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Co-editors: Debra Benko, Carolyn Clark, Suzanne Miller, and Lisa Ransdell
C. Julia Coon, '88, senior Religion major, contributed "A Look At Post-Christian Feminist Spirituality," a portion of her Senior Religion Seminar paper "In The Name of The Maiden, Mother, Crone: An Exploration of Christian and Post-Christian Feminist Theologies."

Jennie Dawes, '88, Senior English (literature) major wrote "On Trilogy" in response to her study of the poetry of H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) in Sandy Runzo's Feminism and Modernism seminar.

Lauren Williams, '88, Senior English (writing) major, wrote this prose poem last year while thinking of two friends.

Debra Benko, '88, Senior double major in English (writing) and History, has written both poetry and fiction from a feminist perspective.

Deborah Fleming is a poet and Visiting Assistant Professor of English.

Jeffrey D. Tritt, '88, Senior Philosophy major, wrote his Philosophy Comprehensive on the difference between the justice tradition theory and the care perspective theory and the importance of maintaining the value of the care perspective in order to ensure a life-affirming future.

Melissa Wellington, '88, Senior English (literature) major, has contributed a chapter of her senior research thesis on the Lais of Marie de France.

Amie Klemphauer, a student from DePauw University, read her talk, "Silence - Death, Action - Life," at the GLCA Student Women's Studies Conference held at Denison last Spring.
Welcome to the Fall, 1988 Issue of the Denison Women's Studies Newsletter. 1988 was a very active year for student contributions to Women's Studies at Denison in all disciplines. Denison hosted the GLCA Student Women's Studies Conference here April 15-16. That same weekend, women artists produced, performed, and displayed their work in the second annual "I'm Not Your Laughing Daughter" concert, Denison's Women's Arts Festival. Denison faculty, staff and students also participated in the thirteenth annual GLCA Women's Studies Conference held in Dayton, Ohio on November 11-13. Also this year, the Women's Studies Prizes were renamed in honor of former English Professor and Women's Coordinator Nan Nowik, who died last January.

The winners of the 1988 Nan Nowik Memorial Awards in Women's Studies were:

I. Senior Academic Scholarship

First Place: Deidra Marie Brown
Honorable Mention: Amy Marie Miller

II. Essays

First Place: Christine Julia Coon

III. Creative Expression

First Place: Debra Ann Benko
Second Place: Karen Anne Hoffman
Honorable Mention: Elizabeth Moorhead Brown

IV. Feminist Activism

Co-winners: Christine Julia Coon
Jennie Marie Benford

We hope you enjoy the various pieces featured in this issue of the Women's Studies Newsletter.

Debra Benko '88
Carolyn Clark '88
Suzanne Miller '89
Lisa Ransdell, Women's Coordinator
Our "American Way of Life" has been a life-style based on an endless quest for Progress and Success, primarily at the individual level. Advocating the superiority of a representative democracy and capitalism as the best protections for an individual's "inalienable" rights over all other political and economic systems, we have duped ourselves into organizing our own almost certain destruction. Our blind support of capitalism and our ethnocentric denunciations of other political systems are symptoms of the greater disease to which much of America has succumbed—what I, and most feminists, label "Patriarchy."

Initially meaning a social structure in which the father ruled over the clan or household (wife, children and others), today the term includes much more. As used in this paper, patriarchy suggests a system in which all relationships are hierarchical—someone always dominates over someone or something else. In many cultures, this hierarchical structure is especially apparent in the domination of men over womyn.

Related to this perception is the understanding in a patriarchal world that reality is dichotomous. Things are either black or white, cyclical or linear, masculine or feminine. This dichotomous thinking, however, does not merely separate things into distinct groups but insists on ranking them and assigning them relative values. In this manner, patriarchy encourages exclusive and divisive perceptions of the world and constructions of reality.

Many feminists agree that enfranchising the oppressed and legislating reforms in the realm of work is not enough to stop this process of oppression and destruction. Equality of the sexes, ecological awareness and cooperative, live-affirming and sustaining interaction between all people can only be achieved if the patriarchal conceptions under which we operate are destroyed. We must discontinue our unquestioning acceptance of a hierarchical, dichotomous reality—we must question the assumptions which form the basis for our perception of this reality. Such assumptions, contend some feminists, are perpetuated by our social institutions, particularly by the Christian Church. Christianity's image of God as Father, Warrior, Lord and King has neatly permitted, even encouraged, the development of patriarchy.
CHRISTIANITY CRITIQUE

Whether as scholars of the institution or simply of life, womyn and men have increasingly been finding dissatisfaction with the sexist and anti-liberating aspects of Christianity. Critiques of Christianity's patriarchal, oppressive nature abound. Feminist dialogue, in particular, has exposed the many offenses committed or contributed to by this religion against both sexes--among these, the suppression of all that is considered "feminine" in men and the denial of womyn's full humanity.

Furthermore, in nourishing the growth of patriarchy, Christianity has abetted the process of ecological destruction inherent in such an ideology. Interpreting the divine order, through the Bible, as hierarchical (God-man-womyn-animals), we have developed a society based upon the principles of such a model. The biblical example of an Almighty, all-powerful God, worshipped and served by the lowly ranks of humanity, becomes the pattern for our relationships to one another and our environment. Men, made in the image of God, occupy a higher position in society than do womyn, who, after all, were created from man's rib as a sort of afterthought. However, the ranking does not end with separation by sex. The sub-group "men" is further divided into classes based on race, wealth, nationality, etc. If equality exists, it does so only within very segregated groups. A repeating pattern of Dominant vs. Submissive characterizes all social interactions. Animals and Nature, falling even lower than womyn in the divine order, are viewed as "naturally" at the disposal of human beings. If human comfort depends on their demise, so be it.

