Special Sessions on women or gender announced for the 22nd International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, May 7-10, 1987:

Misogynist Literature: The Texts and the Genres of the Tradition (Elizabeth Psakis Armstrong)

Sex, Money, and the Portrayal of Women in Chaucerian Comedy (Leigh A. Arrathoon)

Joan of Arc: Heroine, Saint, Mystic (Beverly Boyd)

Images of Women in Medieval Art (Magdalena E. Carrasco)

Feminist Mythography (Jane Chance)

Gender and Class in Italy, 987-1987 (Stanley Chojnacki)

Medieval and Renaissance Women's Writings: Views on Virginity, Chastity, and Marriage (Anne R. Larsen)

The MFN will sponsor a cash bar and brief business meeting at Kalamazoo. Look for details in the upcoming program. We hope to see you there!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THANKS to Martha Driver, Mary Erler, Judith Ferster, Monica Green, Elaine Tuttle Hansen, Sylvia Huot, Penelope Johnson, Ann Matter, and Ellen Raymond for their contributions, and to Heidi Rockwell for her helpful assistance with this issue.


Bell compares the self-starvation of some Italian holy women to the eating disorder diagnosed as anorexia nervosa, in which an upper-class, obedient girl of doting yet demanding parents refuses nourishment. Although his psychological arguments advanced by Bell are tentative (based as they are on hagiographic accounts), Bell's social analysis is provocative: the anorexia of these saints was a move of resistance and opposition to the domination of the family, the threat of imposed marriage, and the patriarchal social structure of medieval Catholicism. Deprived of other means of self-definition available to men, the holy anorexics attempted to gain autonomy "over the only thing western society allows a teenage girl to conquer herself." (RLK)

By far the best study of the "Trotula Question" to date, Benton offers conclusive evidence that Trota (her proper name) did indeed exist, and that she authored an extant work of medicine. The several gynecological treatises that went under her name, however, were not written by her, but by three different authors (at least one of whom was certainly male). (Monica H. Green)


Provides summaries of numerous courtesy books for women from the second century to 1500, in Latin, French, English, German, Italian and Spanish. Although the number of books surveyed prevents detailed analysis or discussion of historical context, Bornstein's compendium is a useful source of information. Rich material which merits further study. (RLK)


Includes essays by Jo Ann McNamara ("Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy"), Vern L. Bullough ("The Prostitute in the Early Middle Ages," "Prostitution in the Later Middle Ages"), James Brundage ("Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law," "Rape and Seduction in the Medieval Canon Law," "Prostitution in the Medieval Canon Law"), and Penny S. Gold ("The Marriage of Mary and Joseph in the Twelfth-Century Ideology of Marriage") among others. (Martha Driver)


Special issue devoted to "Courtly Ideology and Woman's Place in Medieval French Literature." Articles on female voice in epic, Na Castelloza, troubadour lyric, Heloise's voice, Marie de France, the female reader of Yvain, women in the fabliau, transvestites in literature, Le Roman de Silence and Christine de Pizan, with Bibliography on Women in Medieval French criticism.


A lurid and engrossing account of flesh as food, spiritual and otherwise. (Martha Driver)


The section on Medieval Marriage (pp. 102-141) includes 15 documents translated by Fredric L. Cheyette from the life of Maria of Montpellier (+1213), daughter of William VIII, lord of Montpellier. Maria's first marriage was arranged when she was 11; she was widowed at 12, and repudiated by her second and third husbands. Maria's misfortunes provide a fascinating case study of marriage, property law, and family politics in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Southern France. (RLK)


The book focusses primarily on fourteenth century literature, Chaucer, Langland, Gower, etc. with an emphasis on social unrest. It includes a very useful survey of literacy in fourteenth century England based on extensive research on historical sources such as wills. (ER)


The five chapters in this collection written by American, English, and French scholars in anthropology, economic theory, and history form a unified and coherent whole. The authors argue that male dominance has not always existed or been universal in human society. Rather, it is a likely outcome of socio-economic expansion and complexity; the roots of male dominance are social rather than biological and are nourished by the control of women's production. Male control grows out of the development of patri locality which is necessary for men to exploit women's labor. The authors revise Engels in arguing that women's subordination preceded the emergence of real private property and the state.

