

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

their general education and in their pastoral activities.” The “evil nature of women and the harm they ... cause to their innocent victims” (men and children) (16) constitutes a strong subtext.

Examples of how the book was read are provided by excerpts from two major commentary traditions. Based on the Lyons 1580 edition, with emendations primarily from the Venice 1508 edition and only occasionally from earlier manuscripts and printed editions, Lemay’s translation of this difficult text is highly readable. Oddly, the last chapter on the generation of sperm, missing from the Lyons edition and taken from two Munich manuscripts (presumably Clm 22297 and 22230) stops one sentence short of the traditional close found in most manuscripts (including Clm 22297) and printed editions: *Grates ergo de bene dictis et veniam de obmissis, si aliqua sunt humiliter nunc imploro et auxilium divine gratie, a quo omnis sapientia orta est et vita eterna, ad quam nos deus omnipotens gloriosus et magnificus perducatur, qui cum patre vivat et regnat per infinita secula seculorum. Amen.* The translator’s own explanatory phrases in brackets (80 ff.) render some of the most difficult passages (dense scholastic arguments about the nature of accidents, for example) more fluent.

One might quibble with certain minor points. It is unnecessarily confusing, for example, to use the term *physici* for natural philosophers (Introduction, 33, 43) when the Latin text consistently uses *medici* for medical authorities or doctors and *philosophi* for natural philosophers. Used to distinguish the general medical practitioner from the surgeon, *physicus* (physician) meant someone with advanced training in general internal medicine who had also studied natural philosophy (Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* [Chicago, 1990] p. 21). The argument is well-taken that not until the thirteenth century did ideas about the poisonous nature of menstruation become enshrined in learned scientific texts (35); nevertheless, in the section of the introduction entitled “Women’s Secrets and Medieval Science,” one misses references to Pliny, to popularizing literature like the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets*, or the story of the venomous maiden from the *Dialogue de Placides et Timéo* (ed. Claude Thomasset, [Geneva/Paris, 1980] pp. 109-113), or to the excellent discussion of this topic and the role of *Secrets* in the construction of Western “gynophobia” in Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1988, pp. 75, 191, 126-129). A more serious omission is the valuable critical study of Johann Hartlieb’s fifteenth-century German adaptation of the *Secreta mulierum* (Würzburger medizinhistorische Forschungen, vol. 36, Pattensen/Hanover, 1985), which is nowhere mentioned.

Medieval feminist scholars will find the bibliography very useful. I expect this handsome, affordable and well-executed volume to become a bestseller. It will be indispensable in any course where the medieval scientific view of women is of concern.

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Richards, Earl Jeffrey, ed., with Joan Williamson, Nadia Margolis, Christine Reno. *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Athens, GA/ London: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1992.

Feminist scholars will find this an indispensable volume in the Christine de Pizan bibliography. The first of the book’s three sections, entitled “Christine and the ““faith