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The field of military history has been expanding its focus over the past few decades to increasingly encompass an interest in the culture of warfare and the horizons of its combatants, from martial emotions and masculinity to the memory of expeditions and their participants. Craig Taylor’s *A Virtuous Knight: Defending Marshal Boucicaut (Jean II Le Meingre, 1366-1421)* builds on the author’s previous work on late medieval chivalry, as well as his co-translation of the *Livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le Maingre* that is at the fore of the book. Taking the culture of chivalry that is often at the center of debates about proper military conduct and this particular text as a point of departure, he highlights a number of the possibilities opened up within the field and the benefits of revisiting such works from this broader perspective.

After a brief but engaging biographical sketch of the marshal’s life, founded primarily on older histories which Taylor hopes to recapture from oblivion, the book can be divided into two parts. The first centers on placing the biography in the context of its production, offering more in-depth arguments concerning the identity of its author(s), audience, and purpose than Taylor had been able to provide previously in the introduction to his 2016 translation with Jane H. M. Taylor. The argument for multiple authorship laid out in chapter 2 is very convincing, as is his attribution to the cleric Nicholas de Gonesse, who had just finished an extensively utilized translation of Valerius Maximus, and the knight Jean d’Ony, who is prominently featured throughout the first part of the biography. Rather than the result of a disconnection between a violent reality and a florid chivalric ideal—a view rooted in the evaluation of the *Livre des fais* promulgated by Johan Huizinga—the disjunct composition becomes more comprehensible as the product of collaboration between Boucicaut’s confessor and his companion-in-arms. While these attributions are not entirely new, Taylor goes further than previous scholarship to argue for a collaborative composition so extensively supported by the text and the circumstances of its composition.
The contextualization of the text, outlined in chapter 3, highlights that it was composed in a hurry with the hope that it could be used to defend the marshal's reverses in Italy at the French court. These included the loss of Pisa to the Florentines and a bumbling of diplomatic efforts to the end the Great Schism afflicting the papacy. While the biography was likely written before Le Meingre had lost Genoa, the writing on the wall seems to have been apparent to his biographer(s), who were already at pains to point out the fickle nature of the Genoese and shift away any blame from the marshal. In his evaluation of his tenure as governor, Taylor tries to walk a middle path between the Italian historiography, which is quicker to highlight Boucicaut's shortcomings, and the Anglo-French historiography that more often accepts the defense provided by the *Livre des fais*. Nevertheless, his tenure in Genoa itself is largely overshadowed by Taylor's more in-depth attention to the vicissitudes surrounding the loss of Pisa.

The book then shifts to the different qualities promoted in the two parts of the *Livre des fais*: the more martial and chivalric in chapter 4 and the more civic, classical qualities in chapter 5. Here, Taylor is less encompassing in his arguments but nevertheless offers stimulating interventions indicating where future work on this source and others like it can go. The more traditional, first part of the *Livre des fais*, outlining the deeds of the marshal and highlighting his prowess and loyalty, gives some insight into the motivations behind his military activities, the chivalric order he founded, and his diplomatic failures. Taylor notes that more than any sense of proto-national pride or overt religious motivation, the *Livre de fais* frames Boucicaut's primary driver as his knightly reputation and fame, rooted in the more traditional, chivalric model. Rather than attempting to defend this model within the contemporary debates exacerbated by the brutal reality of the Hundred Years War, Taylor convincingly shows this was a byproduct of the overall goal of the author(s) of the *Livre des fais* to explain and defend the marshal's activities and setbacks as governor of Genoa. In addition, Taylor also makes a brief excursus into the emotions in the *Livre des fais*, a topic of increased interest in the field of military history, noting the strategic assignation of emotions such as fear to those whom the biographer(s) would like to blame for the setbacks of Boucicaut's Nicopolis expedition.

The qualities highlighted by the biographer(s) in the second part of the *Livre des fais* provide Taylor with additional opportunities to tackle its embeddedness in the complex discourses surrounding knighthood and aristocratic masculinity, questions of increased scholarly interest. For example, the qualities of discipline, justice, eloquence, and compassion are all traits that were ubiquitous in the genre of the mirror for princes—more fully taken up in Taylor's work on Christine de Pizan. Additionally, the marshal's piety and charitable activities received far greater attention in the second part of the *Livre des fais* than in the first, provoking questions about the prominence of religious motivations among knights themselves but also illuminating the role of charity in promoting a favorable civic image. Thus, not only do the qualities highlighted serve to defend Boucicaut's record as governor of Genoa, painted as a well-cultivated leader beset by ill fortune, but they also speak to the larger debates about the culture of the French aristocracy. It is precisely the connection Taylor draws between the martial storytelling among knights highlighting their chivalric exploits and the oral reading culture of the aristocracy, its concept of the philosopher of arms, and its connections to classical motifs that is the most interesting contribution of this chapter.

This is a welcome companion to Taylor's earlier translation that will serve to highlight the many topics the *Livre des fais* can speak to. Not only will medievalists with an interest in chivalry and military historians find a brief but engaging read, but graduate students will also value this book for the new directions for research utilizing chivalric bio-
graphies that it promotes. Instructors looking for another way to engage students in medieval survey courses may also find it useful for the background it provides on many topics (crusading, schism, chivalry, aristocratic culture, late medieval engagement with classical texts, etc.). A **Virtuous Knight** is a delightful work that moves beyond its stated purpose and shows the exciting potential of revisiting chivalric biographies from the growing variety of perspectives transforming the field of military history, and the utility of such works for engaging students on a variety of topics commonly taught in medieval survey courses.

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