Article Preview:


Recent studies of the enigmatic early Tudor poet John Skelton have emphasized the search for patronage as the primary motivating force behind many or most of the poet's works. In this important and significant new book Jane Griffiths demonstrates convincingly that Skelton's own search for literary authority shaped his written output to an equal or even greater extent than his need for patronage. Searching for legitimating authority that could empower his satirical and didactic agenda, Skelton shifted his interest across his career among the titles of Orator Regius and Poet Laureate as well as the role of vates, or divine spokesman. At the same time, Skelton found ingenious ways to ground his poetic voice...
imaginative audience. Skelton is frequently treated as a maverick, but this book places his theory and practice firmly in the context of later sixteenth as well as 15th-century traditions. The result is a highly idiosyncratic poetics that locates the poet's authority decisively within his own person, yet at the same time predicates his 'liberty to speak' upon the existence of an engaged, imaginative audience. Skelton is frequently treated as a maverick, but this book places his theory and practice firmly in the context of later sixteenth as well as fifteenth-century traditions. Focusing on his relations with both past and present readers, it reassess his place in the English literary canon.