strategy might be difficult to enact, for the cloistering of Medieval Studies, as I have indicated throughout this piece, is overdetermined.

I hope that audience members will find insights from our roundtable helpful in their daily battles against problems that plague feminist medievalists in academe.

Lynn Arner
Hobart and William Smith Colleges

THE INVISIBILITY OF FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP IN MEDIEVAL IBERIAN STUDIES

During fall semester 1999, I made what I deemed a bold attempt to infuse my Survey of Medieval and Golden Age Spanish Literature, a class required of all undergraduate majors in Spanish, with fresh material. In addition to the traditional authors studied, we were going to read the literary works of four Hispanic women from this period: Leonor López de Córdoba (b. 1363) composer of the first “autobiography” written in Castilian; St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582), poet, prose-writer, mystic and, subsequently, doctor of the Catholic Church; María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590–1650) novelist and dramatist who depicted the cruel reality of women’s life choices; and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695), Mexican poet, dramatist, essayist, autobiographer, and early feminist, who was persecuted for her intellectual pursuits. Because the works of these women—with the exception of one poem by St. Teresa—did not appear in our anthology, I included in my course reader a selection of their writings and some supplementary materials.

On the last day of the semester, one of the brightest students in the class (who was also an honors student and native speaker of Spanish) approached me as I gathered up my books. “When was Don Juan written?” he asked me. I explained that the first literary work about the figure of Don Juan was Tirso de Molina’s seventeenth-century drama El burlador de Sevilla. A more popular version of the legend, Don Juan Tenorio, was composed in the 19th century by José de Zorilla. As if not hearing my answer, he continued to pursue his line of inquiry. “Why didn’t we read Don Juan in class?” he asked. “It is an important literary work.” “Well,” I responded, “this is a survey class, so we can read only a small number of representative texts. We read Fuenteovejuna by Lope de Vega, the ‘father’ of the modern Spanish theater, and a nicely glossed edition is in our textbook.”

The student and I walked out of the classroom and down the hallway. Two other students from the class tagged along listening. The young man now moved to make the point he had wanted to make all along. “While I was home during the
Thanksgiving break, my dad and I looked through a history of Spanish literature. I looked for Leonor López de Córdoba and María de Zayas, but they were not in there. Why did we spend time reading them if they don't even exist?" I was floored. "But," I began, "these women did exist, and they did write. You see, the canon of literary texts we typically read was formed ..." My words were left hanging as the student abruptly turned and announced, "I don't have time to talk to you now. I have class," opened the door, and rushed down the stairs. I was infuriated by his comments, but more significantly by the way in which he had silenced my explanation.

My face undoubtedly betrayed my disbelief and anger as I stood there looking at the door. The two female students who had been following looked surprised, and then laughed. "We understand why you included those women writers in the course," one said. The other added, "I really enjoyed reading María de Zayas, and wished we could have read more of her novelas." A week later, on the day of the final exam, a third female student approached me and explained that she had heard about the incident from her classmates. She was shocked, too, and added that she had thoroughly enjoyed reading the women's writings.

Their consolation, however, did little to calm me because the bottom line was: "He didn't get it." After a semester of reiterating why I had chosen to include four female authors in our syllabus, and how it was imperative to develop a more inclusive literary canon, I realized that this bright and articulate honors student hadn't gotten it. I had failed! Or had I? My inability to make sense of this incident forced me to take a hard look at the presentation of my discipline to undergraduates, as well as my own experiences as a student and, now, a tenured scholar.

I begin with this anecdote because it seems to me to be emblematic of the situation encountered by feminist scholars and scholarship in Medieval Iberian Studies: just as my student could not see or acknowledge the women writers studied because their works are not validated as canonical, so too is feminist scholarship overlooked even though feminist scholars in the field are active, feminist scholarship is being published, and medieval women were living, significant contributors to the cultures of medieval Iberia as writers, workers, nuns, leaders, and caretakers. However, in a field whose infrastructure—from graduate school mentoring, hiring practices, and leadership in the profession, to the scholarship that is valued and the formation of the canon—is essentially still patriarchally structured, there is little opportunity for this message to be heard. This liminality of feminist scholarship, coupled with the marginalization of medieval Iberian studies within the greater field of western European medieval studies, leaves feminist scholars in the discipline struggling to make a visible and significant impact. In what follows, I would like to reflect briefly on the most
salient of these issues of infrastructure, and offer some suggestions for working towards transformation.

