

Another subject insufficiently studied is nineteenth-century medieval scholars themselves, who come before us in every posture from dedicated to unusual to eccentric to stark, staring ravers. One thinks for example of Carlyle or Ruskin. It seems to me that feminist scholarship is advancing steadily, and I for one hope only to see more of it. The progress of medievalism has been very different, and much more modest, and I have described what I think we need to do now. For both undertakings, the future is a bright one.⁶

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NOTES

¹Leslie J. Workman, "Medievalism and Romanticism," *Medievalism and Romanticism 1750-1850*, ed. Leslie J. Workman, *Poetica* 39-40 (special issues for 1993): 1-44.

²Jessie L. Weston, *The Romance of Perlesvaus*, ed. Janet Grayson, *Studies in Medievalism Monographs and Texts* 1, 1988.

³Written c. 1859; first published in Herbert Butterfield, *Man On His Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 212.

⁴See the most recent issue of *Arthuriana* for reviews by Richard Utz and by me of *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁵Articles recently published include Robin Blaetz, "Cecil B. DeMille's *Joan the Woman*" (*SIM* VI, 1994); Kymberly N. Pinder, "The Reception of Toby E. Rosenthal's [painting] *Elaine: Medievalism in San Francisco*" (*SIM* VI, 1994); Karen Hodder, "Elizabeth Barrett and the Middle Ages' Woolful Queens" (*SIM* VII, 1995); Marilyn Lincoln Board, "Modernizing the Grail Quest: Gender, Theology, and Allegory in the Iconography of G. F. Watts" (*SIM* VII, 1995); Suzy Beemer, "Asceticism, Masochism, and Female Autonomy: Catherine of Siena and *The Story of O*" (*SIM* VIII, 1996, forthcoming).

⁶See the final pages of Cantor's *Inventing the Middle Ages*.

SHARED INTERESTS OF *SIM* AND *MFN* (VOLS. 22 AND 23)

Some of the ways our work already parallels *MFN*'s project are suggested in *MFN* No. 22 (Fall 1996), the issue on Gender and Medievalism, which covers topics that *SIM* too has addressed in some form: contemporary fiction about the Middle Ages, modern constructions of medieval women like Joan of Arc, the influence of prominent medievalists like Tolkien, the recuperation of medieval art forms like stained glass. Indeed, if "medievalism" as we define it denotes the whole range of postmedieval engagement with the Middle Ages, then "medieval studies" themselves must be considered a facet of medievalism rather than the other way around. Where can one confidently draw a boundary between the two? To what extent, we might ask, did "medievalism" both instigate and inform the academic study of the Middle Ages in the early decades of the discipline? Ralph Adams Cram, for example, seems to have modulated naturally from the ultra-romanticism of his short-lived periodical *The Knight Errant* to the

establishment of the Medieval Academy, and no doubt the mistily medievalist poems of Dorothy L. Sayers's youth precipitated, at least to some degree, the prodigious medieval scholarship of her maturity.

More to the purpose, it must surely be asked how medieval studies were implicated from the outset with contemporary notions of gender traceable to a widespread cultural medievalism. Surely Henry Adams, conventionally named America's first real professor of medieval studies, was in quest for a stable definition of the feminine, as Kim Moreland is among the most recent scholars to document in her book *The Medievalist Impulse in American Literature* (1996). One could argue, in fact, that the nineteenth-century construction of the Middle Ages developed hand in hand with a simultaneous construction of gender putatively authorized by the Middle Ages and still operative today. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has noted, "The master terms of a particular historical moment will . . . entangle most inextricably . . . the filaments of other important definitional nexuses"; when Walter Scott insisted that medieval knights, unlike the Homeric warriors, fought "for God and their ladies," gender clearly becomes inseparable from authorizing conceptions of the past. How did women—or for that matter, men—incorporate contemporary medievalism into their own life-struggles and achievements? What were its implications for, say, Margaret Fuller, who admitted in youth to "a head full of chivalry" and years later, watching Garibaldi ride by, recast the leader for her readers as "a hero of the Middle Ages"? Why did Edith Wharton, in so many ways a modernist, align her erotic development with the paradigms of Francesca da Rimini and Iseult? And what impelled anyone, but women in particular, to embark on medieval studies as a career?

Studies in Medievalism therefore shares with *MFN* an interest in the personal and professional lives of women medievalists like Jessie Weston, Helen Waddell, Eileen Power, Evelyn Underhill, or Vida Dutton Scudder, and we would be glad to see such figures considered in our ongoing series "Makers of the Middle Ages" at the Kalamazoo Congress (where this year we heard Rosemary Welsh's excellent presentation on Anna Jameson). In an additional dimension, Ulrike Wiethaus documented in one of our recent Conference sessions the backlash against a twentieth-century German feminist's revisionist study of St. Elizabeth of Hungary—a backlash largely from scholars still trailing clouds of Montalambert's reverential popular biography of the 1830s. Studies like this one, we think, are especially useful in sorting out the relations—or, more probably, the tensions—between the scholarly discipline of medieval studies and a received medievalism of nonacademic parentage.

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LITERATURE AND LIFE: *SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT*

A few years ago, after presenting a paper on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* at a Kalamazoo session, I received a question from an audience member that stumped me: "How has your viewpoint been affected by the fact that you write as a woman?" Blithely unaware then of the theoretical implications of that question, I manufactured some answer that divulged more personal information than I normally would share with a group of strangers, but the questioner seemed satisfied—or at least decided to let the matter rest.

Since then I have often pondered that question of how my research, my teaching, my overall view of life have been affected by my gender. Although this is certainly a vital question, it has led me to an even broader one: Why am I repeatedly drawn to teach and research particular texts? What causes me to "privilege" certain literary works above others? At this point the answer seems (at least for me) not so much an issue of gender as of the essence of being human, of dealing simultaneously with a personal and professional life. I now recognize that my personal circumstances have affected my teaching and research in surprising ways. I came to this recognition recently, as, preparing yet another conference paper on *Gawain*, my favorite medieval text, I realized that my teaching emphases and research interests in this work reveal a telltale track through about ten years of my life.

My first conference paper on *Gawain* grew out of my first semester of teaching it to a class of general education students. We were all struck by the discordant note in Fitt 4 when Gawain learns that his hostess was actually the vehicle for tests set up for the unsuspecting knight. Despite his often-touted reputation for courtesy, Gawain breaks into an uncharacteristically harsh, discourteous speech against women in general, a diatribe in sharp contradiction to his earlier speeches of exaggerated politeness.

My students and I pondered the incongruity of this speech. Was Gawain actually a closet misogynist, a product of his culture, or a man seeking an excuse for shameful behavior? Looking back now, years later, I realize that during this time my own marriage was on shaky grounds. In that most intimate of relationships a disturbing discrepancy between outward appearance and inner reality was