

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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ROBINSON HALL

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Professor Richard M. Hunt, Director
Andrew W. Mellon Faculty Fellowships in the Humanities
Lamont Library 202
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Dear Richard,

You asked for an evaluation of my year here at Harvard as a Mellon Fellow, and this I will attempt to do. It is difficult, as I reflect, to embrace the manifold fruits of this year that I received as a Mellon Fellow, and that to a lesser, but grateful, degree I produced as a teacher to Harvard freshmen and a friend and a colleague to my fellow Mellons, the faculty of the History Department, and the students and associates of Cabot House.

Regarding my proposal to complete my first book on "Carolingian Baptismal Instructions and the Carolingian Reform," I will be satisfied to have completed a solid first draft of the entire book when I leave here June 30th. Having access to Widener was, as I expected it to be, one of the greatest pleasures of doing research at Harvard. I found the staff always extraordinarily helpful and friendly. But at my stage of progress, most of my hours were spent at a desk writing, not in the stacks, and for this reason I am especially grateful to Hilles Library. I was given a beautiful office. I cannot tell you what this meant to me. My greatest fear when coming to Harvard was what to do about finding office space, since I do all my work in the office, and knew it would be crucial to having a successful year.

(By the way, may I suggest that future Mellons be told to get in touch with Hilles if they are looking for office space. I always felt warmly appreciated here, and was accommodated with special keys and a phone.)

I delivered a talk to the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies in February. This was an important moment of the year here, because a number of distinguished scholars in my field were present, and I had a chance to see their interest in my work.

Regarding my teaching experience, this is one area I could not ring enough praises to Harvard or thanks to the Spirit for my participation in the Freshman Seminar Program. I was truly overwhelmed by the Harvard freshmen I came to know and to love in my seminar on "Ritual and Society in the Middle Ages." I believe they will say the same. The seminar atmosphere allowed us to come to know one another, and to undertake a vast array of projects and field trips, including the Public Library in Boston

to see an exhibition on the catacombs, the Widener Library to learn together the ropes of actually getting a book out of it, the Houghton Rare Book Room, where Rodney Dennis took us personally and left eight students open-mouthed and wide-eyed after actually feeling and turning the pages of medieval manuscripts, one over 1100 years old! The Fine Arts Museum, St. Paul's Catholic Church where we studied architecture (it is modeled on St. Zeno's in Verona) and saw an ordination ceremony (25 Jesuits to the diaconate!), the Episcopal Monastery on the Charles River where one of my students led us to Compline were also on our list of adventures.

Throughout the term the people at the audio-visual center were marvelous at always supplying me with a slide projector and screen (even dashing over with a fresh bulb on one occasion) or giving us a room in the Science Center to view video-cassettes. I will not be able to thank people like Rodney Dennis and Susan Lewis and Gerry over at the Seminar Office enough.

I am happily still in touch with my students. They astonish me. One re-wrote his final research paper to apply for a grant, another is tracing a footnote he discovered was erroneous, and a third wants to become a History major with a concentration in Irish History. These people are my fruits, if I can boast of any fruits. And of course they are not mine, but a gift from the Lord that has helped me to have a very different view of Harvard than the outside world often has of it, of preppy students and uncaring faculty.

As for my benefits from the Mellon Program, I have to thank you personally for selecting two people in Carolingian liturgical history. Fred Paxton has been enormously important to my work here, and my growth as a scholar. We have met innumerable times to hash out ideas and read each others' written work. Since we know each other's field like no one better, the rewards have been tremendous for both of us.

It was also very important for me to get to know the other Mellons. What a beautiful group of people! My only regret is that I could not get to know them all equally well. As a fellow Cabot House resident, I was especially fortunate to share dinner most nights with Rhys Townsend, and to have become his close, firm friend. One suggestion I have for our luncheons is that sometimes we sit at smaller tables of 4 or 5 and not have an agenda of things to talk about. This would give us a chance to communicate at a level we cannot when talking at everyone formally.

I have no complaints about the Program, only tremendous thanks to you and to Harvard and to God for opening up my eyes in so many ways this year. I am also especially grateful to Amy Gazin-Schwartz who made the whole transition to Harvard less traumatic, and was always available for help and advice.

With warm regards,


Susan A. Keefe