defames women for several serious vices, claiming that their morals are full of perversity..."; in order to make a connection with the Genius passage "spoken" by the ghost of Jean de Meun, we went to the beginning of the second paragraph: "He is so insistent about not telling a secret to a woman, who is so bereft of discretion as he recalls, and I can't imagine where in the devil he found so much nonsense and so many futile words as are huried at them throughout that long trial, but I beg all those who consider this quite authentic and put so much faith in it to tell me how many men they have known to be accused, killed, hanged, or even reproached in the street because of the denunciation of their wives; I think they will find them very thinly scattered" (342); next I excerpted those lines from the third paragraph that mention "the ugly way" that Jean speaks of married women who deceive their husbands (343) and the script speech concludes with Christine's direct attack on Jean: "In spite of the fact that my judgment tells me that Master Jean de Meung was a very learned man and eloquent and would have been capable of writing a much better work ... I suppose that the great lechery which obsessed him perhaps made him more prejudiced than profitable, as by our actions our inclinations commonly reveal themselves" (344-5).

7 Richards, 3-4, beginning with the opening lines, "One day as I was sitting alone in my study...," and, omitting several lines, continuing through to the passage on Christine's dismay at reading Mathéolus, as demonstrated in the following speech from our "script":

"Because the subject seemed to me not very pleasant for people who do not enjoy lies, and of no use in developing virtue or manners, given its lack of integrity in diction and theme...[,] I put it down in order to turn my attention to more elevated and useful study. But just the sight of this book ... made me wonder how it happened that so many different men—and learned men among them—have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many wicked insults about women and their behavior...They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. Thinking deeply about these matters, I began to examine my character and conduct as a natural woman and, similarly, I considered other women whose company I frequently kept, princesses, great ladies, women of the middle and lower classes...To the best of my knowledge, no matter how long I confronted or dissected the problem, I could not see or realize how their claims could be true when compared to the natural behavior and character of women."

8 The conference, "Enhancing Undergraduate Instruction," was funded by a grant from the Bush Foundation and was held on October 17-19, 1990 at the Northland Inn in Brooklyn Park, a Minneapolis suburb.

CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF MEDIEVAL WOMEN AND THEIR LEGACY: USING FILM, TEXT, AND THEORY TO TEACH MEDIEVAL WOMEN'S CULTURE

Actually, I really did catch on fire, but Mr. Preminger just kept on rolling....
He used that tape in the film because it was authentic.

—from the Journals of Jean Seberg

I. 1. Introduction

"Cinematic Representations of Medieval Women and Their Legacy: Using Film, Text, and Theory to Teach Medieval Women" is being taught at Wake Forest University, a private liberal arts university, and at West Chester University, a state university where the course is cross-listed in literature, comparative literature, women's studies, and film. Pairings and modifications of texts and films can be used in introductory courses as well as in more specialized ones. For example, at West Chester, it is taught as a lower-division interdisciplinary course for nonmajors, as an upper-division seminar for literature majors, and at the graduate level.
The course focuses on the ways in which modern film has represented gender, space, and constructions of the body as major categories for understanding aspects of medieval women’s culture. In broad terms, the purpose of the course is twofold: (1) to introduce students to medieval women’s culture through writings by and about medieval women and (2) to study these writings in the context of one of the major forms of cultural discourse today, film. Important readings in feminist and film theory are used to help contextualize connections between literary and cinematic representations and articulate questions for further inquiry, analysis, and interpretation.

2. Why Film?
A course studying medieval women’s culture is particularly suited to an approach that integrates the disciplines of history, literature, philosophy, art history, music history, and science. Students now live among and often receive formal education in new electronic media and technologies which encourage the simultaneous use of visual, verbal, written, and acoustic forms. The disciplinary categories of medieval literature, film studies, and feminist theory share an interest in the politics of images and representation: literature and film help to project a constructed world wherein the intersections of visual and literary gendered representations can be studied, while feminist literary and film theory prevent images of medieval women from becoming fixed as a certain “type” or coherent “subject” positioned in a narrowly defined historical space.

Film brings visibility, embodiment, and historical presence to medieval women, whose exclusion from disciplinary regimes and scholarship has long provided the rationale for thinking that medieval women’s culture is a “no culture.” Film can dramatically illustrate narrative movement and provide a context for vicarious participation in configurations of sexuality, gendered space, boundaries, and social codes. This course uses three categories of film: historical films; modern films in which medieval themes and experiences as they have been documented by medieval women continue to influence women’s lives; and documentaries that examine medieval legacies in the modern world.

