

edition of the original text stripped of the second and third scribes' emendations. In this way, they hope to provide modern readers with "the opportunity to see in a dynamic way the successive stages of the evolution of this text in this manuscript" (p.91). An intriguing project, but this being the case, I am uncertain why they have opted to regularize the punctuation, word-division and capitalization of the composite text. Surely "evidence for the reception of the text at a particular time" (p. 90) is obfuscated by such an imposition of modern lexicographical systems. A more diplomatic editorial approach of expanding abbreviations and emending obvious scribal errors while retaining the manuscript's syntactical methods might better have accomplished the goal of representing "two Old English correctors in the process of intelligent interpretation of the A text" (p. 89).

Regarding more practical matters, the volume's usefulness might have been heightened by the addition of several apparati. The rather complicated interrelationships of the Greek and Latin versions of the legend laid out in Chapter Two would be easier to follow if a genealogical table were provided. Extensive cross-references assist the reader who wishes to pursue particular topics through the volume, but a general index would be still more helpful. More consistent translation of passages in languages other than English might prove similarly useful. While such passages are carefully translated when these appear in the body of the prefatory text, those which appear in footnotes are not; nor are two of the three appended texts. These minor reservations aside, the new edition of these undeservedly neglected lives is welcome, and should hold particular interest for feminist scholars.

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Judith Bronfman. Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale:" The Griselda Story Received, Rewritten, Illustrated. New York: Garland, 1994. Pp. xiv, 162.

Judith Bronfman's descriptive bibliography will certainly teach every reader something of interest about the reception and transmission of the tale of Griselda through the past seven centuries. Who would suspect that this story had been retold by Annie Steger Winston in African-American dialect in a short story entitled "A Griselda of the Cabins"? Who among medievalists has studied Gerhard Hauptmann's turn-of-the-century drama Griselda, which adds rape, strangulation, and even poisoned house-cats to the tests of the character's patience?

But if this slender volume has something for everyone, it also tries to accomplish so much in its roughly 100 pages of text that it cannot be helpful to any one reader throughout; indeed, it follows the Griselda story in so many directions that it ultimately gives the lie to its titular focus on Chaucer's tale. The book summarizes the well-known medieval sources and analogues of Chaucer's tale from Italy and France, along with later versions of the Griselda story written in both Europe and the United States. These literary works are supplemented with summaries of and plates from six programs of visual representation, only one of which, William Morris's Kelmscott Chaucer, actually illustrates the English tale. (Among the other illustrative programs reproduced are ink drawings from the unique manuscript of L'Estoire de Griseldis, dated 1395, and the

of Petrarch in 1473.) And in spite of the fact that Bronfman entitles the longest chapter of her book "Chaucer's Tale Rewritten," she includes a number of Griseldas clearly based on the pre-Chaucerian continental texts, even though she does not always identify the later versions' sources.

The evidence of artistic and literary history and reception is interrupted by two chapters on a very different kind of reception: the modern critical history of Chaucer's tale alone, divided into "The Marriage Group and the Allegorical Griselda," and "The Clerk's Tale as Religious Tale and Political Commentary." (While levelling the discursive playing field between artistic and critical re-presentation could have some interesting postmodern ramifications, they remain unexamined.) These short but rambling chapters—the former only nine pages of text, the latter ten—offer an incomplete overview of the critical history of Chaucer's tale. Although they might provide an undergraduate in a Chaucer survey with a simplified understanding of some major issues in the criticism of the tale, they are too simplistic for graduate students and instructors.

The brief descriptive summaries of revisions of the Griselda story will titillate scholars studying the reception of any medieval version of the story: Bronfman's book provides its greatest service by simply informing the reader of the existence of such texts as Maria Edgeworth's 1805 novella The Modern Griselda: A Tale, Jules Massenet's opera Griselidis, and a wealth of other redactions.

Even though the book's primary function seems bibliographic, its bibliography is confusingly organized. The volume offers a listing of so-called "primary sources" divided into English language versions of the tale, English "analogues" (from 1888, 1893, and 1965!), and selected illustrations. Boccaccio and Petrarch, along with post-Chaucerian non-English revisers of the tale, are exiled to the bibliography of secondary sources; Le Livre Griseldis is nowhere indexed under its own title.

In short, this book cannot serve the needs of any one imaginable student of the Griselda story, and it might mislead some students new to the Griselda story, but its breadth may make it helpful to many readers.

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Lynn Staley. *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania

State UP, 1994. xiii +224pp.

Last summer I was a member of the NEH Institute which juxtaposed Chaucer and Langland, reading the *Tales* in conjunction with *Piers Plowman*. It proved to be a far more productive and illuminating enterprise than one would have suspected. But Chaucer, Langland, and Margery Kempe? Not the usual trinity of literary personages that ordinarily springs to mind. Yet in her book, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*, Lynn Staley presents a Margery Kempe as artful a literary strategist, as deft a social commentator, and as astute a political and ecclesiastical critic as her two more celebrated contemporaries. Staley asserts that Kempe's *Book* not only testifies to the religious and The third section of the book, "The Image of Ecclesia," utilizes gender to explicate the