into "gender studies," another name for the business-as-usual, masculine universalism Shahar alludes to.

Some progress has been made. In some medieval texts (not all), masculine celibates contemplate a masculine God who created a masculine creature without female participation. Even some men in my department see that this is a bit weird; this may not be the whole story.

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REVIEW


The works of Hrotsvit--drama, hagiography, history, epic--are by one of the medieval women writers who has "canonical" status in a masculinist literary canon. Yet her works are seldom read, primarily because they are in Latin, and few exist in accessible modern translations. Modern readers have unjustly denigrated the tenth century as a humanistic wasteland inhabited only by the rare talent of the seldom-read Hrotsvit. Those who appreciate both the works of Hrotsvit and those of other tenth-century writers, however, may hope that renewed attention to Hrotsvit will revive interest in other neglected authors.

This anthology of essays, most of which "were presented...at Kalamazoo in 1985 and 1986" (xiv), has two avowed aims. It wishes to illuminate Hrotsvit's unquestionably great talent and show her, in Katherina Wilson's words, "as a skillful artist of the Ottonian Renaissance" (xiii). In so doing, it demonstrates that earlier scholarly impressions of the tenth century were ill-conceived.

The anthology contains nineteen essays. The first two, which introduce Section I, "Hrotsvit and the Past: The Intellectual Heritage," discuss the literary (especially the hagiographic) and philosophical background to Hrotsvit's work. The second essay, Suzanne F. Wemple's "Monastic Life of Women from the Merovingians to the Ottonians," may be especially interesting to feminist scholars because it discusses such subjects as continental double monasteries under female rule that contributed to the autonomy of women and nourished talents like Hrotsvit's. The remaining six essays discuss the influence of Terence, Augustine, and Boethius on Hrotsvit's literary artistry as well as her debts to musical, mathematical, and aesthetic theories contemporary with her.

Section II, "Hrotsvit and the Present: The Tenth-Century Context," comprises seven essays that demonstrate the context within which Hrotsvit
wrote. They discuss the revival of classical culture in the tenth century and historical, liturgical, and literary traditions available to her. Henk Vynckier's "Arms Talks in the Middle Ages: Hrotsvit, Waltharius, and the Heroic via," compares Hrotsvit's Gesta Ottonis with the great (but neglected) Waltharius Poesis and makes an important contribution to scholarly understanding of Christian epic. It also adds to our appreciation of Hrotsvit (an accomplished poet in the epic genre, which many believe is outside the province of women's writing) and of the tenth century.

The four essays in Section III, "Hrotsvit and the Future: Reception and Literary Survival," discuss the influence of Hrotsvit from the rediscovery of her work in 1493 by Conrad Celtis through John Kennedy Toole's 1980 A Confederacy of Dunces. Karl A. Zaenker observes that one indication of a writer's importance is "the impact her work has on modern writers, composers and artists" ("Hrotsvit and the Moderns: Her Impact on John Kennedy Toole and Peter Macks," 276). Scholars concerned with women authors would do well to include the works of Hrotsvit and this scholarly anthology in their syllabi and research.

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The space limit and venue of this review impose a terse style and narrow focus. Hence the review is in no way complete but instead is narrowly oriented to issues of gender.

I found the book offensively sexist, displaying in attenuated form the "madonna-whore" syndrome so often deplored as an aspect of clerical ideology in the Middle Ages. On the one hand, there is a rosily utopian attitude toward marriage: virtually every married couple at court were, Howard assures us, idyllically wed: Edward III and the "dear, kindly" (49) Queen Philippa (despite the king's longtime mistress Alice Perrers), John of Gaunt and Blanche (though John was a notorious womanizer), Lionel and Elizabeth, Richard and Anne (though Richard was allegedly homosexual) -- even Chaucer and his Philippa, about whom there is strong circumstantial evidence that she was John of Gaunt's mistress before and during her marriage to the poet. But it is best to disregard such evidence, Howard advises, because it interferes with "a more palatable picture" (95). The author seems obsessed with marriages, even creating them where they do not exist, biographically and literarily. Chaucer himself must have wanted to marry again, and probably had a specific woman in mind (460). The Black Knight in The Book of the Duchess becomes "the deceased lady's husband" (153: Howard's emphasis), though there is no textual support for this reading. The tone of the unfinished House of Fame "suggests