

In the class I tried both to be sensitive to the speakers and to move the discussion toward how pedagogy in the classroom could include experience, calling for a 'feeling discourse' or a 'feeling analysis,' my ideas influenced by Stephanie Jed's Chaste Thinking (Indiana UP, 1989). Yet the authority of the personal experience of pain silenced some students who felt they could not question these women's statements. One student wrote later that to claim privileged status for the private interior space of a woman's body was to privilege female bodies and reproduce traditional notions of chastity rather than transcend those stereotypes. Further, the student worried that to see the permanent mutilation of dismemberment and delingualization as less severe than rape was to confirm the necessity for the protection and perhaps confinement of women.

I tell this story, first, to raise our awareness about the consequences of teaching older materials in the feminist classroom. Feminist pedagogic practice which invites the active inclusion of personal experience may animate literary texts in unexpectedly painful ways. I had not imagined that I could have so many rape survivors in the class. Second, I want to raise a question about the status of survivor testimony in the feminist classroom. In the late 60s and 70s women found empowerment in 'breaking the silence' and in their analysis of the personal. I fear that the profound political disturbance provoked by the breaking of taboos against female speech may be smoothed out by processes that transform the political into the therapeutic. The woman empowered to speak may be empowered only to reproduce her victimization. Testimony may be a necessary stage in a movement toward political change, but I fear that a cultural process may be recuperating the power of feminist challenge through the uncovering of pain, a question raised by Harriet Goldhor Lerner in her review of self-help books (Women's Review of Books April 1990: 15-16). The political aspect of the slogan the "personal is political" may be muted. This classroom incident further illustrates the silencing effects of experience in the classroom analyzed by Diana Fuss in Essentially Speaking (Routledge, 1989).

Next time that I teach Titus I will begin with the problems of the play for a reader who has been raped and will ask how representations of rape in literature participate in the construction of ideology. I plan to pair the play with Atwood's Handmaid's Tale and will show A Question of Silence (by Marlene Gorris, a 1984 Dutch film available on video). I am considering beginning the class with James Kavanaugh's "Ideology" in Critical Terms for Literary Study ed. Lentricchia and McLaughlin (U Chicago P, 1990), and perhaps Fuss's chapter "Essentialism in the Classroom."

REPORT FROM NEW YORK

Gender and Medieval Society II: Men in the Middle Ages

Thekla Fenster, Fordham University, and Jo Ann McNamara, Hunter College Co-organizers

Fordham University's March 1990 conference on "Men in the Middle Ages," a follow-up to its 1988 meeting on "Gender and the Moral Order in Medieval Society," was organized to encourage the study of men as material, gendered beings, different from the universalized, transcendent idea often transmitted by conventional intellectual history. Such an approach, which supposes that

gender is constructed, begins to demystify men's history and men's culture as they have been written/constructed largely by men. At the same time it attempts to correct the suggestion that women alone have gender—an idea that privileges women but also, paradoxically, may threaten a new kind of marginalization.

Jo Ann McNamara gave the keynote address, asking the "Herrenfrage": why in the eleventh and twelfth centuries did men want to make the public sphere "woman-free"? Why did men increasingly try to dissociate themselves from women? Other papers dealt with a variety of issues: the emergence of the husband in law (Susan Stuard), inheritance customs and father's intentions (Jacques Pluss), the masculinization of domestic service in Venice (Dennis Romano), jurors in a small English town (Anne DeWindt), Alcuin's quarrel with Charlemagne's "boys" over the Lunar Saltus of 797 (Mary Alberi), gender roles and cross-dressing (Vern Bullough), and the presentation of self in wills (Joel Rosenthal). A session on spirituality considered the correspondence of Pope Gregory VII (Sue Brotherton), female sanctity as a concern among thirteenth-century friars (John Coakley), and spiritual authority in the years 900-1150 (Mary Skinner). Papers in a related session addressed the male reception of St. Foy (Pamela Sheingorn) and Elijah the Prophet as a model for the masculine Carmelite order (James Boyce, O. Carm.) Literature offerings included a roundtable discussion with participants Michael Gerli, Louise Mirrer, Julian Weiss, and Scott Wight dealing with gendered approaches to medieval Spanish language and literature. Other literature papers centered on Marie de France (Robert Stein), the construction of masculinity in the Poema de Mio Cid (Bonnie Wheeler), the Roman d'Eneas and the construction of empire (Christopher Baswell), the question of manliness in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde (Elaine Hansen), fear and love of men in Inferno XV (Linda Lomperis), male fear and epic distance (Andrew Taylor), and anti-marriage literature (Elizabeth Makowski).

<u>NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS,</u>
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Report from the May 1990 MFN Business Meeting at Kalamazoo

A brief business meeting preceded the fifth annual MFN cash Bar at Kalamazoo, a convivial event attended by a crowd of old and new friends.

The following items were discussed:

1) We elicited topics from subscribers for next year's proposed sessions at Kalamazoo. We decided to submit only five sessions under the MFN rubric, and encouraged others to send in their own proposals separately. This year we all agreed that it would be good to cover areas that have not been represented in the past, such as art history, philosophy, science, etc.

2) We discussed topics for forthcoming MFN issues. No. 10 (Fall 1990) will be devoted to bibliography and book reviews. Chris Africa and Margaret Schauss, librarians at the University of Iowa and Haverford College, respectively, will join forces to prepare a bibliography of recent pertinent work. Helen Bennett. Gillian Overing and Clare Lees will publish a bibliographical essay on women and feminist issues in Anglo-Saxon studies. Please send us your recent bibliographical notes.

Responding to the very successful MFN panel on "Literature, History, Feminism: A Dialogue," several readers said that they would like to hear more