The excellent introduction surveys "explanations" of male dominance in enough detail to be of value for scholars and with a clarity that makes it fully accessible to undergraduates. Chapters one through three trace the emergence of gender dominance through pre-literate societies. Chapter four examines the connection of that dominance to slavery which the authors argue followed the establishment of the subordination of women. The final chapter is an historical examination of growing male dominance in primitive and archaic Greece. The collection works as a whole since the authors agree on the bones of their thesis although describing different shapes for the body of the argument. Some of the chapters, however, are jargon-laden and would be heavy-going for students.

Although this work is not concerned with the Middle Ages and therefore of obvious relevance to readers of the MFM, it is provocative and useful for anyone seeking to teach or do research
from a feminist perspective and offers one answer to the bewildered student who wants an answer for what s/he perceives as the universality of women's subordination. (Penelope Johnson)


Although not a feminist book, this is one of the most thorough surveys of women in Anglo-Saxon England including a discussion of property laws, marriage, women in the church, and an addendum on women after the Conquest. It is an historical study which shows that women had many more rights and opportunities in this early period than usually believed. (ER)


A must for anyone working on English mystics. Georgianna explains the psychological richness of the Wisse in terms of its continental contexts. (ER)


Enduring twelfth century images are explored for their various and often conflicting meanings and compared/contrasted with the contemporary woman's experience. Gold studies secular literature, the epic and the romance, religious sculpture, and secular and religious life for clues to societal attitudes towards women. She has found an ambivalence both in image and reality which defies neat patterns or simple chronological development. The book provides a concise study of work done by other scholars on twelfth century women's experience while providing some new insights. (Ellen Raymond)


Important study on the "invisibility" yet prevalence of rape in the Provencal and Old French pastourelle. These celebrations of bucolic "love" serve to legitimize the sexual dominance of the male aristocracy: in one-fifth of the extant poems, the knight rapes the shepherdess. Gravdal's analysis redresses the critics' oversight of a central topos in pastourelle and, by extension, in other literary genres. (RLK)
Renaissance women artists are discussed in this book. (Martha Driver)


An interpretive study of medical, scientific, and even belletristic literature from Isidore of Seville through the High Middle Ages. (Monica H. Green)

Analyzes the representation of woman in modernity, primarily in deconstructive and post-structuralist theories of male critics. Although not on the Middle Ages, Jardine's insights on the appropriation of the "feminine" as a subversive trope in phallocentric culture by male philosophers may prove illuminating to studies of female representation in early Western literature. (RLK)

Fourteen essays by historians, including articles on the Sibylline tradition, hagiography in Merovingian nunneries, the household servant, prostitution, the English dower, women in Sardinia, gynecology, and "the problem of feminism in the fifteenth century." (RLK)


Studies religious iconography of the nursing Virgin in the context of crises of food supply in fourteenth-century Tuscan society. Quoting from the author's conclusion: "Images of the Virgin with one bare breast both formulate and attempt to control one of the most awesome powers of women, the power to nourish." (RLK)

Chapter 4 deals with images of women in 14th century Tuscan painting. This may be very useful for those investigating women in religious imagery. (Martha Driver)

Concise critique of Anglo-American and French feminist literary criticism; provides excellent overview and analysis of major theories. Useful selected bibliography. (RLK)

Quoting the abstract: "Adrienne Munich argues that the male-authored works of the literary canon are properly as much the object of feminist criticism as is women's writing. Turning to the traditional reading of Genesis as a myth of male dominance - in particular, dominance by means of language - she shows how tropes of male authority serve to deny the presence and power of women. In a feminist reading of an episode from Don Quixote, she deconstructs the ways in which literature mythologizes woman and man's desire for woman. Finally, she suggests that critical discourse, in defending texts which don't wholly substantiate patriarchal definitions of gender, is often more misogynistic than the texts themselves" (p. 238). The essay provides useful theory for the continued analysis of male-authored medieval texts. (Elaine Tuttle Hansen)


