

**Wounds, Words, Worlds: Injury In
Middle English Satire, c.1250-1534**

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Abstract

The thesis explores the role of violence and wounding in English satire before the Reformation. From the analysis of medieval commentary on Juvenal and Horace, and depictions of wounding in medieval culture, a new understanding of satiric aggression is derived. It is suggested that satire and mutilation are connected by their common sense of ambivalence. During the Middle Ages both were invested with two distinct functions: each could enforce a given system of standards and definitions, or be used to dissolve such a system. While this dualism makes disfigurement a natural emblem for satire, it also means that wounding invariably brings to light discrepancies when it is portrayed in satiric texts. Its flexibility serves to exacerbate the tensions present in the mode. The thesis thus treats injury not only as a central motif in satire, but as a point at which implicit conflicts emerge most clearly. Wounding is used as a means of distinguishing points of friction in the literature. These ideas are applied to the two main traditions of Middle English satire, anticlericalism and antifeminism. In both cases, the ruptures in texts are closely analysed. These in turn are used to identify inconsistencies in medieval culture more widely.

The thesis seeks to redress two critical oversights. Firstly, the dual nature of medieval satire has never been explicitly theorised. While the genre's two facets have been examined individually, their coexistence has never been fully investigated. Secondly, vernacular satire is itself an under-explored field. Although several studies of Middle English satire exist, these often conflate the literature with unrelated types of text, or reduce English works to echoes of twelfth-century Latin satire. This study treats medieval vernacular satire as an art-form in its own right, with its own unique concerns and complexities.

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Contents

Laughter And Bloodletting: Introduction	1
'Satyra Percussit': Theories Of Medieval Satire	8
Do Not Forget Your Whip: Violence In Antifeminist Satire	91
Church and Destroy: Violence In Anticlerical Satire	150
Reopening Old Wounds: Summary And Conclusion	231
Bibliography	236

Laughter And Bloodletting: Introduction

There is no feast without cruelty, as man's entire history attests. Punishment, too, has its festive features.¹

Let us be merry while we be here! [...] Shall I break my neck to chaw
your sport?²

Over forty years ago, Robert Elliott published *The Power of Satire*, a work which outlined a new framework for the analysis of satire.³ Drawing on earlier studies by Fred Norris Robinson and Mary Claire Randolph, Elliott proposed that literary satire had its roots in ritual 'incantational verse' designed to inflict 'facial disfigurement' on an enemy.⁴ As Elliott himself states, 'my aim is [...] to elucidate an early connection of satire with magical power and to show how that magical connection survives, in underground and distorted ways'.⁵ More recently, a different but comparable theory has been offered by Alvin Kernan, who suggests that satire should be regarded as a biological 'inhibitory mechanism' evolved by humanity to neutralise violent impulses, shaping 'the energy of aggression in a socially acceptable way'.⁶ Kernan considers that the chief purpose of satire is to render 'useful the enormous powers of militant anger'.⁷ Despite their differing explanations, both Kernan and Elliott offer much the same comprehension of satire. Both see it as a mode which is clandestinely motivated by an intent to wound and damage. For both of these commentators, injury occupies a central place in satirical literature, acting as its very stimulus.

While Elliott and Kernan's approach may not ultimately convince – both assume that

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. by Francis Golffing (New York and London: Doubleday, 1956), p.198.

² *Mankind*, from *The Macro Plays*, ed. by Mark Eccles (London, New York & Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.156; I, ll.78-9.

³ Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: magic, ritual, art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960). Elliott's critical legacy is assessed in the introduction of *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, ed. by Claude Rawson (New York and London: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp.1-5.

⁴ Fred Norris Robinson, 'Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature', in *Satire: modern essays in criticism*, ed. by Ronald Poulson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp.1-36; Mary Claire Randolph, 'The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satire: its possible relationships and implications', *Studies in Philology* 38 (1941), pp.125-57.

⁵ Elliott, *Power of Satire*, p.vii.

⁶ Alvin Kernan, 'Aggression and Satire: art considered as a form of biological adaptation', in *Literary Theory and Structure*, ed. by Frank Brady and others (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) pp.118-9.

⁷ Alvin Kernan, 'Satire', in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: studies of selected pivotal ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973-74), IV: *Psychological ideas in antiquity to zeitgeist* (1974), p.212.

written works are not artefacts of particular cultural or historical circumstances, but reflections of ‘ineradicable human samenesses’ and ‘primitive’ forces – their central observation remains true.⁸ These two critics do raise an important and valid point about their subject matter. There is indeed an extraordinary and persistent affinity between satire and corporeal mutilation, between the literature of mockery and the ‘slash of the fang or the claw’.⁹ Satire certainly demonstrates a firm proclivity for violence, drawing on wounding with a frequency that implies a kinship between its own projects and physical injury.

Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the satire of the Middle Ages, ‘one of the great ages of satire’ according to John Yunck.¹⁰ Medieval English asserts the alliance between injury and ridicule with particular vehemence, as disfigurement proves to be a recurrent symbol or device in ‘the vast medieval literature of reproof’.¹¹ To cite a handful of examples, wounding is a conspicuous presence in the climactic battle of the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, in the anonymous lyrics that call for friars to be ‘brent’ and women to be ‘beten’, and in the entire framework of *Wynnere and Wastoure*. The same connection is no less apparent in the grotesque distortions of mock-blazons, or in the sanguinary punishments of mystery-play devils. The purpose of the present study is to account for this peculiar preoccupation. Its aim is to determine the reason for this association, as well as to explore what the link can reveal about the practices of vernacular satire in the Middle Ages, and about the culture in which this literature operated. It will interrogate the relation between Middle English satire and wounding by examining the range of meanings and functions that satirical texts ascribe to injury.

Throughout the study, the approach will be theoretical. The focus will be on the common ideas that govern episodes of mutilation in satirical texts. Such principles will be used as the basis of analysis. However, this should not be taken to mean that the texts will be treated in a purely abstract and hermetic manner, as self-contained

⁸ Elliott, *Power of Satire*, pp.66-7. For a critical examination of both Kernan and Elliott, see Dustin Griffin, *Satire: a critical reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), pp.28-34. Further problems with this approach are discussed in the following chapter.

⁹ Kernan, ‘Aggression and Satire’, p.122.

¹⁰ John A. Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Meed: the development of medieval venality satire* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), p.1.

¹¹ John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p.3.

systems of rules with no connection to wider ideologies, traditions, or sets of beliefs.¹² On the contrary, particular attention will be paid to how the forms of medieval satire are conditioned by the conceptions and circumstances of medieval society, and what satire in turn can disclose about such factors. Owing to this, twentieth-century interpretive models have been invoked sparingly, in favour of works either originating from the Middle Ages or directly addressing the period. In spite of the fruitful deployment of modern theory in a medieval context by the likes of Paul Strohm and Glenn Burger, an awareness has been retained of the objections raised by A.J. Minnis, who argues that current critical models can only produce readings with ‘no historical validity as far as medieval literature is concerned’, imposing alien constructions and expectations on to premodern texts.¹³

In so far as any particular approach has been followed, the study maintains some affinity with the work of Michel Foucault and the critical movement generally known as New Historicism. As well as regarding texts as ‘nodes in a network [...] caught up in a system of references’ with ‘economic and social processes, behavioural patterns’ and ‘systems of norms’, the study is also concerned with ‘the discontinuities and the thresholds’ that texts advertise, using them to identify ‘the half-hidden stress points in the official structures, the tensions, ideological negotiations, and rifts’.¹⁴ However, such a standpoint has not been upheld slavishly. A key difference is that the present survey treats this disclosure of ‘negotiations’ and ‘tensions’ as an inherent part of satire. It regards it as one of satire’s principal and most characteristic stratagems, rather than the effect of analysis. Foucault’s project of ‘trying to operate a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre’ is held to be a central function of Middle English satire itself, in which injury plays a key role.¹⁵ The study is thus less an attempt ‘to challenge a text’s self-understanding’ than an effort to spell out the

¹² On satire’s resistance to such an approach, see Kirk Combe, ‘The New Voice of Political Dissent’, in *Theorizing Satire: essays in literary criticism*, ed. by Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), pp.74, 90-1.

¹³ A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: scholastic literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), p.1. See Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Glenn Burger, *Chaucer’s Queer Nation*, Medieval Cultures Series 34 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); also Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: the historical understanding of medieval literature* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p.43.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Alan Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.23, 45, 41; Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Introduction: New World encounters’, in *New World Encounters*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.xvi.

¹⁵ Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, p.205.

processes through which medieval satirical texts constructed themselves, the means by which they engaged with the various strands of their culture in order to stage their attacks.¹⁶

The study itself will be organised thematically. The first chapter will outline the theoretical understanding of satire and injury which will be deployed in the two later sections. It will place particular emphasis on the dual nature of medieval satire, its inclusion of two distinct and incompatible intentions. Because injury serves as a powerful means of symbolising and articulating these two sets of objectives, it will be argued that mutilation is not only central to satire, but a point at which its tendencies confront one another, at which their contest is most conspicuous. Subsequent chapters will make this abstract model less conceptual, applying it directly to Middle English literature, and analysing how the dynamics it identifies perform in different texts. As stated earlier, the emphasis here will be historical, treating the peculiar structures of texts as products of external factors. Each chapter will lay bare the broader sets of ideas which occupy and motivate the principles of satire, considering satire's treatment of injury as a conflux of social discourses. They will trace how the forms it adopts are dictated by wider attitudes and conflicts, how its elements derive their shapes from various cultural and political currents. The particular areas of Middle English satire which these chapters will consider are antifeminism and anticlericalism, the two major traditions of vernacular satire. Since each of these chapters is concerned with a specific group of texts, they will stand as self-contained studies in their own right. Nevertheless, each will be underpinned by the theoretical framework and interpretive assumptions laid out in the first chapter. The nature of medieval English satire makes this thematic approach necessary. Whereas medieval satire is not a well-defined corpus in itself, for reasons that will be discussed in the following chapter, these two traditions are relatively clear-cut. From the point of view of selecting texts for analysis, these ready-made groupings are indispensable, since they each consist of a firmly consolidated body of work.

A few comments must also be made at this point on some of the terminology used here. The term 'bourd', which describes the humorous narrative poems of the

¹⁶ Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, p.43.

fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, is taken from the work of Melissa Furrow.¹⁷ Although the authors of these pieces refer to them by various names, designating them 'aentours', 'gesttyngs', 'gestes' or 'trifuls', Furrow uses 'bourd' to differentiate these poems from the continental fabliaux. This is an important distinction, since the English pieces resemble the fabliaux only in part. As a consequence, Furrow's term has been retained here. Another point worth mentioning at the outset is the use of the terms 'Wycliffite' and 'Lollard'. Following the practice of many recent commentators, most notably Anne Hudson and Richard Rex, these two words have been used more or less interchangeably throughout the study.¹⁸ This is based on the assumption that there was a high degree of continuity between Wyclif's own ideas and those of his lay followers, that 'what Wyclif planted the Lollards tended'.¹⁹ The older view that 'Lollard' was simply a catch-all term for any religious irregularity is tacitly rejected here.²⁰

Lastly, the date chosen to mark the end of the Middle Ages requires some explanation. It is of course difficult to nominate an exact point at which the late Middle Ages gave way to the early modern period. Older notions of an 'epoch of fading and decay' that abruptly 'melted into air' are now treated with justified scepticism.²¹ When examining the culture of the Renaissance, continuity can often be more conspicuous than change: as David Norbrook has stated, the period was more 'a tension between innovation and respect for tradition' than a time of straightforward transition.²² Satire is no exception to this. Several medieval traditions were still in use long after the Middle Ages. The 'danse macabre', for instance, enjoyed a vigorous

¹⁷ Melissa Furrow, 'Middle English Fabliaux and Modern Myth', *English Literary History* 56 (1989), pp.1-18.

¹⁸ See Anne Hudson, *Premature Reformation: Wycliffite texts and Lollard history* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); also Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: authority and the interpretation of texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁹ Donald D. Smeaton, *Lollard Themes in the Reformist Theology of William Tyndale* (Kirksville: The Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1986), p.252.

²⁰ See K.B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London: English Universities Press, 1953); J.A.F. Thompson, 'Orthodox Religion and the Origins of Lollardy', *History* 74 (1989), pp.39-55.

²¹ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: a study of the forms of life, thought and art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth centuries*, trans. by Frederick Hopman (London: Edward Arnold, 1970), p.v; Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. by S.G.C. Middlemore, ed. by Peter Burke and Peter Murray (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.98.

²² David Norbrook, 'Introduction: rebirth and restoration', in *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse, 1509-1659*, ed. by H.R. Woudhuysen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p.7.

afterlife in Elizabethan and Jacobean chapbooks.²³ Individual medieval texts also continued to circulate, and in some cases lost little of their topicality. One example is the *Fyftene Ioyes of maryage* (c.1507), which retained sufficient bite to be banned in 1599, when it was ordered 'to be burnte' along with a number of other 'Satyres or Epigrams'.²⁴ Medieval vernacular satire faded away gradually, rather than dropping quickly out of sight. Consequently, it is virtually impossible to establish a firm end-date for the literature.

As a result of this, the date selected here does not represent the close of any Middle English satirical tradition. Rather, it has been chosen because it helps to mark the emergence of several new forms of satire, which have little basis in medieval convention. Principal among these is humanist satire, best represented by the verse epistles of Sir Thomas Wyatt.²⁵ Wyatt's three epistolary satires owe more to classical and Italian models than to medieval precedent. Their chief templates are Horace and Luigi Alamanni, rather than the themes and topoi employed by medieval poets. They thus indicate a movement away from the traditional forms of Middle English satire. Since they were probably produced a few years after 1534, using this date as a limit removes Wyatt's work from consideration.

No less importantly, 1534 was also the year in which the so-called Reformation Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, one of the most decisive 'moves of the crown in claiming power [...] over the indigenous affairs of the church'.²⁶ Suffice to say, the Act and subsequent legislation had far-reaching consequences: satire was affected by these no less than any other area of late medieval culture. A new stance appeared in the literature as a direct result of the Protestant ecclesiology ushered in by the Act. As Paul Slack writes, the Protestant emphasis on personal devotion brought

²³ See Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: mortality and identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp.51-60, 75-6.

²⁴ Charles Symonds, 'Destruction of Books at Stationers' Hall in the Year 1599', *Notes and Queries* 12 (1867), p.436; Richard McCabe, 'Elizabethan Satire and the Bishop's Ban of 1599', *Yearbook of English Studies* 2 (1981), p.189.

