
About the Cover



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The cover image for this issue of *postmedieval* on Medievalism and the Medical Humanities depicts the thirteenth-century casket reliquary of Saint Amandus undergoing conservation in 2008, when the piece was transported from the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore to the University of Maryland Medical Centre and placed on a Direct Radiography Table. The investigative procedure is discussed by Jack Hartnell in his article in this issue. The editors are grateful to Dr Hartnell for suggesting and providing this image. We also would like to acknowledge the generous permission and co-operation of the Walters Art Museum, in particular Ruth Bowler, and Professor Barry Daly of the



Department of Diagnostic Radiology, University of Maryland School of Medicine and Medical Center.

This striking image is interesting as a starting-point for many of the themes and arguments that are raised by the authors in this collection. I use the term starting-point quite deliberately as it will become clear from the articles here that the Medical Humanities has entered an exciting period. The field originated as a way to explore how medicine could be aided by a closer association with the arts and humanities and, subsequently, there was a dynamic sharing of ideas and methodologies between ostensibly quite different disciplines. Matters have now moved on, however. The emerging field of the Critical Medical Humanities, discussed in the Introduction and elsewhere in this issue, has taken a more confident standpoint and begun to interrogate meanings of health, illness, and, essentially, what it is to be human. With this in mind, the cover image might be particularly appropriate in terms of what is happening on the Direct Radiography Table – we are looking both *inside* the casket and *back* to the past. But the medical setting is unmistakably modern, and the methodologies of the Medical Humanities and Critical Medical Humanities might be said to be analogous to the rays that are penetrating the casket.

What is happening in this image? The team are attempting to gain a privileged insight beneath the surface. Of course, the most striking aspect is the contrast between the overtly clinical setting and the medieval artefact sitting somewhat incongruously on its surface. But this is exactly the aim of this collection of articles: each of these authors is attempting to explore new ways of thinking about what it was to be human in the medieval period. In the spirit of Medical Humanities, this is also urging us to think about health, illness, and being human in the twenty-first century. What were the boundaries between medicine, philosophy, and theology? How was illness depicted in literature and art? What were the different cultural, social, and political influences that might affect the health and wellbeing of an individual or society? This image is perhaps not as incongruous as it may first appear. In fact, in terms of what it points towards in this issue of *postmedieval*, it is very exciting.

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