

Acknowledgements:

The editorial team of Marginalia wish to thank the members of the journal's 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.

Marginalia Volume 13, October 2011**Editorial Board**

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Editor's Foreword

Sara Harris, *Magdalene College, Cambridge*

The 2012 issue of *Marginalia* addresses the theme of 'Taste'. Although then, as now, the term had implications of aesthetic discernment, the fleshly aspects of taste as one of the five senses and its connection to the Fall ensured that it remained predominantly associated with sin for medieval writers in the Christian West. However, such sin also afforded the possibility of redemption: the author of the Old English *Dream of the Rood* exploits the dual meaning of 'byrigde' as 'tasted' or 'buried' to great effect, creating a half-line that is simultaneously suggestive of both Adam's death and Christ's resurrection. The mouth remained a site of sin more generally, not only as a conduit for gluttony, but also as the origin of the *peccata linguae* which increasingly concerned the later Middle Ages.

Both items in this summer's *Marginalia* address the issues raised by our theme, directly and indirectly. Emily Selove's article, 'Crashing the Text: Speaking of Eating in *Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim*' concerns the Arabic text of the *Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim*, likely to have been written in the eleventh century by the otherwise unknown al-Azdī. Selove explores the writer's constructions of obscenity through overabundance, particularly the juxtaposition of a superfluity of verbal description with the paucity of food available for consumption. The morality of appetite and its appeasement are considered through the parasitical figure of the uninvited guest, whose insatiable epicurean desires, Selove suggests, are analogous to the author's omnivorous appropriation of other texts in the construction of this poem.

Ben Parson's essay, 'An Early Flyting in Hary's *Wallace*', draws critical attention to a previously unnoticed example of a flyting, found in the fifteenth-century Makar 'Blind' Hary's *The Actes and Deidis of the Illustre and Vallyeant Campioun Schir William Wallace*. Composed in the 1470s, the brief altercation between Wallace and an English soldier enjoys extensive stylistic and thematic parallels with the other three flytings extant, the earliest of which, that of Dunbar and Kennedie, dates from c.1503. Hary's *Wallace* is therefore able to provide evidence that the main features of the flyting tradition were in place significantly earlier than previously attested.

This issue of *Marginalia* also features reviews by members of the Medieval Reading Group of various recent books connected to the Middle Ages, discussing topics that range from the homiletic writings of Wulfstan to early Irish and Welsh astrology.