²⁵ See Thomas Wyatt, *The Complete Poems*, ed. by R.A. Rebholz (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), pp.186-94, 438-52.

²⁶ Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.1.

into satire a 'shift of attention from social sins to individual ones'.²⁷ This more personalised 'ad hominem' satire can already be glimpsed in the work of early Protestant satirists, such as Luke Shepherd and John Bale.²⁸ No less than Wyatt's humanism, this outlook diverges from medieval tradition: accordingly, the texts it produced fall outside the scope of the present study. Focusing on the pre-1534 period, before the Act consecrated Henry VIII as 'supreme head in earth of the Church of England', once again eliminates work in which post-medieval concerns are apparent.²⁹ Therefore, these parameters are the most suitable for the current study. From the following chapter onwards, which will lay the groundwork for later sections, the focus will be limited to texts composed before 1534.

²⁷ Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: public welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p.10.

²⁸ See Janel Mueller, 'Literature and the Church', in *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, ed. by David Lowenstein and Janel Mueller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.292-3.

²⁹ *Documents of the English Reformation, 1526-1701*, ed. by Gerald Bray (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1994), p.113.

‘Satyra Percussit’: Theories of Medieval Satire

Thus Burnellus [...] strings together jokes, refusing to reprehend with direct allegations, since he knows that sharp and bitter rebukes have no power to reform. The application of ointment alleviates more kinds of illness than does the branding iron.¹

Now can I knowe feeste fro penaunce;
And whil I was with thee / kowde I nat so.²

The purpose of the present chapter is to establish the theoretical framework for the remainder of the study. It will put forward a conception of Middle English satire which will underpin analysis in later chapters. This discussion falls into four main subsections. Firstly, existing critical material on Middle English satire will be examined. This is not only to lay bare the main features of the literature, but also to locate any deficiencies or oversights in current notions of vernacular satire. Secondly, medieval comprehensions of satire will be considered, especially those which emerge from the exegesis of classical literature. These will be used to balance and supplement the observations of modern criticism. The third section will trace the ways in which scholastic conceptions of satire manifest themselves in Middle English texts. Particular attention will be paid to the modifications these notions undergo as they enter a specifically vernacular literature, and how they respond to other related discourses. The final section will consider why satire should display a proclivity for corporeal mutilation. It will demonstrate why wounding proves so recurrent in medieval satirical literature, and why the structure of this discourse lends itself to portrayals of disfigurement.

Modern Theories of Middle English Satire

A reader familiar with critical writing on Middle English satire may wonder why a revised theoretical model is necessary. After all, an extensive body of work on the

¹ ‘Unde Burnellus [...] interserit nolens jocosa quaedam insimulatione reprehendere, quae noverat aspera increpatione nequaquam se posse extirpare. Multa emin genera morborum sunt quae utilis unguetum quam cauterium ad medelam admittant’: Nigellus Wireker, *Speculum Stultorum*, in *The Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets and Epigrammatists of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Thomas Wright, Rolls Series 58, 2 vols (London: Longman and Co., Trübner & Co., 1872), I, p.10. Unless indicated otherwise, translations are my own.

² Thomas Hoccleve, ‘La Male Regle’, 23-4, in *Hoccleve’s Works: the minor poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, EETS e.s. 61, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1892-1925), I: *Minor Poems in the Phillipps Ms. and the Durham Ms.*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall (1892), p.40.

subject already exists. Since the publication of Samuel Tucker's *Verse Satire In England* almost a century ago, studies dedicated to medieval English satire have appeared sporadically.³ The list includes contributions by John Peter, V.J. Scattergood, George Kane, Paul Miller and Laura Kendrick, to name just a few of the most significant examples.⁴ While this commentary is not as voluminous as critical work on Renaissance or Restoration satire, it has proved impressively cohesive. It has generated an idea of Middle English satire which most studies have upheld in some measure. Although this does not constitute a full-scale critical model, it does contain a number of key generalisations that are still widely accepted. Even recent work is reliant on this corpus of opinion, honouring its early promoters as 'seminal' and 'authoritative'.⁵

However, it is precisely in its cohesion that the accepted view proves problematic. Its assumptions are by no means erroneous: they are for the most part accurate and useful, taking into account several important features of medieval English satire. But their conception of the subject is often narrow and limited. It does not take into consideration the full range of satire's possibilities, and often purposefully rules out much pertinent material. Even when critics do detect different processes at work in specific texts, they tend not to broaden their findings to address satire as a whole.⁶ In short, despite its strengths, the conventional view of medieval satire needs to be refined and developed. Received opinions should be broadened to accommodate material that they currently neglect or disregard.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that there is much of value in modern criticism on Middle English satire. Its core findings give a sound idea of satire's general character.

³ Samuel Marion Tucker, *Verse Satire in England Before the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908).

⁴ John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956); V.J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1971); George Kane, 'Some Fourteenth-Century "Political" Poems', in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), pp.82-91; Paul Miller, 'John Gower, Satiric Poet', in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: responses and reassessments*, ed. by A.J. Minnis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp.79-105; Laura Kendrick, 'Medieval Satire', in *European Writers: the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. by William T. H. Jackson, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1983), I: *Prudentius to Medieval Drama*, pp.337-75.

⁵ James M. Dean, 'Anticlerical Poems and Documents: Introduction', in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. by James M. Dean, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), p.45.

⁶ See, for instance, Thomas D. Hill, 'Parody and Theme in the Middle English "Land of Cokaygne"', *Notes and Queries* 22 (1975), pp.55-9.

One of the first important points it raises involves the status of satire in vernacular literature. Several critics observe that satire is not associated with any one form of text in the Middle Ages. Douglas Gray comments on its 'pervasiveness', while Marcia Colish terms it 'a red thread' that runs 'through more than one medieval literary genre'.⁷ Medieval satire is embedded in various types of text, 'from slander to the sermon'.⁸ From a critical standpoint, this means that Middle English satire ought not to be approached as a type of text in its own right. Fritz Schalk states this explicitly, arguing that 'the Middle Ages did not know satire as a genre'.⁹ Medieval satire was not associated with any particular textual framework, and cannot therefore be considered a particular 'form' of writing, like the romance or chronicle.

As a consequence, most commentators prefer to define medieval satire as a mode. George Kennedy and Charles Witke, for example, both argue that the Middle Ages treated satire in this way, as a method of presenting an object.¹⁰ According to such analysts, medieval satire is a rhetorical technique designed to depict an object in a particular way, a 'utilitarian' device that 'does' something to its subject-matter.¹¹ This point is reinforced by medieval commentary. In Matthew of Vendome's *Ars Versificatoria* (c.1175), for instance, satire is listed as a tool for the 'description of persons'.¹² Medieval satire is not a type of text, then, but a method which any form of writing may deploy. It can only be regarded as a mode used by certain genres, not as a genre in itself.

The functions of this satiric mode have been discussed by numerous critics. Most agree that satire assumes a binocular view of its object. As Stewart Justman states,

⁷ Douglas Gray, 'Rough Music: some early invectives and flytings', in *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, ed. by Claude Rawson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), p.21; Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Literary Tradition, 400-1400* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p.204.

⁸ Conal Condred, *Satire, Lies and Politics* (London: MacMillan, 1997), p.32.

⁹ 'Das Mittelalter kannte die Satire als Gattung nicht': Fritz Schalk, 'Die moralische und literarische Satire', in *La littérature didactique, allegorique et satirique*, ed. by Hans Robert Jauss, *Grundriss der Romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters* 6 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1968), p.245.

¹⁰ George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition From Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p.198. See also William E. Haas, 'Some Characteristics of Satire', *Satire Newsletter* 3 (1965), p.2; *A Handbook to Literature*, ed. by William Thrall and others (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), p.436; Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom, 'The Satiric Mode of Feeling', *Criticism* 11 (1969), pp.115-37.

¹¹ Charles Witke, *Latin Satire: the structure of persuasion* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1970), p.13.

¹² Matthew of Vendome, *Ars Versificatoria: the art of the versemaker*, trans. by Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), p.27.

medieval satire 'tends to concentrate on the gap between profession and deed, theory and practice, the ideal and actual'.¹³ Everything satire portrays is understood to be a deviation from the duties demanded of it. Satire's object must always diverge from a stipulated set of directives. This means that satire invariably presents its objects in a binary form. It simultaneously presents each one in its actual state, and as the set of patterns that it ought to follow. Each object is accompanied by a ghost-presence. It is shadowed by an ideal form of itself, a version that perfectly embodies its prescribed role.

When this mode is employed in Middle English texts, it is usually taken to operate in a highly specific way. The best summary of this line of thought is provided by Laura Kendrick. Kendrick states that 'the satirist criticizes deviation from a standard of behaviour, more or less clearly defined and generally accepted by his audience [...] the purpose of didactic satire is to convince the intended audience not to do something the satirist considers, for whatever reason, wrong'.¹⁴ In medieval satire, splitting the object into its real and perfect facets means that the real version may be condemned. It can be evaluated against the model, and the points at which it departs can be considered failings, crimes or sins. Satire may thus attack 'vicious behaviour as a deviation from the ideal moral norm'.¹⁵

This process of course rests on the view that the ideal object is superior to its real version. It supposes that the ideal is the most authoritative form. Without being allocated such authority, the ideal could not serve as a criterion by which the real object may be judged. It may even be said that satire is actively defending the status of the ideal. By condemning any departures from the standard, satire privileges it. Its denunciation marks any alternative to the ideal as an error or offence. Satire thus works to uphold the system of values which grants the ideal precedence: as Maynard Mack states, it asserts 'the validity and necessity of norms, systematic values, and meanings that are contained by recognizable codes'.¹⁶ As a consequence, Middle English satire appears to be resolutely conservative. Attacking violations of the given

¹³ Stewart Justman, *Springs of Liberty: the satiric tradition and freedom of speech* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), p.8.

¹⁴ Kendrick, 'Medieval Satire', p.341.

¹⁵ Rose Zimbardo, *At Zero Point: discourse, culture and satire in Restoration England* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), p.83.

¹⁶ Maynard Mack, 'The Muse of Satire', *Yale Review* 41 (1951), p.85.

order places it on the side of established convention. The mode serves to entrench 'a common conception of the moral law'.¹⁷ Kendrick's choice of the term 'didactic satire' is thus highly apposite.¹⁸

In every important respect, this reading of satire proves coherent and tenable. It cannot be denied that Middle English satire is best defined as a mode which divides its object into two distinct elements in order to contrast the two. Some of the functions of this mode may be fairly described as conservative and instructive. It is at this point, however, that critical work becomes problematic. The chief difficulty lies in its general refusal to progress any further. Most critics regard the processes just outlined as the limit of medieval satire. These procedures are not simply treated as widespread in Middle English satire, but are deemed to be the only ones the literature may perform. Satire in the Middle Ages is routinely denied the ability to do anything but reinforce the standards that it draws on. Satire must always confirm the 'recognizable codes' that these ideals imply.¹⁹ No further dimension is imputed to the mode.

This limitation is not only implicit. Several commentators openly state that medieval satire may only 'persuade the audience that certain behaviour is wrong'.²⁰ These claims are especially prominent in the work of Paul Miller. In his study of Middle English satire, Miller denies that satire can act as anything but a buttress for conventional standards. At one stage he cautions against reading medieval texts as challenges to the ruling value-system. He states that 'no medieval writer' would have wished to confront the dominant ideologies of the day, seeking only to 'correct those whom he censures'.²¹ This obviously excludes a large range of possibilities from satire. If the mode must always gesture towards a positive standard in its attacks, wholly defamatory tactics are outside its range. It may not deflate its object entirely, since it must retain some belief in the worth of that object at an ideal level. Nor may it play with or interrogate the ideals it draws on, since its purpose is to reinforce such ideals. Making correction the overriding intent of Middle English satire banishes any

¹⁷ W.H. Auden, 'Notes On The Comic', *Thought* 27 (1952), p.68.

¹⁸ Kendrick, 'Medieval Satire', p.341.

¹⁹ Mack, 'Muse of Satire', p.85.

²⁰ Kendrick, 'Medieval Satire', p.340.

²¹ Paul S. Miller, 'The Medieval Literary Theory of Satire and Its Relevance to the Work of Gower, Langland and Chaucer' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Belfast, Queen's University, 1982), pp.241, 206.

disrespectful, playful or ironic tendencies from the mode. Satire may not be scurrilous, and may not denigrate its objects at the level of their ideal being.

Far from being atypical, Miller's comments represent an enduring current in criticism. Another critic who describes medieval 'reprobative literature' as a solely dogmatic form is John Peter. According to Peter, the mode possesses 'more or less doctrinal attitudes' and is firmly 'tied to a system [...] and an accepted and enduring system too'. For him, its chief concern is 'always to be sober and reasonable, if occasionally severe [...] like the Christianity it espouses'. Again, it is in essence 'corrective', and such techniques as 'urbanity, malevolence, raillery, scurrility, cynicism', even 'comedy' and 'ribaldry', are outside its scope.²² For Peter, no true derogation is possible in medieval satire, as every attack must be constructive, reinforcing an 'accepted and enduring system'. The same point occurs in the work of Gilbert Highet. Highet agrees that 'the smile of satire' vanished during the Middle Ages, as medieval satirists were at root 'unremittingly serious and doggedly systematic'. It is his opinion that 'in the world where Christianity had to make its way [...] no believer could jeer about truth'.²³ Like Miller and Peter, Highet asserts that medieval satire held conventional ideals to be sacrosanct, and placed them utterly beyond dispute.

The core ideas of Peter and Highet echo throughout subsequent criticism. Even when not explicitly stated, the notion that medieval satire was essentially 'corrective' hovers behind many discussions. It is evident in the tendency to conflate satire with an ostensibly similar mode which modern scholars have dubbed 'complaint' or 'protest literature'.²⁴ Complaint is one of the most robust traditions in medieval verse, with many examples extant in both Latin and English. Its conventions were already fully developed by the sixth century, and remained unchanged at the close of the Middle Ages: its framework is equally evident in Gildas' account of the 'guilty and

²² Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, pp.9-10, 57.

²³ Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp.44, 46. For a critique of Highet's analysis of medieval texts, see Edward Witke's review of *The Anatomy of Satire* in *Classical Philology* 58 (1963), pp.260-4.

