

NOTES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

MESSAGES

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

The Editorial board of *MFF* had hoped that this issue would feature articles about medieval feminism on an international level. This topic came to our attention a year ago when there was a discussion at Kalamazoo about whether the medievalist feminist agenda that we are committed to at SMFS, however diverse it may appear to us, actually seems like a specifically American position when viewed from an international perspective. I was disappointed to see that our call for essays about international medieval feminism did not bring us any submissions. I do hope, though, that the idea will grow with time and that a future issue of *MFF* will present a lively debate on this important topic.

But we are fortunate in this issue to have two groups of essays on problems of women doing medieval history and medievalists doing women's history. First are four essays that could be seen as an addition to the wonderful new collection edited by Jane Chance, *Women Medievalists and the Academy* (U Wisconsin, 2005). In spite of the efforts of a team of scholars led by Chance, and in spite of the thousand pages plus of biographies of notable women medievalists in the final volume, some of our Foremothers were, unfortunately but inevitably, left out. Consequently, Joel Rosenthal and Caroline M. Barron have brought us an introduction two essays that articulate the respect due to the important social historian Sylvia Thrupp, who was not included in the Chance anthology. These essays have been nicely complemented by Michelle Sauer's interview with Raymond Grew, Sylvia Thrupp's collaborator on the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, who remembers the professional challenges that faced Thrupp and how she dealt with them. Rounding out this section is Barbara Hanawalt's reflection on the contradictions that Thrupp presents as a famous woman historian and role model who

actually opposed women's history as a category of historiography. I hope that these essays will be successful in presenting the complexity of the spectrum between women's history and women historians, and that *MFF* will continue to celebrate the lives and work of important Foremothers, especially those who have not had the recognition they deserve.

This issue also has two short articles by Constance Berman. These were originally crafted for presentation in the classroom, but they stand on their own for a wider reading public just as well. In one, Berman looks back at her mentor, David Herlihy, and suggests some ways in a classic article he published in 1962 could be reinterpreted today. Like the essays about Sylvia Thrupp, this is a look, but through feminist eyes, at someone who has been an important mentor. In the second, Berman muses on the relationship between available sources on women's economic roles and the scholarly assessment of women's power in the Middle Ages. In all, the essays on Thrupp and the essays by Berman give us an interesting set of reflections on medieval social history from the perspective of women scholars.

Finally, we have a preview of Judith Bennett's argument against "presentism" in women's history, as will be more expansively treated in her forthcoming *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism*, to be published this year by the Penn Press. Bennett challenges the establishment of women's history to pay more attention to medieval women, and feminist medievalists to try harder to make a bridge to concerns of modernist feminist historians, pointing to some of the work of Jane Chance as a step in this direction.

We are fortunate to have all of these articles together in one issue, showcasing the many sides of the field we want to encourage: work by women scholars on the Middle Ages, and work about women in medieval culture and society. I hope this issue will provoke some interesting conversations.

This is the end of my term as Editor of *MFF*. I want to thank Michelle Sauer for her hard work and creativity in the difficult task

of starting up publication from Minot State. I look forward to future issues crafted by the hands of my companion medievalist feminists.

E. Ann Matter

MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Once again, I find myself indebted to the SMFS membership at large; thank you for your continuing support. I especially appreciate the positive feedback I have received about the “new look” launched in Issue 40. The move to perfect binding had been overdue, and will make *MFF* a force to be reckoned with. The marketing suggestions and the “volunteer army,” who are determined to spread the word about SMFS, make this even more of a surety. This is the true feminist medievalist spirit—feminist scholars collectively working on an important project, bridging the traditional gaps of discipline and status in order to succeed. It is precisely this attitude that would have been appreciated by the medievalist foremother we honor in this issue, Sylvia Thrupp. One of my favorite things about being a medievalist is the opportunity for interdisciplinary work, and Thrupp’s pioneering endeavors demonstrated the viability and the necessity of such approaches. I also enjoyed researching a woman about whom I knew very little beyond *The Worshipful Company of Bakers*.

The articles in the second half are of great significance as well. Berman’s thoughtful reevaluation of her mentor’s work illustrates fine feminist scholarship—building upon an established tradition, not to denigrate it, but to reconsider positions that we have accepted as unquestionable. In a similar vein, is her look at religious women. Judith Bennett’s remarkable piece serves as a sobering reminder that we still have a big job to do, both as medievalists and as feminists. Her “expose” of the (somewhat self-created) marginalized space that medievalists inhabit is right on the mark. We all lament the phasing out of medievalists at universities everywhere. Many departments have only one medievalist. Some used to have one, but don’t rehire medievalists when the tenure line opens. Some departments simply have none—and no plans to get one. This is a sobering situation.

