

margins

Out of the

Marginalia

Vol. XIX Tenth Anniversary Conference:

Out of the Margins

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Marginalia

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Editorial

I had the great pleasure of heading the committee that organised the hosting of Marginalia's first ever conference in September 2014, which celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Medieval Reading Group at Cambridge and its online journal. This was a wonderful two-day event, concluding in a banquet with madrigals, which brought together international scholars from all levels to collaborate over two days in a joyful exploration of all kinds of margins. The papers gathered here represent that scope, which crossed many borders of era and discipline. What unites the essays here is the evidence that bringing the edges, physical and conceptual, to the centre of our focus holds academic reward—and that to examine the medieval margins is also to reframe our conception of what 'marginal' means. Professor Helen Cooper's plenary lecture on Chaucer's rhetoric illustrates this in its exploration of the borderland of medieval and renaissance scholarship, of vernacular and Latin literary traditions. The edginess of Chaucer's vernacularity can push out our consciousness of his inscription in the fullest literary tradition, and a (shockingly!) still prevalent desire to push the middle ages to the margin of the Renaissance can impoverish a reading of Chaucer. She demonstrates, as does her entire career, how essential it is to work in the borderlands, as poets and as critics—for it is along these lines that interesting inversions of what is 'central' and what 'marginal' occur. The newly-instituted Helen Cooper Prize, which is testimony to Professor Cooper's involvement in Marginalia from its inception, goes to the best postgraduate paper of the conference. Katya Chernyakova's brilliant piece of scholarly detective work on the musical notation in the margins of the manuscripts of some northwestern German canonesses reveals their intimate, performer's, knowledge of the music of the mass chants. She importantly extends our knowledge of the ecclesiastical role of these female religious: this presence on the edges of in fact places them indeed much nearer the 'centre' of sacramental life. Dr Jason Baxter gives theoretical ground to the porosity between text and exegesis, 'centre' and 'margin' in a twelfth-century commentary on the *De Nuptiis*. Paradoxically, the importance of the auctor, insofar as it is grounded in a platonically realist conception of truth-content, gives true value to exegesis as a veritable participation of this truth. The marginal commentator is engaged in an opening out of the rhythmically knotted complex of authorial intent, an activity not servile but richly imitative, in a way paralleled in Nature's creative *poesis* as an unfolding of the divine intent. Charlotte Cooper's article contributes to this theoretical conversation about the particularity of the medieval margin as she deconstructs the relevance of the print-based theoretical term 'paratext' in relation to the very differently constituted medieval text. With Dr Giovanni Gasbarri we find that the physical margins and frames of Byzantine texts can perform their own exegetical, typological and even rhetorical work. Finally, as a little 'marginalia' of my own to these efforts, and a tribute to the work of the conference, I offer a shorter note on the significance of Dante's inclusion of a creator of manuscript marginalia amongst the figures of the proud in Purgatory.

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