Editors' Note

The editors would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants in this discussion. Whatever points of disagreement our readers may have raised about his article, Howard Bloch's "Medieval Misogyny" succeeded in focussing critical attention on a troublesome issue that is worthy of continued attention; he has offered a provocative description of the discourse of misogyny as it appears in texts from late Antiquity to the Renaissance. From a diversity of perspectives, the eight respondents demonstrated how feminist critics or historians are not willing to separate the text from its context, literary representations from sexual politics, or the critic from his or her subject. Taken together, "Medieval Misogyny," the eight comments on it, and the author's response to his critics demonstrate how misogyny serves as a limit case for the analysis of the complex intersection of gender, politics, and language.

It is not our intention here to attempt either to reconcile or evaluate the opposing arguments presented by participants in the debate. (The editors do not, on this matter, speak from one and the same mouth.) We prefer to let the contributors speak for themselves, sounding their own individual voices. There is clearly much more that remains to be said about how misogyny works in both medieval and modern culture, and we thank all contributors again for indicating such a range of questions and approaches.

We would like, however, to offer a comment on the structure of the debate. We could not help but notice the extent to which this modern controversy over misogyny seemed to replay the dynamics of the *querelle de la Rose* or the *querelle des femmes*: authorities and readers, women and men, seem locked in opposition over the problem of women's literary representation, with the sides drawn up largely though not exclusively along gender lines. Mutual suspicion and mistrust are endemic to such polemics, which at one level perpetuate the binary divisions of phallogocentric culture.

In a more optimistic vein, we would like to think that the discussion might ultimately be read not as competing monologues but as the beginning of a new, more open dialogue. It may be utopian to think that we can transcend antifeminism easily. But the attempt to undermine cultural misogyny still remains part of the feminist project. How better to do that than to recognize the principle of difference, and to sound not just one voice, but many?

RLK

The editors of MFN invite readers' suggestions for future Commentary columns. Write to Thelma Fenster (address, p.2).