A hierarchical understanding of the world and its creatures depends upon the acceptance of reality as dichotomous, a perception also furthered by biblical texts. Christianity--or, as Christian feminists would argue, our interpretation of Christianity--seems to have promoted a polar conceptualization of reality. From its traditions have come the notions of Heaven vs. Earth, God vs. Humankind, good vs. sin, and Life vs. Death. Such conceptions have led us firmly into a culture based on dichotomies. We have developed "masculine" and "feminine" traits, male and female roles, ideas of "civilization" as opposed to "nature," and a belief in the existence of The Right Way (Yahweh's, the United States', etc.), in contrast to all others. The latter leads us to believe that those not "with us" (i.e., "like us") must necessarily be against us. Such thinking manifests itself throughout our world in the forms of religious, racial, gender and nationalist oppression and tensions.

Overcoming this dichotomous understanding of the world and, thereby, the exclusion of womyn from full participation in society have been
two of the primary goals of the feminist movement. Feminists seek to reempower womyn and thereby validate the feminine traits that exist within both men and womyn. Eventually, many hope to dispel the whole concept of gender-specific roles and traits. Having destroyed this contrived distinction, we can rid ourselves of other notions of our separateness and sense our interrelatedness and interdependency.

The feminist attack on the biblical religions began with the realization that creating the desired social changes involved confronting and reforming society’s underlying religious symbols. These symbols, whether accepted consciously or not, constitute our perception of reality and of “how things ought to be.” Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has described how, “Religion is a system of symbols which act to produce powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations,” moods and motivations that we translate into social and political structures (Geertz, CULTURES, cited by Christ, LAUGHTER, p. 118). Actually born into a meaningless world and unable to survive through instincts, human beings must create meaning; needing order where none exists, we create symbolic conceptions of a higher reality and then pattern our lives upon our creations. A society’s symbolic representation of the Divine constitutes its understanding of reality. Of all symbols, a society’s “god” bears the most influence on its social and political structures. For many feminists, understanding this concept led to the unsettling realization that the biblical God they had revered as the Giver-of-Salvation was actually the source of their oppression.

CHRISTIANITY TRANSCENDED--THE EMERGENCE OF THE GODDESS

The identification of the Divine as Mighty Warrior, Judge, Lord and Father—all images connoting “male”—has effectively excluded half of the human race from claiming any real relation to divinity. Womyn’s experiences and bodies have been demoted, at best, to insignificance. Because God is “He,” womyn’s talents and abilities have been confined to the “less important” realm of the home, and any display of strength or intelligence by a womyn is usually labelled an aberration. Carol Christ reflects on the existence of this causal relationship in her own life saying,

When singing to the Father and Son, a girl must hear her exclusion. She must begin to recognize that the power and the glory are not to be hers...Did the rituals of religion help me to accept my exclusion from the teams my brothers played on, my father coached, and my mother and I could only watch? Did I somehow know
that no matter what I did, I would never be the beloved Son? (LAUGHTER, p. 95)

In creating a Father God who "created mankind in His own image," patriarchy denies full personhood to womyn, leaving them unfulfilled and without a sense of any true relationship to the Divine.

Men who are unfortunate enough to exhibit such "feminine" traits as tenderness, nurturance or passivity have fared no better. If being "god-like" is good, and God is "He," then being masculine is good and feminine sinful. The "masculine" attributes of the Lord God—strength, omnipotence, knowledge and supremacy—become the model for a "real man." Men who feel tender or nurturing are ridiculed and persuaded to suppress these feelings.

In the midst of such an ideology, many womyn and men, seeking the means to live more fully as complete, integrated human beings—in harmony with self, others, and the natural world—are finding only disillusionment and frustration within the confines of the Christian tradition. In increasingly large numbers, many people, both from biblical and non-biblical backgrounds, are searching for (and finding) meaning and liberation through worship of the Goddess. Rather than a personification of the hierarchical, androcentric status quo, the Goddess, in the various forms of Her worship, represents wholeness and the energies of life. Existing within all, she yet contains all. As both source of creation and the creation, she sanctifies the natural processes of life—birth, aging and death; as manifest deity, she affirms the sacredness of all forms of life; as "God-dess," she affirms the beauty of the female body and all that we deem "feminine," and validates female power. Those choosing Goddess do so because, as Mary Daly writes, "GOD represents the necrophilia of patriarchy, whereas GODDESS affirms the life-loving be-ing of women and nature" (Daly, GYN/ECOLOGY, p. xi).
Through communion with the Goddess, womyn and men overcome the sense of alienation from self, society and nature developed within and by a patriarchal culture.

In their current existence as post-Christian feminist spirituality, the Goddess religions are religions of diversity, multiplicity and fluidity. Rather than a sacred canopy, pre-formed and always above the individual, Goddess spirituality is a never-completed tapestry presently being woven of many multi-hued threads: re-creations of the rites and myths of the ancient goddesses, modern witchcraft (feminist wicca) and various individual practices.
You gave her back to us
(we who are, you said,

"the spinners of the rare intangible thread
that binds all humanity")

Our Mary, our Eve
(new Eve) Our Universal Lady.

Perhaps, you say, all this time
Isis was really in charge,

Not her brother, Not Kaspar
(who tricked un-maidenly Mary)

Or Gabriel, Michael or Hermes the alchemist
Who made us accept, sacrifice myrrh.

She you speak of--this new Eve
--becomes us all,

Marys-a-plenty, and like you,
Like me, and we spinners,

Sibyls hiding in caves,
Scribbling lines on rotting leaves.

And she who is your hero
Rescues us from John, from snakes

And plagues, and casting outs,
Returning us to each other.

She is an opal, standing plain
"at the turn of the palace stair."

Your Muse? Yes, she stands with us,
Not above, or aside,

But bearing yet no flowering rod.
It does not flower for us,

Only for He-poets who brandish it.
Only Hilda thinks on this, and laughs.
The first girl-woman was filled with lights and darks. She had a relationship with the space and air that surrounded her—she used it and gave something back. She knew it not as a child knows a stove before touching it, but as a fireman knows a flame. She moved with respect for space. She was a dancer. Her hair was very black and very strong and sprung out of the milk white scalp as if it felt trapped by the structure of its roots.