²⁴ On the conventions of this form, see Joseph Keller, 'The Triumph of Vice: a formal approach to the medieval complaint against the times', *Annuaire Mediaevale* 10 (1969), pp.120-37; Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets and the Early English Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.174-85.

thieving' Saxons, and in the first stanza of Chaucer's 'Lak of Stedfastnesse'.²⁵ The complaint typically takes the form of a catalogue, recounting a series of proverb-like moral pronouncements. The following lines, dating from c.1300, typify the form:

Bissop lorles,
Kyng redeles,
Yung man rechles,
Old man witles,
Womman ssamles.
I swer bi heuen kyng,
Pos beþ fue liþer þing.²⁶

As this example makes plain, the complaint is firmly judgmental. It functions by condemnation, fixing each of its objects to a particular species of 'liþer' behaviour. The fact that these categories are expressed negatively marks each as a transgression of some more valid behaviour: 'witles' is a lack of wit, 'ssamles' a lack of shame, 'rechles' a lack of prudence, and so on. Thus, the complaint always gestures towards a positive ideal in its attacks. In this, it resembles Laura Kendrick's conception of satire. But the complaint is even more unilateral than Kendrick's definition. Its framework bars any further implications. The complaint does not leave space for anything but acceptance of the ideals it cites. Since the entire point is to issue the briefest possible verdict on each object, no room remains for further engagement. This also demonstrates an absolute confidence in the ideals that are quoted. The lack of further discussion suggests that each gives a total account of the object. For instance, the term 'rechles' gives such a thorough summary of the 'yung man' that no further comment is needed. The poem is convinced of the validity of these norms. It sees no need to distrust or defy them. The complaint is moral exhortation in its purest possible form.

What makes this simple verse-formula relevant here is its frequent inclusion in discussions of Middle English satire. The complaint is often categorised as a type of medieval satire. One influential critic to assume this stance is John Yunck. In his study of medieval venality satire, Yunck explicitly denies that any point of separation exists 'between satire and the literature of protest'. Complaint is considered to be

²⁵ Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other works*, trans. and ed. by Michael Winterbottom (London: Phillimore and Co., 1978), p. 29; Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Lak of Stedfastnesse', 15-7, ed. by R.T. Lenaghan, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.654.

²⁶ 'Abuses of the Age, I', in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. by Rosell Hope Robbins (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.144.

within the range of his investigation into satire. He states: 'much of the material examined on the following pages may be best described cautiously as moral-satirical'.²⁷ The work of Thomas Kinney perpetuates this view. Kinney also merges satire and complaint, discussing the two terms as situated in the same tradition, and often treating them interchangeably.²⁸ More recently, Kathleen Fahey has edited an anthology specifically dedicated to 'satirical poems in Middle English'. This likewise regards complaint as a variant of satire. Introducing her collection, Fahey echoes Yunck in her firm rejection of 'any distinction that can be made between satire and complaint'.²⁹

By including complaints under the heading of satire, these critics reveal a comprehension of medieval satire in line with Peter's and Highet's. Even though Yunck and Fahey both criticise Peter's work as 'not [...] especially fruitful', their willingness to consider 'imprecise lamentation over the evil of the time' as a form of satire is founded on much the same outlook.³⁰ If such pieces can be classified as satirical, this again makes satire essentially moralistic. Exhortation is all that a text needs to demonstrate in order to be termed satiric. Any other activity is reduced to secondary importance. As Fahey explicitly states, satire becomes 'by its very nature a complaint'.³¹ Measuring objects against accepted standards, in order to fortify those standards, becomes the chief objective of every satirical text.

However, despite the prevalence of this view in criticism, it does not adequately reflect the practices of medieval satire. Identifying the complaint with satire gives a false view of the literature. Medieval English contains many texts which display a far greater range of satirical techniques than simple rebuke. From the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, a body of work emerges in English which cannot be comfortably viewed as straightforward exhortation. While it is true that these pieces

²⁷ John A. Yunck, *The Lineage of Lady Meed: the development of medieval venality satire* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), p.5.

²⁸ Thomas L. Kinney, 'The Temper of Fourteenth-Century English Verse of Complaint', *Annuaire Mediaevale* 7 (1966), pp.74-89.

²⁹ Kathleen A. Fahey, 'Some Shorter Satirical Poems in English from the Thirteenth to the Early Sixteenth Centuries' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, Bodleian College, 1991), p.2.

³⁰ Yunck, *Lineage of Lady Meed*, p.5; Kirk Combe, 'The New Voice of Political Dissent: the transition from complaint to satire', in *Theorizing Satire: essays in literary criticism*, ed. by Brian Connery and Kirk Combe (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), p.77.

³¹ Fahey, 'Some Shorter Satirical Poems', p.2.

do contain an element of reproof, it is difficult to view this as their sole or ruling aspect. They employ a set of devices which are more elaborate than those of complaint literature, with more varied ramifications. Moreover, the recurrence of certain features in these texts suggests that a degree of confrontation and negation is integral to the mode. In sum, the evidence suggests that satire in Middle English was intrinsically complex, and quite distinct from the complaint in its conventions.

This may be demonstrated by briefly reviewing a few instances of satirical discourse in medieval English. The texts themselves reveal that Fahey, Yunck and Peter's view is too narrow, laying undue emphasis on the remedial implications of satire. A good source of such work is Oxford, Jesus College MS 29. This manuscript is noteworthy for containing several of the earliest satirical poems written in English. While it is difficult to establish the precise date of these pieces, most seem to have been composed during the mid thirteenth century. The manuscript itself has been dated to 1285-1300, but appears to have been based on an older exemplar.³² Some of its texts can even be traced back to the twelfth century, such as the *Poema Morale*, which dates from c.1170.³³

The satirical pieces preserved in the Jesus College manuscript are notable for using numerous comic effects. Throughout these texts there is a conspicuous willingness to play with ideals as much as to enforce them. Two pieces of particular interest are 'Sinners Beware' and 'A Lutel Soth Sermun'.³⁴ Neither of these can be called wholly satiric, as both are primarily devotional works, but each one does contain several passages of sustained derision. Embedded in the first is what may be the earliest 'estates satire' in English.³⁵ Like later examples of the estates tradition, the text offers

³² Betty Hill, 'Oxford, Jesus College MS 29, Part II: contents, technical matters, compilation, and its history to c. 1695', *Notes and Queries* 50 (2003), pp.268-276.

³³ See Neil Cartlidge, 'The Composition and Social Context of Oxford, Jesus College, MS 29(II) and London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.ix.', *Medium Ævum* 66 (1997), pp.250-69; *Selections from Early Middle English*, ed. by Joseph Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), pp.30-46; Betty Hill, 'The Twelfth-Century *Conduct of Life*, formerly the *Poema Morale* or *A Moral Ode*', *Leeds Studies in English* 9 (1977), pp.97-144.

³⁴ 'Sinners Beware' and 'A Lutel Soth Sermun', in *An Old English miscellany containing a bestiary, Kentish sermons, Proverbs of Alfred, religious poems of the thirteenth century*, ed. by Richard Morris, EETS o.s. 49 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1872), pp.72-83, 187-91.

³⁵ On the estates tradition, see Ruth Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (New York: Ungar, 1962), pp.21-34.

a comic survey of 'the whole nation, conceived as a set of occupations or estates'.³⁶ This section of the poem begins by railing against the various orders of the church, dedicating a sestet to each, before moving on to secular professions, such as 'playdurs [...] wel kene' and 'chapmen monye bi stréte' (133, 139). The poem's appraisals reach as far down the social scale as 'þe bonde', before concluding with a lengthy attack on 'prude leuedies' (146, 157).

In this survey, the poem uses tactics that are alien to the complaint. Rather than simply fixing each class to a specific form of deviation, it often ironically plays with the distinction between rightful and wrongful behaviour. In its description of knights, for instance, the poem remarks that 'knyhtes beoþ so bolde./ Hwenne heo habbeþ aquolde./ Heore crystene ivére' (127-9). Of particular interest here is the use of the word 'bolde'.³⁷ The poem is condemning the knights in terms normally used to praise them: for example, 'bolde' is one of Layamon's favourite epithets for Arthurian 'cnihtes bolde, a þousend itolde'.³⁸ In this context, the courage of the 'knyhtes' becomes not only an aspect of their ideal behaviour, but also the force that motivates their sin. By employing this stratagem, the poem steps beyond the strictures of complaint. Owing to this use of irony, the ideal and the sin may not be clearly differentiated. The same root cause underlies both, as boldness can be both malicious and beneficial. 'Sinners' lacks the clarity of complaint. It does not smoothly fix its objects to sins, as when Gildas writes that 'Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; she has judges, but they are wicked'.³⁹ Instead, it blurs the distinction between the offence and the ideal it contravenes.

This irony has further effects, which cause 'Sinners' to depart even further from direct condemnation. The piece is not straightforwardly reproving the 'knyhtes' by attacking their deviation from a valorised ideal. Instead, it slyly mocks the ideal itself. By using the word 'bolde' to describe wrongdoing, with its connotations of proper knightly conduct, the poem implies some flaw in those ideals. The implication seems

³⁶ James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution, 1350-1547*, Oxford English Literary History 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.246.

³⁷ The *Oxford English Dictionary* (henceforth OED) states that 'stout-hearted, courageous, daring, fearless' has been the primary sense of 'bold' since c.1000 CE.

³⁸ *Layamon's Brut*, ed. by G.L. Brook and R.F. Leslie, EETS o.s. 250, 277, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963-78), I, 643: l.11391.

³⁹ Gildas, *Ruin of Britain*, p.29.

to be that the knights' models of behaviour can lend themselves to treachery and gallantry with equal ease. The second, negative meaning of the word only confirms this.⁴⁰ At the level of their root cause, chivalry and the killing of 'cristene ivére' become indistinguishable. The same term can describe both. Thus, the standards of this class are the target here as much as the knights' departure from them. The poem is not simply contrasting the real and ideal forms of the object at the expense of the former. It is also calling the validity of the ideal into question, refusing to reinforce it as a positive norm. The tactics employed in 'Sinners' are far more scabrous than those of complaint literature.

The second piece, 'A Lutel Soth Sermun', is even more forceful in its satire. About a third of the way through the text, the 'Sermun' interrupts its account of the Fall and the Passion to list various types of 'lechur and horlyng' (29). This soon expands into a bawdy account of the romantic dalliances of 'maydenes' and 'prude yongemen' (53, 55). In vivid terms, the poem relates how 'Robyn wule Gilothe./ leden to þan ale [...] Euer heo wule hire skere./ ne com hire no mon neyh./ Forte þat hire wombe./ vp aryse an heyh' (73-88). As Thomas Hahn has noted, this section of the poem is 'clearly in competition with other English poetical narratives that exhibit learned affinities but no overt intention to improve their readers'. The specific examples Hahn gives are *Dame Sirith* and *The Fox and the Wolf*, both overtly comedic texts.⁴¹ In this sequence, the 'Sermun' seems to be borrowing techniques from pieces designed purely for entertainment. In light of this, the poem's intent does not appear to be strictly hortatory. The purpose of this text does not seem to be exclusively didactic, since it is drawing on conventions which do not function along these lines. The piece may also be seeking to amuse, to achieve something other than issuing pure directives. In fact, the description of the 'prude' youngsters is more scoffing than corrective in tone. Although it does make such statements as 'at hom is hire pater noster', it seems more concerned with pillorying 'wilekyn and watekyn' than with pinpointing their exact sins, or measuring them against a positive standard (67, 71). The sequence eventually concludes with a general appeal to 'godemen for godes luue', addressing all Christians rather than spelling out the exact abuses it has portrayed (89). The poem

⁴⁰ The OED records usages of 'bold' in the sense of 'audacious, presumptuous, too forward' from c.1200 onwards.

⁴¹ Thomas Hahn, 'Early Middle English', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.81.

does not fully conform to the habits of complaint: it aims to do more than outline a simple moral code.

At the very least these texts demonstrate that medieval English writers could employ a range of humorous and playful devices in their attacks. Even at this early date, there is evidence to challenge the notion that 'the satiric variations [...] lie beyond the range' of medieval writers.⁴² These are complicated texts, demanding more from the reader than simple acquiescence. The use of comedy in the Jesus College poems introduces features which are not entirely consistent with exhortation. Their ribaldry and parody passes beyond straightforward moral censure, and may not be easily reconciled with this objective. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there are limits to this. The poems do retain a firm attachment to conventional morality. The 'Sermon' may suspend any ethical schemata to deliver its attacks, but this is only momentary: the verse ends on a pious note, invoking 'seynte Marie./ for hire Milde mode' (93-4).

However, other satiric poems do go a little further. Several poems from the same period directly subvert conventional ideals, and even interfere with moral appraisal itself. A number of texts along these lines are found in Harley MS 913, compiled in Ireland no later than 1330.⁴³ A particularly good example is the best-known piece in the manuscript, the much-anthologised *Land of Cockayne*.⁴⁴ At first glance, this seems to be a fairly typical description of Cockayne, the fantastic edible land which appears in many medieval literatures.⁴⁵ Like several other texts, it describes Cockayne as a paradise in which cooked geese fly through the air honking 'al hote al hot', and rivers of 'oile, melk, honi, & wine' flow past buildings 'al of pasteis' (104,

⁴² Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, p.10.

⁴³ On the date and provenance of the Harley MS, see A. M. Lucas and P. J. Lucas, 'Reconstructing a Disarranged Manuscript: the case of MS Harley 913, a medieval Hiberno-English Miscellany', *Scriptorium* 14 (1990), pp.286-99; on the contents, see especially K. Reichl, 'Satire und politische Lyrik in der anglo-irischen Kildare-Handschrift' in *Zeitgeschehen und seine Darstellung im Mittelalter*, ed. by Christoph Cormeau (Bonn: Bouvier, 1995), pp.173-99.

⁴⁴ 'The Land of Cockayne', in *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1400: an anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp.431-5.

⁴⁵ On analogues in Middle Dutch, Italian and French, see Herman Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockayne*, trans. by Diane Webb (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp.33-44, Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: the cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller*, trans. by John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp.82-6, Veikko Vaananen, 'Le "fabliau" de Cocagne', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 48 (1947), pp.3-36; on onomastic references to Cockayne across Europe, see Malcolm Jones, *The Secret Middle Ages* (Stroud: Sutton, 2002), pp.145-6.

