Marginalia in Manuscripts: A Seminar

We plan to hold a Research Group seminar on Friday, 24 June, devoted to marginalia in medieval manuscripts. This will explore a variety of entries of script and decoration made in the margins of manuscripts during their original production or history of use. As witnesses to activities ranging from preliminary layout to subsequent annotation, elucidation, distraction and defacement, such entries have much to offer as evidence — sometimes otherwise unattested — for manuscript production and usage through the medieval, early modern and modern periods.

We aim to run the seminar on informal lines, as a round table. This will give plenty of opportunity to respond to the speakers and ask questions. Nigel Wilkins will speak about the Battle of the Birds, disputing the nature of love, among the Anglo-Norman marginalia in Corpus Christi College MS 383. Ray Page will discuss the runic material found in margins, as in Corpus MSS 57 and 41. Joyce Hill will consider aspects of the text and layout of Ælfric’s Colloquy, especially in the important copy found in the margins of an eleventh-century grammatical manuscript now divided between Antwerp and London (Plantin-Moretus Museum MS 47 + British Library Additional MS 32246). Mildred Budny will survey the widespread genre of artists’ and readers’ sketches, pen-trials and scribbles placed in margins and on endleaves, as notably in Corpus MSS 2, 23, 41, 153, 162, 173B, 223, 286, 389 and 422. We hope that others will contribute to the discussion from their areas of specialisation and interest.

A group of manuscripts in the Corpus collection will be available for examination during the seminar. Among them will be manuscripts containing marginalia of various kinds considered by the speakers, including MS 41 which forms a particularly close parallel to the Antwerp–London manuscript through acquiring various added texts in many of its margins. Other volumes may emerge for inspection in the course of the session.

The seminar will meet in the Parker Library. We will begin at 11 a.m., break for lunch in College and continue until about 4:30 p.m. Alas, we must ask our participants to contribute to the cost of lunch, as our Research Group funds cannot cover it. But because we are able to take lunch in College on a Friday, the cost, depending upon individual choice, should be between £2–3 only. To let us know whom we may expect, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to me as soon as possible.


Mildred Budny

To: Dr Mildred Budny
The Parker Library
Corpus Christi College
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I  ☐ will be able to attend the seminar on Friday, 24 June
☐ will not

Signed .........................