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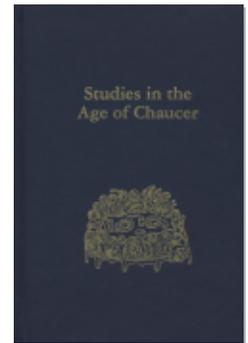
*The Language of the Chaucer Tradition* by Simon Horobin  
(review)

John H. Fisher

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one of the book's strengths is its depth of historical/cultural research. Her methodology is extensive and connective to the point of headiness, informed by Foucault and psychoanalytic, postcolonial, and gender theories. Her methodology resists the literary encapsulation of an organized reading, choosing rather to disperse the text as she constellates its historical and cultural indexes. One of Heng's most suggestive claims concerns medieval concepts of race, which she extrapolates from a reading of *The King of Tars*, and which she sees as a concept with cultural power in its own right. It is not simply a secondary function of religion; she argues that it deploys morally valenced physical attributes based in whiteness and blackness, but it also demonstrates lability and cultural performativity across different contexts.

Geraldine Heng's study of romance mingles conceptual acrobatics and deep research: fearless and provocative, a gestural display in an area of medieval studies that tends to the minute and insular. Whether or not you agree with her methodology or are convinced by all of her arguments, Heng's scholarship and sweep are admirable. This is a must-read for scholars interested in new ways of thinking about the diversity and cultural reach of medieval romance.

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SIMON HOROBIN. *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003. Pp. vi, 179. \$75.00.

Simon Horobin's study of the language of the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* is characterized principally by its deliberate diminution of the part played by Chancery in standardizing English at the beginning of the fifteenth century. He follows M. L. Samuels's 1963 identification of four written standards that distinguish between the language of Chaucer and other literary manuscripts (Type III) and government and commercial documents (Type IV), which after 1430 Samuels calls "Chancery Standard." Horobin's treatment is deliberate because the books and articles in which I have advanced the influence of Chancery are cited in his bibliography but never referred to in his text. Anent bibliography, it may be noted that the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (LALME).

to which Horobin frequently refers, is not included in his bibliography or in any note that provides bibliographical information. It is edited in four volumes by Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin (Aberdeen University Press, 1986).

The problem with Samuels's classification is that we know that at least one of the scribes that he and Horobin included in Class III, Thomas Hoccleve, was, like Chaucer himself, a government clerk. It is hard to believe that the other scribes who wrote literary manuscripts were not also writers of government and business documents. The few manuscripts that Horobin chooses to focus on would not have been enough to support a scribe. Literary scribes must have done commercial work as well and, if so, the dozen or so words on which Samuels and Horobin base their distinction of Types III and IV are less convincing. Henry IV and especially Henry V shifted Chancery and Privy Seal from Latin and French toward English. The stationers and guilds followed suite, and a tradition of writing in English, both commercial and literary, came into being.

Assisted by the continuing progress of P. M. W. Robinson's *Canterbury Tales* Project, which is producing computer transcripts of all the Chaucer manuscripts, looking forward to computer collation to produce a history of the texts, Horobin has made exhaustive counts of the spellings and grammatical forms of some twelve to fifteen words, especially in the Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts. On pages 74–75, where he lists the presence or absence of Type IV (Chancery) forms of five words in Chaucer manuscripts between 1400 and 1500, Horobin concludes that chronology was the most significant factor in determining the presence of Type IV forms. Actually, it was the growing influence of Chancery models and training that helped to regularize writing. The forms that Horobin has cited with reasonable accuracy should be viewed against the background of Chancery practice. At the end of Fisher and Richardson's *An Anthology of Chancery English*, which Horobin cites but does not use, we have a glossary of the forms in the manuscripts. It lists the number of times each spelling appears in each government office and in the other writs in the PRO collections (we too composed by computer, which made the statistics available). It is interesting to see how often the favorite forms for the words in the glossary are the forms that have come down to us in Modern English. Chancery established the favorite forms early on. Against some sort of background like this,

Horobin's comparisons would have a context. They should not be treated as scribal idiosyncrasies but as aspects of a developing tradition.

Horobin's study represents careful work, but I have noted a few differences. On page 51, *MI* I.3654 should be *GP*. On page 53, *GP* I.77, *Hg come* should be *comen*; *GP* I. 651, *Hg excuse* should be *excusen* and *El excusen* should be *excuse*. On page 103, *El* I.67 and *El* I. 1016, *his* should be *hise*. On page 110, *WB* 268, *some* should be *som*. On page 116, *ender* of my lyf should be *endere*. The final e's are flourishes in the manuscripts, but transcribed as *e* in the *Variorum Wife of Bath*. Also on page 116, in the *And neer* quotation, line 805 is lacking. Horobin page 30 has only *th* (*þ them*) forms for the obj. 3rd pl. The Anthology glossary has 121 *th* (*them*) forms, but 150 *h* (*hem*) forms. Horobin page 32 gives *though* as the IV form; the glossary has *though* two times, *Pow* two times, *thowe* once, *thof* three times. Horobin page 44–46 discusses *ayein* as a Chaucerian form; the Anthology has *ay* 67 times, *aȝ* 22 times, *ag* 23 times.

Horobin's study was very interesting to me for comparison with the Chancery material. But it offers little real information about Chaucer's language because it treats the forms in isolation, as if they sprang spontaneously from the inclination of the scribe. Against a broader background these, comparisons would be more meaningful.

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JACQUELINE JENKINS and KATHERINE J. LEWIS, eds. *St. Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*. *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* 8. Turnhout: Brepols, 2003. Pp. xi, 257. \$84.00.

This collection of essays, which is focused on medieval devotion to Saint Katherine, continues an important line of inquiry that has developed in the study of medieval hagiography: the ways in which saints' cults were constituted not just by medieval hagiographers but also by devotees of all social classes and educational backgrounds. One significant result of this approach is that researchers are demonstrating that there was no simple transmission of clerical text to lay audience in the medieval period. Indeed, the relationship between those who read and wrote hagio-