46, 54). Usually the text is considered a typical specimen of Cockaigne-literature. For instance, Robert Elliot and John Scattergood treat it as a 'basically wishful' piece, an outpouring of 'desire'.⁴⁶ However, as Wim Tigges has noted, the poem is in fact using this topos strategically, and for ends that are firmly satirical. *Cokaygne* is really a patchwork of several utopian ideas, a 'superimposition' of numerous 'variants of the Other World'.⁴⁷ Cockaigne is not the only paradise outlined by the text. The fabulous region is forced to share the poem with the Christian 'peradis'. From the outset the two are established as neighbours: the 'lond ihote cokaygne' is statedly positioned 'under heuen riche', made to share a border with this rival ideal (2-3). The two are even compared with one another. At one stage the poem directly contrasts the two: 'þoʒ peradis be miri & briʒt,/ cokaygn is of fairir siʒt' (5-6).

What makes the poem significant in the light of Highet and Yunck's conception of satire is its deliberate undercutting of any moral judgment. The proximity of these two paradises unsettles any idea of an absolute, universal truth. Both Heaven and Cockaigne are, in Herman Pleij's phrase, 'fantasies of the perfect life'.⁴⁸ They gather together the best possible conditions for existence, each one representing a notion of goodness at its most fully achieved. But it must be noted that each supposes a very different idea of what constitutes goodness. Heaven, at least as it is presented in the poem, stands for the denial of appetite. It possesses no 'met bote frute', and no 'halle, bure, no benche' (10-12). Its idea of perfection is only arrived at through 'fastidious devotion to simplicity', as Krishnan Kumar writes.⁴⁹ Self-restraint is its criterion of goodness. Cockaigne, on the other hand, valorises the pursuit of 'sensual satisfaction [...] wishing away all physical and sensual limitation'.⁵⁰ Cockaigne represents carnal pleasure as a means of measuring goodness. Its idea of perfection is attained by giving free reign to bodily appetite. Each of these landscapes therefore assumes a different system by which merit can be reckoned. In one case physical pleasure determines value, while in the other withstanding temptation has the same function.

⁴⁶ Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p.353; Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.5.

⁴⁷ Wim Tigges, 'The Land of Cokaygne: sophisticated mirth', in *A Companion to Early English Literature*, ed. by N.H.G.E Veldhoen & Henk Aertsen (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988), p.98.

⁴⁸ Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne*.

⁴⁹ Krishnan Kumar, *Utopianism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1991), p.6.

⁵⁰ J.C. Davies, 'The History of Utopia: a chronology of nowhere', in *Utopias*, ed. by Peter Alexander and Roger Gill (London: Duckworth, 1984), p.8.

This also has moral implications. Heaven and Cockaigne each promote a different form of human conduct as an ideal. As Cockaigne's notion of goodness lies in indulgence, it licenses such behaviour. Heaven's emphasis on forbearance has the same effect, valorising moderation.

This creates an interesting set of circumstances in the poem. Since each system is made to neighbour the other, it becomes difficult to derive any definite moral from the piece. The notion of correct conduct becomes plural and uncertain. Consequently, any appeals to definite notions of decency are rendered problematic. *Cokaygne* does not appear to champion behaviour that conforms to a widely accepted standard, as Fahey and Peter insist that all medieval satire should. Instead, it establishes multiple standards, creating disparity in the very conception of goodness.

When 'a wel fair abbei/ of white monkes & of grei' is introduced, this indeterminacy gains a satirical edge (51-2). The behaviour of this order is as riotous as the landscape permits: there 'nis no spech of no drink' in its cloisters, and 'pilk monke þat slepiþ best' is most likely to become 'uadir abbot' (111, 175-6). Sexual license is also evident, as the monks routinely head to a nearby convent, and 'techip þe nunnes an oreisun/ wiþ iambleue vp & dun' (165-6). This scurrilous caricature obviously has some moral resonance, implying that the monks have little interest in the asceticism, celibacy and contemplation they ought to pursue. While they subscribe to Cockaigne's ideal of indulgence, they should be following Heaven's abstinence. This is a clear moral judgment, comparing the object's 'reality' to its proper ideal at the expense of the former. However, as Thomas Hill observes, *Cokaygne* also veers its attack away from the reality, towards one of the central tenets of monastic life. According to Hill the poem 'recalls one of the great themes of monastic literature: the tradition of the "paradisus claustralis", the cloistered paradise'. When the poem speaks of Heaven, as Hill notes, it is actually referring to the monastic notion of paradise, its belief that its austerity 'is the earthly type of the "order" of heaven'.⁵¹ Hence the 'peradis' depicted by the poem is markedly ascetic, containing nothing 'bot watir man-is þurst to quenche' (12).

⁵¹ Hill, 'Parody and Theme in "Land of Cokaygne"', pp.55-6.

The 'superimposition' of Cockaigne next to this quasi-monastic Heaven means that the latter can no longer be considered the sovereign notion of goodness. The monks' desire to emulate Heaven through their strict and austere regimen is directly challenged. The poem points out that this is not the only idea of goodness in existence. The monastic 'fantasy of the perfect life' loses its dominance and authority. It becomes simply one of many rival conceptions.

Cokaygne thus begins to ridicule the pretensions of monasticism. The poem is not only comparing the conduct of monks to the patterns of behaviour they ought to be following, but is also calling those ideals into question. It is partly undercutting the standing of such ideals, rather than simply reinforcing them. In this, the poem demonstrates the range of devices which medieval satire could deploy. In its use of indeterminacy to undermine the status of monastic orders, it shows that Middle English satire does not only censure deviation. *Cokaygne* achieves far more than a straightforward recitation of 'doctrinal attitudes [...] applied to subjects already simplified'.⁵² The poem's goal is closer to ridicule than reproof. It actively suspends moral sensibilities in order to execute its attacks.

What makes this all the more important is the simple fact that the strategies of *Cokaygne* are not particularly exceptional. Their complexity is mirrored by a number of poems in the famous Harley MS 2253, a collection apparently copied at Ludlow during the 1340s.⁵³ Amongst these is the so-called 'Satire on the Consistory Courts', a text which is very similar to *Cokaygne* in its basic strategies.⁵⁴ The *Satire* takes the form of a monologue. It is narrated by a 'lewed lued' who is brought before a bishop's court, having allegedly 'on molde mote wiþ a mai' (4). The narrator produces several scathing attacks on the court during the course of the poem. The attending summoners are branded 'mys-motinde men alle by here euene', while the bishop himself has 'no wyt in is nolle' (38, 45). As it concludes, the narrator claims he is being persecuted: 'atte constorie heo kennep vs care,/ ant whissheþ vs euele & worse to fare' (85-6).

⁵² Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, p.9.

⁵³ For a recent discussion, see *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: the scribes, contents, and social contexts of British Library MS. Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000); see also *A Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, ed. N.R. Ker, EETS o.s. 255 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

⁵⁴ 'Satire on the Consistory Courts', in *Historical Poems*, pp.24-7.

Most readings treat the poem as a complaint, regarding its narrator's laments as simple moral appraisals. A number of critics follow Thomas Wright, and see the 'Satire' as a direct indictment of 'the smaller Ecclesiastical Courts, and the vexation which they caused to the peasantry'.⁵⁵ The piece is frequently classified as plain 'social criticism'.⁵⁶ However, as George Kane points out, the 'Satire' is much less clear-cut than this. It is if anything 'more social comedy than complaint', as its 'speaker [...] is not favourably represented'.⁵⁷ Any sense that the poem is a straightforward protest against a corrupt institution dissolves as it progresses. The narrator's own stance is deeply compromised. It quickly becomes apparent that he is guilty of the charges against him, and is not the innocent victim he claims to be. At one stage he reveals some highly incriminating knowledge, describing his accuser as unattractive beneath her headdress, or 'vncomely vnder calle' (60). He is not the source of indisputable truth, or even an injured party, but a flawed and self-interested speaker.

However, it is no more true to state that he himself is an object of condemnation. The poem is not a sermon against fornicators any more than it is a complaint against bishops' courts. Much like *Cokaygne*, the poem creates a number of competing assessments. It is clear that two trials are underway in the poem. Just as the narrator is tried and judged, so he tries and judges the court with his invective. He even passes sentence on its personnel, saying that the clerks 'shulen in helle on an hok/ hongre þere-fore' (53-4). As the court seeks a verdict against him, so he delivers his verdict on the court. What is most significant here is that the poem avoids giving precedence to either set of judgments. It does not award primacy to the decrees of the narrator or the court. The court's sentence is not overturned. At length the narrator is forced to submit to its punishments, as he is married to his accuser by 'a pruest proud ase a po' (82). Yet his own estimations of the court also stand unchallenged. His monologue is the only voice in the poem: no other speaker intervenes to correct or dislodge his insults. The poem is not delivering a single set of authoritative judgments: it is a

⁵⁵ *The Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: J.B. Nichol and Son, 1839), p.155.

⁵⁶ Saara Nevanlinna and others, 'Middle English', in *Early English in the Computer Age: explorations through the Helsinki Corpus*, ed. by Matti Rissanen, Merja Kyto and Minna Palander-Collin, *Topics in English Linguistics* 11 (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1993), p.37.

⁵⁷ Kane, 'Some Fourteenth-Century "Political" Poems', p.86.

neutral space in which two sets of appraisals converge, in which each judge is also the object of another's judgment.

The poem thus denies any central authority, in much the same manner as *Cokaygne*. The only real difference is that this is an end in its own right, rather than something turned against a particular target. Both the court and the accused are equally objects of mockery. The poem is even-handed in its denigration. It makes all positions equally open to question, rather than allowing any to become a privileged site from which secure rulings can be issued. Like *Cokaygne*, the 'Satire' is not strictly a complaint. Its content expands beyond the narrow parameters of such work, and even challenges the moral certainties on which complaint literature is based.

It is safe to say that none of these poems are reducible to simple ethical vituperation. Although all involve some form of assessment, none can be termed straightforwardly didactic. They are complex pieces, using devices which do not occur in the complaint, and which are not merely variations of its methods. All share a tendency to play with ideals and judgments rather than demand allegiance to them. Even the most rudimentary of these works makes extensive use of irony, undercutting the values it appears to advocate. Each of the texts employs deflation at least as forcefully as it employs admonition, playing with codes rather than enforcing them in unambiguous terms.

Of course, it may be argued that these poems are anomalies rather than illustrations of a coherent literary trend. After all, a handful of disparate texts can hardly be considered a large-scale tendency in medieval poetry. However, there is evidence to suggest that these poems do represent a wider current. Each of the manuscripts so far mentioned contains numerous texts which use the same scabrous forms of attack, rather than one or two items in isolation. Harley 2253 is a particularly rich source of such literature. Along with the 'Satire On The Consistory Courts', it preserves the mock-blazon 'Annot and John', the coarsely antifeminist 'On the Follies of Fashion', and the savage lampoon of Henry III's supporters 'Against the Barons' Enemies'.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ See Theo Stemmler, 'The Problem of Parody: *Annot and John*, for example', in *Genres, Themes and Images in English Literature from the Fourteenth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1988), pp.156-65; Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib*

Likewise, Harley 913 contains other pieces which adopt the same broad stance as *Cokaygne*, such as the playful estates satire *On the People of Kildare*, and the anti-academic 'Song of Nego'.⁵⁹ Also found in this manuscript is 'Pers of Bermingham', ostensibly a panegyric to Sir Peter de Bermingham, which Michael Benskin and Deborah Moore have identified as an example of 'psogos' or mock-encomium.⁶⁰ All of these poems attack by deflation, irony and direct mockery, rather than simply issuing rigid moral pronouncements which champion established codes.

Even the Jesus College MS preserves several texts which apply the same techniques. Similar processes are evident in the antipapal 'Holy Chireche is vnder uote' (c.1271-6).⁶¹ The poem opens with a parodic biblical gloss, which aims to 'explain' the corrupt state of the contemporary church in scriptural terms. The poem assures the reader that it is fitting for simony to pervade the priesthood from 'þe seolue pope' down, because St Peter was still 'i-cleped symon' when the 'chireche' was 'sette [...] up-on' him (1-3, 29). This mockery is directed against both the ideal and the reality of the object: the very foundation of the church is comically implicated in the critique, rather than hailed as an unquestionable standard. Also in the same manuscript is the famous *Owl and the Nightingale*.⁶² If anything, this provides an even more striking use of satiric indeterminacy than *Cokaygne*. Numerous critics have noted its refusal to propose firm judgments and definitions. R. Barton Palmer describes the poem as 'an interrogation rather than a declaration of "meaning"', while Douglas Peterson notes

(Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1944), p.182; 'Against the Barons' Enemies', in *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. by Carleton F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), p.131.

⁵⁹ 'An Irish Satire', in *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. by Celia Sisam and Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp.156-8; 'Song of Nego', in *Political Songs of England*, pp.210-11.

⁶⁰ 'Pers of Bermingham', in *Die Kildare Gedichte: die ältesten mittelenglischen Denkmäler in angloirischer Überlieferung*, ed. by W. Heuser, Beiträge zur Anglistik 14 (Bonner: P. Hanstein, 1904), pp.161-4; Michael Benskin, 'The Style and Authorship of the Kildare Poems, (1) *Pers of Bermingham*' in *In Other Words: transcultural studies in philology*, ed. by J. L. Mackenzie and R. Todd (Dordrecht: Foris, 1989), pp.57-75; Deborah Louise Moore, 'Parody and Satire in the Medieval Cultural Productions of the South West Midlands and Anglo-Ireland' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Victoria, 1996), pp.50-63. On Peter's career and reputation as the 'epitome of the unapologetic English lord', see Robin Frame, 'Power and Society in the Lordship of Ireland 1272-1377', *Past and Present* 76 (1977), pp.28-9.

⁶¹ 'Whan holy chireche is vnder uote', in *Old English Miscellany*, p.90. See Tucker, *Verse Satire in England*, p.53.

⁶² *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001).

that it deliberately suspends any 'final verdict'.⁶³ This suspension is achieved by citing several criteria at once, rather than allowing one position to dominate. There is no consensus in the poem as to how exactly the birds' various arguments should be verified. As Karen Gasser writes: 'Where does one find the answer to the riddle of experience – in hedonism or in moral absolutism [...] through logic-chopping, rhetoric, self-assertion, force, or [...] tolerant accommodation?'⁶⁴ There is no common standard for establishing superiority in the poem, but several competing models. As a result of this, the satire is turned against debate itself, or even against 'human contentiousness' in general.⁶⁵ The poem does not promote a single correct position, or a positive norm: on the contrary, everything it mentions is a target. As in 'Consistory Courts' and *Cokaygne*, nothing is privileged, and everything is equally denigrated.

