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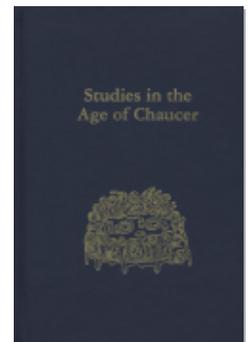
Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer by Suzanne C. Hagedorn (review)

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tice, for some of Chaucer's poems but which is not discussed). Chaucer's range and richness are not of course to be caught in a reference book even as good as this and such omissions are not to be taken as serious adverse criticism, or, I hope, as a captious desire to paint the lily by gilding it with refined gold.

There is only one error that I noticed (nine minor misprints are insignificant in so large and magisterial a work). The error is the entry on Artoys. The Knight is said to have fought there, that is, in Flaundres and in Picardie, whereas a major point in his portrayal, as somewhat less clearly emerges in the entry on the Knight himself, is precisely that he has never fought in France (like so many of Chaucer's fellow courtiers and Chaucer himself), but only on the borders of or beyond Christendom. In the entry on Artoys, he has become confused with the Squire. One might also query the entries on the identification of Ruce and Pruce in the formal description of the Knight (see Derek Brewer, "Chaucer's Knight as Hero and Machaut's *Prise d'Alexandrie*." in *Heroes and Heroines in Medieval English Literature*, ed. L. Carruthers [Cambridge, 1994]). The full entry on the Knight rightly dismisses recent nonsense about him being presented as a mercenary thug. The comments on the Squire have a similar polite robustness.

Gray's work includes sketch maps, some tables, and a useful, if inevitably incomplete, bibliography. It is beautifully produced, yet another instance of OUP's outstanding contribution to Chaucerian studies over many years. There are other excellent Companions to Chaucer studies already available, *by aventure yfalle/ In felaweshipe*, like the Canterbury pilgrims, like them with their own differences, being based on different principles of compilation (and perhaps I ought to confess an interest in one). Chaucer may be said to have a genial relationship to each. They do not cancel each other out, but Gray's work will always be a monument of learned and civilized literary Companionship.

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SUZANNE C. HAGEDORN. *Abandoned Women: Rewriting the Classics in Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. Pp. ix, 220. \$60.00.

Suzanne Hagedorn constructs a compelling case for the richly complex medieval reception of Ovid's theme of abandoned women, as well as for

the comparative thinness of our knowledge of that reception. In a series of detailed, witty, and insightful readings, she demonstrates the pervasive and often unsuspected lines of influence, echo, and transmission that link the authors of her title to one another and to their common classical past. Not the least of her achievements in this book is to delineate a Chaucer who is very much a European writer. This Chaucer, rather than writing under the tutelary influence of Italian sources, emerges as an author fully their companion in the project of late medieval adaptation of classical sources. All wrote within a received tradition that they altered to suit their present and various literary purposes.

Such writers in turn imply an audience not only literate but also familiar with the particular literary traditions they appropriate, an audience sensitive to the potential significance of ellipses, shifts, and lacunae. Audience and reception are central in this work. At the beginning of the book, Hagedorn lays out the theoretical context in which she has read the works she discusses. Given the essential project of the book, to argue the presence of literary tradition in the most elliptical and apparently skewed medieval narratives of classical stories, her invocation of Eco, Iser, and Jauss signals her interest in reception as well as in creation. Her argument depends upon a critical aesthetic of reader response and semiotic dynamics that in turn assumes a degree of uniformity in the referents, interpretants, and signifieds that late medieval audiences would have called forth as, for example, they heard echoes of Penelope's *timor* in Criseyde's fear.

The project of this book, to recover the "powerful and sympathetic views of women" to be found in the worlds of the medieval authors, is closely linked to a secondary and more provocative thesis, that stories of abandoned women expose the darker side of the heroic tradition and these authors' "disapproval of heroic forgetfulness" (p. 18). "[F]igures of abandoned women," Hagedorn contends, "challenge the centrality of the heroic code of the epic by calling attention to the private aspects of human experience that this masculine ethos tends to ignore" (p. 188).

