very well worth reading. It is passionately sincere, richly informative, and always stimulating.

Balliol College

Oxford

A. V. C. SCHMIDT


The *Legend of Good Women* may be one of the less loved of Chaucer’s major works, but it is not among the less studied. In the last fifty years more than half a dozen monographs and essay collections have been devoted to the *Legend*, most recently a 2017 special issue of *Chaucer Review*. Carolyn P. Collette’s compact but rich *Rethinking Chaucer’s Legend of Good Women* is a commendable addition to this field and an apposite successor to her 2006 edited collection *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*. Although the *Legend’s* creative texture, intertextuality, gender politics, representation of emotion, and reception have been much considered, Collette’s monograph is the first squarely to refute Thomas R. Lounsbury’s characterization of the *Legend*, in his *Studies in Chaucer* (1892), as evidence of Chaucer’s subservience to those ‘essentially vicious … and therefore transitory’ tastes of his time. Collette decisively repudiates such a reductive view of this mid-career work by reading the *Legend*, treated here as a fully realized work whose survival is fragmentary, in light of several synchronic cultural and intellectual contexts. She thereby recuperates the poem’s serious participation in a cosmopolitan, proto-humanist late medieval literary culture which ensured it a respected position in Chaucer’s *œuvre* and positions it for recognition today – in a case the book as a whole advances – as ‘a central text in the development of a major writer’s work’ (p. 2).

The five chapters cover an ambitious amount of territory: bibliophilia and the early English humanism of Richard de Bury and his circle; contemporaneous compilations of exemplary female narratives in Latin, Italian, French, and English; Aristotelian conceptions of ‘social and political virtue’ (pp. 77ff.) as mediated by Nicole Oresme’s glossed translation of the *Ethics*; broad thematic continuities between *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Legend*; and various foundations laid in the *Legend* for a new comic paradigm in *Canterbury Tales*. Because these chapters are largely self-contained and generously expository, this book will be especially valuable for advanced students navigating the poem and its cultural contexts. Seasoned scholars will find much of value here, too, though they will perhaps wish for less summary of Chaucerian core texts and more integration of the
(excellent) contextual and primary readings. The first three chapters scrupulously delineate pertinent intellectual contexts but weave these only minimally into analysis of the Legend itself. Quite separately, the last two chapters address fundamental coordinates of the Legend’s textual status, critical history, and thematic constitution. The readings here, which emphasize Chaucer’s ethical seriousness and his sympathy for women’s experience, are sensitive and frequently incisive, although it is perhaps inevitable for the aim of remediation to result in the occasionally imbalanced claim (for example, that the difference between Troilus and the Legend is mainly a matter of formal style, pp. 121–34). Boldly eschewing the rather Balkanized terrain of critical controversy on the Legend in favour of a sympathetic, catholic approach that listens in an open-minded spirit to what the poem actually says, this book runs the risk of eliding complications arising from the history of scholarship. For instance, in choosing not to pursue how the Legend alters and appropriates its classical sources, a dynamic that has been essential to ironic readings, Collette’s analysis of the legends as fully conceived units with clear ideological investments may not convince the sceptical reader. However, the collective strength of this book’s analyses far outweighs this methodological demurral. Collette’s generous attention to the poem in light of its lateral affiliations results in numerous fresh insights into a phenomenon rarely imagined by critics but quite possibly appreciated by Chaucer’s early audience: a mature, three-dimensional Legend of Good Women with a reputable place in Chaucer’s poetics and in au courant late medieval society.

Florida State University, Tallahassee, Fla

JAMIE C. FUMO


The central thesis of this study is that the medieval English translation of the Vulgate Bible (in two distinct versions, the earlier closer to the Latin), while still customarily called ‘Wycliffite’ or indeed ‘Lollard’, ought at best to be dubbed ‘Wycliffian’. The translation is orthodox, probably influenced and assimilated by, but not a partisan product of the heretical movement, and it was not in fact condemned by Arundel in 1407. Certainly a complete proscription has never tied in with the extraordinarily large numbers of surviving manuscripts (though it was not printed). We have of course come a long way from Foxe’s assertion that Wyclif himself translated the Bible like ‘the sun breaking forth in a dark night’, and views such as those of David Daniell (The Bible in English (New Haven, Conn., 2003), p. 69), that Wyclif may have had very little to do with