The existence of several poems which seek to undermine ideals, rather than simply to reinforce them, shows that such methods are by no means unusual in medieval poetry. These forms of attack are not confined to a mere handful of texts. Several vernacular pieces seek to problematise given codes instead of simply to impose them, degrading the ideals surrounding their objects instead of treating them as infallible criteria. Short-circuiting conventional standards is clearly a key part of vernacular satire's range of techniques. Even at an early stage in Middle English poetry, derision and irreverence are vital aspects of its satire.

In sum, the main point to stress is that Middle English satire is a highly complex literature. It does not necessarily act in a straightforward or moralistic manner. The work of Yunck, Fahey and Kinney, which argues that these poems implement the same basic strategies as complaint literature for the same ends, begins to appear a little restricted when placed alongside the poems themselves. None of the poems so far discussed can be defined as purely sententious, delivering only simple moral decrees. Even this brief review reveals that seeing satire as 'moral-satirical' or 'by its

⁶³ R. Barton Palmer, 'The Narrator in *The Owl and the Nightingale*: a reader in the text', *Chaucer Review* 22 (1988), p.307; D.L. Peterson, 'The Owl and the Nightingale and Christian Dialectic', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 55 (1956), p.26.

⁶⁴ Karen M. Gasser, *Resolution of the Debate in the Medieval Poem The Owl and the Nightingale*, *Studies in Medieval Literature* 18 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), p.95.

⁶⁵ Kathryn Hume, *The Owl and The Nightingale: the poem and its critics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p.102.

very nature a complaint' does a disservice to the literature. At best this stance treats satire's more playful tendency as dispensable and superficial, regarding it as a digression from the mode's real purpose. At worst, it flatly denies that satire may confront the ideals it cites. These assumptions render satire predictable and mechanistic, whereas it often proves more volatile and deflationary in practice. The fact is that Middle English satire is generally more than an exercise in pure didacticism. A remark by George Kane may stand as a summary of the material so far studied: 'here we have a genre, and it is not complaint [...] what we have been looking at is instances of Middle English satirical verse in varying degrees of seriousness'.⁶⁶

It is clear that a more refined theory of medieval satire is required. Medieval satire needs a new conceptual model, one which takes into account the more scabrous potential of the mode. The next section of this chapter will begin to sketch out such a theory. It will develop a revised view of the subject, putting forward a model which explicitly theorises the more troubling aspects of satire, and moves them to the centre of consideration.

Medieval Theories of Satire

The best starting-point for this formulation is the critical work on satire produced during the Middle Ages itself. The comments on satire made by medieval writers will help to draw out the processes at work in the English poems. Since they deal explicitly with the mode, they will lay bare many assumptions that can only be inferred from the texts themselves.

As might be expected, medieval English itself contains few comments on satire. Middle English satirists are largely silent on their habits. The word satire is not even specifically applied to an English work until 1509, when Henry Watson proposes that his version of the *Stultifera Navis* 'may be called satyre' like the 'poesyces and fyccyons/ of the auncyent poetes'.⁶⁷ By the time that extended discussions of satire do

⁶⁶ Kane, 'Some Fourteenth-Century "Political" Poems', p.88.

⁶⁷ Sebastian Brant, *Stultifera nauis*, trans. by Henry Watson (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1509), f.8. Short-Title Catalogue (henceforth STC) 3547. It is interesting to note that the *Middle English Dictionary* (henceforth MED) does not even have an entry for 'satire' as a poetic form. Of the two

appear in English, new priorities are informing its composition. As Anne Prescott notes, by the middle of the sixteenth century 'satirical and humorous work' had become a firmly 'humanist endeavour'.⁶⁸ In fact, the earliest English critics deliberately exclude medieval satire from their discussions. George Puttenham dismisses 'that nameles, who wrote the Satyre called Piers Plowman' as a mere 'malcontent of that time', while William Webbe claims that Chaucer was the only medieval poet able to 'gyrde at [...] vices and abuses'.⁶⁹ Owing to this, the notions of satire outlined by early English critics cannot comfortably be applied to the Middle Ages. Medieval English satire has no comprehensive set of remarks on its customs.

However, this does not mean that the Middle Ages produced no useful reflections on satire at all. Medieval Latin contains a substantial body of work on the mode. The commentaries and glosses of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provide several detailed examinations of satire. From the first investigations of the twelfth-century Renaissance to the close of the Middle Ages, several studies of the mode were produced, aiming to identify its functions and schematics. For the purposes of the present inquiry, such works are indispensable. As conscious discussions of satire, they demand attention.

That satire should have been the focus of criticism during the period should not be surprising. The Roman satirists occupied a key place on the curricula of the medieval schools. As is well-known, once 'new educational structures were generated during the long twelfth century', classical literature gained a new centrality in schooling.⁷⁰ Students were introduced to the works of Roman poets at the earliest stages of their education. 'Grammatica', the first of the arts of the trivium, drew on classical texts as it equipped the student with a basic knowledge of Latin.⁷¹ Amongst these texts,

definitions it lists for satire, one describes 'a god or spirit variously associated with the air, mountains, or woods', while the other pertains to 'a type of ape said to live in Africa and Arabia'.

⁶⁸ Anne Lake Prescott, 'Humour and Satire in the Renaissance', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. by H.B. Nisbet and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989-2001), III, *The Renaissance*, ed. by Glyn P. Norton (1999), p.286.

⁶⁹ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1968), pp.48, 50; William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. by G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), I, p.241.

⁷⁰ R.N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.12.

⁷¹ See *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. by David L. Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

satires were particularly favoured. Suzanne Reynolds notes that Juvenal and Horace usually headed the selections from ancient writers, probably 'to assure the medieval reading community' of the 'moral standing' of pagan literature generally.⁷² The popularity of satire is demonstrated by the library of the almonry school at St Paul's. A list of the library's contents compiled in 1358 mentions 'Juvenal (two copies), Persius (two copies)' and 'Horace (*Satires*)'.⁷³ Significantly, Persius and Juvenal are the only authors whose work appears in multiple copies.⁷⁴

Engagement with satirists in the classroom promoted commentary on two fronts. Firstly, the students themselves were called on to analyse the texts they read. As A.J. Minnis and Ian Johnson write, interpretation of text, in the form of scripture, was the most central endeavour in medieval education: 'no book was more assiduously studied [...] than the Bible'. It seems that the hermeneutic procedures used in this study were first practised on secular texts. Minnis and Johnson continue: 'far from "theological thinking" being essentially antithetical to "literary criticism", on many occasions it served as a major stimulus [...] theologians received an educational grounding in the liberal arts, and many of the analytical techniques they applied in interpreting Scripture had been acquired as their schoolteachers led them through such "set texts" as Priscian, Ovid and Juvenal'.⁷⁵ 'Grammatica' did not merely enable students to read Latin, but expected them to comment on Latin texts in detail. It provided not only a 'point of entry into literate culture' but transmitted a set of 'interpretative strategies' as well.⁷⁶ The entire point of studying pagan literature was to analyse it, to rehearse techniques that would later be used in reading the Testaments. Conrad of Hirsau, writing in the middle of the twelfth century, conceives this in Pauline terms. For him, reading classical literature must precede the study of

⁷² Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: grammar, rhetoric and the classical text*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.1, 11.

⁷³ Edith Rickert, 'Chaucer at School', *Modern Philology* 29 (1932), p.257. The list of books appears in the will of William de Ravenstone, a schoolmaster at St Paul's.

⁷⁴ Lucan is also ubiquitous on school curricula, but is regarded as a writer of 'historia' not 'poesis'. See Berthe Marie Marti, 'Literary Criticism in the Mediaeval Commentaries on Lucan', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 72 (1941), pp.245-54, especially pp.246-7.

⁷⁵ A.J. Minnis and Ian Johnson, 'Introduction', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. by H.B. Nisbet and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989-2005), II, *The Middle Ages*, ed. by A.J. Minnis and Ian Johnson (2005), p.4. See also Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. by Mark Sebanc, 4 vols (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1998-2000), I: *The Four Senses of Scripture* (1998), pp.34-5.

⁷⁶ Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: grammatica and literary theory, 350-1100*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.1-2.

'greater truths', 'just as when an infant is unweaned and is not yet able to take solid food'.⁷⁷

Secondly, such texts had to be made accessible for undergraduate study. For medieval students to understand the poets of antiquity, explicatory materials had to be attached to their reading matter. Two of the most significant medieval expositions on satire were apparently composed to meet such a need: Conrad's *Dialogus Super Auctores* (c.1140), a collection of introductions to twenty-one 'auctores minores' and 'auctores maiores', and William of Conches' *Glosiae in Iuvenalum* (c.1130), which interpolates the first six satires of Juvenal with numerous scholia.⁷⁸ On Conrad and William, James Schultz remarks: 'to the extent that anything is known about their lives, it is clear that they were teachers, primarily teachers of grammar [...] the texts with which they show themselves so familiar were their textbooks'.⁷⁹ Their work seems to have arisen from the educational milieu, being written for use by students.

Of course, it may be objected that commentary can reveal little of relevance to early English literature. After all, the bulk of exegetical work was developed centuries before satire began to appear in English, and circulated in a reading community far removed from any vernacular counterpart.⁸⁰ However, it is far from the case that exegesis is irrelevant to English poetry. This point is made clear by the work of Paul Miller. While Miller's overall understanding of satire is at odds with that outlined here, he does offer compelling evidence that commentary had a profound impact on English poetry. Miller's main contention is that the large corpus of Latin satire produced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries passed on a conception of satire to English writers. In its turn, this early satirical literature derived its main impetus from

⁷⁷ 'Velut in gradu lactentis infantiae positus eorum, qui solidum cibum nondum possunt capere nec adhuc disciplinatus validioribus auctorum maiorum operam dare': Conradus Hirsaugiensis, *Dialogus Super Auctores*, in *Accessus ad auctores: Bernard d'Utrecht, Conrad Hirsau*, ed. by R.B.C. Huygens (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), p.86. Conrad is alluding here to I Corinthians 3.2 and Hebrews 5.12-13. See Robert Glendinning, 'Pyramus and Thisbe in the Medieval Classroom', *Speculum* 61 (1986), p.65.

⁷⁸ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.49; Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, ed. by Bradford Wilson, *Textes philosophiques du Moyen Age* 18 (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1980).

⁷⁹ James A. Schultz, 'Classical Rhetoric, Medieval Poetics, and the Medieval Vernacular Prologue', *Speculum* 59 (1984), pp.3-4.

⁸⁰ See for instance Charles F. Briggs, 'Teaching Philosophy at School and Court: vulgarization and translation', in *The Vulgar Tongue: medieval and postmedieval vernacularity*, ed. by Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2003), pp.99-111.

commentary. He claims that 'the medieval satirical tradition [...] evolved in the late eleventh or twelfth centuries as a result of the study of Roman satire and medieval satirical theory in the schools'. The Latin poets adhered to these conceptions with sufficient fidelity to preserve them once 'the tradition expanded from Latin to the vernacular languages'. Miller justly states: 'to write satire that was fully congruent with medieval satirical theory there was no need to study Roman satire and its medieval literary critics: by the second half of the fourteenth century there was more than ample material available in the medieval satirical tradition to make the conventions and characteristics of the medieval genre apparent'.⁸¹ The work of the Latin poets relied on the templates found in commentary, and passed those templates on to their followers in the vernacular.

It must be noted that little in this account is out of step with the findings of modern scholarship as a whole. Miller's proposals spell out a relationship that is inferred in many other studies. It has long been acknowledged that there is a vital link between the large corpus of medieval commentary and the production of satirical verse in Latin. The work of Cornelis Geerars, R.M. Thomson, Giovanni Orlandi and Bernard Bischoff makes exactly this point. Each of these critics stresses that exegesis was the main channel through which satiric 'tendencies' passed from antiquity to 'the Christian and medieval world', in its turn shaping how those tendencies were received.⁸² Martha Bayless has also noted that several important twelfth-century satirists, including Hugh Primas, the Archpoet and Walter of Chatillon, seem intimately familiar with the school curriculum and its related scholia.⁸³ Primas himself appears to have taught literature at Orleans, while the Archpoet may have been one of his pupils.⁸⁴ There can be little doubt that 'commentary transmitted

⁸¹ Miller, 'Medieval Literary Theory of Satire', p.240-1.

⁸² Bernard Bischoff, 'Living With the Satirists', in *Classical Influences on European Culture 500-1500*, ed. by R.R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.93; R.M. Thomson, 'The Origins of Latin Satire In Twelfth-Century Europe', *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch* 13 (1978), pp.73-83; Giovanni Orlandi, 'Classical Latin Satire and Medieval Elegaic Comedy', in *Latin Poetry and the Classical Tradition*, ed. by Peter Godman and Oswyn Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.114.

⁸³ Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: the Latin tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.180.

⁸⁴ See Peter Dronke, 'Hugh Primas and the Archpoet: some historical (and unhistorical) testimonies', in *Hugh Primas and the Archpoet*, trans. and ed. by Fleur Adcock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.xvii-xxii; P. G. Walsh, "'Goliath" and Goliardic Poetry', *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983), pp.1-9; A.G. Rigg, 'Satire', in *Medieval Latin: an introduction and bibliographical guide*, ed. by F.A.C. Mantello and A.G. Rigg (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp.562-68.

interpretations of satire' to medieval poets.⁸⁵

At the other end of this progression, the impact of Latin satire on vernacular texts is extremely well documented. Modern research has uncovered numerous points at which satiric topoi passed from Latin into English. Examples are given in the work of Penn Szittyá on antifraternalism, Jill Mann and John Yunck on social satire, Howard Bloch and Alcuin Blamires on antifeminism, and Katharina Wilson and Elizabeth Makowski on misogamy.⁸⁶ It is indisputable that English satirists were heavily indebted to Latin precedent.

The weight of scholarship is therefore firmly behind Miller's claims. His work spells out a connection which is inferred by much analysis of medieval literature. It can be stated with confidence that engagement with the satirists of ancient Rome fixed the perimeters in which medieval poets framed their work. For medieval students of grammar, contact with Juvenal, Horace and Persius was invariably mediated through commentaries and explanatory glosses. As Miller writes, 'study led to commentary, and commentary led to imitation'.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that Miller's account is not beyond critique. The suggestion that such an expansive range of work can be tied to a single explanatory origin raises questions. It seems unlikely that a vernacular tradition could simply reiterate a Latin discourse without modifying it in some way, and without combining it with other, more immediate influences. Likewise, the extent to which commentary could establish a practicable manifesto for poets, being more reflective than prescriptive in character, is debatable. These issues will be addressed below. At this

⁸⁵ 'In enkele middeleeuwse poetica-handboeken [...] zijn mededelingen over en interpretaties van de satire vastgesteld': C.M. Geerars, 'Theorie van de satire', *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* 16 (1972), p.4.

