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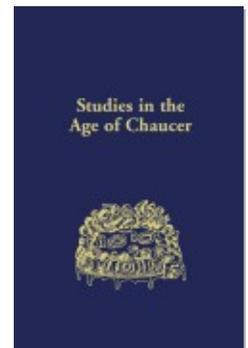
*Manuscript Pepys 2006: a Facsimile, Magdalene College,
Cambridge* by A. S. G. Edwards (review)

George R. Keiser

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understanding that tradition are only first steps toward understanding the poem. Dronke does not refer to these studies in his notes.

Dronke's reminder that there can be many critical approaches to the poem is a salutary one. For that reminder readers of his book can be grateful. Perhaps a more pointed way of saying the same thing is that more interaction between American and British schools of Dante criticism might prove fruitful. Dronke's study embodies this both by what it says and by what it leaves out.

RONALD B. HERZMAN
SUNY – Geneseo

A. S. G. EDWARDS, intro. *Manuscript Pepys 2006: a Facsimile, Magdalene College, Cambridge*. The Facsimile Series of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, vol. 6. Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1985. Pp. xxxii, 418. \$144.00.

Whereas the nineteenth-century Chaucer Society provided transcripts of many of the major Chaucer manuscripts, its twentieth-century successor, the New Chaucer Society, is exploiting newer technologies to provide very desirable facsimiles of several of the more important manuscripts. The latest of these is a volume comprised of two late-fifteenth-century manuscripts of "Pieces of Chaucer," as described by the early cataloguer of the library which the irrepressible diarist and man-of-affairs Samuel Pepys bequeathed to Magdalene College, Cambridge.

Neither of these manuscripts, apparently joined before Pepys acquired the volume, enjoys distinction as a textual authority, except in one instance, the unique version of *Merciless Beaute* preserved in the second manuscript. In the first manuscript are preserved fragmentary texts of *The Legend of Good Women*, *The House of Fame*, *An ABC*, *The Complaint of Mars*, *The Complaint of Venus*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, a complete text of *Fortune*, and several non-Chaucerian works, including three by Lydgate (*The Complaint of the Black Knight*, *The Temple of Glas*, and *The Serpent of Division*), *The Three Kings of Cologne*, and Benedict Burgh's *Cato Major* and *Cato Minor*. The second manuscript in the volume is exclusively Chaucerian, with texts of *The Tale of Melibee*, *The Parson's Prologue and Tale*, *Chaucer's Retraction*, *The Complaint of Mars*, *The Complaint of*

Venus, Anelida and Arcite, Fortune, The Envoy to Scogan, An ABC, The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse, Truth, and (as mentioned) *Merciless Beaute*; of the verse only *Scogan, Purse*, and (apparently) the unique *Merciless Beaute* are complete.

The introduction to the facsimile by A. S. G. Edwards, like those of its predecessors in the series, is spare and lean, the work of a competent and knowledgeable scholar, who provides a description of the contents and separate sections treating date, material and structure, ruling, layout and presentation of texts, handwriting, punctuation, correction and annotation, decoration, binding, and the history of the volume. To keep the introduction spare and lean and the volume reasonably priced, only a summary discussion of these topics was possible, with the result that it breaks less new ground than Edwards would probably have desired. An exception is the discussion of handwriting, which presents a fuller and more authoritative palaeographical analysis than has hitherto been done. (In view of the economics, inclusion of the final lines of each text in the description of the contents seems prodigal, especially since many of the endings are atelous, none of the works is of uncertain identity, and the original texts are, after all, just a few pages away.)

The treatment of ruling and decoration is particularly valuable because of the lack of color in the facsimile and apparent variations in the photographic reproduction, but it does leave some unanswered questions. If the writing area is 205–10 × 110–50 mm and the leaves 270 × 180 mm, the very thin margins evident in the facsimile suggest that it does not reproduce the leaves fully. If so, we understand why the description of item 5 contains a heading not visible in the facsimile and why Edwards refers tentatively to *apparent* cropping by an early binder, when the lost tops of initials on pages 270–78 would otherwise leave no doubt that the volume was cropped. This problem may arise from exigencies imposed by the need to photograph Pepys MSS in situ, as may the apparent variations in the quality of the facsimile, the second part being much sharper (even wire lines in the paper are visible) and more easily readable than the first. In any case, an explanation and a reassurance that marginalia have not been lost would have been welcome.

