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COVER IMAGE: *Psalterium cum Antiphonis f1r* (Lombardy c. 1475)
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Editorial

The present Yearbook issue showcases essays by Adam Horn and Robin Phillips-Jones which were submitted as part of last year's Cambridge MPhil course in Medieval and Renaissance Literature. As is customary these essays were selected by the convenors of the course amongst the best work produced during the academic year of 2013-2014.

In “‘Ertheliche honeste thynges’: Langland's Earthward Theology’, Adam Horn offers fruitful new insight into the parameters of self-exploration in *Piers Plowman*. He argues that the inward turn of Langland's poetics, although ultimately leading man closer to God, must first, in the image of Christ in the Harrowing of Hell, involve a movement downwards, towards ‘an intractably sinful self’, where humility in itself equates with knowledge. Using apophatic theology and drawing upon the scholarship of Jill Mann in particular, the essay illustrates this earthward turn by discussing how the poem conflates the limits of language with those of man, and how the relentless process of being humbled is conducive to divine grace. It is in this sense of remoteness that separates man from the divine, Horn suggests, that Langland situates the experience of God.

Robin Phillips-Jones's essay, ‘Authority, Identity, and “the Idea of the Vernacular” in *The Owl and the Nightingale*’, challenges the tendency of recent scholarship to chart the formation of English as a literary language in terms of ‘named authors and identifiable movements’, and argues for an understanding of *The Owl and the Nightingale* (c. 1200) as one of the earliest English texts to display a sense of vernacular self-consciousness. The essay explores how the poem uses and reconfigures the tradition of Latin debate poetry from which it emerged in such a way as to position itself as a piece of specifically English writing. The processes of appropriation and innovation involved are profitably discussed, thus providing evidence of the poet's appreciation of ‘the potentials of his language as a sophisticated, creative medium’.

This issue also contains reviews by Gabriel Byng, Phil Robins, and Arabella Milbank of some challenging and thought-provoking recent contributions to different areas of the field of medieval studies.

Marcel Elias
MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE