



**Join the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship at the  
MLA Convention in Washington, DC, January 6-9, 2022**

**PROPOSALS DUE March 15, 2021**

## **1. Magic and Gender in Medieval Literature**

Magic was omnipresent in the Middle Ages: theorized by natural philosophers, debated by theologians, written about in a wide variety of practical texts and literary genres, and undertaken by a wide range of practitioners, including what Richard Kieckhefer has described as “a clerical underworld.” Unlike the early modern obsession with witches, most medieval magical instruction books limit the knowledge they hold to learned men. Yet in literature, gender seemingly is no barrier for who can cast spells, create potions, or divine the future. While the “authority” of magic is recorded in books understood as the parvenu of men and in particular, of clerics, the practice of magic throughout the medieval period is undertaken by male and female, alike. In fact, more often women, particularly women of the fey and euhemerized goddesses, are wielders of powerful magic. This panel investigates the gendered slipperiness surrounding depictions of magic in medieval literature. Possible topics: How does the project of *translatio studii* shape divergent cultural understandings of the connection between magic and gender across the Global Middle Ages? Does magic have the power to subvert understandings of masculinity and femininity, or does it uphold them? What role does gender play in literary depictions of the preternatural? What (perhaps thinking beyond the *Philosopher’s Stone*) are the intersections between magic, gender, mortality, and immortality? What is the relationship between magic, gender, and the Church, or magic, gender, and kingship/queenship? Is there a distinction between masculine and feminine magic in the medieval period? Is there any recognizable intersection between ethics, power, and gender in medieval magic, and/or are there constructions of good and evil encoded in gendered representations of magical practice?

**Submit 300-word abstracts and a brief bio for 15-20-minute papers to Melissa Ridley Elmes ([MElmes@lindenwood.edu](mailto:MElmes@lindenwood.edu)) and Kersti Francis ([kersti.francis@gmail.com](mailto:kersti.francis@gmail.com)) by March 15, 2021.**

## **2. Gendered Violence in Old English Literature**

The Old English MLA forum and the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship are proposing a jointly-sponsored session on gendered violence in Old English literature. The last decades have witnessed an increased interest in research on the relationship between gender and violence in the Middle Ages, with new studies exploring the construction of gender through violence and women as its victims. Gender theory and feminist studies have done much to refine methodologies used in this research, especially in the late Middle Ages. Still, there is a great deal of work to be done in the area of gendered violence, in particular in the literature of the early English era. Some of the questions that panelists in this jointly sponsored session might wish to address include: How/ is violence gendered in early medieval English literature? Is there an expressly gendered aspect to violence, or should we be looking at other factors in these investigations? What role does violence play in constructions of gender in these texts? What are the intersections of power and gender in terms of depictions of violence in early English texts? How/ is gender featured, understood, interpreted and applied in legal contexts featuring violence? Are there indications of gender as a significant factor in the violence of these texts from an expressly linguistic standpoint? With what other categories of individual, socio-cultural, and political classification does gender intersect in depictions of violence in early medieval English texts?

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Panel co-sponsored by the Old English Forum and the Society for Medieval Feminist Studies. This panel is not guaranteed.