have collected about 50 titles dealing with women, their problems and their literature. Of course I am absolutely aware of the fact that, since none of us shares the heuristic resources of Tiresias or Virginia Woolf's Orlando, we can only approach this subject as man or woman. If I try to evaluate the evidence objectively I must say that works on this topic written by women are valuable in proportion to the emotional distance and detachment their

authors can muster. Many feminist approaches project 20th-century problems and perspectives into the Middle Ages; they are therefore worse than useless, they are outright misleading.

There are excellent studies on feminist concerns in scholarly magazines, such as the JOURNAL OF POPULAR CULTURE. Particular praise is due to Angela M. Lucas for her book, WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE AGES (Brighton, 1983).

THE INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS

Clearly no cursory survey can do complete justice to all the most recent research on the major 15th-century authors. In the next several pages I can only provide what I hope will in general be adequate points of departure.

On Robert Henryson there are numerous recent works. The best critical edition of the COMPLETE WORKS appeared in Oxford University Press, in 1981 (Denton Fox, ed., THE POEMS OF ROBERT HENRYSON), after selections and reprints had appeared in 1971, 1973, and 1974; Charles Elliott, ed., ROBERT HENRYSON: POEMS, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1974); G. Chalmer, ed., 'ROBENE AND MAKYNE' AND 'THE TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID' (Edinburgh, 1824; rpt. New York, 1971); and Duncan Stewart, ed., MORAL FABILIS (Edinburgh, 1823; rpt. New York, 1973)]. Monographs on Henryson have been written by M.P. McDiarmid and Robert L. Kindrick (McDiarmid, ROBERT HENRYSON, Scottish Writers Series [Edinburgh, 1981]; Kindrick, ROBERT HENRYSON, Twayne's English Authors Series [Boston, 1979]). There are many articles on Henryson's TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID, which is definitely the author's best-known work. That it is, at the same time, his best work has been doubted by J.A.W. Bennett, who ranks the FABLES much higher (See "Henryson's TESTAMENT: A Flawed Masterpiece," SCOTTISH LITERARY JOURNAL, 1/1 [1974], 5-16).

The second Scottish Chaucerian, William Dunbar, has generated increasing interest. James Kinsley's edition of

the entire works appeared in Oxford University Press as *THE POEMS OF WILLIAM DUNBAR* (1979). There is also a monograph on this author by Edmund Reiss, *WILLIAM DUNBAR* (Boston, 1979). Several articles deal with the problem of the genre of individual poems, sources and their treatment, rhetoric and imagery.

In the case of Gavin Douglas, less has been done. There is only one modern monography by Priscilla Bawcutt, *GAVIN DOUGLAS: A CRITICAL STUDY* (Edinburgh, 1976). But there are quite a few articles in journals, nearly all of them on Douglas's *ENEID*.

Also the *KINGIS QUAIR* by James I has not yet found the critical regard it evidently deserves. The dependence upon Boethius and Chaucer has often been noted, but the syncretistic method of James in regard to Fortune and human fate are still awaiting appreciation (Walter Schoeps, "Chaucerian Synthesis: The Art of *THE KINGIS QUAIR*," *STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE*, 8 [1971], 143-65; William Quinn, "Memory and the Matrix of Unity in *THE KINGIS QUAIR*," *CHAUCEER REVIEW*, 15 [1981], 322-55; Vincent Carretta, "*THE KINGIS QUAIR* and *THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY*," *STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE*, 16 [1981], 14-28).

John Lydgate, however, has evidently passed the zenith of his scholarly appeal. The great Lydgate monographs of Walter F. Schirmer, Alain Renoir, and Derek Pearsall have not found a successor. Some *LIVES* have been edited separately (J. E. van der Westhuizen, ed., *THE LIFE OF SAINT ALBAN AND SAINT AMPHIBAL* [Leiden, 1974]). A new, profusely illustrated manuscript of *THE LIVES OF STS. EDMUND AND FREMUND* has been discovered and printed (Kathleen L. Scott, "Lydgate's *LIVES OF SAINTS EDMUND AND FREMUND*: A Newly-Located Manuscript in Arundel Castle," *VIATOR*, 13 [1982], 335-366). Some well-known motifs of Lydgate, as for instance his Goddess Fortune or the stellification of King Arthur, have been reassessed (Richard A. Dwyer, "Arthur's Stellification in the *FALL OF PRINCES*," *PHILOLOGICAL*

QUARTERLY, 57 [1978], 155-71; Tamotsu Kurose, GODDESS FORTUNE IN JOHN LYDGATE [Tokyo, 1980]).

