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Geoffrey Chaucer's Italian texts, K. P. Clarke observes in the concluding pages of his work, were not simply texts but books, and on this important difference hinges the analysis undertaken here. The Italian sources of Chaucer's poems have been exhaustively discussed and explored for the past century, and studies such as Correale and Hamel's *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales* (2002- 05), have mapped for us the complex web of Chaucer's Italian reading. More recently, however, there has been in medieval and early modern studies a surge of attention for books as objects, rather than mere repositories of texts, and for what they tell us about contemporary readers; works such as William H. Sherman's *Used Books* (2007), devoted to the reading habits of Renaissance England, are exemplary in this respect.

*Chaucer and Italian Textuality* is clearly situated in this critical context, and while owing much to a tradition of Anglo-Italian studies investigating the role of Italian poets in English literature, it also seeks to move beyond comparative analysis, focusing instead on the material culture in which these texts were read and handled. Such an approach is extremely complex, as it requires investigation both at a historical and at a philological level, and Clarke is sure-footed in the latter area, analyzing an impressive number of fourteenth-century manuscripts (in fact, the absence of an index of manuscripts is keenly felt here) and revealing a complex web of writers, commentators and readers. He is particularly interested in the evidence of contemporary readers interacting with the text in marginalia and glosses. His highlighting of the role of two Italian readers, Filippo Ceffi and Francesco d'Amaretto Mannelli, whose attitudes, respectively, to Ovid's *Heroides* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* might have informed Chaucer's own, offers a welcome addition to what we already know of late medieval readership.

A Florentine notary, amanuensis and translator, Ceffi makes his appearance in chapter 1, dedicated to the vernacular tradition of Ovidian texts. Fascinated with the play between authoriality and textuality at work in the *Heroides* (which Ceffi translated into Italian in the early fourteenth century), Clarke proposes this text as a model on which medieval writers could exercise and explore, gaining the rewards of hermeneutics. The relation between this text and the *Legend of Good Women* is of course well known, and Clarke re- examines this relation in light of the "peculiar medieval flavour" (14) imparted to the *Heroides* by their manuscript appearance. Clarke explores the rich commentary tradition and reads Chaucer's use of Ovid as a model for the "sleight of hand" (19) the English poet practices when deliberately confusing the *intentio auctoris* with the *intentio commentatoris*. Readers might wonder whether this is strictly relevant to the "Italian textuality" of the title, but Clarke's exploration of Chaucer's work repays us of this slight disappointment by the richness of his own hermeneutics, setting the *Legend* in the context of Chaucer's entire oeuvre, and gleaming a number of rich details and original observations from his analysis, though a sense of the overall purpose of this section is perhaps lacking. In comparing the *Legend* to Ceffi's translation of the *Heroides*, Clarke is relying (as Sanford Brown Meech did in the 1930 article from which Clarke draws inspiration) solely on internal evidence. As a result, his hypothesis rests on too fragile a basis, and though the analogies in the instances quoted are indeed striking, they are too few and isolated to constitute the "compelling evidence" (29) they are claimed to be. Very little attempt has been made to reconstruct the circulation of this or any other of Ceffi's works, or to formulate a hypothesis for the occasion on which Chaucer might have come in contact with this translation; nor is there any attempt to compare it with contemporary Italian and French translations of the same text. However, the comparison is useful insofar as Clarke makes a good case for Ceffi's status as a sophisticated writer and erudite, implicitly offering a useful comparison for Chaucer's use of Ovid.

The rest of the book is constructed as a progress from Boccaccio to Chaucer, highlighting the former's activity as interpreter and commentator of his own and other people's works. What is suggested is not only the simple and much debated issue of the sources of Chaucer's works: more subtly, Clarke uses Boccaccio's activity as a commentator to hypothesize a network of textual criticism, in which the Italian writer and his informed and articulate approach to manuscripts, as evidenced in his tireless activity as a glossator, instructs Chaucer's own approach not only to Italian vernacular poems, but also to the classics. This is especially useful in the case of *Troilus and Criseyde*, given the attention paid in this text to the classical and vernacular literary tradition. Equal attention is devoted to *The Knight's Tale*, and the triangulation with Boccaccio and Statius is here highly rewarding (though in a book punctiliously referring to a wealth of critical studies, one would have expected an allusion to V.A. Kolve's magisterial study of the tale in *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*).

