

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS



∞ FROM THE PRESIDENT

If you're like me, you don't usually pay much attention to the page of a journal that lists the Society's officers and the membership of the advisory and editorial boards. But if you do, you'll find some striking changes since issue 44.2 of *Medieval Feminist Forum* (Winter 2008). First, please join me in welcoming Dr. Chris Africa as the new Managing Editor of *MFF*, succeeding Dr. Michelle Sauer of the Department of English at the University of North Dakota who stepped down after five busy and very productive years in that post. Chris, the History and Social Sciences Bibliographer for the University of Iowa Libraries, has been active with the Society on the Advisory Board and has served as Book Review Editor, Elections Coordinator, and Information Technology officer. She brings to the job not only intellectual depth, but also a wide-ranging knowledge of the profession, expertise in information management, and a keen sensitivity to the nuances of academic publishing. These are vital and valuable qualities that you can see at work in the issue of *MFF* that you hold in your hands, which still owes much to Michelle's hard work and vision. In addition to working closely with the Editorial Board and Issue Editors, publishing new and innovative feminist scholarship, Michelle brought to *MFF* a distinctive design that transformed the journal from its less formal, staple-bound format to its current perfect binding that enabled us to expand in size. That's a tough act to follow, but I am sure that Chris is the perfect person to succeed Michelle and we are delighted to work with her. I'll let Chris fill you in on the details of her vision for the *Medieval Feminist Forum* as she takes it into the realm of digital journal publication.

The annual meeting at Kalamazoo brought a new Associate Editor

to the *Medieval Feminist Forum*. Rachel Dressler, Associate Professor of Art History at the University at Albany, State University of New York, joins Marla Segol (Skidmore College), Megan Moore (University of Illinois, Chicago), and Jennifer Thibodeaux (University of Wisconsin, Whitewater). Succeeding Chris Africa as Book Review Editor is Helene Scheck, Associate Professor of English, Director of Undergraduate Studies in English, and Director of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program at the University at Albany, State University of New York.

I'm delighted to announce the annual SMFS prizes for scholarship. The 2009 Prize for Best Article was awarded to Professor Rebecca Winer, Department of History, Villanova University, for her paper "Conscripting the Breast: Lactation, Slavery, and Salvation in the Realms of Aragon and Kingdom of Majorca, c. 1250–1300," *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008). The Honorable Mention for the 2009 Best Article Prize went to Professor Nicole Nolan Sidhu, Department of English, East Carolina University, for "Weeping for the Virtuous Wife: Laymen, Affective Piety and Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale,'" published in *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing, and Household in Medieval England* edited by Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (Cambridge UP, 2009). In 2008 SMFS inaugurated two prizes for students. The Graduate Prize went to Sarah Celentano Parker, University of Texas, Austin, for her paper "Commentary from the Canoness: Female Agency and Christian-Jewish Debate in the *Hortus Deliciarum*," and the Undergraduate Prize went to Amy Brown, The Women's College, University of Sydney, for her paper "Gender, Power and Heroism in *Ælfric's Judith*."

Because all of this costs money, SMFS is exploring ways to build an endowment to secure the Society's finances and guarantee that we can continue to foster medieval feminist scholarship through publishing the *Medieval Feminist Forum*, organizing events at conferences, mentoring younger scholars, and awarding prizes. You will be hearing more about this as the year progresses from Sally Livingston, who has agreed to use her financial acumen to get things started.

And, just in case you haven't noticed, SMFS has a Facebook page. We set up this page to as a way to keep in touch informally with feminist friends around the world. It's not restricted to SMFS members only, but

we do hope to use it as a way to generate new members. On the subject of members, please encourage your medievalist feminist colleagues to join SMFS. Our reach is now truly global and our increased conference presence will bring our work to new audiences, which we hope will increase the membership so that we can continue to build on the work begun by scholars we now celebrate as Foremothers.

Finally, as we were putting the finishing touches on this issue of *Medieval Feminist Forum*, we were greatly saddened to hear of the death of one of the great feminist Foremothers, Jo Ann McNamara. Her presence enriched, deepened, and enlivened the world and her death is a great loss to us all. Dorothy Helly, Jo Ann's colleague at Hunter College, generously allowed us to publish her eloquent and moving obituary for Jo Ann, whose spirit continues to move us and whose work will always inspire us. We dedicate this issue of the *Medieval Feminist Forum* to the exemplary life and work of Jo Ann McNamara.