As a rule, medieval Iberian literary studies are founded on the positivistic practice of nineteenth-century philology as espoused by Lachmann and further developed by Bédier. Throughout much of the twentieth century, graduate research meant producing elaborate critical editions of literary texts using our training in paleography, codicology, and linguistics. As our professors guided us in our search to produce the “true” or “best” text, theory with a capital T was often left aside, as were a whole collection of literary “isms” (postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminism), the very prisms available to us to “read” the editions produced.

Part of this conservative training was the predominance in the field of senior male professors. These senior scholars consciously or unconsciously developed a network of male graduate students who were groomed for placement in tenure-track positions at large research or Ivy League institutions. There was certainly no network of female mentors into which female graduate students were plugged, no grooming for plum positions. Rather, we were guided toward “settling.” Training in feminist approaches to medieval Iberian studies was simply not an option: those Ibero-medicvalists who have gone on to pursue a feminist research agenda have had to teach themselves women’s cultural history and feminist theory once they landed their first job, reinventing or reeducating themselves along the way, so to speak.

Because the field of medieval Iberian studies historically has been so male-dominated, the majority of the leadership positions in that field remains in the hands of our male colleagues. Female scholars, particularly feminists, are not to be found in high numbers among the ranks of full professors nor at the large research and Ivy League institutions. The invisiblity of feminist scholars in positions of authentic leadership creates a serious problem for those feminists working towards promotion and tenure. For example, promotion and tenure committees require external review letters from scholars at the rank of full professor at nationally renowned institutions, as do fellowship and grant committees. In my specific field of fourteenth-century women’s writings, I cannot come up with the names of any feminist scholars at the rank of full professor to write on my behalf. Who will read the draft of my book manuscript which is heavily influenced by feminist social theory? Who will write letters in support of my fellowship proposals? Where are the role models for those of us trying to combine motherhood and professional life? If most Ph.D.s in foreign languages are indeed earned by women, why haven’t we seen a change in the past decade in the leadership of the profession?
Despite a lack of visibility, it would be untrue to say that groundbreaking research into issues of feminist concern in medieval Iberian studies has not been published in the past decade. Feminist scholarship has begun to emerge as a shaping force in the literary and historical research of Laura Bass, Carmen Benito Vessels, Ana Gomez-Bravo, Eukene Lacarra, Montserrat Piera, Milagros Rivera, Donna Rogers, Cristina Segura, Miriam Shadis, Marilyn Stone, Ron Surtz, Teresa Vinyoles i Vidal, Alison Weber, and Barbara Weissberger. Feminism has also made its presence felt, together with queer theory and postmodern criticism, with the publication in 1999 of Gregory Hutcheson and Josiah Blackmore’s *Queer Iberia* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press). My own challenge to the issue of visibility is to bring out of the darkness the voluminous writings of nearly a dozen medieval Catalan princesses and queens preserved in the Archives of the Crown of Aragon (Barcelona), among them the approximately 20,000 extant letters of queen Violant de Bar (1365-1431).

As I have said, the omission of women writers and feminist criticism from the literary canon reflects an ignorance or unwillingness on the part of the leaders of our discipline to effect change. If, for a moment, we take a look at the female-authored texts that are included in the standard classroom anthologies of medieval Spanish literature, this passivity becomes self-evident. The widely-used *Antología de autores antiguos* (1972) includes for the period 900-1700 only one female-authored work, a poem by St. Teresa of Avila. The newer anthology preferred by many, David W. Foster’s *Literatura española* (1995), also limits its inclusion of women to St. Teresa. Is it any wonder that our undergraduates feel justified in stating that women writers didn’t exist in medieval Iberia? Most of us who choose to include women writers and feminist approaches to male-authored texts, or to discuss feminist issues in medieval Iberian culture are forced to supplement with course readers and photocopied pages which students perceive as costly, non-essential reading—“recommended, not required”—regardless of how it is stressed.

