# Medieval Feminist Newsletter

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## COMMENTARY

This first Commentary column will be brief and ask a question. We hope that readers will feel encouraged to respond with their own points of view, and that the responses can provide the substance of the next issue's Commentary. Necessarily, I write from the perspective of someone who studies literature, but comments from all disciplines are welcome.

Feminist scholars of later periods of literature have been able to undertake archaeological "digs," unearthing unpublished or underpublished works by women. Rethinking the value of those works, as well as of diaries and letters written by women, has produced one of the most exciting developments so far in the feminist project: an interrogation into what constitutes literature, and a reappraisal of the canon of texts we study and teach. In the medieval arena, there have been, to be sure, a number of new editions, anthologies, and studies of women's work, which testify to the same gratifying interest among medievalists. Yet, compared with later periods, the medieval period has preserved far less writing by women. What are the implications of that for our own medieval feminist aims? Are there, for example, ways of finding women and women's writing in the interstices of male writing?

What does this mean for our teaching of the Middle Ages? Do we rely primarily upon "image of women" literature courses? (I don't disdain such courses since I teach them myself.) In what ways can/should women's writing be incorporated into curricula, particularly with a view toward suggesting new contours to the canon of works taught?

Your comments are earnestly solicited and should be sent directly to: Thelma Fenster, Office of Medieval Studies, Fordham University, Bronx, New York 10458.