Editor's Introduction

Introducing the winners of the first biennial Michael Camille essay prize

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Our most cherished cultural monuments are not the neatly packaged products of a distant and therefore irresponsible medieval past. Cathedrals are above all spectacular sites in the here and now, sites that are continually being reinterpreted, reconstructed, and interrupted by new monsters of our own making.

Michael Camille, *The Gargoyles of Notre Dame: Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity*

With this issue of *postmedieval*, the editors are pleased to publish the winners of the first Biennial Michael Camille Essay Prize, co-sponsored by the BABEL Working Group and Palgrave Macmillan and awarded at the biennial meeting of BABEL held in Boston, Massachusetts in September 2012. Although we had originally intended to select only one winning essay, the entries were so strong that we settled on a First Place essay ('Lions and Latour Litanies in the Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt,' by Haylie Swenson) and two Runners-up ('Time Mechanics: The Modern Geoffrey Chaucer and the Medieval Jack Spicer,' by David Hadbawnik, and 'From Medieval Saint to Modern *Bête Noire*: The Case of the *Vitæ Æthelwoldi*,' by Alison Hudson). The prize was awarded

for the best short essay (4000–6000 words) on the theme of ‘Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity,’ and we asked for essays in any discipline that would bring the medieval and the modern into productive critical relation under the aegis of this particular theme.

Although Michael Camille (1958–2002), the brilliant medievalist and art historian who taught at the University of Chicago and inspired so many colleagues and students with his warmth, openness and generosity, lamentably died before *postmedieval* was even a gleam of an idea in its editors' eyes, he has always been one of the journal's guiding, tutelary spirits (one of our ‘queer little gods,’ as the late Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick might say). As his colleague Linda Seidel said shortly after his death, Michael Camille had ‘a mind like shooting stars.’ Therefore, we wanted to inaugurate a scholarly award for early career researchers that would honor Camille's intellectual vibrancy, as well as his wide-ranging scholarly oeuvre on medieval art, and the ways in which his work exemplifies playfulness, a felicitous interdisciplinary reach, a restless imagination and a desire to bring the medieval and modern into vibrant, dialogic encounter in order to explore ‘the prism of modernity through which the Middle Ages is constructed.’ In addition, we wish to honor Camille for his attention to the fringes of society – to the liminal, the excluded, ‘subjugated rabble’ and the disenfranchised – and for his interest in the socially subversive powers of medieval artists who worked on and in the margins.

We wish also to express our thanks to the judges of the 2012 award – Anne Harris (DePauw University), Robert Mills (University College London), Michael Moore (University of Iowa) and Karl Steel (Brooklyn College, CUNY) – for their hard work assessing the finalist entries, of which there were many, and to all those who submitted essays. The erudition and disciplinary breadth of writing received indicates that the future of postmedievalist scholarship is bright, indeed.