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Helen Fulton, ed. *Chaucer and Italian Culture*. New Century Chaucer. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021. Pp. 288. $88.00 (cloth).
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Readers have acknowledged Chaucer's extraordinary debt to Italian literature ever since John Lydgate (1370–1451) encapsulated the *House of Fame* as "Dante in English." With the advent of academic scholarship, there has been a steady industry on Chaucer's engagement with the writings of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, ranging from the identification of sources and direct influences to broader considerations of how these Italian writers modeled for Chaucer a bold new form of vernacular authorship, how they opened up novel ways to engage with antiquity, how they revealed alternative political systems and, consequently, constructions of the self. This highly productive vein of inquiry has enriched our reading of both Chaucer and the Italian poets, as Helen Fulton surveys in her masterfully succinct introduction to *Chaucer and Italian Culture*. And yet (one whispers dubiously) by now the field seems highly worked over. Fulton acknowledges this worry head on: "For those who think there cannot be anything new to say about Chaucer and the Italian tradition, we hope this book will change your minds" (1).

I am happy to report my doubts have been assuaged. Reading this uniformly excellent collection reinvigorates the question of what Chaucer gained from his Italian encounters. Tying these eight essays together is a curiosity in new sites of overlap between Chaucer and Italian artistic practices. Comparisons are framed more loosely than source text and translation, presented instead in various guises of intertextuality ("re-mediation" [5], "textual haunting" [50], "affinity" [123], "diffusion" [170]). James Robinson's piece on the ghosts of Guido Cavalcante and Dante in the writings of Boccaccio and Chaucer is the most extended such meditation, but we see this intertextual impulse on display in other contributions as well. Robert Sturges brilliantly juxtaposes Dante's *Vita nova* with Chaucer's *Troilus*, the two meeting indirectly through their shared reliance upon the discussion of sensory perception, love, and transcendence in Dante's *Convivio*. In Leah Schwebel's deft reading, the elusive *auctor* "Trophee" of the *Monk's Tale* is none other than the genre of poetic triumphs itself, an interpretation that nicely chimes with Teresa A. Kennedy's assertion, based upon the *House of Fame* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, that Chaucer's intertextual play simultaneously honors authority and refuses to make absolute claims.

Many of these essays should be welcome in critical conversations beyond that of Chaucer and Italy. William T. Rossiter's examination of fourteenth-century changes in diplomacy does more than gloss the *Clerk's Tale* and provide context for Chaucer's own role in ambassadorial missions; it is a clarion call for "a diplomatic turn in late medieval literary studies" (23). Similarly, Helen Fulton's discussion of chorography and the *Clerk's Tale* argues for a larger recuperation of a genre neglected by medieval literary critics. Sometimes the most refreshing insights come from expanding the terms of the equation, such as when Chaucer's Italian interlocutors are not poems but astrological iconography in public monuments, which Andrew James Johnston fruitfully brings to bear on the *Knight's Tale*, or, alternatively, when Victoria Flood normalizes Dante and Chaucer within a larger consideration of apocalyptic political prophecy that includes Joachim da Fiore, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and an array of contemporary anonymous prognostications.

In the end, though, we seem unable to escape the gravitational pull of the *tre Corone*, perhaps because we are still relying upon the eagle for flight. Nearly every essay grounds Chaucer's work with texts by Dante, Petrarch, or Boccaccio, mostly in the usual places, i.e., those works of Chaucer's that are explicitly translations and adaptations from Italian sources, although there are sometimes connections made to less expected texts by the Crowns (Robinson and Sturges both invoke Dante's *Vita nova*; Schwebel and Kennedy briefly incorporate Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione*). I intend no criticism of these outstanding

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essays individually nor the power of the collection as a whole. The authors should be commended for bringing something fresh to these textual pairings. But the persistence of traditional depictions of Italian culture—even in a volume as thoughtful as this one—has led me to ponder how difficult it is to escape the totalizing nature of the Three Crowns model when it comes to characterizing the artistic contributions of the medieval Italian peninsula. We don't reduce antiquity to a *tre corone antiche* of Cicero, Virgil, and Ovid when discussing their influence in the Middle Ages. Such heuristics do a disservice to the authors they elevate as much as to the larger context they ignore.

Why not look for other Italys that may have surprised Chaucer? Ruminating further on the title of this collection—*Chaucer and Italian Culture*—I am newly struck by how many aspects of Italian culture that Chaucer likely encountered are still left to be considered. No book can contain everything. But the Italy (an anachronism in itself) presented in this volume is routinely secular, male, public, nascently humanistic, and linguistically Latin and Italianate (read: Tuscan). How might Franco-phone Italy have altered the way Chaucer thought of French? What might Chaucer have gleaned from Italian pilgrimage sites, such as the wonder-working icon of the Virgin in Turin, which has elsewhere been suggested as an influence upon the *Prioress's Tale* (Carol F. Heffernan, "Praying before the Image of Mary: Chaucer's 'Prioress's Tale,' VII 502–12," *Chaucer Review* 39 [2004]: 103–16)? When Chaucer passed through the Cottian Alps (as he likely did in 1372–73), was he aware of the fate of the earlier heterodox residents in the Vaudois, and did he draw any parallels between the faith held by the Waldensians and the burgeoning Lollards at home? Who were on the Italian peninsula that he likely would not have met in England, such as Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, slaves? And of whom might Chaucer become newly aware through their absence in Italy as compared to his London, such as the *femme sole*? The fact that reading this book provokes these questions for me also demonstrates its success. In accepting Fulton's invitation to think again, I do so employing a strategy so eloquently modelled by many of the contributors, namely pondering not just what is present but what is absent.

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Colin Helling. *The Navy and Anglo-Scottish Union, 1603–1707*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022. Pp. 300. $125 (cloth).
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This book brings together in a fruitful way two historiographical strands long associated with the seventeenth century: the relationship between the Stuart dynasty's British kingdoms, and the role of the armed forces in the formation of a British state. It presents a convincing account of the Royal Navy's importance for setting the two British kingdoms on a path toward political union. Under the Stuarts, the navy was, Helling argues, both an institution through which it became possible for Scottish elites to think about national security as a multi-national project, and a force that propelled the two kingdoms toward forming one sovereign state.

Helling points out that, between 1603 and 1707, the navy was the only institution, save for the monarchy, with an accepted role in both British kingdoms. Yet the navy was not a shared institution in the sense that its soul (leadership) and body (dockyard infrastructure) remained based in England. Nor was the navy an integrative institution during the period. Instead, its importance for the union lay in its effect on the thinking of key political players in England and Scotland, albeit in different ways and with contrasting intensity depending on the security

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