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Editorial

The choice of theme for this summer's issue of *Marginalia* rendered up precisely the creative diversity of responses it was hoped would emanate. The three articles in this issue also give a concise demonstration of incipiently innovative developments in graduate work: an engagement with modern 'eco-theology' from Corinne Dale; critique of post-modern obsession with 'othering' discourses in Duncan Hardy's article on English 'national identity'; and in Kiel Shaub's piece, a good methodological lesson in microhistory through the wider view he opens out from the narrow lens of Lincoln Cathedral Library's booklist.

Corinne Dale argues for evidence of early medieval understandings of the natural integrity and goodness of Creation through two riddles about objects shaped from trees from the tenth-century Exeter Book. She challenges past arguments that the medieval theological account of the irredeemable fallenness of creation established the basic conditions for later environmental exploitation. This is true especially outside doctrine in the malleable and even playful literary context. Within the riddle is enacted in little the relationship between man and nature; they can be read towards different ends – glorifying or debasing to nature – as they are 'solved' for variant answers. Dale inventively argues that here, as in the *Dream of the Rood*, this allows the speaking shaped matter of the tree's wood to be engaged in the moral reshaping and redemptive remaking of its addressee and of course co-creation: the human reader.

Duncan Hardy's deftly-argued article shows up a false 'creation': an oversimplified narrative of the emergence of the English language and of English identity. The coincidence of the Hundred Years War and the increasing prevalence of Middle English as a literary vernacular, as well as the popularity of the idea of the formative 'other', still lead many writers to emphasise falsely the importance of a reactive movement towards the 'non-French' language of English. As literary scholars will especially appreciate, the picture is much more diverse and resplendent: the French language formed and informed the literary language of Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate, in a time of English claim to the French crown. Indeed, Hardy suggests, English may have been much more about 'us-ing' than 'other-ing', formed from a sense of the 'commons' speaking to all and for all, lewd and learned.

Finally, Kiel Shaub uses a few leaves of textual history to explore the many traces an intentionally created work can carry. He questions bald readings of the medieval booklist as functional record, reading beyond, through and around its volumes and those who owned and kept them to render up a richer account of the twelfth-century life of Lincoln Cathedral and its Bishops. His emphasis on what was established, built and done as well as read and thought challenges the potentially 'dry' and papery bibliographic bias.

As always, we also feature a series of reviews of recent books of interest to medievalists, including volumes on the allegorical quest tradition, the practice and rhetoric of inquisition, the very earliest history of the book and the *vitae* of some intriguing holy women.

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