The study of glosses offers unexpected gems and sheds light into obscure corners; Clarke's analysis of Mannelli's fascinating glosses to Boccaccio's tale of Griselda reveals an unexpectedly modern reaction, as Gualtieri's "matta bestialit" evokes even in the fourteenth-century reader the same outraged perplexity many of us feel today (111-28). Intriguing as this is, however, such an insight is not pursued in Chaucer's version of the tale, as Clarke, turning to the *Canterbury Tales* (discussed not simply as text, but in the context of the two early, most famous manuscripts in which they appear, Ellesmere and Hengwrt), initially concentrates on the Wife of Bath and her Prologue, rather than on the *Clerk's Tale*. Given the explicit debate over texts and their authority on the Wife's Prologue, Clarke's conclusion is inevitable: the Wife presents herself as a text, and her legerdemain with biblical and patristic texts mirrors her skillful handling of men and of the narrative material at her disposal in the Tale. Confusingly, in the move from Boccaccio to Chaucer the analysis is heavily gendered: Boccaccio's feminine readers turn into Chaucer's feminine text, and in their turn this offers the opportunity for a more general, and perhaps generic, declaration that "all language is feminine" (148). The concluding section of the book goes back to the Griselda motif, analyzing the *Clerk's Tale* and the glosses present in the early manuscripts, but not attempting a comparison with the glossing of Boccaccio's corresponding tale, studied in the previous chapter.

As may be seen in this synopsis, sometimes the author's love for detailed analysis is indulged at the expense of a unifying narrative, and the book risks losing unity and focus. Perhaps this is inevitable in a work that reveals such wide reading on the part of the author, both of primary and secondary sources, and Clarke's use of generally forgotten texts such as the paratextual apparatus of Boccaccio's work, or the Italian writer's epistles, is very welcome. His uncovering of the wealth of information often hidden in marginalia also prompts a salutary reminder for modern editors, when he denounces a "modern mistrust of the marginal or paratextual material that so pervaded a manuscript culture and that became sanitized within a printed culture" (68). Happily, this warning has already been heeded by a number of scholars and editors (as witness recent studies acknowledged in the present work), and the resources of online editing, allowing access to images of the manuscripts and reconstruction of the paratextual apparatus, as well as offering new solutions for a presentation of a non-linear text, may make Clarke's preoccupations slightly outdated. What I find challenging here is his attention for, and careful distinction between, the work of the glossator and the reader's response.

Clarke is to be commended for his painstaking attention to manuscripts and their physical characteristics, and his reconstruction of the complex textual history of works such as Boccaccio's *Teseida* marks an important step forward in our understanding of these texts. The book also shows excellent use of literary theory in the reading of manuscript textuality. However, occasionally this reader felt the book was rather a missed opportunity. It may be that Clarke's extreme respect for the critical sources he quotes, sometimes *ad abundantiam*, betrays an excessive dependence on the scholarly tradition on the subject, leading him to forget the thrust of his own argument, but the book sometimes gives the impression of a work still in progress, showing impressive potential but not yet coalesced into a unifying whole. Tighter editing might have helped here, and forced the author to give up marginal notes that may have only little relevance. Some instances of poor editing result in confused reading: on p. 32 an Ovidian apocryphon, *De pulice libellus*, is mentioned; on p. 36 there is a reference to *Pulex*, without any hint at the fact that the two are the same work. More worryingly, on p. 3 the writer underlines the importance of Dante's decision to write in *prosimetrum*, that is, alternating poetic text and prose commentary, without mentioning the obvious model for such a choice, Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae* (other sources obviously could be Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, or Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia*); when, however, on p. 40 we are told that Dante translated parts of the *Consolazione* for his *Convivio*, we feel the writer should have made the connection. There is also some forcing of interpretation, as when on p. 105 we are told that at the end of canto 5 of the *Inferno* Dante faints "when confronted with the terrifying responsibility he has an author"--which is not true, strictly speaking, since the narrator clearly states he faints "di pietate," for pity. All these, though giving the reader some unease, are minor points, amply compensated by the interesting insights Clarke provides into medieval reading practices, but they leave something to be desired in an accomplished scholarly work.