The second girl-woman was very soft and heavy, letting the space around her be aware of her presence but never daring to move beyond the boundaries of her own body. She knew space as a child who had danced about in the warmth and heat of the stove thinking it meant comfort and safety only to find it blistered the skin. She gave away respect for fear and moved with an element of shame. Her hair was the brown of a field in winter and slid down her back and the sides of her face reaching for the ground as if this might offer more security than the human scalp.

The two girl-women sat together but very differently. The first draped herself over a chair being all at once luxurious, ornamental, and artistic. The second fed herself into a couch and arranged her arms over her chest. They filled the air in between with experiences of being girls and being women. Silence cradled the burden of all they felt but could not say.

Lauren Williams
MAUD DIVORCED FROM YEATS
by Debra Benko

I.

You tell me that I have no right
to rescue Maude Gonne, as I have no right
to write of El Salvador or Nicaragua
(The people do have their own voice,
though 70% are illiterate: they sing
"We Shall Overcome" in their Church,
and because they speak in Spanish,
Americans do not hear them).
I read the Oxford biographies. They tell me
Maude Gonne failed to requite Yeats's love.
I read poetry by Yeats. He tells me
that Maud Gonne is at best a fond memory,
at worst a woman he spurned for being
too political, too liberated, too outspoken.
In this poem, I refute Eliot's detachment:
I choose to speak to you and to Maud Gonne:
I choose to divorce myself and my writing
from the Tradition we revere, the talents we despise.

II.

Gone is your voice, Maud Gonne
as long as Yeats, Eliot, and Auden, Ellmann and O'Clair,
shout their respective pieces of the Tradition.
Yeats has buried you in the classics
we all are raised in so no one dares
question your comparison with Helen, woman hated most,
next to Eve, instead of Eve. All Greece hates Helen;
so all Ireland hates Maud Gonne. But Greece hates Helen's beauty
alone; Yeats hates more, Maud, though I doubt he ever
told you so: your difference
from the ideal daughter he prayed to raise:
gentle, uneducated, lavish, self-denying, and silent, silent,
comforting to her class and to her father and to her man,
trying like Yeats, like all men, to return to the Middle Ages,
to knighthood, to dreams of unsurpassable prowess
fulfilled when they have finally married virgin ladies
so they may religiously ravish and rescue them whenever
they please. Yeats hated you, Maud,
because you denied this image of woman,
this image of yourself, in your fight
for a free and equal Ireland, an Ireland bloodied
for the purpose of healing: for as all mothers know
you knew the fever must reach its highest point
before breaking and the child must be given a mild case
of the disease for the purpose of prevention.
Yeats hated his memory of your childlike, young beauty
in the impotence of his old age. He could not divorce you
from his mind and heart, could not complete
the separation and make a whole without you and so you became
for Yeats a motif, a recurring image, a symbol
of disaster, hatred, failure, blood
spilled, age, and death. He did not find life
in you, did not recognize that you saw no beast
coming second into an artifice of eternity but called
instead on Goddess powers, cycles of love and nature.
You were Yeats's Leda, but he did not possess the Swan's power;
he soon tired of your talk of the politics in poetry
because his politics supported the old revolution, fatal
to Jews, Catholics, and homosexuals, fatal to the poor
and to the scholars. You knew war would free women, but
not that peace would re-enslave them and you when Yeats lamented
your own disorderly desire to burn the buildings
of those who would burn your children. In his conscience
he compared your sacrifice to a stone and called
your birthing beauty terrible, forgetting, forgetting,
that your madness was such a madness that you could not
extricate your beauty from your dance of words.

III.

You say I have no right to rescue
Maud Gonne, as I have no right
to write of South Africa from America,
America, where blacks are free to swim
and tan on the beaches but not to walk in Howard Beach.
(On "Donahue" one of the black men defends himself from the shouts
of the white men of Howard Beach by whispering the word
"Honky"). I listen to the poetry of Carolyn Forche and the music
of Joan Baez; I listen to the name Steven Biko
and hear the rhythms of my own Czechoslovak name,
I learn the story of Victoria Mxenge, a black woman lawyer, killed in her own home in white South Africa because she defended one too many black persons who could not afford to pay her, because she said one angry, loving word too many. In this poem, I write to speak Victoria’s words and Maud’s words because they can no longer speak, and generations of men, generations of men, have spoken in their places, have spoken in their places. I write their bitterness, their bitter words of hatred, hope, and love, because they should be your words; they are my words.
CAMILLE WAS NO LADY
by Deborah Fleming

(On August 17-20, 1969, the most destructive hurricane in U.S. history, "Camille," ravaged the coasts of Louisiana and Mississippi with winds up to two hundred miles per hour. This poem is based on a survivor's account of her ordeal.)

We was watchin the tide come up an the trees was bendin double an I knew we shoulda left but my husband said it'd be okay, we lived on the seventh floor an the buildin was concrete, but when the water come up to the fifth floor I knew we's in trouble. When it come up to our winda I tried to force it open but it wouldn't go, so I put a lamp throught it an climbed out. My husband was shoutin but there wasn't nothin I could do for him, he couldn't swim, so I jumped in.

I could see the lights on in some of the partsments below where they was havin hurricane parties, but there wasn't nothin I could do for them, so I kep swimmin. I had strong laigs from bein a cocktail waitress.

When a tree come along I grabbed the roots, but that wasn't a good idea, I got caught an pulled under. So I went deeper an when I thought the tree was outa the way I swum up. Next time I grabbed the trunk.

I never thought till later bout snakes. There was lumber an nails. The water was all muddy an salty cause the ocean was swep in by the wind. I felt like I's the last one in the Great Flood.