To reach this end, she begins with an overview of the afterlife of Ovid's *Heroides* in the Latin Middle Ages, limning a variety of creative interpretive responses to and receptions of Ovid's text beyond what she terms the "flat-footed didactic schema set forth in the schoolmasters' commentaries" (p. 45). Chapter 2 reads Dante's *Inferno* 26 against Statius's *Achilleid*, in which Achilles abandons Deidamia at Ulysses' urging. The discussion of Statius's poem is particularly informative both for the deepened perspective it opens on the theme of the book—through what

Hagedorn terms the “back story” of Ulysses’ duplicitous evocation of the heroic code and its disastrous results for both Deidamia and Penelope—and for its reminder of how much literature familiar to late medieval authors is comparatively unread today. In chapter 3, Hagedorn focuses on the story of Ariadne and Theseus and discusses how both Boccaccio and Chaucer handle the history of Theseus’s betrayal of women. In close readings that persuasively recenter the Theseus of Chaucer’s work against the partially suppressed tradition of his betrayals and manipulations of women, Hagedorn provides a fresh context in which to read both *The Legend of Good Women* and *The Knight’s Tale*, where she sees a “doubled, potentially duplicitous Theseus” in Chaucer’s evocation of this classical hero. Chapter 4, “Abandoned Women and the Dynamics of Reader Response: Boccaccio’s *Amorosa Visione* and *Elegia di Madonna Fiametta*,” follows Boccaccio’s interest in the topos of the abandoned woman in his works after the *Teseida*. This chapter introduces Boccaccio’s intertwined moralizing and affective responses to the trope of the abandoned woman in these two comparatively overlooked works, and, not coincidentally, provides a potentially fresh perspective from which to read Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women*. Thus it is a matter of some regret that the last two chapters of the book do not fully explore potential connections between the *Amorosa Visione* and the *Legend*. Chapter 5 is a sensitive reading of the “background presence” of abandoned women in the narrative and discourse of the *Troilus*, and of how Troilus himself exemplifies many of the markers of the abandoned lover. Chapter 6 turns to *The Legend of Good Women*, reading it as an ironic text, which “incorporates a play of stylistic registers and modes of discourse” that challenge the “narrow conventions of the courtly aesthetic imposed on the narrator by his inscribed reader, the God of Love” (p. 20). Much of the discussion of *The Legend of Good Women* focuses on the figure of Dido, closing the circle begun in the introduction. In this last chapter, Hagedorn uses Bakhtin to argue the presence of a variety of discourses—Virgilian, Ovidian, epic, romance, and liturgical—that work against “portraits of abandoned women in the literary tradition” (p. 191). The argument works well in respect to the polysemous quality of Chaucer’s Dido narrative, but less so in constructing an opposition between the stylistic complexity of Chaucer’s telling of the legend and courtly discourse, since it is debatable whether courtly narratives of abandoned women can truly be termed “monologic” in contrast to Chaucer’s “dialogic” narratives (p. 20).

The great strength of this book is its expansive reading across the vernacular literary tradition of the late Middle Ages. This reading is accomplished in clear, articulate prose, with humor and complete authority. At the same time, this breadth of reading requires extensive and frequent citation of various texts essential to the argument. While the forest is never lost for the trees, it is sometimes obscured. Clear introductions and a retrospective Afterword consolidate and sharpen the complex argument, recalling the larger, overarching purposes of the book. This study is provocative in its theses and impressive in its learning. If one may quarrel with some of the interpretations and readings, one closes the volume full of ideas and questions about a freshly delineated field of reception and transmission of the topos of the abandoned woman in late medieval literature.

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CAROL F. HEFFERNAN. *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance*.
Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003. Pp. x, 160. \$70.00.

Carol F. Heffernan's *The Orient in Chaucer and Medieval Romance* is a collection of essays on how the "orient" appears in Chaucer and a selection of medieval English romances. The book does not attempt to offer a coherent argument about medieval "orientalism," as Heffernan explains in her introduction: "This study focuses on a genre and a place—'romance' and the 'Orient'—as they are exemplified in late medieval English literature, especially in Chaucer" (p. 1). Furthermore, Heffernan explains, "This study does not press anything like a continuous argument for medieval orientalism of a Postcolonial stamp, though a connecting purpose of the six chapters of this book is to show how the Orient and the people in it are presented in late medieval romance" (p. 1).

Arguing that one can discern an "oriental influence" in medieval romances, Heffernan argues that romance appeared in Europe following the Second Crusade and that this aristocratic genre makes "love," "courtship," and "marriage" central issues (p. 4). After a brief overview of crusade history, also covered in the introduction, five discussions of