

Course subject not clear

Since nobody knows the exact dates of Chaucer's works Frank moves back to a discussion of Chaucer's work again, recovering some ground and also raising some new questions and theories. "The Legend shows him moving, hesitantly at first with growing confidence (the progress from Cleopatra to, say, Lucrece would be our evidence), into a new body of material and demonstrating his ability to use this new matter effectively. The accessibility of a new range of narrative matter and its exploitation were, however, dependent on the mastery of brevity. The narrative skill and the comfortable control and mastery of the short verse tale in the Canterbury Tales owe much to what was learned in creating the legends." (p.170)

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Frank now goes through again, in a somewhat redundant manner, the narrative skills that Chaucer had to master in the Legend, and we get them in this concluding chapter in the space of a few pages. (pp. 170-172) I will not go into them much further. One is "... a mastery of the art of silence; refusing to amplify when the opportunity knocked and a fertile imagination beckoned." Another "...is the art of the quick summary of action." Another is the "...art of the quick effect(i.e. the sea battle in Cleopatra)." The last is the "...art of selection," and its complements cutting and emphasis. The last narrative skill is important and Frank follows it up in depth. "In the Legend of Good Women, though art's function as a key of remembrance is invoked, Chaucer's freedom in cutting and changing his material reveals other purposes as well. The moral intention of the brief exemplum, legend, or saint's life is of some importance, insofar as this relates to a (sometimes mocking) praise of woman's faithfulness in love and an (also sometimes mocking) indictment of man's fickleness. A more general