Don know how long I's floatin, but when the sun come up there's a boat on the horizon an I waved an yelled like a crazy woman. After while, seem like forever, I saw they's headin for me, two men an two women in a motorboat.
MORAL REASONING: A NEW LOOK
by Jeffrey D. Tritt

There is something wrong about a mode of rationality which allows for nations to prepare for war in the name of peace. My intent is to examine the kind of moral reasoning which has led us to our present situation in regard to the nuclear arms race. My belief is that political scientists and the people in think-tanks are missing the point when it comes to combating the real issue behind the nuclear arms race. The issue that needs to be attended to is the relationships that nations have with one another as opposed to a restructuring of deterrence policy to accommodate for the ever increasing rise in technology.

In her book In A Different Voice, Carol Gilligan gives us a clue to the puzzle of faulty moral reasoning and emphasizes the importance of maternal traits and modes of reasoning for securing the future. The implications of restructuring moral reasoning along the lines she suggests could have a tremendous effect on the relationships between nations and people, for I feel that national relationships based on deterrence policy have a negative effect. I will argue that deterrence policy, instead of creating stability, actually drives people further apart and perpetuates anxieties and fears that people have. Through an examination of the justice tradition and the care perspective I will show that the ethics of a caring which stresses interconnectedness is crucial for preserving a meaningful life.

Gilligan points out a masculine bias in the evaluation of the different developmental growth patterns and modes of moral reasoning characteristic of women and men. Generally men are thought to strive for separation and independence and women for connection and interdependence. The greater value attached by society to the male mode of reasoning has given us an unbalanced and inadequate notion of maturity. This bias has led us to an over-emphasis on individualism and the power to control, which, as we can see, in a sense characterizes the nuclear arms race. Each nation stresses its independence instead of interdependence. The manner in which these different modes of reasoning are translated into public policy may be discerned through comparison of the justice tradition and the care perspective.

In their anthology on women and moral theory, Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers explain justice theory: "In the justice tradition, individual autonomy has two main dimensions: moral autonomy and personal autonomy. People gain moral autonomy when they use reason to discern
which principles ought to be followed; personal autonomy is their entitlement to pursue their own visions of good in their own way. These aspects of autonomy stem from the themes of social contractarianism and personal liberty, respectively” (Kittay and Meyers 1987:4). This notion of autonomy leads us to a sense of separation. Our decisions are based on a hierarchy of values as we appeal to abstract notions of what we ought to do.

The care perspective which Gilligan introduces concludes "that the justice perspective fails to capture the import of the concerns expressed by the women, the decision-making strategies employed by the women, and the course of women’s distinctive moral development” (Kittay and Meyers, 1987:7). When acting under the care perspective one is aware of one’s responsibilities to others. Therefore, decisions that are made are made with consideration of the consequences that particular action will have on all individuals who are affected by it.

Some would argue, along with Seyla Benhabib, that the justice tradition has been associated with the public sphere and that the care perspective is associated with the private sphere. Because of the public nature of the justice tradition it has been given more attention. The nurturing, or maternal moral decisions of the private sphere have taken a back seat. As more women enter the public sphere so too will the qualities of their moral reasoning.

Different modes of rationality are associated with male moral reasoning patterns and female moral reasoning patterns. The Kohlberg scale which traditionally placed the male pattern of moral reasoning higher begins to crumble when we view the care perspective as contextual with an emphasis on interconnectedness. Jonathan Adler writes, "In light of Gilligan's observations and these recent challenges in moral theory, it is natural to inquire how well Kohlberg’s theory respects the personal point of view” (Adler, 1987:206). The idea that one becomes morally mature as one becomes more and more autonomous becomes more difficult to accept.

At this point I would like to show how the justice tradition has led us to the present situation of nuclear weapon proliferation in which many of our "rational" leaders preach deterrence policy as the only solution to insuring a safe world. I would hold that these individuals are unknowingly leading us away from global harmony by their appeal to a hierarchial mode of moral reasoning. Furthermore, I will show that by paying attention to the female mode of moral reasoning which has traditionally been limited to the private sphere, that there are great possibilities for a kind of peace which can never be achieved by means of deterrence policy.
Current public policy has been shaped by those who see deterrence as the best way to preserve life. The logic behind their argument rests in the fact that an aggressor knows ahead of time that retaliatory blows will far exceed any possible gains resulting from aggression. Those who espouse deterrence view the problem logically and derive the rational solution—deterrence. What is rational to deterrence advocates is what perpetuates a world of nations standing alone as opposed to a world which thrives on interconnectedness. Betty A. Reardon noted that, "Individuation and separation have so determined our concepts of national interest that we are blinded to the many realities of interdependence that are the major determinants of our present world situation. That we are willing to risk our very survival to defend the national interest is not so surprising in a masculine-biased system when we understand that the morality of rights differs from the morality of responsibility in its emphasis on separation rather than connection, in its consideration of the individual rather than the relationship as primary" (Reardon, 1985:88,89). What the advocates of deterrence policy overlook is the complexity of the situation. Their appeal to logic leads them to a solution in which war games are a part of life. The anxieties produced in people and nations by a policy based on fear are certain to have an impact on the way we relate and make further decisions. Even a reduction of arms in this framework is merely a re-ordering of the same kind of thinking which drives a wedge between people. This is because it does not address the human issues involved.