And as I have pointed out in several conference discussions, when a medievalist goes on the English job market, without a *cv* glutted with Chaucer scholarship, the odds are steep. Are we (medievalists) seen as one-issue, theoretically impoverished scholars? Are we (feminist medievalists) stuck between being feminist and medievalist? Are all medievalists in danger of being “forgotten”? Of course these are not new questions by any means—but as time passes, we may find new answers, and Bennett’s call to action reminds us that we still have a job to do.

On a happier note, I am very pleased to report that the woman who has been the Art Director for Issues 40 and 41, Roxi Homelvig, will be staying on as Art Director for at least Issue 42, and perhaps more. It is a pleasure to work with someone who is an excellent up-and-coming graphic artist, with a positive attitude, a solid work ethic, and inspired ideas.

Michelle M. Sauer

MESSAGE FROM MSU’S EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Leave it to the first male *MFF* Editorial Assistant at MSU to also be the most incorrigible intern of the bunch. Indeed, when Dr. Sauer invited me to work for the *MFF* during the spring of what we both thought would be my last term as a seven-year undergraduate English major with minors in gender/women’s studies and history, I’m not sure that either of us fully realized what we were getting ourselves—and each other—into. Alas, now spring has sprung into summer—and I am still an undergraduate in what my professors jokingly call “the tenure track” program. While I am looking forward to (finally!) graduating in December 2006, the delay has enabled me to take full advantage of a unique opportunity—the chance to spend a few extra months as the *MFF* Editorial Assistant.

Being actively (if minorly) involved with the production of Issues 40 and 41 has been an eye-opening experience, to say the least. Even for a seasoned English major like me, it is difficult to communicate just how exhilarating it has been not only to correspond with so many

remarkable medievalists via email, but also to actually have had the chance to meet many of you in person at Kalamazoo last May. It's an incredible feeling to know that the people you are updating in the *MFF* database are also the authors of the books and articles you've read and admired—and when you are able to actually smile and shake hands with those scholars, it is the most rewarding experience for which an undergrad can ask.

In light of the *MFF*'s recent attention to “the archive,” I have been inspired to relate my role as editorial assistant to a kind of archival experience. To be sure, the vagaries of fax machines, bulk mailings, temperamental photocopiers, and recalcitrant computer software must pale in comparison to dodging cow patties while on the hunt for sheela-na-gigs in England, to weathering the icy temperatures of climate-controlled libraries throughout Europe, and to the various other challenges facing the “practical paleographer.” Nevertheless, I'd like to think that, as unglamorous as filing subscription information and stuffing envelopes may be, such activities are still an important part of the archival process. After all, they come with their own rewards, and certainly provide their own occasions for comedic complications. Indeed, the humorous anecdotes about the challenges of archival research are what I enjoyed most about Issue 40. I can't tell you how much of a pleasure it has been to know that we are all learning and laughing together.

Christopher Lozensky

MESSAGE FROM THE ART DIRECTOR

Working on the *Medieval Feminist Forum* has opened my eyes to the craziness involved in the editing process. Being a part of the *MFF* editing staff has been an enlightening experience. I've learned more about grammatical rules over the making of Issues 40 and 41 than I ever did in high school. The letters “m” “f” “f” will forever be italicized in my eyes, and I will always see unnecessary spaces between sentences.

I was excited to get to work when I was given the opportunity to be the art director for the *MFF*. Issue 40 was my first book project, and with that, my most daunting. I see it as my “warm up” issue. Now that I’ve got my footing as Art Director on Issue 41, it seems I’ve got my first taste of blood. I’ve found that the work of piecing together the articles and illustration with everything else is addicting. I am looking forward to working on issue 42 and honing my directing skills even more.

The atmosphere in the editing process is hectic and fast-paced. Things either get done quickly, or... well, let’s not talk about what happens when they don’t. While it is fairly rushed, it’s also a lot of fun. The times spent with Dr. Sauer and Chris and Misty, and soon Amanda, are always highly entertaining. It’s easier to work on a project like this when the people involved are so much fun to work with. This has been a valuable experience for a college student, and I’m glad that I got to be a part of it and learn from it.

Roxi Homelvig

