

MEDIEVAL FEMINIST NEWSLETTER

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The NEXT ISSUE of MFN (Spring 1988) will focus on grant writing and publishing. Please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to E. Jane Burns by March 1, 1988.

If you have not yet paid your dues for 1987-88 and wish to receive the Spring Newsletter, PLEASE SEND \$2.00 to E. Jane Burns. This is your LAST CHANCE!

Conference on "Gender and the Moral Order in Medieval Society," sponsored by the Medieval Studies Center of Fordham University to be held on March 25-26, 1988, at the Lincoln Center Campus, 60th St. and Columbus Ave. For information contact Thelma Fenster, Medieval Studies Office, Fordham University, Bronx, NY 10458. Register early. Space is limited!

Inspired by the overwhelming turnout at last year's cash bar, the MFN will again sponsor a cash bar and brief business meeting at Kalamazoo. Look for details in the conference program. Be sure to come!

BOOK REVIEW

Geoffrey Chaucer, The Legend of Good Women, trans. and with an intro. by Ann McMillan. Houston: Rice Univ. Press, 1987.

In her introduction to this translation of Chaucer's Legend of Good Women, Ann McMillan focuses her scholarly attention on the poem's place in the tradition of literary catalogues of (in)famous women. Over-viewing this long-lived genre, McMillan identifies two influential classical sources, in Vergil and Ovid, and then discusses the assimilation and extension of classical ideas about women in catalogues by early Christian writers (specifically, Jerome) and later continental poets (Boccaccio and Christine de Pizan). She argues that Boccaccio's De Claris Mulieribus provided Chaucer with both "raw material" and an example of the "torturous reasoning" of a fundamentally anti-feminist male author that Chaucer set out to parody. Her subsequent comments on the Legend itself attempt to support this reading. In the Prologue, she points out various problems with a "straight" reading, such as the framing of the description of the blissful birds in May (ll. 130-170) with allusion to the rapes of Europa and Chloris. In the Legends, she views the levelling of the various heroines into flat, monotonous types of the God of Love's ideal as "ironic"; Chaucer, enemy of "moral absolutes," is both sympathetic with woman's plight and