⁸⁶ Penn R. Szittyá, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: the literature of social classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); John A. Yunck, 'Dan Denarius: the Almighty penny and the Fifteenth Century Poets', in *Die englische Satire*, ed. by Wolfgang Weiß (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), pp.69-88; R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: an anthology of medieval texts*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Katharina M. Wilson and Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: misogynous literature from Juvenal to Chaucer*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

⁸⁷ Miller, 'Medieval Literary Theory of Satire', p.187.

stage, it is enough to acknowledge that exegesis is a major force behind vernacular poetry. At the very least it is part of ‘the under-wood of satire’, in Dryden’s phrase. As such, it merits close scrutiny.⁸⁸

As John Norton-Smith and Udo Kindermann have both concluded, exegesis owes its conception of satire to one work in particular, the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville (c.630).⁸⁹ Although Isidore’s remarks on satire are fairly rudimentary, they may be considered the wellspring of medieval satire criticism. Isidore turns his attention to satire in the eighth book of his vast encyclopaedia, as his discussion moves from Greek and Roman philosophy to classical literature in general. His observations are worth quoting in full:

There are two kinds of comedy, that is, Old and New. The Old gave rise to ridiculous jokes, as with Plautus, Accius, Terence. The New, which is also known as Satire, generally gathers together vices, as in the work of Horace, Persius, Juvenal, or other similar authors. These on the whole snatch up sins, never shying away from describing even the worst, nor from reprimanding sinful habits. Each naked sin is pictured, its every part laid bare. Furthermore, the word ‘satirical’ is taken from ‘saturation’, or that which is full of every kind of eloquence, or from ‘surfeit’ or ‘copiousness’, for satires speak of several things at once.⁹⁰

As Kindermann and Norton-Smith note, this comprehension of satire forms the bedrock of most later work. Throughout the Middle Ages definitions of satire retain the features outlined by Isidore. The mode remains a medium for ‘picturing’ sin in even its grossest detail, in the hope that such portrayals will serve as a ‘reprimand’ to the audience, preventing them from committing misdeeds in practice. Isidore’s ideas are reiterated by his fellow Spaniard Averroes of Cordova, whose highly influential

⁸⁸ John Dryden, *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire*, in *Dryden: Selected Criticism*, ed. by James Kinsley and George Parfitt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) p.234.

⁸⁹ John Norton-Smith, *William Langland* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), p.47; Udo Kindermann, *Satyra. Die Theorie der Satire im Mittellateinischen. Vorstudie zu einer Gattungsgeschichte*, Erlanger Beiträge zur Sprach- und Kunstwissenschaft, 58 (Nuremberg: Verlag Hans Carl, 1978).

⁹⁰ ‘Duo sunt autem genera comitorum, id est, veteres et novi. Veteres, qui et ioco ridiculares extiterunt, ut Plautus, Accius, Terentius. Novi, qui et Satirici, a quibus generaliter vitia carpuntur, ut Flaccus, Persius, Iuvenalis vel alii. Hi enim universorum delicta corripiunt, nec vitabatur eis pessimum quemque describere, nec cuilibet peccata moresque reprehendere. Unde et nudi pinguntur, eo quod per eos vitia singula denudentur. Satirici autem dicti, sive quod pleni sint omni facundia, sive a saturitate et copia: de pluribus enim simul rebus loquuntur’: Isidori Hispalensis, *Etymologiarum sive originum*, VIII.vii.7-8, ed. by W.M Lindsay, *Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), I, unpaginated.

commentaries on Aristotle also mention satire.⁹¹ Averroes gives an extremely concise version of these same basic conceptions. He states that the behaviour 'most proper to satire' is the 'representation of vices or defects' in order to 'give rise to a certain measure of indirection', to deter the reader from the actions depicted.⁹² Again, the mode is classified as a medium for the portrayal of sin, with the purpose of discouraging such wrongdoing.

Later discussions do not travel far beyond these fundamental conceptions. In Miller's phrase, these notions become the settled 'vocabulary of censure' for centuries.⁹³ Scholiasts recast this definition in the terminology of exegesis, but make few substantial additions to it. The first feature outlined by Isidore and Averroes becomes the 'materia' of satire, the subject-matter that is most appropriate to the mode.⁹⁴ Satire becomes a mode that characteristically examines vice. The chronicler William of Tyre, writing in the 1180s, defines satire entirely on this basis. While describing the customs of 'the men [...] dwelling in the East', William draws a brief comparison between satire and history. He argues that 'one who would undertake with careful pen to portray their morals, or rather their monstrous vices [...] would seem to be writing satire rather than compiling history'.⁹⁵ The chief distinction between the two forms seems to be their scope. Whereas history is free to record more or less any event, satire is exclusively concerned with 'monstrous vice'. Fifty years earlier, William of Conches offered much the same comprehension in his Juvenal glosses. William treats a reference to Horace, which describes the earlier poet as 'the lamp of Venusina', as an allusion to satire itself. This justifies a reading of satire as a form wholly concerned with sin. According to William, 'satire is called a lamp here because it frankly exposes vice'.⁹⁶ Satire is again characterised by the 'materia' it can

⁹¹ On Averroes' influence in the West, see Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), pp.418-21; Alfred Ivry, 'Averroes', in *Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by John Marenbon (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.49-64.

⁹² Averroes of Cordova, *The Middle Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. by O. B. Hardison, in *Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism: translations and interpretations*, ed. by Alex Preminger and others (New York: Frederick Ungor Publishing, 1974), p.363.

⁹³ Miller, 'John Gower, Satiric Poet', p.81.

⁹⁴ See Douglas Kelly, 'The Scope of the Treatment of Composition in the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Arts of Poetry', *Speculum* 41 (1966), p.276.

⁹⁵ William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, trans. by Emily A. Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p.406.

⁹⁶ 'Digna Venusina lucerna id est satira. Satira dicitur lucerna quia nudat et aperte vicia': Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.110. See the notes accompanying this line (I.51) in Juvenal, *The Sixteen Satires*, trans. and ed. by Peter Green (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p.125; Juvenal,

legitimately represent. It is, simply, a mode in which the range of discussion is limited to sinfulness.

Such notions survive long enough to pass into vernacular texts. Similar points are raised in a rare English discussion of the Roman satirists given by John Trevisa in his translation of Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon* (c.1385). On both of the occasions that Trevisa mentions the 'poete [...] i-cleped satiricus' he makes use of the term 'matir'. This appears to be an equivalent term for 'materia', as Trevisa's remarks are in line with those of the Latin commentators. His second and longest citation contains a detailed account of the chief themes of satire, derived in most part from Isidore. Trevisa writes: 'satiricus is y-seide of saturitas, þat is fulnesse of þe matir, oþer of the reprovynges þat þey speke aʒenst wikked men and euel levynges, for þey speke þerof at þe fulle'.⁹⁷ Once again, satire is defined by its range of objects. Its concentration on 'wikked men and euel levynges' is its central aspect. As soon as the term 'satire' makes its way into English, it is accompanied by the conviction that vice is its proper subject-matter.

The other strand of Isidore's commentary is developed into the 'utilitas' of satire, its practical usefulness.⁹⁸ One text which is particularly informed by this concept is John of Garland's *Parisiana Poetria* (c.1229). While this is a handbook on composition, and not a work of commentary in the strictest sense, it does make much use of the exegetic vocabulary. The *Poetria* defines 'Reprehension or Satire' as a form which recites 'evils [...] with the hope of correcting them'. John even approaches this feature as the essence of satire. For him it is the quality that distinguishes it from other related forms, especially 'Invective, in which slanderous things are said' with no wish to improve, 'with full intent to malign'.⁹⁹ The basic personality of satire is bound up with its supposedly didactic effects. Satire is held to be an innately edifying form, which must direct the reader towards some positive ideal. Without this

Satires, with the Satires of Persius, trans. by William Gifford, ed. by John Warrington and Susanna Braund (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1992), p.5.

⁹⁷ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, III.40, IV.9, trans. by John Trevisa, ed. by Joseph Rawson Rumbly, Rolls Series, 9 vols. (London: Longman, 1865-86), IV (1872), pp.179, 407.

⁹⁸ See Winthrop Wetherbee, 'From Late Antiquity to the Twelfth Century', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, II, p.119.

⁹⁹ *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland*, trans. and ed. by Traugott Lawler (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p.103.

outcome, a text simply cannot be classified as satirical. This idea is also taken up by the English Franciscan John Ridevall. In his lengthy exposition on Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (c.1333), Ridevall uses the satirists to defend the general utility of classical literature, citing them as proof that 'many of the poets set out to reprehend carnal sin'. For him this 'reprehension' is the chief function of satire, as he defines 'the poets of the Romans called satirists' as 'strong and sharp fighters against sins and fleshly delight'.¹⁰⁰

On the face of it, these ideas of satire seem far removed from the processes found in *Cokaygne* and other vernacular texts. Rather than allowing satire some measure of free-play and negation, the medieval commentators act much like their modern counterparts. They seem to steer satire towards one simple function, the reinforcement of a given set of ideals. Their insistence that satire depicts objects which depart from a stated norm, and aim to fortify that norm, is very close to more recent work on medieval satire. Like Highet, Yunck and Peter, the exegetes place emphasis on satire's constructive qualities, tacitly excluding other meanings. In fact, commentary is often used by modern studies to confirm a didactic model of medieval satire. Most critics see little beyond an 'ethical poetic' at work in exegesis.¹⁰¹ Joachim Suchomski, for instance, claims that scholiasts make satire entirely admonitory, and refuse to admit any other meanings, regardless of the strain this creates. He writes: 'the limits of tolerance could be stretched so far that almost any material could be accommodated, given a justification, function and value [...] germane with Christian, biblical attitudes'.¹⁰² This view is also that of Miller, who likewise regards exegesis as binding satire to a remedial intent: 'the scholia present the satirist as a bold, just reformer who sees the need to counteract the moral degeneration of the community [...] a poet who aims to correct with constructive criticism, not to defame with

¹⁰⁰ 'Quia multi de eis intendent reprehendere vitium carnis [...] Illi enim poete romanorum, quos vocabant satiricos, fuerant fortes et acuti reprehensore vitiorum et carnalium delectationum': quoted in Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early XIVth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), p.319. On Ridevall's work and career, see Beryl Smalley, 'John Ridewall's commentary on *De civitate Dei*', *Medium Aevum* 25 (1957), pp.140–53; *English Benedictine Libraries: the shorter catalogues*, ed. by Richard Sharpe and others (London: British Library, 1996), p.567.

¹⁰¹ Judson Boyce Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: a decorum of convenient distinction* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

¹⁰² 'Innerhalb der Betrachtungsweise, die den biblisch-christlichen Standpunkt überwindet [...] kann die Toleranzgrenze so weit gedehnt werden, daß nahezu jede komische Dichtung ihre Rechtfertigung findet, ihre Funktion erfüllt und damit ihren Wert hat': Joachim Suchomski, '*Delectio*' und '*Utilitas*': ein Beitrag zum Verständnis mittelalterlicher komischer Literatur, *Bibliotheca Germanica* 18 (Bern and Munich: Francke, 1975), p.173.

malicious slander'.¹⁰³

But it is not quite accurate to treat these definitions as the limit of medieval reactions to satire. Focusing on these propositions neglects a large amount of material that contains a markedly different response. While the technical descriptions of satire are fairly uniform, different ideas do begin to emerge in the more sustained accounts. There are in fact several points at which the exegetes' reading of satire slips free of a purely ethical schema. No matter how forcefully commentators insist on satire's moralising function, this intent often loosens its hold when the operations of satire are outlined. The more detail that is given about satire, the more there arises a sense that it cannot be solely corrective. As Vincent Gillespie notes, satire comes to be held in 'paradoxical regard'.¹⁰⁴ Several commentaries hint that the mode contains further, less constructive potentialities.

One of the most striking examples of this accompanies William of Conches' glosses on Juvenal. In one of its two surviving manuscripts the *Glosae* is preceded by a short *accessus*, a brief introduction to the 'auctor' and his 'opera'.¹⁰⁵ According to its modern editor Bradford Wilson, the *accessus* is most likely the work of one of William's students: at least, its opening section refers to him as 'magister Wilelmus'.¹⁰⁶ What makes the text particularly noteworthy is its attempt to pin down exactly 'what satire might be', or 'quid sit satira'. During the course of this definition, the *accessus* follows a typical procedure of medieval criticism. It attempts to unearth the structure of satire by setting forth the word 'in its true original sense'.¹⁰⁷ This leads to some extremely interesting remarks, which warrant close examination:

It is possible that 'satire' is derived from 'satiri', that is from 'churls' [...] Peasants, when they assembled for the honour of Ceres and Bacchus [...] would give free reign to their appetites, celebrating and drinking, feasting for the greater part of the day. At the end of such occasions, the rustics of one village would stand against those of another settlement, and by turns they poured out abuse, chiming together in ungainly fashion, as harsh and

¹⁰³ Miller, 'John Gower, Satiric Poet', p.81.

¹⁰⁴ Vincent Gillespie, 'From the Twelfth Century to c.1450', in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, II, p.225.

¹⁰⁵ See E.A. Quain, 'The Medieval *accessus ad auctores*', *Traditio* 3 (1945), pp.228-42; Curtius, *European Literature*, p.221.

¹⁰⁶ See Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.89, and Wilson's notes on pp.28-9.

¹⁰⁷ Ernest Brehaut, *An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages: Isidore of Seville* (New York: Columbia University, 1912), p.33. See R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: a literary anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp.30-63.

rough as befits the peasantry. And these types of outbursts anticipated satire, because the craftiest farmers, those with most skill and artistry, later fashioned verse intended to reprehend.¹⁰⁸

The bulk of this material is most likely borrowed from Horace, who also mentions ‘the country folk of old’ and relates how ‘the peasants poured out, one after the other, abuse phrased in rhyme, during their disorderly rituals’.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless Horace does not associate these verbal duels with literary satire, nor does he use the key term ‘satiri’. Neither is this derivation found in the *Etymologiae*, or among the four etymons of ‘satira’ given in Diomedes’ *Ars Grammatica* (c.400).¹¹⁰ The connection between satire and ‘disorderly rituals’ is an innovation on the part of the *accessus*.

