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Foreword

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Foreword

We are proud to present The Gower Project Prize issue featuring essays by students who won first place in the undergraduate or graduate category in the spring, 2019 contest. This competition invited student submissions focusing on an aspect of Gower's trilingual corpus: undergraduate papers were expected to be at least five pages in length and provide a critical reading; graduate student papers were expected to be at least ten pages in length and engage with scholarly research. The students who surpassed the other entrants also went beyond the stated requirements in offering extensively researched and in-depth analyses concerning gender criticism and source studies. Their essays rose to the top in a blind review process overseen most generously by Joel Fredell (judging the undergraduate papers) and María Bullón-Fernández (judging the graduate student papers). In very different ways the winning essays connect the past with the present and future—a scholarly position that the author of “[s]cripture veteris capiunt exempla futuri” would have approved.

The winner in the undergraduate category for “Undiagnosing Iphis: How the Lack of Trauma in John Gower’s ‘Iphis and Iante’ Reinforces A Subversive Trans Narrative” is C.E. Janecek. A graduating senior at the time of the contest, Janecek is a poet who recently received a Bachelor of Arts in English at Westminster College and plans to pursue an MFA in creative writing. To a repertoire that includes working as an editor, consulting in Westminster’s Writing Center, and interning at nonprofit organizations such as the Brink Literacy Project, Janecek has added other interests—feminist epistemology, bioethics, coming-of-age narratives, and queer theory—all of which have contributed to their incisive reading of one of the most challenging of Gower’s tales. In “Undiagnosing Iphis,” they draw upon the recent work of M.W. Bychowski in an argument that addresses the complexities of trans identity by way of comparing Ovid’s tale in

the *Metamorphoses* with Gower's version in the *Confessio Amantis*. Praising the range and substance of Janecek's submission, Fredell remarks, "In both its formal and theoretical structures this essay is an outstanding achievement."

The winner in the graduate student category for "Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon* and John Gower's *Confessio: The Story of Apollonius Retold*" is Thari Zweers, a PhD student in Medieval Studies at Cornell University. Of her submission, Bullón-Fernández writes, "It is carefully written and supported by detailed readings of both texts as well as by a thorough engagement with scholars who have previously written about Godfrey's work and its relation to Gower's poem." Well-researched and informative, Zweers's essay promises to expand our understanding of Gower's complex relation to his sources whether they are explicitly cited or silently appropriated. In addition to her focus on Gower's work, Zweers's research interests include multilingual literary culture from late medieval England and France and questions concerning cross-cultural exchange and the formation of national identity. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA), Master of Arts (MA) and a Master of Education (M Ed) in English Literature and Language and Medieval Studies from the University of Groningen (The Netherlands). If past performance is any indication of future success, her article "Gerald of Wales' *The Journey Through Wales: Reinstating the Greatness of the Welsh Nation*" published in *Hortulus* in 2015 assures her place in premodern studies.

We hope that you will find Janecek's and Zweers's research as provocative and edifying as we have. As representatives of a new generation interested in various aspects of the literature and culture of the Middle Ages, these two young scholars promise to enhance our understanding of the breadth and scope of the premodern past. We are inspired by the innovative work they

have done in their readings of Gower and pleased to make that work available to readers of *Accessus*.

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