As for Hoccleve, Audley, Capgrave and John Mirk, there are biographical and background studies, as well as linguistic and stylistic approaches.

The use of manuscripts as a source of knowledge is a subject of increasing scholarly interest, most of all if there are several manuscripts of the same work (Derek Pearsall, "Chaucer and the Modern Reader: A Question of Approach," DUTCH QUARTERLY REVIEW OF ANGLO-AMERICAN LETTERS, 11/4 [1981], 258-266).

There has been a kind of revival of interest in William Caxton, due to the quincentenary of English printing. Norman F. Blake has produced three important books on Caxton: CAXTON AND HIS WORLD (London, 1969); N. F. Blake, ed., CAXTON'S OWN PROSE (London, 1973); and CAXTON: ENGLAND'S FIRST PUBLISHER (London, 1976), as well as a number of editions and several scholarly articles.

Margery Kempe has aroused new interest because she was a woman, and an illiterate one at that. Critics have tried to find out to what extent her book is her own composition and what credit must be given her amanuenses; see A. Goodman, "The Piety of John Brunham's Daughter of Lynn," in Derek Baker, ed., MEDIEVAL WOMEN (Oxford, 1978). For rather similar reasons, the PASTON LETTERS have generated new critical interest, both in and outside women's studies. Bennett's famous book THE PASTONS AND THEIR ENGLAND (Cambridge, 1968) has been reprinted several times.

Historical and background studies of the ballads and carols which may date to the 15th century are still in their infancy. In several anthologies and also in the new MANUAL, ballads are attributed to the 15th century or are being the printed together with 15th-century poetry. The question of the poetic origins of the ballad has been sadly neglected. There is as good as nothing on the late medieval ballad. Later popular ballads and broadsides have drawn much more

attention.

Let me end my grand tour with a personal statement. There are many scholars in English studies who entertain doubts as to the usefulness and sense of highly condensed summaries of research. If my summary helps even one scholar avoid retracing the steps - or the wanderings - of his or her precursors, then in my view the trip has been eminently worth making. I am full of respect and admiration for the organisers and for the work which is done in Kalamazoo, and I think it is marvellous that so many medievalists from all over the world come here to exchange views on their common subject, which is European culture, civilisation and literature. It is a link across the Atlantic which can make us aware of our common heritage, and our common responsibility.

NOTES

¹See reviews in *English Studies*, 58 (1977), 449-5; *Modern Philology*, 77 (1979/80), 84-6; *Medium Aevum*, 45 (1976), 372-3.

²Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer, eds., *Aspects of Malory, Arthurian Studies*, 1 (Cambridge, 1981), p. 1.

TABLE

PUBLICATIONS LISTED IN THE MLA ANNUAL BIBLIOGRAPHY BETWEEN 1964 and 1982:

	Middle English Non-15th Century	15th Century	Middle English Total
1964	315	60	375
1965	334	54	388
1966	386	69	455
1967	344	68	412
1968	344	80	424
1969	335	74	409
1970	360	74	434
1971	407	97	504
1972	424	125	549
1973*			597
1974		124	593
1975			517
1976		147	575
1977			457
1978			532
1979		114	504
1980			734
1981		136	672
1982			

*From 1973 on 15th-century titles were no longer listed separately. The listed publication rates thereafter are based on estimates.

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GERMANY

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PERIODIZATION

The periodization of literature is at best a questionable undertaking. A national literature is a continuum, even though its different genres are born, flourish, and wilt on their own and independently of each other. Dividing the course of a literature by centuries is truly a Procrustean affair, because arbitrary boundaries sever not only unified movements but even the uninterrupted output of individual poets. If our dear Lord had chosen to be born fifty years earlier or fifty years later, we would have been given a different set of epochs, which, by chance, would have better suited late-medieval German literature. The century from 1350 to 1450 could conceivably be considered a unit, the period from Ockham to Gutenberg, both of whom drastically influenced German literature; but at neither end could the boundaries be closed.

PREVIOUS STAND DER FORSCHUNG

Five years ago at the Sixth International Germanistic Congress at Basel I called the German literature of the 15th Century a "Scarcely Cultivated Field" [1]. At that time