In addition to the problems of invisibility and exclusion internal to medieval Iberian studies, the question of marginality within the broader field of Medieval Studies is a substantial concern as well. One need only flip through the pages of any Western European medieval history to note the absence of nearly all things Iberian—languages, literature, science, art, agriculture, law, and so on. Most comparative monographs of medieval Western European history or literature do not extend their view to include Iberian materials, feminist or otherwise. In a like vein, both edited volumes and major journals seldom include contributions from Ibero-medievalists. Iberian studies in general have not been integrated—and do not fight to integrate themselves—into the larger theoretical conversations of the historical and literary disciplines.
Although as a very recent initiate into the realm of feminism, I would prefer to look to others to tackle this problem of invisibility, I realize that I myself must become an active agent in the call for network-building and in the transformation of leadership and the canon. I have found the following strategies most useful to me as I work towards these goals:

- Feminist (and female) Ibero-medievalists must begin to collaborate with and support each other, creating a vocal, yet diverse, professional network. Through this network, we must seek to mentor and support graduate students and junior colleagues in their “non-traditional” research and in their publishing endeavors.

- We must look to the rich reserve of critical resources on gender studies and feminist and queer theory across an interdisciplinary spectrum, both medieval and modern. These approaches can be useful tools in our research when used judiciously.

- Greater visibility on the national and international levels is imperative: feminist Ibero-medievalists must maintain a presence at conferences, proposing sessions and nominating each other for editorial and advisory boards of well-known academic organizations and journals.

- We must strive to publish our research with an eye to the greater scope of Medieval Studies, namely by submitting more articles to journals like *Speculum* and *Journal of Medieval History*, as well as to internationally-known feminist journals like *Journal of Women’s History, Gender and History*, and *Signs*.

- Feminist scholars in fields with a fuller appreciation of sophisticated theory, such as Classical, French, and Renaissance studies, as well as History, can lend support if we reach out and make them aware of our scholarly pursuits.

- Women’s Studies programs at our institutions are by definition interdisciplinary and open to the contributions of all feminists. At my institution, for instance, the Women’s Studies program sponsors an informal Feminist Theory reading group and more formal invited lecturers; aids in the development of a professional women’s network; assists feminist research with small research and travel grants; and welcomes the development of courses related to the mission of the program. Affiliation with programs of this type can offer needed support.

- Finally, transformation of the literary canon is the key to better educating our undergraduate and graduate students. The integration of women writers and women’s issues into the traditional knowledge base will not only validate the research already done in these fields, but will prepare a new generation of
students willing to acknowledge that women have made significant contributions to the cultural history of Medieval Iberia.

Dawn Bratsch-Prince
Iowa State University

1 My use of the term "Iberian" is meant to include all the cultures of the Iberian peninsula, of which the most widely recognized are Castilian, Catalan, and Galician-Portuguese.


4 María de Zayas y Sotomayor, "La esclava de su amante" [Her Lover’s Slave], Water Lilies. Flores del agua, Ed. Amy Katz Kaminsky (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996), 143–201.


7 In the recent past, two journals have dedicated issues to feminist criticism and women in the Iberian literary world: Journal of Hispanic Philology (1989) and La Coronica (1998).

8 Barbara Mujica’s Antología de la literatura española. Edad media (NY: J. Wiley, 1991) fares better in its inclusion of Teresa de Cartagena and Florencia Pinar, but its format and difficulty make it unwieldy for use at the undergraduate level.

9 One notable exception to this is Bonnie Anderson and Judith Zinsser’s A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present. 1st ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), which does sprinkle references to the medieval Iberian peninsula throughout.