

by "translations" of Middle English (especially of Chaucer's East Midlands dialect, so accessible to serious modern readers), I have not tried to assess the merits of McMillan's rendition of the poem. It is followed by annotated "Suggestions for Further Reading" on both the poem itself and the general subject of medieval women.

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#### COMMENTARY

The last Commentary column asked how we, as medievalists and feminists, might locate the medieval female voice, given the relatively small corpus of works by women that have been preserved from this early period. What are the implications for the canon? What does this mean for our teaching? Are there alternative strategies? We received two provocative responses. The first, from Professor Joan Gibson of York University, Ontario, pinpoints areas in which investigation might take place. The second, from Professor Deborah Ellis of Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas, describes how the female voice can be inserted into the standard syllabus in a pertinent and telling fashion.

Professor Gibson suggests that we attempt to unravel the strands of male and female voices, especially in cases where women's vernacular writings are translated into Latin. She suggests that we might look at "the role of male secretaries, scribes or spiritual directors for women writing under obedience," and she would like to see "more study of women's influence on male writers". Is anyone working in these areas? If so, write and tell us how you are approaching the issues, what problems you have encountered, what solutions you might propose.

As for teaching, Professor Deborah Ellis responded that although she has used anthologies of writing by women, she finds it even more helpful "to integrate women's writing into standard syllabi piecemeal, to emphasize a parallel perspective" whenever she can. Specifically, Professor Ellis uses selections from Christine de Pizan's Book of the City of Ladies to parallel Malory, and passages from Margery Kempe when teaching the Prologue to Chaucer's "Wife of Bath." Professor Ellis's students look at the "assumptions about love that Malory makes at the beginning of what Eugene Vinaver calls 'The Knight of the Cart,' assumptions about fickleness and about Guinevere's characterization as a good lover who therefore had a good end." These notions are then compared with Rectitude's opinion of love in The Book of the City of Ladies in an attempt to make sense of Guinevere's inconsistent characterization. In this context Christine's description of male assumptions about female inconstancy and prudence are also considered. (The Book of the City of Ladies, trans. E. J. Richards, Persea Books, 1982 pp. 186-87 and Eugene Vinaver, King Arthur and His Knights, pp. 51-52, 83-7, 114-15, 143, 164-5).

When discussing Chaucer, Professor Ellis distributes copies of p. 9 and p.67 of the EETS Margery Kempe. The first passage, according to Professor Ellis, "reminds students of the Wife of Bath in terms of social arrogance (clothing, pride, and intransigence). The second...shows the side of pilgrimages not represented in Alice's wide experience. None of this sounds very relevant, but actually students remember and refer to Margery Kempe all semester" (my underlining).

My thanks to Joan Gibson and Deborah Ellis for taking the time to send their views to "Commentary." Readers are encouraged to send in reactions to these comments, to my question in the last "Commentary" (copies available from me if you haven't got yours anymore), or to raise still other issues of interest. "Commentary" is designed to be a forum for the exchange of ideas, so send them in! Write to: Thelma S. Fenster, Medieval Studies Center, Fordham University, Bronx, N.Y. 10458.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

THANKS to Anne Barstow, Judith Bennett, Deborah Ellis, Anne Eggbroten, Joan Gibson, Penny Gold, Elisabeth Gossmann, Monica Green, Elaine Tuttle Hansen, Sandra Hindman, Sylvia Huot, Penelope Johnson, Carol Meale, Mary Speer, Harriet Spiegel, Susan Mosher Stuard, Katarina Wilson, Connie Wright and Mary Wack for their contributions. And special thanks to those who annotated the entries they submitted. Some of the items listed below appeared in the previous bibliographic issue (MFN #2). We decided to print everything that was submitted to us, largely for the benefit of new subscribers.

Abram, Annie. "Women Traders in Medieval London." Economic Journal 26 (1916), 276-285. Anecdotal but packed with info.

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Bell, Rudolf M. Holy Anorexia. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985.

Bennett, Judith. Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague (1987). Argues that women's lives changed dramatically with changes in marital status (daughter, wife, widow), but that women were always profoundly subordinated to men.