

# NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



## A REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT: KALAMAZOO 1996

In keeping with our emphasis on fostering community among medievalist feminist scholars, both advisory board and membership meetings began with introductions of new advisory board members, of officers, and of all in attendance. To assure continuity, we need nominations for members of the advisory board to serve from July 1, 1977 to June 30, 2000. Members were urged to forward nominations to Maggie Schleissner by September 1.

The board formed two subcommittees: 1) to investigate provision of childcare during the Kalamazoo Congress: Ann Clark Bartlett, Linda Lomperis, and Nydia Rivera-Gloeckner; 2) to review the by-laws: Laine Doggett, Ruth Mazo Karras and Roberta Krueger.

The board decided to pursue affiliation with several other professional societies and in each case named a board member to pursue the matter. Clare Lees will look into affiliation with the American Comparative Literature Society; Paula Gerson with the College Art Association; Sarah Stanbury with the Modern Language Association; and Ruth Mazo Karras and Mary Suydam with the American Historical Association. One goal will be to sponsor sessions at the annual conference of each of these societies. We also agreed to participate, along with SSHMA, in the sponsorship of a conference on homosexualities in the Middle Ages, which is being planned for 1998 at the CUNY Graduate Center. Francesca Canadé Sautman will serve as our representative on the conference planning committee.

As usual, the selection of our sessions for the next Congress aroused much lively discussion and demonstrated the wealth of excellent ideas the membership can generate. Informal discussion continued after the meeting during the open bar.

*Pamela Sheingorn*

## KALAMAZOO 1997 SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP



The following SMFS sessions have been approved for the May 1997 meetings of the International Congress on Medieval Studies sponsored by the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo. Interested participants should send an abstract to the organizer by September 15, 1996. Early queries are appreciated.

Our Business Meeting and Cash Bar have also been included in the May meetings. See you there!

1) "The Poetics and Politics of Female Enclosure"

Organizers: Shari Horner, English Department, Dickinson College; and Virginia Blanton-Whetsell, Binghamton University

This session explores the aesthetic and social dimensions of female anchorism. The organizers seek contributions from scholars working in a wide range of time periods and in a broad variety of disciplines. Some topics might include: the range of material practices and rituals associated with female enclosure, the changes in anchoritic rules over time, and relationships between sainthood and enclosure.

2) "Autobiographical Criticism and Medieval Studies"

Organizer: Anne Clark Bartlett, Department of English, DePaul University

This session will reflect on the relationship of medievalists to their subject matter. Some suggested topics might include: the formation and blurring of relationships between scholar, topic, and audience; the ways in which the "other" languages of the Middle Ages may communicate in ways our contemporary tongues cannot; and the reasons why certain topics attract us and show up as discourses and counterdiscourses in our scholarship.

3) "Women and Death in the Middle Ages: Artistic, Historical, and Literary Perspectives"

Organizer: Judith Laird, Department of English, Southwest Texas State University

This session invites examination of medieval representations (textual, iconographic, musical, etc.) which either portray the death of a female(s) or which associates women (or the feminine) with death. The suggested focus is on the topic as a cultural text, a bearer of social meanings. Papers may examine familiar representations or suggest neglected sources and approaches for further study.

4) "The Company of Women: Knowledge and Use of Medieval/Early Modern Women's Writing by Later Female Authors"

Organizer: Chris Africa, History/Social Sciences Bibliographer, University of Iowa Libraries

This session seeks to chart relatively new territory. What do we know about medieval and early modern women's awareness of the writing of the predecessors? What sorts of influence did medieval women's texts have? Papers need not focus on individual authors or texts, but they should examine the "distaff side" of literary history.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR THE MFN ADVISORY BOARD



Nominations should include the candidate's field, affiliation, research interests and one sentence statement of goals for the organization. This information will be printed on the mail ballot sent out with the Fall Newsletter. Please send nominations to Margaret Schleissner, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648-3099.



Ann Marie Rasmussen, General Editor for 1996-97, will feature the topic "Gender and Medievalism Inside and Outside the Academy" in the fall issue. This subject grows out of Megan McLaughlin's "musings" in *MFN* 19 on our "complex nostalgia for the Middle Ages." We ask for contributions on this topic, including but not limited to such topics as: gender in popular representations of medieval culture; popular medievalisms in teaching; how we address our students' preconceptions about gender and medieval culture; the success, failure, advantages, disadvantages of using popularizations in teaching; more 'musings' on how we recognize and channel our own nostalgia into scholarly discourse. We hope to receive as well contributions from novelists on what kinds of medieval scholarship they read and how they use what we write.

Please send contributions, questions, or proposals to Ann Marie Rasmussen, Dept. of German, Duke University, Box 90256, Durham, NC 27708-0256 or post to: amras@acpub.duke.edu.

## MEDIEVAL STUDIES AND MENTORING



Who Do We Turn To? Perspectives on Women and Mentoring culled from the Round Table sponsored by TEAMS and the Society of Medieval Feminists at the 30th International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo 1995

Organized and edited by Bonnie Wheeler, Medieval Studies, Southern Methodist University (bwheeler@mail.smu.edu)

The Committee on Teaching the Middle Ages (TEAMS) and Society of Medieval Feminists co-sponsored a session on Women and Mentoring at the Kalamazoo medieval conference in May 1995. The topic for this panel on professional roles was chosen precisely because it opens up sensitive (and sometimes raw) issues about correlations between gender/age/status and attitudes/behaviors in the academy. Do women faculty, for instance, "mentor" students as well, better, or differently than male colleagues?

Do our women students think they are mentored in the same fashion, to the same degree, and with the same results as their male colleagues? What follows are several frank reflections on the mentoring process from woman faculty at various stages of their professional careers. The forum fomented lively discussion with the audience of faculty and student colleagues about some merits and deficits of our modes of professional induction. Topics of harassment and various other forms of inappropriate domination or adulation seemed to be leading participants to views which drained mentoring relations of all emotion. The conversation concluded on a powerful note with an intervention by Judith Ferster, who reminded us that at their best these intense intellectual relations inspire not only admiration, but also love, and these emotions are part of our educational energies.