

concludes it is the definitive guide to the *Menexenus* that the back cover promises, there is something here for everyone who wants to think critically about the dialogue and its problems.

PETER A. O'CONNELL
The University of Georgia

Robert R. Edwards, *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England* (Interventions: New Studies in Medieval Culture), Columbus: The Ohio State Press, 2017. 230 pp. ISBN 9780814213407

It is a philological distinction commonly invoked by historians of rhetoric that invention, rhetoric's first and arguably foremost canon, has something of a double meaning. The Latin *invenire* can mean "to find" or "to come upon," or it can mean "to create" or "to contrive." In *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England*, Robert Edwards shows how medieval authors invented (in both senses of the term) authorial identities that worked within accepted traditions of literary production and interpretation, and also sometimes questioned or subverted those traditions, showing that "authorship is at once rhetorical and literary, historical and poetic" (xi). Yet, while Edwards observes that rhetorical theory was an important element of literary production and of identification with distinct traditions, the relationship between the literary, the rhetorical, and distinct models of authorship remains comparatively underexplored. The result is a deep and compelling literary analysis of canonical English authors such as Marie de France, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, but a somewhat incomplete discussion of the intersection of rhetoric and poetics in English literary culture. This incompleteness, however, should not dissuade the prospective reader from engaging with this text.

Edwards' deep knowledge of classical and medieval culture is evident throughout all of the chapters of *Invention and Authorship in Medieval England*. Indeed, the relationship of each literary figure to classical and vernacular traditions is of paramount concern to Edwards, as he notes that "the agency . . . working in medieval English texts consciously foregrounds the decision to write within traditions and conventions" (xv), meaning that authors only achieve *authorship* by "consciously placing themselves through their works within the interpretive structure of a literary system" (xvi). Each chapter, then, endeavors to place each literary figure within such a literary system. Chapter 2, for instance, demonstrates how Marie de France "exercises agency to revise her received materials [e.g. primarily those of Ovid] from popular and learned sources and to create a hybrid classicism in which she operates as a counterpart and conscious alternative to a Latin *auctor*" (34). In general, Edwards' claims in regard to such systems are well-defended; for instance, he thoroughly defends his assertion that "in Ovid's

erotodidactic poems . . . Marie finds a topic and conceptual frame for invention and authorship rather than rhetorical adornment and learned allusion" (40). This assessment is itself valuable, as it counters common readings of Marie (and indeed, many other medieval authors) that reduce their receptions and appropriations of classical literary culture to derivative borrowings, as Edwards himself observes (39). Likewise, Edwards' discussion of Gower and his use of elements of scribal and textual culture—such as the *accessus*, prologues, paratexts, and others (63–104)—is well-supported and fascinating.

Yet, some other chapters, such as the section on Chaucer, do not fully account for the potential influence of contemporary theories of rhetoric and poetics that would have been instrumental for defining attitudes toward literary authorship. This omission is striking, first, because Edwards observes the connections between literary authorship and rhetoric in the introductory chapters of his text, and second, because his incorporation of scholarship by historians of rhetoric such as Rita Copeland and James J. Murphy suggests a knowledge of this sub-field and how it may have influenced English literary attitudes. For example, while Edwards observes that Chaucer is associated with a catalogue of works by his contemporaries, as well as that these works are largely "generated through forms of poetic imitation," (110) it was surprising to see that he made little connection to the tradition of the medieval *artes poetriae* (aside from a reference in a footnote citing Murphy, which mentioned Geoffrey of Vinsauf and Matthew of Vendôme). Arguably these *artes* represent an early example of the codification of contemporary medieval poets such as Alan of Lille as exemplars and models of imitation, representing a break from earlier modes of authorship and composition that tended to elevate only ancient poets to the status of worthy exemplars. Moreover, Chaucer's connection to such texts, especially the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, is a common topic of scholarly debate, especially in rhetorical studies. Such a shift in authorial identification should clearly be of interest when seeking to explore the inventions of Chaucer and Gower, as these texts may have influenced their attitudes toward authorship.

Some reference to the *artes poetriae* and more contemporary scholarship in the history of rhetoric would also have been welcomed in the later discussion of Chaucer's use of imitation and "speaking after a man" in the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* (137). Edwards notes that Chaucer employs style as a "distinguishing habit of expression that allows us to reach judgments about characters and what they say," an approach to character delineation that "reflects theories of imitation developed in classical antiquity" (136). Here, Edwards refers to a Horatian and Ciceronian tradition of self-consistent characterization and expression, one that finds clear medieval expression in the rhetorical-poetic treatises of Matthew of Vendôme and his contemporaries in the School of Orleans, as well as in the *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf and later treatises such as the anonymous *Tria sunt*. Greater attention to these texts may have revealed unaddressed parallels or ruptures in Chaucer's approach to characterization and authorship within the frame-narrative of the *Canterbury Tales*.

All in all, however, the omission of scholarship addressing the *artes poetriae* and other elements of the rhetorical culture of the medieval period is more a quibble than a complaint. Indeed, Edwards has crafted an excellent study of the varied approaches to English literary authorship over several centuries. While the historian of rhetoric may find in the text gaps they wish to see addressed, perhaps it is best to treat these, as Edwards states, as occasions for authorship, as “a rhetorical topic of invention” that enables and facilitates composition (xxx). From this perspective, Edwards’ work is rich and generative, well worth one’s time and attention.

JORDAN LOVERIDGE
Mount St. Mary’s University