The Middle Ages and feminisms

Call for papers

Perspectives médiévales n° 45

« Studying medieval culture has the power to challenge the theories of gender that were rooted entirely in modern philosophy and society. A number of aspects of the middle ages have emerged that destabilize even postmodern notions of sex/gender arrangements [...] in the past fifteen years, medievalists have carried the banners of expanding feminism [...] as well as have contemporary theorists ». (M. Caviness)¹

In the wake of Madeline Caviness's seminal article, what assessment can be made of the fertile links between the Middle Ages and feminism? In its wake, the next issue of Perspectives médiévales invites us to take a fresh look at the reciprocal contributions of medievalism and feminism, as part of an epistemological and historical reflection on the Middle Ages and the present.

What encounters with the Middle Ages have feminist movements and theories had, from the Middle Ages to the present day? What uses have successive feminist theories and movements made of the Middle Ages and its forms, whether real, assumed or fabricated? Alongside Anglo-Saxon studies, and in particular American scientific contributions (women's studies, gender studies, queer studies, empowerment, situated knowledge, intersectional studies, etc.), is a form of European feminist thought and reflection emerging? Within this scientific framework, how can we understand the opposition between culturalist and universalist feminism?

We'll be looking at feminist movements and theories in themselves, and the part they play in the Middle Ages. The epistemological and historiographical contribution of medieval studies to these movements and theories will be brought to light, as will the impact of the Middle Ages on their definition and evolution.

Historically speaking, what representations of the medieval or the Middle Ages has feminism drawn on (for example, in terms of power, economics, culture and social practices)? What place does the Middle Ages hold in the history of pro-feminist thought, in both academic and mainstream discourse?

On a theoretical level, did the Middle Ages witness or generate moments, movements or schools of thought that could be described as feminist? And what role did the Middle Ages play in the construction of feminist or anti-feminist knowledge and discourse? Conversely, how have medieval studies been enriched by contemporary feminist thought?

On a pragmatic level, can the contemporary experience of femininity or feminism be accompanied or

¹ Madeline Caviness, Feminism, Gender studies and Medieval studies, Diogenes 57, 2010.
enlightened by these historical approaches or theoretical parameters coming from the Middle Ages or its representations?

This multidisciplinary call for papers is addressed to specialists in literature, philosophy, history, art history, etc., whether medievalists or specialists in later periods. The study will focus on medieval objects (texts, images, etc.) as well as on representations of the Middle Ages in later periods, whether imaginary or founded.

Without excluding case studies, theoretical and transversal proposals will be favored. Particular attention will be paid to the academic theories and practices of medieval studies, and to the role that a feminist approach can play in them: could a "sororal philology" be envisaged?

The aim of this issue is to explore contemporary feminisms by exploring the Middle Ages and their representations. In other words, in what way is the Middle Ages an object of investigation both for feminist thought and by feminist thought?

Proposals for articles (max. 500 words) should be sent jointly to Véronique Dominguez and Sébastien Douchet by September 15, 2023 (veronique.dominguez@u-picardie.fr; sebastien.douchet@univ-amu.fr). They will be submitted to the journal's scientific committee (double-blind evaluation) for a reply to the authors on October 15, and a return of the articles in their final form on January 15, 2024.

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