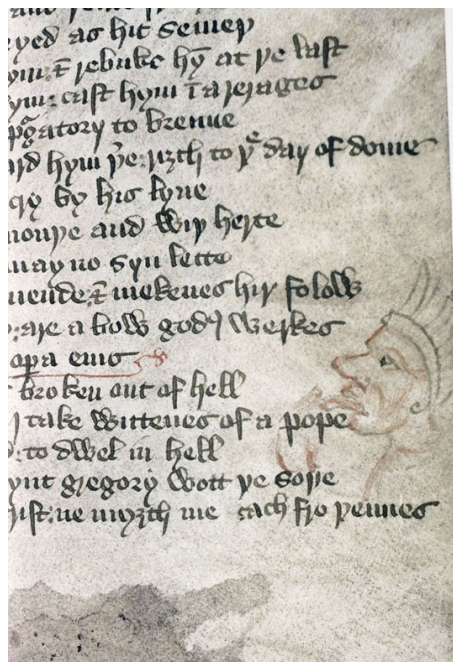


Marginalia

The Journal of the Medieval Reading Group



Yearbook

April 2011

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Cover Image: The Emperor Trajan contemplating the C-Text of *Piers Plowman*. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Douce 104, folio 56r. Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library. Copyright © Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2011.

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Editor's Foreword

Joni Henry, *St. John's College, Cambridge*

Our twelfth issue of *Marginalia* celebrates the work submitted by students of the MPhil course at Cambridge in the academic year 2009-2010. As well as a dissertation and a palaeography project, the course requires each student to write two essays; the two published in this issue were selected by the convenors of the MPhil course as the best writing produced that year.

Alexander Gabrovsky's essay ('The Good, the Bad, and the Penitent Thief: Langlandian Extremes, the Edge of Salvation, and the Problem of Trajan and Dismas in *Piers Plowman*') explores Langland's use of the figures of Dismas, the good thief crucified alongside Jesus, and Trajan, the virtuous pagan emperor of Rome. He proposes that these two figures are deployed as extreme opposites to allow Langland to examine two contrasting beliefs about salvation, salvation via God's grace and a kind of Pelagian salvation via good works. With close readings of the text, he argues that through the depiction of these two contrasting figures and other antitheses, Langland makes a strong case for a salvific belief where the two contrasting theories exist in tenuous equilibrium. In such a belief, the possibility of salvation for both believers and non-believers exists but Langland emphasises the difficulty of realising this possibility - all sinners must dangle, like Trajan and Dismas, precariously on the edge of salvation.

In her essay, "'In cordis tui scrinio conserua": Richard Methley, *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Reading for Affectivity', Sara Harris discusses Methley's translations into Latin of the Middle English texts of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls* in Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 221. She focuses on Methley's approach to the demands of Carthusian reading practice, which placed a heavy responsibility on the translator to make faithful, as well as orthodox, translations of doctrine. Associated with this practice is the importance of God's love as a guide to affective reading and interpretation. She shows how Methley's construction of translation and gloss create works that encourage readers' analytical engagement with the text, works that form a Carthusian commentary on the possibilities for understanding the union of the soul with God.

Also in this issue are reviews by members of the Medieval Reading Group of recent books of medieval scholarship on topics ranging from the centrality of the medieval world in the works of Shakespeare to the vernacular versions of the *Vita Adae et Evae*.

We are very grateful to the authors of these two excellent articles and all our reviewers. We also thank all the other supporters who make this journal possible: the members of the advisory board, the editors, the website experts, and the members of the English faculty who kindly advise and support the Medieval Reading Group and this journal. In particular, many thanks to all the members of the Reading Group whose papers, questions and camaraderie continue to make the study of the Middle Ages at Cambridge both challenging and supportive.