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An annotated critical bibliography for five of the 15th-century English Chaucerians : Thomas Hoccleve, John Lydgate, George Ashby, Thomas Norton, and Stephen Hawes

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Description

This dissertation offers a comprehensive annotated bibliography of the main Englishlanguage critical references, from the earliest times to about 1999, regarding five 15th-century poets. Annotations are drawn almost exclusively from articles and books. A Note on the Annotations (x-xiii) details the selection criteria. My intention is to give informed readers enough detail, albeit in the form of concise notes, to know whether the original critical material is likely to be of use to them. I...[\[Show more\]](#) have included an index to the critics. For the published version, I will also prepare a general index (my work is intended to be the basis of a volume in the series of critical bibliographies published by D.S. Brewer under the general editorship of Dr T.L. Burton). The five poets of the bibliography are the most significant of that group often referred to as the 15th-century English Chaucerians. In the past, '15th-century English Chaucerian' has frequently meant little more than 'bad poet' and it has, just as frequently, introduced discussions that have paid scant attention to the diversity of the poets concerned. I note in my introduction, however, that criticism is now investing this old label with a new and positive meaning. Each of my poets worked in a tradition of which Chaucer was a part, and, with the exception of Ashby, produced works that had a considerable readership in the late Middle Ages. All of these poets, except Norton, have a notable place in the current discussion of English cultural and political life in the 15th century. In this discussion, Hoccleve and Lydgate attract by far the most attention. I have included criticism for Norton's Ordinal of Alchemy for several reasons, even though the Ordinal attracts little critical interest. It is the principal English alchemical text of its period, and so reminds us of the existence of a tradition that is outside the courtly or middle-class concerns of the other poets of the bibliography; the extent of its printing history shows it to be a prominent 15th-century poem that warrants attention; it has flashes of wit that genuinely recall Chaucer; and it shows an engagement with European culture that is characteristic of the English Chaucerian tradition. Bokenham is probably the most significant of my omitted authors, but he is to be included in another volume of the Brewer series edited by Laurel Means. My introduction offers an overview of the significant features of the critical record: I discuss Hoccleve and Lydgate in parallel as their history has many points in common; then I consider Ashby, Norton, and Hawes. Nearly 1400 annotations, arranged chronologically by poet, and an index to the critics, complete the dissertation.

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