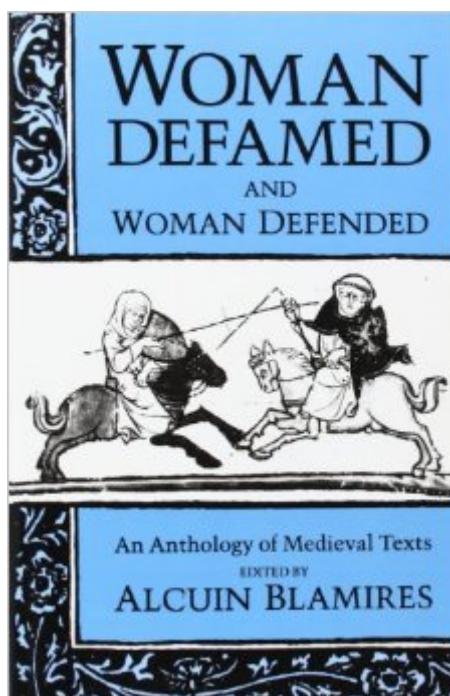


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Woman Defamed And Woman Defended: An Anthology Of Medieval Texts



Synopsis

"It is impossible / That any clerk wol speke good of wyves." Behind the words of Chaucer's Wife of Bath lies a vast corpus of medieval misogynistic writings. These texts, which range from those of the Church Fathers to a rich array of vernacular literature, have had a profound effect on the status of women in the West. Despite the recent surge of investigations into women's situation, however, no one book has sought to collect the key voices of medieval antifeminism, let alone to present the voices sometimes raised, even at that epoch, in defence of women. This new volume meets the urgent need for a single and substantial sourcebook of these materials in modern translation, including an introduction, notes, and commentary. The accessibility of the better-known texts here (from Jerome to Walter Map; from Héloïse and Abelard to Christine de Pizan and Chaucer) will be welcomed by those engaged in medieval and women's studies; the lesser-known writings concerning, for instance, the sexual "double standard", and women and the priesthood, will provide unexpected discoveries for specialists and beginners alike. The book also features a surprising range of early texts championing women--including material never previously available in translation.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Clarendon Press; 1 edition (November 19, 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0198710399

ISBN-13: 978-0198710394

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.8 x 5.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #203,276 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #90 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Women Authors](#) #117 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Women's Studies > Women Writers](#) #180 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Poetry](#)

Customer Reviews

Woman Defamed and Woman Defended is a highly useful book for anyone interested in the medieval querelle des femmes or in women's history. It gathers together the major Late Classical and Medieval writers who addressed the issue of women's place in the world, allowing one to read

the relevant excerpts without having to hunt through all of those writers' works (which can be a very daunting task in the case of someone like Ovid or Augustine). As the title suggests, the book highlights not only women's detractors, but also their defenders (including proto-feminists such as Christine de Pizan) to counter some of the nastier misogynistic passages. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of gender in the West, especially those who confine the main part of their work to the 19th and 20th centuries. The Western so-called "war of the sexes" has its ultimate roots in this material, despite the way that (in my experience) it is often ignored or glossed over in classes that deal directly with gender.

This is an excellent book about the literary tradition of misogyny (hatred of women) in Europe. I first encountered this book in a Chaucer course, and it opened up a whole new vision of interpretation of classical and medieval materials and further forward through literary history. This book is a definite must for anyone studying history, literature, or for that matter, life in general, as it brings forth some of the origins of misogynist ideology.

This book is exactly as touted, a tour of the many statements from Medieval and Ancient scholars which hold women in a less than glowing light. I have never thought Blamires exactly fair with his critique of these scholars, since these quotes are selective and may not always reflect their personal thoughts or their views through time. Jerome, for example, is well known for teaching women Theology, but Blamires has him speaking against women in general. Be that as it may, the book is a well written journey through a mountain of such quotes, and would be a welcome tome in any modern Feminist library.

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