placed on a stationary surface and perused with the aid of several bookmarks that secure the reader's place in text, endnotes, bibliography, black-and-white reproductions of all the miniatures, and black-and-white reproductions of comparative pictorial material—not to mention the six appendices offering codicological diagrams, detailed descriptions, and transcriptions of portions of the text. The reader who traverses the material according to the path mapped out by the main text, following its many excursions and detours through notes and images, is rewarded with the rich complexity of multiple shifting contexts. For most readers, however, the superscripted and parenthetical numbers serve only to authorize. In this and similarly produced books, a reintegration of the notes and at least some of the illustrations would render transparent both the discursive character of the study and the dialogic principles at work between texts and figures.

Hamburger's sound foundation of painstaking scholarship on the specifics of this work will serve as a basis for further observations. His study greatly enriches the continuing debates on mysticism and art, gendered readings of bridal allegories in sacred texts and images, and gender-specific uses of medieval art.

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Hansen, Elaine Tuttle. *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: Univ. of California Press, 1992. 301 pp.

Elaine Tuttle Hansen's new book, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender*, is, for my money, one of the two or three best and most original books published on Chaucer in the past couple of decades because it brilliantly demonstrates the crucial role that feminist analytics has to play in the study of early, canonical texts. In ten chapters that cover Chaucer's entire poetic career, Hansen finds that career unified not by some preordained trajectory of growth and maturation, but by the repetition of an almost obsessive concern with gender instability. This concern, which forms and informs Chaucer's poetics and thematics from *The Book of the Duchess* through *The Canterbury Tales*, derives, Hansen argues, from a number of sources within Chaucer's social and political milieu, as well as from the literary and discursive traditions to which he is heir. Ultimately, Hansen shows, it comes from a fundamental masculine anxiety, as Chaucer repeatedly registers it, that men and women may not be different enough or different at all; that the *Genesis* myth may be dangerously correct in making men and women "'O flessh'" (p. 248).

Paradigmatic configurations of relationships within medieval literature, culture, and politics also worked, liked the *Genesis* myth, to blur fixed gender distinctions: configurations such as the ones typically found in courtly love, wherein the male is represented as feminized in his hyper-emotional subservience to the lady. To inscribe gender differences where it may seem, and dangerously so, that none exist and thus to stabilize the instability of gender, Chaucer creates the "fictions of gender" that Hansen names in her title. These are fictions, often uneasy ones, of gender differences meant to repress, occlude, and finally to erase the specter of gender sameness, even, at times, while the fictions themselves forefront and explore it. Moreover, as Hansen's complex and textured argument makes clear, these fictions of gender, as they appear in Chaucer's work, create and empower masculine identity specifically by allowing men (sometimes in unexpected cases, like the Knight's and the Miller's), to bond across social classes, as well as across genres, poetic styles, and seeming moral differences. In the end, men can

bond most effectively by participating in the misogynistic discourses and exchanges that involve the transaction of women.

As this book argues, the Western tradition of misogynist discourses articulates much the same anxiety about gender instability and feminization that marks Chaucer's work. But Hansen also locates Chaucer's particular anxiety in the historically specific circumstances of the fourteenth-century court poet who is seeking to inscribe himself as authorial subjectivity within this masculine literary tradition. At the same time, however, his very status as court poet marginalizes him within his culture, indeed feminizes him, by making him the object of patronage and thus of male domination. In response to this "compromised" position, the court poet can assert his own masculinity by playing the time-honored game of kings (and poets, among others): the game of trading in women, or stories about them, which is as Hansen writes of Chaucer's translation and transaction of Criseyde, "the only game in town—for serious authors" (p. 180).

As Hansen examines the sources and implications of the fictions of gender that circulate throughout Chaucer's texts, she simultaneously develops the original, powerful, and courageous political and metacritical project of her book. By studying the history of Chaucer's critical reception, Hansen shows the ways in which Chaucer criticism has traditionally been complicitous in perpetuating (even manufacturing its own) fictions of gender, most frequently by eliding the implications of Chaucer's representations of women in order either to establish or recuperate "Chaucer's good name" (p. 40). At the center of this elision is what Hansen calls the "politics of literary adulation" (p. 40). Examining the implications of that politics, Hansen shows us clearly, plainly, and painfully what has been ignored about Chaucer, and especially about the Chaucer constructed either as the putative friend to women or as the remote, distanced, ironic, dispassionate authorial consciousness (perhaps the most powerful fiction of gender to emerge from Chaucer's work).

