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

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 (11. 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