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Thomas Hoccleve: Selected Poems ed. by Bernard O' Donoghue
(review)

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interested in costume “in an antiquarian way” (p. 44): “Because Annas and Caiaphas are called ‘bishops,’ that does not imply they are contemporary English bishops” (p. 45).

It is a pity that a slim collection of essays so interesting to students should be so expensive and so poorly overseen in production. The repeat printing of a plate (pp. 69, 137) was caught by after-sales service. Not so the footnote numbering on p. 48, the repetition of “gold¹³” on p. 89, and the omission of the words *blood or* from the English translation of the stage directions from the Lucerne Passion (p. 84). More careful editing could have insisted on more glossing of the Middle English (e.g., *bey*, p. 99; *Amys mans*, p. 102) and have introduced more cross reference between articles.

Much of current research on medieval English drama is concerned to recover conditions of performance. Slowly and surely an entirely new perspective is opening on the aesthetics and acting style of Middle English plays. Yet there is still an urgent need for more and more fully annotated scholarly editions of plays. Cawley’s edition of 1952, notwithstanding the fields near Bethlehem, remains exemplary in its attention to text. There is also a need to stimulate and inform intelligent theatrical experiment. Teachers and students and actors have a duty to prevent repetition of the misguided and tedious spectacle that was presented at the York Festival as “the York Mystery Plays, 1984.”

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BERNARD O’DONAGHUE, ed. *Thomas Hoccleve: Selected Poems*. London: Carcanet New Press; Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, 1982. Pp. 104. £3.25, \$7.00.

Thomas Hoccleve has long been recognized for his background contributions to Chaucerian studies, but it is only in our own generation that he is also slowly gaining a modest, but good, reputation of his own as a unique poet. This clerk of the Privy Seal Office and a minor poet deserves a better scholarly and reading following than he has had. I am pleased that the past

twenty years have been positive ones for Hoccleve students, and I predict that Hoccleve's rather low reputation will soon be turned around.

Bernard O'Donoghue's book is the latest contribution to a twentieth-century renaissance of positive scholarly attention to Chaucer's younger contemporary, the minor but fascinating and charming poet Thomas Hoccleve (ca. 1368–1426). The ongoing Hoccleve renaissance seems to have started with Jerome Mitchell's *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century English Poetic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968) and to have continued with the revised reprint of *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems* (ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz, rev. Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, EETS, nos. 61, 73 [1892, 1925; reprint in one vol., London: Oxford University Press, 1970]) and the reprint of *Hoccleve's Works: The Regement of Princes and Fourteen Minor Poems* (ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS, no. 72 [London, 1897; reprint, Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1973]). However, the Hoccleve renaissance really appears to be in a high phase today, first with the appearance of M. C. Seymour's edition of *Selections from Hoccleve* ([Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981]; see the review by Jerome Mitchell, *Speculum* 58[1983]:477–478) and with the appearance of O'Donoghue's selected edition here under review.

In his introduction (pp. 7–18) O'Donoghue discusses (1) the few really positive estimates of Hoccleve's reputation from William Browne in 1614 to Jerome Mitchell in 1968 and Ian Robinson in 1971 (*Chaucer's Prosody*, pp. 190–99), (2) Hoccleve's interest for the modern reader mainly because "he can arrest the reader's interest" (p. 11) and because he "evokes in an interesting way the circumstances of the unremarkable life of a man in his time" (p. 12), (3) a brief summary of responses to Hoccleve's language and style with emphasis on the apparent difficulties with the meter, and (4) O'Donoghue's interest in Hoccleve's autobiographical passages as an important editorial basis for choosing many of the selections.

This volume contains nine selections newly and carefully edited from the best (often holograph) manuscripts: *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint*, *The Dialogue with a Friend* (a selection of 64 stanzas with omitted stanzas paraphrased), *La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve*, *Balade to my Gracious Lord of York*, *Ad Beatam Virginem*, *To the Duke of Bedford*, *Balade and Rowndel to Somer*, *Three Roundels*, and *The Regement of Princes* (107 stanzas selected from the whole poem with omissions paraphrased).

There is judicious marginal glossing of "hard words," and the volume concludes with four pages of helpful textual-explanatory notes and a bibliography containing fifteen basic items in four groupings: editions,

anthologies containing selections from Hoccleve, criticism and background information, and articles.

Bernard O'Donoghue (a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford) has prepared a really good selection from Hoccleve's poems, and Carcanet Press has produced a book in relatively inexpensive yet pleasing format that will be available and useful to advanced undergraduates and graduates who want a positive, competent, and accurate introduction to Hoccleve the poet and to one of Chaucer's most charming, interesting, talkative, revealing, and informative contemporaries.

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DEREK PEARSALL, ed. *The Nun's Priest's Tale. A Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Vol. 2, The Canterbury Tales, Part 9.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984. Pp. xxviii, 284. \$42.50.

Since this volume forms part of the Variorum Edition of Chaucer, it naturally exhibits the virtues and shortcomings of the project as a whole. The volume contains an introduction which is mainly devoted to previous scholarship, particularly that dealing with critical interpretation and textual scholarship. There is a Table of Correspondence among certain early manuscripts together with a description of those manuscripts and modern editions. The text itself is based on Hengwrt, though the apparatus criticus records variants from a limited number of manuscripts and from printed editions. There are copious notes to the text, which is followed by bibliographical and general indices. A question that inevitably presents itself with a volume like this is: What is a variorum edition trying to achieve which is different from other editions? One answer would surely be to present a picture of the way in which the text has been transformed and edited since it was written. In fact this is not achieved. The edition concentrates on the establishment of Chaucer's text to the disregard of many fifteenth-century versions. Only a few early manuscripts are dealt with, and even major additions and omissions which occur in later manuscripts are not recorded in the apparatus criticus. Considerable attention is