3. Course Divisions
The course is organized into four sections: Construction of Medieval Patriarchy; Space as Punishment and Resistance; Care of the Body; and Exploring the Imaginary. The first section also serves as an introduction to the course and, as such, focuses on the two most important cultural institutions influencing how we think about medieval women’s lives, church and court. This section concludes with a special focus on one woman, Joan of Arc. More than any other medieval woman, Joan of Arc has been the subject of numerous twentieth-century films, from Carl Dreyer’s The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928) to Matthew Robbins’ contemporary setting in The Legend of Billie Jean (1985) to Jacques
Rivette's two-part epic, Les Batailles and Les Prisons (1993). In addition, a recent documentary called From the Journals of Jean Seberg (dir. Mark Rappaport, 1995) shows in concrete detail the dangers that continue to threaten contemporary women who act in the tradition of Joan of Arc. (Tellingly, the film includes a quotation from Jean-Luc Godard, who was very influenced by Seberg's performance as Joan in Otto Preminger's 1957 Saint Joan: "Cinema history is the history of boys photographing girls.")

The second section of the course, Space as Punishment and Resistance, explores cultural functions of female monastic enclosures as sites of protective space, social exclusion, or utopian possibilities. The third section, Care of the Body, focuses on women's healing, witchcraft, and self-immolation. The forth section, Exploring the Imaginary, investigates the fate of female authors vis-à-vis censorship and other patriarchal strategies to conceal women's voices and the extent to which medieval women writers developed an écriture féminine.

4. Pedagogy
This course offers a highly interactive and process-oriented pedagogy that relies heavily on weekly essay writing, in-class roundtable and out-of-class electronic discussions, and independent and group research projects that students develop throughout the semester. Our pedagogical goals are as follows: (1) to stimulate and encourage critical and independent thinking; (2) to foster an appreciation of the complex dynamics of cultural productivity and creativity; (3) to familiarize students with current scholarship on film theory, medieval studies, and women's studies; (4) to train students in basic research methods and critical writing within the context of the humanities; and (5) to develop students' "visual literacy" and historical perspective in an increasingly visual rather than text-based culture.

5. Format
One option for balancing class discussion and film screenings is to meet once a week for class discussion followed by a laboratory session during which the class views one or two films for the following class discussion (pizza optional...). We hand out a questionnaire for each film to solicit reflections on the film as well as discussion questions for the class. For each class session, students prepare responses to the discussion questions and assigned reading. We provide introductory lectures as necessary; the main focus is on discussing, comparing, and contrasting film and written materials. Students are encouraged and are graded on keeping the discussions alive by using E-mail or a class listserve between class sessions.
II. Syllabus

Part I: The Construction of Medieval Patriarchy

Week 1: Medieval Military Masculinities: Religious, Courtly, and Literary


Week 2: Constructions of the Feminine in Medieval Patriarchy


Week 3: Transgressing Gender Boundaries and Its Consequences


Week 4: Contemporary Examples of Female Transgression


Part II: Space as Punishment and Resistance

Week 5: Negotiating Enclosure


Film: Clive Donner, Stealing Heaven.

Week 6: Disciplinary Discourses of Enclosure and Rebellion


Film: Franco Zeffirelli, Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1973).

Week 7: Enclosures as Punishment or Escape


Film: Chris Newby, Anchoress (1993); Margaret Wescott, Behind the Veil (1984).
Week 8: Utopian Space/Dream Sequence

Readings: *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas; The Life of Christina of Markyate*; Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (selections).


Part III: Care of the Body

Week 9: Healing and Bewitching


Week 10: Self-Immolation


Part IV: Exploring the Imaginary

Week 11: Speaking the Body


Film: Lars von Trier, Breaking the Waves (1996)

Week 12: Silencing the Female Author


Film: Maria Luisa Bemberg, I, the Worst of All (1990); Michael Tolkin, The Rapture (1993).


Weeks 13–14: Class Presentations

Week 15: Conclusions; Research Paper Due

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GENDER ISSUES IN THE ART OF THE MIDDLE AGES

In the spring of 1997 I designed and taught a class entitled “Gender Issues in the Art of the Middle Ages” for the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program at New York University. Although much of the class was devoted to examining images of women in medieval art and the social and ideological implications of such images, the focus was on “gender” as opposed to “women.” As I have heard others say, it is difficult to study women without also studying men, and I wanted to examine gender as a cultural construct and not as a biological given.

Through a study of manuscripts, ivories, sculpture and stained glass mostly from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, we examined the way medieval art both reflects and helps construct ideologies of gender. Rather than using chronology or media as a method of organization, I focused on a theme for each class. These