repeats material from the introduction and seems primarily aimed at an undergraduate audience that is not otherwise the obvious readership for such a book.

There follows a chapter on *St Erkenwald*, which, via a discussion of its ‘sacramental speech’ (p. 71), argues that the poem is an orthodox and anti-Wycliffite polemic; chapters 4 and 5 shift to Hoccleve and the *Confessio Amantis* respectively, before a brief conclusion considers the ‘Wycliffite’ Chaucer conjured up out of the ‘Plowman’s Tale’. It is with Hoccleve, in particular, that the book’s central theme begins to go out of focus and the enterprise comes to appear more like the conventional kind of historicism recently dominant in discussion of very late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century poetry, so that, for example, Hoccleve’s economic discourse is examined. The theme of the spoken word, certainly, is never far away. But what long narrative poem *isn’t*, at some level, interested in the spoken word? The theme does not always work here as the conclusive thread that joins these otherwise somewhat loosely related, if always interesting, meditations on late medieval English poetry.

University of Manchester

DAVID MATTHEWS


This book has two major aims: the initial one is to give the first ever discussion of the reception and translations of Geoffrey Chaucer’s works in Denmark from the late eighteenth century to the present time. Then, by analysing these translations and the history of Chaucer studies in Denmark, Ebbe Klitgård provides an illuminating study of English studies in Denmark as a whole and in particular the way in which the emphasis on a particular English author reflects changes in Danish attitudes to the culture and literature of the English-speaking world.

The story begins with the first translations which came at the time the British were bombing Copenhagen in the Napoleonic Wars. This too was the time when Thorkelin was preparing the first ever edition of *Beowulf*, yet understandably there was strong anti-English feeling. This changes later in the nineteenth century when there is tension between Germany and Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein and authors such as Grundtvig turn their allegiance west to England for support. As often is the case, it takes a charismatic teacher to stimulate interest in a subject and Thomas Christopher Bruun, who translated Pope’s version of the Wife of Bath’s Tale, was such a man. Another figure of great influence was Otto Jespersen (1860–1943), who followed in the footsteps of another great linguist, Rasmus Rask. Jespersen was amongst the first to write about a wide range of Chaucer’s works in *Chaucers Liv og Digtning* (Chaucer’s Life and Poetry), based on his knowledge of Chaucerian scholarship abroad. Being a linguist it is not surprising that he produced excellent translations.
With the close commercial relations between England and Denmark in the early twentieth century, English became a compulsory subject at school and hence interest in English literature increased. Klitgård sympathetically treats the Danish translations by Møller and Birkedal as pioneers of Chaucerian translation and scholarship, while concentrating on the monumental work in 1925 by a student of Jespersen, Age Brusendorff, The Chaucer Tradition. Brusendorff was the first Dane to examine Chaucer's manuscripts in depth and to establish a canon of Chaucer's works, he was thus able to correct some of Skeat's work on the canon, thereby making a major contribution to international Chaucerian scholarship. After him, there were no significant Chaucer scholars in Denmark until some fifty years later, although there were translations of part of Chaucer's works by Niels Møller, Flemming Bergsøe, Lis Thorbjørnsen, and Jørgen Sonne. During the occupation of Denmark in the Second World War English books were hard to come by, but when hostilities were over, there was a great welcoming of everything anglophone. However, medieval English was taught at university level purely as part of historical linguistics, affording little chance to enjoy Chaucerian literature. Since the 1950s, when Mogens Boisen and Borge Johansen made partial translations of The Canterbury Tales, there have been no other translations; indeed Troilus and Criseyde has never been translated into Danish. In a country where 60 per cent of fiction translated into Danish is from English, it seems surprising that Chaucer has apparently been neglected. One explanation is that Danes who are interested in medieval English are highly competent in English and so will read modern English translations. Yet in this period there have been five translations of Beowulf – maybe because of this work's Danish content. Klitgård estimates that there are only three lecturers (himself included) in Danish universities who teach Chaucer today.

This study is extremely important for many reasons, not least for demonstrating the complex story of cultural change in Denmark since the late eighteenth century. Such studies of literary translation and reception are invaluable for an understanding of the changing cultural ties between the countries in question. Klitgård has made a sensitive and brilliant contribution to our appreciation of the links between Denmark and the English-speaking world.

Glasgow

Graham D. Caie


The prolific fifteenth-century Benedictine writer John Lydgate (d. c.1449) was celebrated both in his own lifetime and in the decades following his death – his 'sugared lips' and 'angel-mouth' earning him a place alongside Chaucer and Gower in the English literary triumvirate – but his reputation was firmly eclipsed in the mid-sixteenth century. Recent years have seen this darkness lift as growing numbers of critics, liberated from sterile quibbles over literary