The care perspective with its emphasis on relationships and interconnectedness is much more suited for creating stability in the long run. for if our decision-makers saw the world as comprised of relationships they would focus their efforts on the preservation of these relationships. The care perspective is the rational way to affect change because it brings the problem into the personal realm. Another effect traditional justice theory has had on us is that we now spend our time dealing with a re-ordering of deterrence policy instead of addressing the problems which come about from our reliance on one another. It is very easy to lose sight of the human implications when we only concern ourselves with technical and logical manipulations of abstract principles of deterrence. Where the care perspective far exceeds justice theory is in its ability to understand the "contextual relativism" of a particular situation. In other words, instead of making a quick moral judgment, utilizing "contextual relativism" would involve sensitivity to the details of the situation and consideration of the impact of any course of action on human relationships.
It is time we begin to mend national relationships. By understanding the nurturing and interconnected nature of the care perspective we can augment our present thinking. If we focus on the primacy of the relationship, instead of the individual, the concept of war games for peace will begin to fade away by itself. Furthermore, the kind of peace that is derived from an understanding of interconnectedness is a long lasting kind of peace—not the kind of peace that comes from the fear-filled world of deterrence policy.

It is time for the "rational" to be viewed in a new light. The either/or mentality that comes about through the hierarchically based justice theory needs to be supplemented with the more contextual qualities of the care perspective. This will happen as we begin to achieve equality in the public sphere where a male bias in moral reasoning has depersonalized human relationships.

References


Marie de France was the foremost author of the lai, which is a storytelling poem descended from the oral tales of the Bretons. Her lais take many of their attitudes and conventions from the venerated areas of troubador lyric and romance yet they go beyond these norms and create a new and unique vision of love. Each lai is a totally separate love narrative, but when the lais are studied as a group Marie's thoughts on love and life in the 12th century emerge clearly.

Marie's Lais are somewhere between the love lyrics about Charlemagne and Roland and the Arthurian romances like Tristram and Iseult and Launcelot and Guinevere in form. On the one side, love lyrics provide many of the themes and motifs found in the courtly love genre and the lai and the lyric share a brevity, intensity, concern for love and association with musical performance. On the other hand, the romances develop and transform these same motifs and themes to a much greater length. The lai concentrates on a certain crisis in the love life of the characters and this incident is absolutely central to the narrative. Love in a lai, then, is more spontaneous and intense than in the romance because it is so condensed. Therefore, the lyric provides material to be utilized by the lai while the romance strings together several lais to develop a longer and more elaborate narrative.

The lai is unique and a genre of its very own, though. Within the lai the lovers are set on their own against evil and against society. Love is most often associated with suffering and death in these 12 poems. Other motifs include transgressed vows, the supernatural, forced and loveless marriages, extra-marital love and adultery, faith and devotion of good women, pride, rewards for the truly good, and punishment of evil.

It is important to remember that a woman wrote these lais. This female authorship is what makes the works stand out among the wealth of courtly love narratives. Marie's views add much to the structure, content, and strength of the lais. Several specific examples of this "woman's touch" include an emphasis on the fate of children, a knowledge of the feelings of unhappy women, and a knowledge of the sexual frustration experienced by women trapped in marriages of convenience.

The heroines of the lais illustrate another element of Marie's personal style. These female main characters are always active and always gain the
sympathy of the reader as they go through their individual crises. Such strong women, and a greater sympathy towards individual love, seem particular to Marie and contrary to the male writers of the time. Marie can bring fresh insight into the very male-dominated world of the love-narrative and that insight makes her work quite unique.

Marie worked with the genre like no other in the courtly love tradition. Lais are very brief and focused and have no extraneous details—just what is necessary to the plot. Marie's lais are less contrived than many of the romances—her characters appear to have been caught unaware by their adventures and are deeply affected by them. The characters in many of the romances, on the other hand, tended to seek out their adventures and moved easily from one to the next in a prescribed pattern. Part of this difference is due to the gender of the characters, of course. The Lais are also wish-fulfillment fantasies in which good does triumph over evil, but the moral overtones are kept to a minimum in favor of pure love. Because the lais are less pretentious than the romances, their great beauty, truth, and devotion to love stands out more fully.

Love is the all-important ingredient in these Lais. Many of the relationships go far beyond the courtly love tradition because Marie stresses moderation in all things and does not encourage courtly love in its extremes (unlike Chretien). She also seems to have believed that it is the quality of individual love that is most important. This is evident in the range of situations and relationships represented in the lais. Not every relationship is the same and even the adulterous couples are judged differently, according to the "goodness" of their love for each other. Marie is one of the only romantic writers to realize that individual situations must be handled individually.

The Lais are spontaneous, passionate, and concerned with individuality of character. The lovers in these lais are on their own and pitted against various evil forces trying to destroy their love. They are also set apart from society because of the fact that they love each other. They are more privileged than the rest of society, for the same reason. How the lovers fit within society is not important because in these lais, if society cannot accept the lovers they either die or leave, and it is society's loss.1

It is dangerous to generalize too much about the Lais for the same reason that Marie is so concerned with the individuality of her characters. Each of the lais is separately evaluated by Marie on the basis of the morality inherent in the narrative. Most important of all in this evaluation is the quality of the love expressed by the characters. For instance, she does not
disapprove of extramarital love if the lover is in an unhappy marriage, and virtue is always rewarded. Almost all of her lais associate love with suffering, however, and her characters are not permitted to find love until they have proved themselves worthy.

These characteristics of individuality and the importance of the quality of love are what set Marie apart from her contemporaries. Writers like Chretien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus are almost misogynistic in their treatment of women in courtly love situations. Marie de France, on the other hand sees the characters in her Lais for what they are—women in love and making the best of bad circumstances. This sensitivity to the plight of the individual lover is unusual for the 12th century and it is possible to hypothesize that it occurs only because Marie is herself a woman.

