

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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Donald R. Howard. *Chaucer. His Life, His Works, His World*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1987. 704 p. \$29.95

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

news of marriage," an odd hypothesis quickly modulated to "the propitious royal match to be announced" (233)! *Parliament of Fools* is also seen as a marriage poem -- again mere conjecture, and of the flatfooted historicizing kind pervasive in the book.

On the other hand, there is a pronounced abusive/derisive vocabulary about women: a "gaggle" of court ladies (49), "shrew," "shameless baggage" (95), "slatternly" (107: this of January's May, and it is incorrect), the "cheeky" independence of businesswomen (429), and so on. The class perspective is as backward as the gender one: of the 1381 Peasant's Revolt we find "mob," "scruffy rebels" (322), "vast, shrieking, menacing rabble" (324), "scoundrel" (326), "crazed behavior" (330), "shrieking" (327), "rabble" (336), etc.: so much for the solidarity of laborers and artisans trying to end an oppressive feudal system. In a longer review one would like to explore the relation of gender and class attitudes in Howard's book.

"*Chaucer liked women*" (95, Howard's emphasis), we are told -- a highly debatable assertion, and a reductive, essentialist one as well, for why should anyone like or not like women as a group rather than making individual judgments? As elsewhere, we learn more about the critic's assumptions than those of the poet.

I wish that Don Howard were alive to read this review, though I don't know whether it would have changed his attitudes. But the attitudes are still with us aplenty, and it is time to serve notice that they will not be passed over tactfully in our teaching, conversations, and reviews.

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NOTES AND QUERIES

Deborah Ellis (Southwestern Univ., Georgetown, TX 78626) would like to hear from anyone interested in seeing provision made for daycare during each year's Medieval Institute at Kalamazoo. She would like to know whether daycare is of concern to others.

For a study of "the feminization of the position of the medieval court poet," **Elaine Hansen** (English Department, Haverford College, Haverford, PA) would like help from historians who can point out "discussions of the effeminacy of men in the authoritative discourse of the period."

Verena Neuberger-Noetzli (Ebelstrasse 5, CH-8032, Zürich, Switzerland) is preparing a dissertation with the working title "Published English Prose Texts by Women: From Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich to 1700." The thesis is to include an annotated catalogue of authors and texts. The author would like to know whether anyone has heard that a similar such