In her fine and illuminating readings of the language and shapes of Chaucer's texts, Hansen repeatedly demonstrates that the willing erasure of women by Chaucer and his readers ultimately involves the occlusion of the troubled problem of gender, its instabilities, and its fictions. Centering that problem and its manifold implications as Hansen does reveals what has had to be ignored in order to establish "Chaucer's good name" at the same time that it reveals what Chaucer had to do to women in order to create his fictions of gender and to explore the anxious problem of men's feminization. What has been ignored, Hansen's book makes clear, is the insistent and repeated patterns that arise in Chaucer's representations of women and that make his putative feminism a dubious proposition at best. These patterns involve the submersion of violence against women's bodies and minds, the conversion of women's presence (however tentative or limited) into certain absence, and the repression of women's language into silence. Ultimately, these patterns stabilize the fiction of female gender in a kind of monotonous sameness, wherein women's power, however shadowy or limited, is contained. What this also allows is the assertion of the primacy of male bonds in order to represent to men the fiction of their own stable gender and to provide some relief (however temporary) from the fear of castration, feminization, and homosexuality that their resemblance to women creates.

Hansen ends her book with what she calls her "partial conclusions." These are her far-reaching meditations on Chaucer's reputation, on his fathering of the British literary

canon, and on the patterns of enforced exclusion that form his works and their subsequent critical reception. In these concluding movements, Hansen resists the (occasionally self-imposed) exclusion of feminists and their questions from the study of early, canonical, male-authored texts by asserting the importance to feminist inquiry of examining precisely the issues about the construction and instability of gender that Chaucer's texts raise. If Chaucer's fictions and their critical reception work to marginalize women as characters, as readers, and often as postmodern feminists who wonder what Chaucer has to say to or about them, Hansen insists that he has much to say, much that reveals the complex ways in which the misogyny of the Western cultural tradition enacts, perpetuates, authors, and authorizes itself. In the process, Hansen also shows us the many ways in which the traditions of academic discourse are variously inspired to construct, perpetuate, and recuperate the "good naem[s]" of canonical authors. Hansen's brilliant, eloquent, and ground-breaking book reveals the costs to women of participating in "the game" (p. 292) of such adulatory reading. Those who read her book will need to ask themselves how much longer they want or can afford to play.

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Lemay, Helen Rodnite. *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' "De Secretis Mulierum" with Commentaries.* Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992. ix + 200.

While a critical edition of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth-century Latin *De Secretis mulierum* remains a desideratum, Helen Rodnite Lemay's English translation makes this enormously influential text documenting male scientific views of female nature available to a wide audience. The attribution to Albertus Magnus insured a wide circulation during the Middle Ages: by my own count there are nearly one hundred extant Latin manuscripts as well as numerous vernacular translations and incunable editions. The text draws on ancient (primarily Aristotelian, but also Galenic and Hippocratic) philosophical and medical theories regarding sex and reproduction (theory of conception, the nature of the menses, embryology especially in its astrological aspects, birth defects, pregnancy and sterility tests and the nature of the male sperm) and transmits them largely unchanged into the early modern period. The lengthy section on astrology, moreover, reflects the reception of Arabic science in the Latin West, as Lemay demonstrates.

The introduction, useful for students and specialists alike, does an excellent job of situating the text within the context of medieval medical, natural philosophical, astrological and encyclopedic writing and of tracing its legacy in the misogynous tradition exemplified by the fifteenth-century *Malleus Maleficarum*. While the question of authorship remains unresolved (and is, in a medieval context, relatively unimportant), the introduction addresses instead the question of the tradition into which the text fell as a means to get at the question of intended audience and use. Because the *De Secretis mulierum* is cosmological, not medical, in focus, Lemay concludes that "it was designed to be used within a religious community as a vehicle for instructing priests in natural philosophy, particularly as it pertains to human generation. Pseudo-Albert... present[s] to his brothers a survey of this important subject which would be useful to them both in