The Lais are also small, self-contained works of art. Not only do they express Marie’s philosophies of love but they are also exciting and romantic stories. Each individual story has something different to say about love. "Guigemar" is one of Marie’s more chivalric lais. It contains such popular motifs as a man who spurns but is still overcome by love, travel by a mysterious boat, and a knot that cannot be untied. In this lai love does not end in death but it does lead to great suffering before "single-minded fidelity leads to triumph and union."²

"Equitain" and "Bisclavret" are the two lais that most condemn the idea of adulterous courtly love. The denouements of both are very harsh and make quite a statement about the penalties of disloyalty—in "Equitain" the king and the senechal’s wife plot to kill the senechal and are scalded to death at the end. "Bisclavret" is also one of the lais most concerned with the supernatural. In "Bisclavret" the wife of the knight/werewolf stole his clothing and so robbed him of his humanity, and all in order to be with someone she did not even love. Therefore, when she and her lover were exiled they had many children and the females "were born without noses and lived noseless."³

"Le Fresne" and "Eliduc" are examples of virtue rewarded. "Eliduc" is virtuous enough to not forget about his duty to his wife, even though he loves another woman, and is rewarded by his wife’s decision to take the vow so that he can be free to remarry. In "Le Fresne" the heroine thinks that she is of a lower social class, and so cannot have the one she loves. She is virtuous and self-sacrificing, though, and earns her love at the end of the tale.
A "problem of love-casuistry" arises in "Lanval". In this lai a knight breaks his lady's commandment not to tell of her existence. Is he guilty or not? Guinevere was teasing him but he still should not have told of his fairy-lover's presence. There is no real answer given in the lai but the lady does show up at his trial to save him and they go off together to the mystical land of Avalon.

"Les Deus Amanz" illustrates how a lack of "measure" can lead to tragedy. The love in this lai is tragic because the death of the two lovers was not necessary. The lover had to perform a feat in order to win his lady's hand but he had a potion that would have enabled him to succeed. It was his vanity and her lack of power over him that caused their deaths.

A mal marée (bad marriage) and a lack of "measure" caused tragedy in "Yonec". The lady was very unhappy and so when a hawk-knight came to her as a lover she was overjoyed. However, she gave the secret away because she looked so happy and he was killed as a result.

"Laustic" is one of Marie's most beautiful lais. The lady in this lai was also involved in a mal marée and so took a lover. She met with him on the pretext of listening to a nightingale. Then the jealous husband killed the nightingale and the tryst was over for the lovers. In a way the love survived, though, as the lady had the nightingale sent to the lover and he wore it in a little casket around his neck. This lai is unique and optimistic in its belief that the permanence of love can triumph against all odds.

"Milun" contains some of Marie's more typically troubador and courtly themes like devotion rewarded, a woman falling in love without seeing the man, and combat between father and son. Another very courtly-oriented lai is "Chaitivel". This is an odd story that equates love with ironic suffering. The guilty are punished but the question remains one of who is to be pitied most. The lady who lost all but one of her lovers, or the lover who could no longer enjoy the lady?

Tristram and Iseult are the subjects of Marie's last lai, "Chevrefoil". In this curious little story the two lovers met in the forest to discuss how Tristram could regain the trust of his uncle, King Mark. What makes it so interesting is the symbol of the intertwining trees that represented the "inevitable union of the lovers in death" because "their love was so pure that it caused them to suffer great distress and later brought about their death on the same day."
Altogether, Marie's Lais say something very special about love in the 12th century. Although much of the literature of the 12th century pictured courtly love as a convention to be used to reach a desired goal, Marie's Lais prove that a more sympathetic view did exist. Not only do these lais favor an individualistic and kind view of love but they prove that it must have been shared by many of the lords and ladies at the courts because Marie's poems were very popular.

In some ways they would have seen their own world mirrored in Marie's fictional one; after all, they were of exalted rank, lived in castles, rode horses in forests, participated in tournaments and had love-affairs. Here again, the fairy-tale element may be visible if we are to regard the Lais at least partly as wish-fulfillment for a particular social class.  

There is a deeper element at work, too. Marie's lais were not just wish-fulfillment, they used real geographical names, had mortal human beings for characters, used a real legal system, and did not always paint a rosy picture of love. In many of the lais love was accompanied by tremendous suffering. Not only the suffering that one was supposed to go through in the courtly love ethic, but suffering such as that of the mother of Le Fresne who was slandered by a jealous neighbor when she had done absolutely nothing wrong. This type of pain, and other examples--like the mortal failure of the deus amanz must have also endeared Marie's Lais to her audience, who were after all real people—not the shining knights and damsels out of the Arthurian legends that they may have wished to be.

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2 Burgess and Busby, Lais of Marie de France, p. 29.
3 Brugess and Busby, p. 72.
4 Burgess and Busby, p. 28.
5 Burgess and Busby, p. 28 and p. 109.
6 Burgess and Busby, p. 34.
The following are excerpts from a senior honors project which combines original narrative writing in a woman's voice and scholarly historical research in the period of early seventeenth-century England in the form of an historical novella. Set in Civil War England, the novella chronicles the daily life and worldview of Lady Chantal de la Tour, an imaginary lady-in-waiting and governess to an historical figure, Lady Charlotte de la Tremoille, Countess of Derby, whose estate was besieged during the English Civil War.

August 20, 1639

Red surrounded me as though I were inside a drop of my own blood when I woke on this morning. But I could not be bleeding, I thought; the doctor had not been able to draw any blood when he tried to let my blood. My arms would not be bled no matter what my head told them. Perhaps my eyes were now rebelling against me, I thought, refusing to allow me to see anything but red spots, more stubborn than Charles when Reverend Rutledge sets him to extra lessons. As I felt the red coverlet, I gradually realized that I was in bed, enclosed in red canopies. Red is the color of healing, I told myself. Red is the color of healing.

Then I must have slept again. I woke with the sense that I was outside of the bed, standing by the red-curtained windows. My nurse, Ma Mie, was standing on a stool, lifting my brother up, and in the bed, soaked red, was my mother, smiling at him, the same color as the bed. And my mother would not look at me, and when I finally broke free of Marie’s grasp, not waiting to be led to my mother, and ran to the bed, Mother told me to be good to my brother. She closed her eyes, and she would not look at me or at my brother again. Then Ma Mie was putting a black dress on me, black next to red, and then everything was black.

