

# Marginalia

The Journal of the Medieval Reading Group



## October 2012

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## Marginalia Volume 15, October 2012

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*Editor's Foreword*Mark King, *Pembroke College, Cambridge*

The present issue of *Marginalia* is, in many ways, a break with the past. This year the decision was taken to offer content of a much wider scope, moving away from the Anglo-centricity of previous editions and the increasingly specific themes which had seen submissions rates decrease over the past few years. Whilst the journal retains its thematic approach, the subject 'Relationships' was deliberately selected for its many possible interpretations in order to encourage a greater variety of articles. Furthermore, and perhaps more controversially, this issue is also the first to contain no work pertaining to the history of English literature. Indeed, of the three articles presented here, only Bogdan Smarandache's is concerned with a text that is loosely connected to the British Isles: the *Estoire de la guerre sainte*, an Anglo-Norman verse chronicle of the Third Crusade. Ultimately, this omission was less the result of a conscious decision on the part of the editorial team than a recognition of the quality of the material received, but it remains the case that this is an issue with a very different feel to it. Whether or not this wider scope will be continued by future editions remains to be seen.

Smarandache's essay, 'A New Reading of the Muslim Elite in the *Estoire de la guerre sainte*', offers a reinterpretation of the presentation of the Muslim 'other' in Amboise's text. In line with much current Crusade scholarship, it suggests that the depiction of Muslims in the *Estoire* was influenced by more than contemporary cultural stereotypes. The author draws out many positive portrayals of Saracen leaders such as the sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his brother Sayf al-Dīn and suggests that Amboise may have been influenced by Richard I's growing respect for both these men and his diplomatic relationship with the latter. As a result, Smarandache argues that the text's considerable insights into the negotiations between the Muslims and the crusaders have been overlooked.

Martin Borysek's article, 'Ibn Daud and Gundisalvi: Exploration of an Intellectual Kinship in the Context of Twelfth-Century Toledo', is also concerned with the relationship between two of the principal religions of the central middle ages, but approaches this paradigm through the intellectual environment flourishing in the newly re-conquered Toledo during these years. In the frontier society which existed here, Borysek traces the academic relationship which existed between the Jewish Abraham ibn Daud and the Christian Dominicus Gundisalvi and the influences they had upon each other's work as both grappled with a particular aspect of Aristotelian philosophy.

Finally, Laura Quick's essay, "'How Many Torah Have You?': Mapping the Relationship Between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in Medieval Judaism Through the Reception History of Psalm 19', investigates the concept of 'Dual Torah' (of the essential unity of Written and Oral Law) and its influence on Jewish historical writing. Focussing specifically on Psalm 19, the author uses the ideas of the eminent scholar Jacob Neusner and his rejection of this unity to argue that the Psalm's reception in the eighth and ninth centuries was largely determined by the political and intellectual context of the day. At a time when the Karaite threat to rabbinic authority was at its most acute, Quick argues that the Midrash on the Psalms took a hymn that was ostensibly divided into two sections and presented it as a 'coherent unity in praise of the Dual Torah' (p.13) in order to strengthen the traditionalist position.

As ever, this issue of *Marginalia* also features reviews by members of the Medieval Reading Group of recent books connected to the Middle Ages.