What makes this passage particular noteworthy is that it constitutes an interpretation of satire in its own right. In a sense, the ‘satiri’ etymology is a critical comment on satire. It is a means of recording an idea of the mode, its behaviour and its purpose. Satire can only be linked with rustic ‘outbursts’ if some correspondence is perceived between the two forms of language. The conduct of satirists and the ‘craftiest farmers’ must be seen as similar in some way. If the two are not assumed to be analogous, then the derivation would make little sense. As a result, the writer’s choice of etymon reveals the characteristics he has detected in the mode. It lays bare the observations that have allowed him to link satire to this particular root. The etymology rests on an assessment of the mode, and conveys a particular impression of the nature of satire.

When examined in this way, the ‘satiri’ figure reveals a view of satire which does not wholly conform to a straightforward ethical conception. The figure comes to impute certain characteristics to the mode which are not obviously corrective. Firstly, it

¹⁰⁸ ‘Potest et satira dici a satiris, id est ab agrestibus dicta est [...] agrestes cuiuscumque patrie conveniebant in honore Cereris et Bachi [...] Deinde sibi indulgendo, commendando, et bibendo magnam partem deie consumebant. Ad ultimum, rustici unius ville contra rusticos alterius ville consurgebant et in vicem fundebant convicia non bene consona pro discretione rusticana. Et huius modi convicia predicta sunt satire, id est agregestes callidores autem in artem redigerunt et metricè ceperunt reprehendere’: Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.91.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Agricolae prisci [...] per hunc inventa licentia morem/ Versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit’: Horace, *Epistolae*, II.i.139-45, in *The Works of Horace*, ed. by A.J. Maclean (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1886), p.214.

¹¹⁰ See Diomedes, *Ars Grammatica*, in *Grammatici Latini*, ed. by Heinrich Keil, 8 vols. (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1855-80), I (1855), pp.485-6. On Diomedes in the Middle Ages, see Martin Irvine and David Thomson, ‘Grammatici and Literary Theory’, in *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, II, pp.15-41, especially pp.31-8; on his etymologies, see Llewelyn Morgan, ‘Satire’, in *A Companion to Latin Literature*, ed. by Stephen Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp.175-6.

seems to claim that satire does not have to restrict its ridicule to vice. The peasants' abuse does not appear to address those who are already established as immoral. There is no mention of their insults being focused only on deserving cases, as the farmers 'pour out abuse' on one another regardless of their actual actions. It seems that this prototype of satire may be turned against any target, regardless of its actual iniquity. It is unselective, rather than concentrating on 'naked sins' alone. For the *accessus*, satire does not appear to be bound to the 'materia' usually ascribed to it.

Likewise, this model also breaks with the customary view of satire's 'utilitas'. If satire is intended to 'reprimand sinful habits' as the commentators routinely claim, this would suppose that its main objective lies beyond its own language.¹¹¹ To repeat John of Garland's summary, the belief that satire recounts 'evils [...] with the hope of correcting them' assumes that it is designed to have some material effect. Yet the bouts of flyting-like 'abuse' described by the *accessus* do not follow this pattern. They more closely resemble a game. They occur in a celebratory context, while 'feasting [...] for the honour of Ceres and Bacchus', and conclude with the festivities: it is only 'ad ultimum' or 'at the end' of these occasions that insults are exchanged. They do not seem to have any particular outcome, but are more self-enclosed in character. In fact, the emphasis of this speech is less on its edifying effects than on the verbal flamboyance of its speakers, as their 'skill and artistry' determines the value of the words. It is therefore more appropriate to view the peasants' abuse as playful, with no intent beyond its own invention. This 'anticipation' of satire is produced as an end in itself. For the author of the *accessus*, the 'utilitas' generally attributed to satire does not seem to represent the limit of its functions.

The lack of the conventional 'utilitas' and 'materia' in this model has a number of important implications. Most significantly, it implies that satire is capable of being purely derogatory. The churls' raillery is unrestricted: it is not compelled to produce a recognisable effect, and has no obligation to attack only transgressors of a stipulated ideal. Both of these points would suggest that it is not necessarily governed by a system of prescriptions. Since it can be applied to any target, it need not regard any qualities as sacrosanct or untouchable. Likewise, since it does not have to turn its

¹¹¹ Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, VIII.vii.7

language outwards to propagate a definite moral, it is not in the service of a predetermined set of values. The peasants' abuse does not have to be founded on any central standard, or be tied to any idea of inviolable goodness or truth. This implies that satire, as the literary mode that this abuse 'anticipates', might also be free of any positive norms. The comparison takes from satire any compulsion to judge entities against an ideal. It may, like its prototype, exercise a purely negative form of mockery. Rather than respecting or publicising given standards, satire is free to be wholly disparaging for the *accessus*. The mode gains the power to mock indiscriminately, without necessarily privileging a norm as it attacks. Drawing this parallel suggests that satire's invective can achieve a life of its own, not subordinate to any sanctified system of values.

Nor is this the limit of the *accessus*' comments. The text goes even further than this in hinting at satire's irreverence. Its central metaphor grants satire the ability to undermine idealised concepts. A significant detail in this respect is the emphatically plural nature of the churls' games. The *accessus* points out that the peasants' outbursts are made up of numerous separate voices: they are not only spoken by the inhabitants of several villages, but are described as being 'non bene consona', or 'not well harmonised'.¹¹² These games are emphatically heterogeneous and dissonant. There is no attempt to reconcile their participants into a single mass, or to suppress their difference, as they remain resolutely discordant. Moreover, these differing positions are allowed to contest one another. It is stipulated that the peasants abuse one another 'in vicem', 'by turns'. Their positions are not simply distinct, but are in direct competition with one another: each challenges the others' assertions, and produces statements that will be in themselves confronted. Even more interestingly, this contest appears to be an ongoing state, rather than a process with a definite conclusion. It does not seek to confirm a winner, or judge the best or most successful insult, but simply ends when the occasion for 'celebrating and drinking' is over. It does not work to establish a principal or pre-eminent voice, or even have any criterion by which such a thing could be decided. The *accessus* emphasises that these rituals highlight disparity and competition for their own sake.

¹¹² Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.91.

All of this strongly implies that satire itself may be turned against standards and prescriptions. As far as the *accessus* is concerned, it does not seem to occupy a single unified position. Like this analogous practice, it too may play host to several competing voices, without accommodating them into a hierarchy or subordinating them to one ruling set of values. If this is the case, then satire becomes capable of undercutting the moral code it cites. Rather than allowing one set of ideas or prescriptions to put itself forward without question, it may create a broad field in which every position is forced to reckon with other standpoints. Instead of allowing one voice to issue secure instructions and judgments, it may unsettle such a process. It may reduce every claim to simply one of several assertions, and even force it to be directly contested by its rivals. In short, the *accessus*' metaphor for satire hints at a clear deflationary power. Through this comparison, satire becomes a practice in which any position can be made to compete with others, and even be countered and resisted. Its playfulness gains a more militant edge.

From these details, it is fair to say that the *accessus* reveals an understanding of satire that does not entirely accord with an ethical definition. While it does not exactly overrule the didactic model proposed by Isidore and his followers, it does expand on such a view. At the very least, its claim that satire resembles a riotous game suggests an awareness that the mode may be playful. Such an analogy places comedy within the scope of the mode. But at the same time this comparison also assigns more querulous powers to satire. It argues that satire may exist without any system of values, and may even have the power to undercut authoritative pronouncements. The mode has the ability to be sportive rather than entirely reformatory, and denigratory rather than plainly constructive. In sum, the Juvenal *accessus* seems to realise that satire is not only a tool for moral commendation. Despite its assurance that satire 'has the function of making its hearers retreat from vice', once its author sets out to describe the mode, he allows further possibilities to emerge.¹¹³ In its survey of satire, the *accessus* recognises some potential for disruption and belligerence.

Of course, a single work can only give a partial view of the medieval period's notion of satire. The Juvenal *accessus* is only one text in the extensive body of Latin

¹¹³ 'Agit ergo [...] hac utilitate ut auditorum retrahat a viciis': Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.89.

commentary, and its views are by no means the only ones found in this literature. However, the text does serve to crystallise a series of reflections that recur throughout exegesis. Although the 'satiri' derivation does not occur elsewhere, other texts follow much the same course as the *accessus*, forming metaphors for satire which steer their remarks towards similar conclusions.

Shades of this trend can already be found in Isidore's work. One of the etymologies outlined here seems to identify a similar potential for unruliness in satire. Towards the end of his discussion, Isidore follows Evanthius in suggesting a link between satire and the satyrs of Greek mythology.¹¹⁴ Isidore writes: 'the word "satirical" is taken from "saturation", or that which is full of every kind of eloquence [...] or else it may be taken from the name of the satyrs'.¹¹⁵ Given the nature of this mythic creature, it would be hard for Isidore to avoid implications of disorder here. Few classical texts fail to associate the satyr with licence and tumult.¹¹⁶ Horace, for example, describes the satyrs as 'plunging with their base speech into dingy taverns', while in Ovid 'Bacchants and Satyrs' trail after Dionysus, marching to the 'noise of tambourines and clashing bronze'.¹¹⁷ The figure is emblematic of low humour and uproar: in the words of Gilbert Murray, it is 'unthwarted by law and unchecked by self-control'.¹¹⁸ The satyr habitually defies codes and orders, rather than reinforcing them.

In the course of his discussion, Isidore not only emphasises these subversive aspects, but projects them directly into satire. He writes of the satyrs: 'It is said that, because of their drunkenness, they were permitted to speak with impunity'.¹¹⁹ The salient detail here is intoxication. For Isidore, 'drunkenness' is the satyrs' governing feature. Everything else is subordinate to this trait. Even their speech is motivated by alcohol,

¹¹⁴ See Evanthius, 'On Drama,' trans. by O. B. Hardison, in *Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism*, p.47; David Galbraith, 'Theories of Comedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. by Alexander Leggatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.8.

¹¹⁵ 'Saturici autem dicti, sive quod pleni sint omni facundia [...] a satyris nomen tractum': Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, VIII.vii.8.

¹¹⁶ A list of allusions is given in Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1960), I, pp.281-3.

¹¹⁷ 'Migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas': Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 229, in *Works of Horace*, p.229; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.75, IV.25-31.

¹¹⁸ Gilbert Murray, 'Introduction to *Alcestis*', in Euripides, *Alcestis*, trans. and ed. by Gilbert Murray (London: Oxford University Press, 1905), p.3.

¹¹⁹ 'Satyris [...] qui inulta habent ea quae per vinolentiam dicuntur': Isidore, *Etymologiarum*, VIII.vii.8.

as inebriation allows them 'to speak' in their characteristic manner. This set of ideas colours Isidore's view of satire. The only parallel that he establishes between satyrs and satire is their production of language, the fact that both 'speak'. The two are associable because they give rise to similar forms of discourse. The implication is that the satyr's manner of speech is the earliest form of satire, the mode in its most primitive state. This imputes a degree of upheaval to satire, making it less corrective at heart. His remark about the mode's 'drunkenness' implies that it need not be governed by restraint, decency, or reason. Drunkenness represents the dissolution of such ideals. It can only come into being if norms are suspended, and its influence prevents them from being upheld. By claiming that inebriation underlies satire, Isidore is acknowledging that it has no innate conservatism. He connects it to the arrest of established standards. This means that ideals do not have to be integral to satire's performance. Satire does not need to be tied to behavioural models, and it has no inherent duty to support them. The mode may be purely derisive, and free of any positive ideals. Like the Juvenal *accessus* after him, Isidore seems to suspect that satire is broader than his definitions allow.

Nonetheless, these are only the briefest of hints. The rest of Isidore's remarks do not present satire as anything but didactic. At one stage Isidore even offers an alternative etymon, one that is wholly prescriptive in character. He suggests that 'satire' may have legislative origins, proposing that it stems from the 'lex satura', 'a type of law that makes several provisions at once'.¹²⁰ In the majority of his comments, Isidore thus treats satire as wholly imperative. The satyr is a passing anomaly in his engagement with the mode, and not representative of his views as a whole. However, this is not the case for Isidore's followers. In late medieval discussions, the satyr comes to play a far more central role. As Gillespie and Kindermann stress, later scholiasts pay considerable attention to this aspect of Isidore's discussion.¹²¹ In their hands, his rough sketch is expanded and embellished, until it becomes a cornerstone of satire theory. In fact it remains a crucial part of commentary on satire until the

¹²⁰ 'De Lege Satura: satura vero lex est quae de pluribus simul rebus eloquitur, dicta a copia rerum et quasi a saturitate; unde et saturas scribere est poemata varia condere, ut Horatii, Iuvenalis et Persii': *ibid.*, V.xvi.1. On the *lex satura* in republican Rome, see William Smith, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London: John Murray, 1875), pp.681-702; Jurgen Von Ungern-Sternberg, 'The Crisis of the Republic', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*, ed. by Harriet I. Flower (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.97.

¹²¹ Gillespie, 'From the Twelfth Century to c.1450', p.225; Kindermann, *Satyra*, chapters 3 and 4.

work of Casaubon in the seventeenth century.¹²² Moreover, although the satyr is extended beyond Isidore's brief outline, it does not lose the connotations of disorder he attaches to it. Throughout the Middle Ages, the satyr remained a vehicle for non-ethical readings of satire.

A case in point is Guido da Pisa's gloss on Dante, dating from about 1387. Guido mentions the satyr in the 'Prologus' of this work, while reviewing the various forms of classical poetry. In the course of his discussion, he makes two highly revealing comments. After stating that the conduct of satyrs is analogous to satire, Guido begins to spell out exactly how one resembles the other. Firstly, he calls attention to the grotesque bodies of the satyrs. He states that 'satyrs are animals with the shape of man above the navel, and the shape of a goat beneath it'.¹²³ His next point concerns the behaviour of the creatures. He notes that satyrs are given to 'frolicking', being 'light-footed and capricious, swiftly skipping and dancing'. This activity is specifically said to mirror satire's own performance: 'the species of poetry in question' also apparently 'skips', 'dancing rapidly from vice to virtue, and from virtue to vice'.¹²⁴

In calling attention to these features, Guido's work follows a broad current in medieval exegesis. Other medieval commentators also cite these details in their work on satire. For instance, Conrad of Hirsau notes that the 'naked and scoffing satyrs' resemble satire because both are 'ill-formed', while John of Garland writes that 'the rule of satire is to laugh at vice, and to dance about'.¹²⁵ What is more, in emphasising these points, all three authors articulate the same ideas found in the Juvenal *accessus*.