August 21, 1639

When I woke on this day, yesterday, my health and vision had improved greatly. I tried to draw one of the red drapes aside, but I did not have the strength, and I sank against the pillow. This time, however, Lady
Charlotte came to my side, laying a compress of roots of comfrey at a cut on my forehead. I asked her if she could open the bedcurtains.

"Are you certain? You've been asleep for many hours, Chantal. I am relieving Miriam now."

"Please," I said. "I dream."

Lady Charlotte looked at me with a worried expression and then opened the bedcurtains on one side, but she would not open the window drapes. "You must be warm to get well," she said. "The excitement over the carriage accident and tending to the coachman before you realized that your head had been hurt seem to have brought on your fever."

Now the red curtains were farther away. I remembered how frightened I had been when Lady Charlotte gave birth to Charles, for fear she would die as my mother had. My brother died a week later; he and my mother had struggled overmuch to bring him into this world; their reward was to return to heaven. And when Lady Charlotte had asked me as I stood at her own childbed if my mother had not died in childbirth, I told her that she had been thrown from a horse.

"Am I falling from the horse, Lotte?" I murmured.

"Rest, and the Lord will restore you to us, dear."

September 21, 1639

Reverend Rutledge and I quarreled today. I pray to God that I shall not come into disagreement with a chaplain. After my report of Charles's continued recovery and my prediction that, with the will of God, he should be well enough to return to his lessons tomorrow, Reverend Rutledge insisted that once Charles was healed he should receive his punishment like the other boys.

I could not help but respond, "But Reverend Rutledge, you cannot intend to punish the boy even more than he has already been punished by his accident?"

"I certainly do mean what I say, Lady Chantal, and I shall thank you not to question my authority as tutor and chaplain and as a gentleman."
"I meant no disrespect, Reverend Rutledge. I do not question your judgment as a man of God; I merely wish you to take greater account of the seriousness of Charles's accident and the length of time the Lord has taken to restore his sight and his skin. Surely that is all the punishment the Lord intends to wreak upon Charles for his carelessness and shiftlessness."

Reverend Rutledge reddened. "Woman, you do not interpret the ways of the Lord to me. Have you not heard St. Paul's admonishment, 'it is a shame for women to speak' yet enough times?"

"St. Paul refers to silence in the churches only, not at home." I knew what Reverend Rutledge's next words would be, but I could not resist the temptation to correct his misuse of Corinthians.

"Aye, but am I not a clergyman, and does not St. Paul also say that women are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law?" Reverend Rutledge made a gesture of dismissal. "You are succumbing to the devil's temptation; the devil owns your tongue. Be careful lest he own your soul, too."

"If you will not listen to me, please talk with Lady Charlotte" I said. Reverend Rutledge does defer to Lady Charlotte on sundry occasions in spite of his beliefs that women's opinions are subordinate to those of men and that women should not dare to express their 'mutterings,' as he calls them.

"You, Lady Chantal, are no more of a woman than Lady Charlotte."

"Thank you, Reverend Rutledge. I shall accept that as a compliment coming from you. Speak to Lord James if you do not think him too much a woman."

"Why of all the audacity! You will be begging forgiveness, mark me! I should use my power to call the demon out of you as Christ called the demon out of the woman in Mark's Gospel. And then you shall be forced, like her, to wait on me in thanksgiving!"

After this interchange, Reverend Rutledge finally spoke to Lord James and Lady Charlotte, both of whom agreed with me. Reverend Rutledge at last desisted, bowing to their authority in the household, "with grave reservations in despite of much prayerful consideration which led him to do their will as God's will," in his language. Despite Reverend Rutledge's authority as a measuring stick or ruler of God, the Stanleys rule in this household and in the entire county of Lancashire. Indeed, some of the
people still say, using the title Lord James will no doubt soon inherit, "God save the Earl of Derby and the King" in that order. And I have no doubt that some secretly add Lady Charlotte to their blessing for her generosity to the common people of Lancashire, though she is at times even more outspoken to many than I am to Reverend Rutledge when I disagree with his treatment of the children.

As to Reverend Rutledge's comments upon the silence of women, I do not believe the God who inspired Mary's Magnificat would have preferred her silence. I simply say of my opinions that there are men who hold the opinion I have expressed and men who do not, and it is my privilege to decide to whom I will listen. I trust God will inspire me to listen to the proper guides. Granting the inferiority of women to men, especially in such particulars as education, and granting that Reverend Rutledge is a worthy man of God, I still maintain, as Jesus did in the example of Mary of Bethany, who anointed Jesus' feet in the face of the disciples, that women have a greater degree of sense than Reverend Rutledge will allow them.

I cannot number the times Reverend Rutledge has told Lady Charlotte and me of the origins of the Stanley crest, "an eagle surmounting a child," in the legend of Sir Thomas Stanley, an ancestor of Lord James, who led his wife to a tree where an eagle often perched. Sir Thomas had, just prior to this, ordered his servant to leave Sir Thomas' only son, an illegitimate child, at the foot of this tree. When Sir Thomas and his wife discovered the eagle hovering over the baby, he convinced her that the child had been carried to them in the eagle's talons, praising God for protecting the child and entrusting the child to their loving discipline and care, to be their Isaac. Reverend Rutledge tells his version of the story firmly believing without any shadow of a question mark that Sir Thomas deceived his wife; I believe she deceived him by pretending she was deceived.

If I have wronged Thy will O Lord and wronged Thy servant, I do beseech Thee to forgive me, but I do most sincerely and heartily entreat Thee to remember Thy dear Son and His dear Mother, who intercededth for me and who suffered the children to come unto them. Amen.
I'd like to begin by explaining the first part of the title which I chose for this essay. Silence = Death is a phrase which you see all over New York City these days on buttons, posters, stickers stuck on subway seats/water fountains/bus stops. Silence = Death. The phrase was developed by an organization of radical gay men and lesbians called ACT UP—or AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. This organization was formed in response to the social and governmental silence on the AIDS crisis. It spoke to the silence which followed the hundreds and then thousands of deaths due to AIDS. ACT UP recognized that silence and silencing is oppressive. It is a way of exercising control over people by regulating what is considered valid experience, by limiting thought and expression, by limiting memory. Those who have been silenced have no power to express their experiences to the world, to unite with each other, or even to explain their own experiences to themselves. Silence = Death.