Somewhat perplexing is the treatment of watermarks, especially those in the second manuscript. Identification is necessarily a problem because, the paper having been folded in quarto fashion, the watermarks occur in the middle of the spine fold. Almost inevitably, then, half of a mark will appear on one leaf and the other half on the conjugate leaf. By not clarifying that point, Edwards leaves it to the reader to realize that the

marks he describes as “ascenders” are surely only half of the complete watermark (indeed, what he identifies as “a five-pronged ascender” in leaves containing the *Melibee* may be only the upper portion of what Manly and Rickert tentatively identified as a mark resembling Briquet 14238, 14239, or 14244, the lower portion of which may be the watermark Edwards saw in pp. 239–40, which he identifies separately as “possibly a *tête de boeuf*”).

Perhaps the least satisfying part of the introduction is the treatment of early ownership of the second manuscript in the volume, which does not proceed much beyond previously established information concerning the lives, careers, and families of the John Kyriel and William Fetypace whose names are inscribed in this manuscript. It is particularly disappointing to have to settle for a second-hand report of the 1464 will of the London draper John Fetplace; according to Manly and Rickert, the will names a son, William, who came of age in 1475.

The early history of this volume is interesting because, as Edwards observes, the two manuscripts “seem clearly aimed at an audience very different from the courtly, sophisticated ones generally postulated for such [related] Chaucer anthologies as Fairfax 16 or Tanner 346.” More specifically, the second manuscript in the volume is, so far as I know, a rare instance of a Chaucer manuscript owned by both a member of the gentry and a merchant. The former may be the John Kyriel of London who was a prisoner in France for twenty-five years, according to a 1482–83 will recorded in the Close Rolls—or perhaps his bastard son John. Possibly, as Ethel Seaton believed, the original owner was the elder John’s brother, the Thomas Kyriel described in the public record as the king’s knight, captain at Gourney and Gysours, and lieutenant at Calais, whose public service brought him into contact with Sir John Fortescue, Richard Wydevyle of Rivers, and a Thomas Caxton and who was executed at Saint Albans in 1461.

The 1464 will of John Fetplace deserves scrutiny for any clue about a possible connection between his family and the Kyriels, not altogether unlikely if he is the John Fetiplace who served in the household of Margaret of Anjou in 1452–53. Further, it might indicate a relation with either or both of the two provincial families of the same name. One of these was a powerful merchant family in Southampton (a Walter Fetiplace served as mayor of Southampton at various times during the period 1430–65); the other was a gentry family with branches in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, the latter having associations with Thomas Chaucer in the 1430s. From a fuller exploration of such connections may come insights into the literary inter-

ests of the middle classes and the circulation of Chaucer's writings among them.

Nevertheless, for Edwards's able synthesis of earlier work on the volume, and his several contributions to it, we must be very grateful. Gratitude is due also to Paul Ruggiers, the general editor of a facsimile series that is providing means and encouragement for the further study of the text and readership of Chaucer's writings and allowing all teachers of Chaucer to bring their students much closer to his writings as they were known to their medieval readers.

GEORGE R. KEISER
Kansas State University

JUDITH FERSTER. *Chaucer on Interpretation*. Cambridge, London, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Pp. x, 194. \$29.95.

At first sight the title of Judith Ferster's book comes as a surprise. One would expect something like *The Interpretation of Chaucer*, that is, a reversal of the subject-object relationship, because we are used to pronouncing our critical opinions on Chaucer's works, often claiming, of course, to present the author's true and original meaning reconstructed from a careful analysis of his cultural context. Hence a book which interprets the meaning of contextuality in a dialectic sense, i.e., the interdependence of text and interpreter, runs counter to the traditional author-text-reader models of interrelation in which the reader interprets but is not interpreted by the texts or tries to discover the final and absolute meaning of a given work.

Judith Ferster's approach to Chaucer, his works, and his audience is based on the principles of phenomenological hermeneutics as formulated mainly in the works of Gadamer and Ricoeur. These principles — to the extent that they are useful for interpreting Chaucer — are identified as follows: (1) the subjectivity of the interpreter; (2) the alterity or otherness of the work he confronts; (3) the influence of tradition on the interpreter's prejudgment, a tradition including the very text he is reading; (4) the resulting hermeneutical cycle of subject-object relationship; (5) the act of interpretation resulting in a process of self-discovery; and (6) interpretation as a never-ending process (pp. 12–13). With these methodological principles established, she proceeds with her dialectical interpretation of five Chaucerian