

# King's College, University of Western Ontario

## *Susan Small*

The presence of Medieval Studies at King's College is perhaps less evident than at some other institutions, but it is solid and firmly-rooted nonetheless. King's is a small, Catholic liberal arts college affiliated with the University of Western Ontario; it has a history of literary and philosophical interest in the Middle Ages and also shares a tradition of medieval ecclesiastical scholarship with St. Peter's Seminary, with which it has an academic affiliation.

The Department of Modern Languages at King's offers courses in both Middle English and Medieval French literature, each offered in alternate years. King's has offered a course in Middle English Language and Literature since 1978, when Paul Werstine, a specialist in Early Modern Drama, hired two years earlier, was found to have the necessary qualifications in medieval studies. In the 1980's, Werstine also served first as Assistant and then as Associate Editor of *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in English*. He has also played an important role in promoting and developing the profile of Medieval Studies at King's outside the College. A member of Western's Graduate Faculty, he has been invited to serve on examining committees for M.A. and Ph.D. theses in Middle English on the main campus of the university, as well as on several advisory committees. In the same spirit of intellectual exchange, Nicholas Watson, a professor of English from main campus, came to the College, just before he left to take up a position at Harvard several years ago, to teach half of the Middle English course. There is every reason to believe that, as long as UWO continues to require this course in the Honours Program, the vitality of Middle English studies at King's will continue to grow, and that the College will hire someone qualified to teach Middle English when Werstine retires in order to continue editing Shakespeare full-time. The courses in French (one half-year survey course and one half-year topics course) are taught by Susan Small, a medievalist hired in July 2002 to fill what the

department recognised as a need in the French program, created when its specialist in Medieval Studies left several years earlier. Enrolment in both courses has far exceeded expectations, and is expected to continue to grow.

In the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at King's, staffing and program limitations do not allow the College to offer a course devoted entirely to Medieval Studies at this time. However, this is expected to change as the program is revamped to meet the changing requirements of the UWO undergraduate program in Philosophy, and, even now, Hunter Brown, Steve Lofts, and John Comiskey—among others—include medieval components in their mainline courses in the history of philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion, and Jim Schmeiser has done a considerable amount of medieval research in sacramental theology and ecclesiology. Research is now being done, as well, on the theory and attitudes of medieval theologians in the area of the study of dreams.

Courses at King's College devoted exclusively to Medieval Studies, are, therefore, limited—somewhat ironically—to the Department of Modern Languages, but courses in other departments at the College contain medieval elements, and there is, as well, much interesting and varied research being done in the field.