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978-0-521-86355-1 - Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt

Robert J. Meyer-Lee

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## POETS AND POWER FROM CHAUCER TO WYATT

In the early fifteenth century, English poets responded to a changed climate of patronage, instituted by Henry IV and successor monarchs, by inventing a new tradition of public and elite poetry. Following Chaucer and others, Hoccleve and Lydgate brought to English verse a new style and subject matter to write about their king, nation, and themselves, and their innovations influenced a continuous line of poets running through and beyond Wyatt. A crucial aspect of this new tradition is its development of ideas and practices associated with the role of poet laureate. Robert J. Meyer-Lee examines the nature and significance of this tradition as it develops from the fourteenth century to Tudor times, tracing its evolution from one author to the next. This study illuminates the relationships between poets and political power and makes plain the tremendous impact this verse has had on the shape of English literary culture.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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*For my family:  
Elaine, Gabriel, Jackson, and Lucas*

## *Contents*

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Notes on citations</i>	xi
Introduction: Laureates and beggars	i
PART I BACKGROUNDS	13
1 Laureate Poetics	15
PART II THE FIRST LANCASTRIAN POETS	43
2 John Lydgate: The Invention of the English Laureate	49
3 Thomas Hoccleve: Beggar Laureate	88
PART III FROM LANCASTER TO EARLY TUDOR	125
4 Lydgateanism	131
5 The Trace of Lydgate: Stephen Hawes, Alexander Barclay, and John Skelton	174
Epilogue: Sir Thomas Wyatt: Anti-laureate	220
<i>Notes</i>	233
<i>Works cited</i>	278
<i>Index</i>	293

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978-0-521-86355-1 - Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Robert J. Meyer-Lee  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

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“Lydgate’s Laureate Pose,” in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. James Simpson and Larry Scanlon, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006. © 2006 University of Notre Dame.

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## *Notes on citations*

All citations of the works of Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.

Citations of Lydgate's poetry are from the following editions:

*The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Part I: The Religious Poems*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, EETS o.s. 107, London: Oxford University Press, 1911, referenced as MP I.

*The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Part II: The Secular Poems*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, EETS o.s. 192, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, referenced as MP II.

*Poems*, ed. John Norton-Smith, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.

*A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady*, ed. Joseph A. Lauritis, Ralph A. Klinefelter, and Vernon F. Gallagher, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University, 1961.

*Siege of Thebes*, ed. Axel Erdmann and Eilert Ekwall, EETS e.s. 118, 125, London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1911, 1930.

*Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e.s. 97, 103, 106, 126, London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1906/1935.

*The Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e.s. 121–24, London: Oxford University Press, 1923/27.

Citations of Hoccleve's poetry are from the following editions:

*Thomas Hoccleve: The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999.

*Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. J. A. Burrow, EETS o.s. 313, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

*"My Compleinte" and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001, for all poems besides the *Regiment*, *Complaint*, and *Dialogue*.

All verse, except where noted, is cited by line number and, where appropriate, book or fragment. Editorial diacritics, emendation

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-86355-1 - Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt  
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 Frontmatter  
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brackets, and indications of expansion are not reproduced, and I have at times modified or added punctuation.

The following abbreviations are used:

*Biobib* for Pearsall, Derek, *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-bibliography*, Victoria: University of Victoria, 1997.

EEBO for *Early English Books Online*, Ann Arbor: Bell & Howell Information and Learning, 1999–.

EETS o.s. for Early English Text Society, original series.

EETS e.s. for Early English Text Society, extra series.

MED for Kurath, Hans, Kuhn, Sherman M., and Lewis, R. E. (eds.), *A Middle English Dictionary*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952–2001.

STC for Pollard, Alfred W., et al., *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, 2nd edn, London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–1991.

*ThomasH* for Burrow, J. A., *Thomas Hoccleve*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994.

Except where noted, translations are my own.