The book is an historical study of prostitution as an accepted institution that allowed women a certain amount of autonomy and power. (ER)


I was particularly interested in the play Mary of Nijmechen, translated by Eric Colledge and previously published by him in Medieval Netherlands Religious Literature, (New York, 1965). In this fourteenth or fifteenth-century Dutch narrative, perhaps written by Anna Bijns, the heroine, Mary, experiences the Faustian cravings for knowledge and power. She asks the devil, in the form of a raffish fellow named Moenen, to instruct her in necromancy, and though he puts her off, he does consent to teach her the seven liberal arts and "all the languages in the world." Under her new name, Emma, she and Moenen travel about, and are responsible for the deaths and damnations of many. In one of their several tavern visits, she sings a song in praise of art, "O rhetoric, o true and lovely art." When she attempts to leave the devil, a spectacular scene ensues in which Emma is drawn up into the air, then thrown to the ground, but miraculously recovers. The conclusion of the play deals with her successful quest for forgiveness, and her spectacular penance.

Most intriguing for feminists, of course, is the character of the powerful Mary/Emma - learned, ambitious, charming, accomplished - and as Professor Petroff observes, the "urbanity, compassion, and humor" of the play's tone is likewise unusual. (Mary C. Erler)

Essays include "Marital fertility and lactation 1570-1720," by Dorothy McLaren; "The remarrying widow: a stereotype reconsidered," by Barbara J. Todd; "Women and the urban economy: Oxford 1500-1800," and "Revolving and crucified marriages: the position of Tudor bishops' wives," both by Mary Prior; "Recusant women 1560-1640," by Marie B. Rowlands; "Stuart women's diaries and occasional memoirs," by Sara Heller Mendelson; and "Women's published writings 1600-1700," by Patricia Crawford. This volume also includes many useful appendices.


Schibanoff reads Christine de Pisan's *Book of the City of Women* as "a quasi-autobiographical story of the transformation of the narrator "Christine" from an immasculated reader into a woman reader intent on defying existing canons and on exercising her right to read texts according to her experiences and interests." She argues that print culture in fact promotes the "immasculation" of women (by fixing patriarchal antifeminist texts and interpretations) and cites the Wife of Bath as an instance of an "aural reader" who, lacking the notion of the fixed text of written tradition, resists immasculation more successfully than Christine and instinctively rereads authorities that contradict her experience.


Sedgwick recasts the work of twentieth-century theorists like Levi-Strauss and Girard from a feminist perspective to shed light on the literary representation of a wide continuum of male bonds, ranging from homophobic to homoerotic, and pays particular attention to "triangular transactions" between men in which women figure not as subjects but as objects of exchange. The earliest work Sedgwick deals with is Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, but her theory suggests fruitful application to a number of male-authored medieval texts, all of which will lend credence to her general claim that "the European canon as it exists" is a male-homosocial canon.


An historical survey of a wide variety of influential queens. (ER)


In both books Strong discusses Renaissance women artists. (Martha Driver)


This essay discusses the activities of Christine de Pizan, printers' widows in the late 15th century, and several others up to the publications of Blanche Knopf in the 1950s, but is far too brief. (Martha Driver)


This essay contains useful profiles of Esther Inglis, Elizabeth Lucar, Marie Presot and others. (Martha Driver)


New MEDIEVAL FEMINIST NEWSLETTER Subscribers

The following colleagues have been added to the MPN roster. Any scholar working on women and feminist theory in the Middle Ages who would like to be added to our list should send a brief description of research interests along with $1.00 to Roberta L. Krueger, MPN, Hamilton College, Clinton, NY 13323.

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