Theresa Earenfight

∞ FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

The Spring after I came to the University of Iowa as the History and Social Sciences Bibliographer in the University Libraries, I went to my first International Congress on Medieval Studies. I had emerged from graduate school as an early modern Europeanist, by force of circumstances, but some of my best friends were, and are, medievalists, and from them I had heard tales of their annual treks to Kalamazoo. Medieval Studies, and quickly feminist Medieval Studies, spoke to my interest in the origins of the western cultural mindset. I discovered the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship whose members made me, a non-medievalist without faculty status, feel welcome. I wanted to become more involved in the Society's activities which led to organizing sessions for the Congress, both sponsored and special, and to becoming Book Review Editor of *Medieval Feminist Forum*.

At the same time, as a collection management librarian at a public research university, I was caught up in the interconnected challenges and changes represented by the economics of publishing and the rapid

development of information technologies. Essentially, the economics of scholarly communication through print, not just journals, at this point, are not favorable to the survival and growth of small specialized publications such as *MFF*. At the same time, technology has the potential to make the scholarship that *MFF* presents known and accessible to a far wider audience than it could reach in print.

In response to conditions in the scholarly communications arena, academic libraries, including the University of Iowa Libraries, have begun to provide online publishing services. The Libraries' Digital Library Services Unit scanned the *MFF* backfile as an early project. The decision to create an electronic institutional repository, Iowa Research Online, included acquisition of a platform for electronic journal publication. This summer the backfile from *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* No. 1, May 1986 through *Medieval Feminist Forum* 43.2 (Winter 2007) will become freely accessible, hosted by Iowa Research Online, at <http://ir.uiowa.edu/mff/>. As *MFF* moves to online publication, access to current issues will be restricted to subscribers. An additional year of back content will be added to the archival site annually. It is my hope that in time *MFF* will become wholly open access.

Adopting an online format for *MFF* will free it from the constraints imposed by printing costs, enabling the editors to accept more submissions and giving authors more latitude to develop their arguments. We will be able to publish color images, to include links (where possible) to other scholarly works, and to take advantage of new applications that are not yet on our collective radar screens. Personally I will regret the loss of the print journal that I can stick in my bag when I head for the bus stop. As Bonnie Wheeler has pointed out, the fragmentation of an online journal's content into searchable bits can decrease opportunities for serendipitous discovery, though that is not inevitable. Overall, *MFF* will benefit from a transition to an online format within the framework of an academic institutional repository, a move that the University of Iowa Libraries are delighted to support.

Chris Africa

∞ FROM THE EDITOR

After many years of involvement with SMFS, first on the Advisory Board, then on the Editorial Board, finally as General Editor of *MFF*, I am about to “rotate out.” It has been a wonderful experience in every way, although editing my two issues of *MFF* has been a particular joy. Thanks everyone!

Felice Lifshitz

∞ CALL FOR PAPERS

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Woman, Man, God

In the medieval period as in our own, religious and political authorities theorize social relations between men and women in terms of their relation to the divine, according to their likeness or unlikeness to God. In this way the divine gender assumes real significance, and so human gender becomes a primary criterion for assessing likeness or unlikeness to God, and in this, social and spiritual status.

The *Medieval Feminist Forum* requests papers for an issue devoted to the relationship between gender, divinity, and social ordering, construed as broadly as possible. Specifically, the editors seek papers that explore the ways in which the taxonomic category of gender is imagined in relation to conceptions of the divine, and/or the ways in which these categories are applied in social ordering.

Please send, by December 15th, 2009, finished papers of 20–25 pages following the conventions of the Chicago Manual of Style. Please also forward a current *curriculum vitae* that includes your present affiliation and contact information. Abstracts of 100 words and informal inquiries are strongly encouraged before the December 15th deadline. Address all inquiries, abstracts, and submissions to Marla Segol at msegol@skidmore.edu.

In Elizabeth L'Estrange's essay in volume 44.2, the wrong image was mistakenly printed for that attributed to Mario Berardi (figure 8). The correct image is printed below.



Gawain on the Bed of Marvels, Ivory Mirror Case, Bologna, Museo Civico, fourteenth century. (Photo © Mario Berardi)

About the Contributors entry for Jane Chance, *MFF* 44.2, p. 189. Jane Chance (jchance@rice.edu), Andrew W. Mellon Distinguished Chair, Rice University, has published numerous books and articles, including, most recently, *The Literary Subversions of Medieval Women* (Palgrave Macmillan), winner of the 2008 SCMLA Prize, and her edited collection *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (U Wisconsin P, 2005). Her most recent essay, “In the Company of Orcs’: Peter Jackson’s Queer Tolkien,” appears in *Queer Movie Medievalisms*, edited by Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Tison Pugh, in Ashgate’s Queer Interventions Series (2009). She has just been selected as PMLA’s Old and Middle English specialist on the Advisory Committee.