There are many different ways in which one individual, one group, or one society can silence another. Some forms of wielding power are easier to identify than others. If persons are being hit over the head with clubs or sprayed by the water of fire hoses, it is fairly evident that someone is holding power over them and using that power in an abusive way. There are also "smaller" more subtle ways of silencing. Institutionalized racism. Sexism. Homophobia. Making assumptions about what is normal, desirable, and good. Designating certain ideas, behaviors, and lifestyles as good and others as deviant.

The "smaller," less apparent things are a large part of silencing. Feminists have long argued, for instance, that male-oriented language silences and discounts women. But this is often treated as a trivial issue—and, after all, we must observe proper grammar. Saying "Oh, you're just too sensitive" is a way of silencing. Brushing off a racist or sexist slur with "Can't you take a joke?" is a way of saying "Shut up/Don't talk about it." Saying "You are a sinner" is often a way of saying "Your life does not count/Your voice has no authority/Be quiet." The silences, big and small, blatant and subtle, add up. Like a cancer, they accumulate, cell by cell.
There are assumptions made about what should be spoken and what not all the time. At DePauw, for instance, it is generally assumed that you fit into a specific student mold. If you don’t fit into that mold you probably want to. If you do fit into it and don’t want to then you probably want to leave. If, for some reason, you don’t want to leave you can be ignored or marginalized. It is a kind of hegemony which is exercised over the entire student body by a portion of the student body. At DePauw and on a broader scale throughout society, assumptions are made that one should think male, think white, value wealth, and practice heterosexuality. The voices which would speak against these assumptions are ridiculed, educated out of existence, socialized into the closet, minimalized, and rationalized away.

Listening to the silencing voices can cause one to forget that those who are encouraged to speak may not speak for everyone. You begin to believe that the “Real World” is, in fact, all white, rich, and heterosexual. You begin to believe that, if you don’t fit into those categories, you deserve to be marginalized and silenced—that you should feel grateful for any little concessions which you get—and that you shouldn’t agitate for anything more. I would not try to deny that DePauw, in some ways, does mirror that “Real World.” However, I would argue that there is considerably more to the real world than what is reflected at DePauw and that the real world itself is not real insofar as it is built upon the silencing of large groups of people.

Silence = Death. Silence is a foundation for injustice. It is a method of selling people their own oppression. Silence and silencing is a way of saying: “You are not important, you are deviant/sick and unworthy.” The task of liberation is left to those persons who are silenced and marginalized, to those who don’t fit into the rich-straight-white-male version of the world and its acceptable categories. This is where the second part of my title becomes important. More recently the phrase Action = Life has shown up around New York City. The death of silence can be countered by action, by remembering, by reclaiming experience and speech. Liberating means speaking, saying NO to enforced silence and marginalization. Action = Life.

Once speech, history, and experience have been reclaimed, organizing can take place. More appropriately, re-organizing can take place. There can be a re-organizing of the social structure from one which is supported by silence, fear, and injustice into one which welcomes diversity and abhors oppression. But first, the speech must be found, the liberating must begin. There is much liberating left to do—and much re-organizing which is needed. But there are beginnings. In several cities around the country, homeless men and women have begun to organize into unions. They are raising their
voices against the silence which tries to keep them unseen and unheard. They are organizing and marching for their lives.

A couple of years ago, one million people demonstrated in New York's Central Park against the nuclear arms race. They let their voices be heard in a condemnation of the belief that nuclear weapons are somehow necessary for safety. They were marching for their lives. In October, 1987, approximately 500,000 gays, lesbians and heterosexual supporters voiced a loud "NO" to a society which would silence them. At the National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights, 500,000 persons marched through the streets of Washington feeling the power which comes with speaking out against the silencing. Banners flew at the march which read "We, too, have a dream." And that dream will be voiced. Action = Life.
GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS
TO THE DENISON WOMEN'S STUDIES NEWSLETTER

WHO MAY SUBMIT A PIECE FOR PUBLICATION?

Denison students are especially encouraged to submit their work to the newsletter, although pieces by faculty, staff and others affiliated with the university are also welcome.

WHAT TYPE OF WORK IS APPROPRIATE FOR SUBMISSION?

Essays, fiction, poetry, artwork and photography which involve one of the following are appropriate: use of a feminist perspective; use of gender as a primary category of analysis; or commentary on a women's issue.

The primary goal of the newsletter is to showcase work done at Denison for Women's Studies courses or which has been influenced by the discipline of Women's Studies.

The range of appropriate topics for submissions is quite broad. Past newsletters have featured portions of scholarly papers written for classes on topics as divergent as the double day, heterosexism, women in Japanese society, eating disorders, etc. Personal accounts have been featured as well, and past examples of these types of submissions include a description of the experience of undergoing breast reduction surgery and an account by a Denison woman student who was raped.

WHY SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO THE NEWSLETTER?

It affords the opportunity of sharing your ideas with others both on and off campus, it showcases your work in an attractive format, and it gives you a publication to list on your resume.

WHAT FORM SHOULD YOUR SUBMISSION TAKE?

Written submissions should be typed, doubled-spaced, and no more than ten pages in length. They should also be edited for grammar and spelling as much as possible. If your submission was originally a paper assignment, journal entry or reaction paper written for class, remember that it should be made accessible to a general audience—minor adjustments may be necessary. Artistic contributions should be camera ready.

Final selection of pieces for the newsletter will be made by the co-editors of each issue.