¹²² Isaac Casaubon, *De satyrica Graecorum poesi et Romanorum satira*, ed. by Peter E. Medine (Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1973). See Bernard Harris, 'Men Like Satyrs', in *Elizabethan Poetry*, ed. by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 2 (London: Edward Arnold, 1960), pp.175-202; Zimbardo, *At Zero Point*, pp.63-7; Giambattista Vico, *Commento All'Arte Poetica di Orazio*, ed. by Guido de Paulis, Studi Vichiani 28 (Naples: Alfredo Guida Editore, 1998), p.310.

¹²³ 'Satyri enim sunt quedam animalia ab umbilico supra formum hominis habentia, sed ab umbilico deorsum habent formum caprinam': Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis*, ed. by Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), p.5.

¹²⁴ 'Sic ista scientia poetarum est levis, quia cito saltat de vitio in virtutem et de virtute in vitium': *ibid.*
¹²⁵ 'Satiricum [...] a satyris dictum nudis et ridentibus, quia hoc carmine viciosa mores denudatur': Conradus Hirsaugiensis, *Dialogues Super Auctores*, p.76; 'Hec lex satire, vitiis ridere, salire': John of Garland, *Morale Scolarium*, 423, ed. by Louis John Paetow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1927), p.234. See A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature 1066-1422* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.167. See also the *Parisiana Poetria*, p.103, in which John makes an identical observation.

When Guido and John claim that the literary mode and the mythical creature have a common monstrosity and a tendency to 'skip', they also imply that satire may be reckless and irreverent. The idea of dancing certainly introduces a ludic element into the mode. The dancing of satyrs, like the cursing contests in the *accessus*, seems more conducive to play than instruction: it is an end in its own right, an act performed for its own sake, rather than a process leading towards a further goal. The notion of play is again brought to the fore. Rather than being linked with a functional activity, designed to have some effect outside itself, satire is again likened to a game. As a literary form, therefore, satire seems able to toy with language and its codes without necessarily enforcing them. This again suggests that satire may be deflationary: it may treat codes ironically, and even perhaps critically.

The emphasis on teratism, as satire originates from 'ill-formed' creatures, develops this idea even further. The work of David Williams raises some helpful points in this regard. Williams examines the role of the monster in medieval culture, and reaches some useful conclusions. He points out that the monstrous body is invariably a distorted version of the human frame. It represents the human figure enlarged, diminished or, as in the case of the satyr, bestialised. This in turn has important ramifications. Williams refers to the symbolic role of the human body in medieval thought, echoing Mary Douglas' claim that the body is a model for 'any bounded system'.¹²⁶ He finds this idea particularly applicable to the Middle Ages, owing to the prevalence of such schemata as the Pauline 'corpus Christi' and the Aristotelian 'body politic'.¹²⁷ Throughout the period, he argues, the human body was a key paradigm for symbolic order in general. The monster is thus more than a mutation of human anatomy: it may also be a deliberate subversion of accepted codes and hierarchies. Williams writes: 'the human body is the primeval matrix of all the chief figures and analogies by which human language seeks to understand reality [...] the deforming of this form negates the equating of the real to the limits of discourse'.¹²⁸ By distorting the archetype of ordered thought, the monster may be used to disturb established systems and rules.

¹²⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Ark, 1984), p.113.

¹²⁷ I Corinthians 12.12-30; Anton-Hermann Chroust, 'The Corporate Idea and the Body Politic in the Middle Ages', *Review of Politics* 9 (1947), pp.423-52.

¹²⁸ David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: the function of the monster in medieval thought and literature* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1996), p.176.

In light of Williams' remarks, Guido's emphasis on the monstrosity of satire becomes highly suggestive. Likening satire to a monstrous body 'with hooked snout, horned forehead, and extremities like goats' feet' implies that the characteristics of the monster are also present in the mode.¹²⁹ The analogy places satire outside the bounds of 'affirmative, logical discourses'.¹³⁰ Since the physiology of its etymon breaks with conventional strictures, satire is moved away from such orders. It is removed from any obligation to preserve existing norms, as it is more firmly linked with their absence than their reinforcement. Satire may thus gain the ability to operate without a set of positive standards to govern it. The way is open for the mode to be wholly denigratory and subversive in its mockery. Much like Isidore's reference to satiric 'drunkenness', Guido's insistence on satire's monstrosity associates the mode with disorder.

From this, it can be seen that the satyr functions much like the 'satiri'. It allows exegesis to coordinate a response to satire that departs from an ethical model. The identification of satire and satyrs discloses a belief that the mode can be corrosive rather than purely constructive. The satyr allows satire to be portrayed as a game rather than a lesson, indicating that it may use language without any directive intent. Satyrs also place some part of satire outside established values, recognising that it does not have to attack in their name. As with the 'satiri', when exegetes attempt to rationalise the link between satire and satyrs, they describe the mode as undermining systems, rather than reinforcing them. Overall, these derivations betray a sense that satire may not simply be a didactic tool. Exegesis invariably uses these metaphors to pick out and magnify the irreverence of the mode. In its etymologies, commentary veers towards Fulgentius' view of satire, seeing the mode as 'laughing boisterously' and 'lashing out with a reckless spray of words'.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Jerome, 'The Life of Paulus the First Hermit', 8, in *St Jerome: letters and select works*, trans. by W.H. Fremantle, ed. by P. Schaff, Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II, VI (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1893), p.301.

¹³⁰ Williams, *Deformed Discourse*, p.103.

¹³¹ 'Satyra lascivienti verborum rore percussit'; 'aut cachinnat satyra': Fulgentius, *Mitologiae*, in *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii V. C.: Opera*, ed. by Rudolf Helm (Leipzig: Tuebner, 1898), pp.9-12. On Fulgentius in the Middle Ages, see Robert Edwards, 'The Heritage of Fulgentius', in *The Classics in the Middle Ages: papers of the twentieth annual conference of the Center For Medieval And Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 69 (Binghamton: Center For Medieval And Early Renaissance Studies, 1990), pp.141-51.

What is more, this view of satire does not only appear as an undertone in exegesis. There are several points at which medieval writers voice these reactions quite openly. A more candid awareness of satiric derision appears in a number of texts. One such work is the *Sacerdos ad altare* (c.1190), an educational tract often attributed to Alexander of Neckam.¹³² Here satire's tendency towards disorder is not merely noted, but comes to dictate how satire should be treated in the classroom. For Alexander satire is a form of literature that should only be read under close supervision. While he does recommend that the student 'reads the books of satirists' in order to 'learn how to flee vices, and desire to imitate noble deeds', he also sounds a firm note of caution. Along with the 'love poems' of Ovid, satire should be kept from immature readers:

However much the student is pleased by the poisons of the authors, love poems along with satires should be kept from the hands of the young; for it is said: 'Those of you who gather flowers and fresh strawberries from the earth, run from here, O youngsters, for a cold snake lurks in the grass'.¹³³

In this passage, Alexander does not see satire as a simple buttress for accepted standards. Instead, he suggests that it may actively disrupt moral principles. His main contention is that satire corrupts 'the young'. It is able to 'poison' the sensibilities of 'youngsters', presenting a danger to their moral development. He believes that some part of satire is able to corrode notions of correct conduct and directly overturn proper ideals. As a consequence, satiric poetry should be handled with utmost care. It is evident from this that Alexander does not regard satire as exclusively moral. He does not accept that the mode can be reduced to an ethically beneficial 'utilitas'. Parts of it are firmly didactic, but it also has more troubling powers. It does not only contain moral fruit and 'flowers', but also something more vicious, his 'cold snake in the grass'.

¹³² See R. W. Hunt, *The Schools And The Cloister: the life and writings of Alexander Nequam*, rev. ed. by Margaret T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp.28-30; James H. MacGregor, 'Ovid at School: from the ninth to the fifteenth century', *Classical Folio* 32 (1978), pp.40-2; Richard C. Dales, *The Intellectual Life of Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp.226-7.

¹³³ 'Deinde satiricos [...] libellis legat, ut vicia etiam in minori etate addiscat esse fugienda et nobilia gesta eorum desideret imitari [...] placuit tamen viris autenticis carmina amatoria cum satiris subducenda esse a manibus adolescentium, ac si eis dicatur: Qui legitis flores et humi nascencia fraga./ Frigidus, o pueri, fuite hinc, latet anguis in herba': Alexander of Neckam, 'A List of Text-Books from the Close of the Twelfth Century', ed. by Charles H. Haskins, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* XX (1909), p.91. The quotation is from Virgil, *Eclogues*, III.92-3.

Alexander is not alone in these objections. The same concern is present in John of Garland's work. It is particularly apparent in his *Morale Scolarium* (c.1241), a satire on the 'morals of students'. John opens this work by outlining its overall purpose. He claims to be 'writing a new style of satire, one which does not sow anger: crazed anger, fierce with its mortal blows'.¹³⁴ He goes on to promise that, unlike other satires, 'no specific person will be mangled here with a spiteful fang'.¹³⁵ In these lines, John candidly sets out to make satire more constructive. His 'new style of satire' will not give way to scurrility or unbounded attack. The fact that John is required to make these disclaimers suggests that he shares Alexander's suspicions. If satire is already governed by morality, it would not be necessary for John to rein in its performance in this way. He would not need to ensure that his work 'does not sow anger' if this was already impossible. John recognises that part of satire stands outside the ethical model. The mode can only be purely ethical if he forces it to be so. To write wholly moral satire involves sealing it into a 'new' form, dispensing with some part of its structure. Like Alexander, John realises that some malevolent energies are innate to the mode.

These convictions even make their way into English. In fact, as soon as English satirists begin to comment openly on their work, the same suspicions arise. Henry Watson's remarks on his 'boke satyryke' bear witness to this. At one stage, Watson warns that his book is like an 'almonde', since its 'vertues' or 'kyrnelles' cannot be reached 'withoute brekyng of the stones'. From this comment, it seems clear that his idea of 'satyre' also includes something that stands outside 'vertues/ scyence & doctryne'. Some part of Watson's 'booke' is of a different character to its 'moral sens', and must be pierced or 'broken' before that 'prouffyte' can be accessed. A further statement reveals the nature of this non-moral content. Watson writes: 'Lordes yf it please you for to rede it & yf it seme you yt it is mordaunt excuse me as the auntyentes are excused the whiche haue made dyuers fayre doctrynes mordauntes'.¹³⁶ The term 'mordaunt' suggests that Watson is describing a sort of unrestrained attack, which has no regard for proper standards. The word is used in this sense by other medieval writers: Caxton, for instance, makes mention of 'right mordent and bytyng

¹³⁴ 'Scribo novam satiram, set sic ne seminet iram,/ Iram deliram, letali vulnere diram': *Morale Scolarium*, 1-2, p.187.

¹³⁵ 'Nullus dente mali lacerabitur in speciali': *ibid.*, 3, p.187.

¹³⁶ *Stultifera nauis*, ff.5v.

detractors'.¹³⁷ Like John of Garland, Watson acknowledges that a more slanderous line of attack exists within satire. In fact, Watson even seems assured that this corrosive material cannot be removed from the mode. His appeal to the poetry of 'the auncyentes' indicates that even the earliest models of satire need to be 'excused' for their occasional savagery: he does not seem to consider repressing such content in his own work. This unruly potential becomes intrinsic to the literature, present from its very origin onwards. For Watson, as for Alexander of Neckam, some part of satire will inevitably be vicious and uncontained.

All three of these authors display the same understanding of satire that underlies the satyr and 'satiri' etymologies. Their responses also suggest that satire resists a fully ethical definition. Rather than being fully governed by moral interests, it seems to have forms that are not in the service of exhortation. While it may have some didactic usefulness, it is able to erode concepts as well as endorse them. The mode is, in short, not exclusively corrective. In the words of A.J. Minnis, its 'respectful attitudes' at every stage 'coexist with mockeries'.¹³⁸

Thus the main conclusion to be drawn here is that medieval conceptions of satire are more complex and contradictory than modern summaries allow. It may be true that the exegetes try to pin satire to a reproachful function: in most of these works satire is confidently described as 'reprehensio', a mode in which 'evils are recited with the hope of correcting them'.¹³⁹ It is defined as instructive, giving sanction to idealised forms of behaviour by attacking deviations from them. Its ultimate aim is not ridicule, but the moral education of its reader: as Avicenna states, 'he who states that iniquity is a vice and stops there would not leave the same effect on the soul as when he adds that probity is a sublime and irreproachable life'.¹⁴⁰ However, these technical classifications do not represent the full extent of the scholiasts' reactions. Alongside

¹³⁷ Jacobus de Cessolis, *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, trans. by William Caxton, ed. by William Axon (London: E. Stock, 1883), p.70.

¹³⁸ A.J. Minnis, *Magister amoris: the Roman de la Rose and vernacular hermeneutics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.194.

¹³⁹ 'Satira igitur est reprehensio metrica composita': Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.90.

¹⁴⁰ Avicenna, *Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle: a critical study with an annotated translation of the text*, trans. by Ismail M. Dahiyat (Leiden: Brill, 1974), p.82. See also Salim Kermal, *The Philosophical Poetics of Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes: the Aristotelian reception* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.130-3.

these assured definitions, there is a suspicion that satire's 'representation of vice' to 'give rise to [...] indirection' may not be its only possible effect. As the commentators attempt to describe the form fully, other ideas of satire present themselves. In the discussions examined here, there is a point at which the definition of satire as 'reprehensio' begins to lose the centre ground, and other potential functions intrude. Satire comes to absorb a string of associations which cannot comfortably be reconciled with a hortatory view. It becomes subversive and feral: at the very least, it is compared to activities in which these properties are evident. Although such ideas are untheorised, they still form an important part of the medieval response to satire. They betray a sense that satire is not inflexibly or automatically remedial. Its ability to make forceful moral pronouncements is undeniable; yet its power to enforce an order coordinated around a series of privileged ideas is accompanied by a marked potential for disruption. The mode contains various energies.

However, it should not be inferred from this that medieval theorists treated satire as a vague or chaotic mass. The exegetic conception of satire does not view the mode as amorphous, or present its range of possibilities as a shapeless tangle of options. On the contrary, satire's potential is fixed into a well-defined framework. This is the next significant detail to note about commentary's engagement with satire. While satire is assigned various possibilities, these are made to operate within certain limits. Satire's energies occupy a strict network of channels, which impresses a definite form on to them, and on to the literature as a whole. The chief feature of this structure is its dualism. During the course of its analysis and definitions, exegesis manages to split satire into two separate strands. One of these is comprised of the more constructive, judgmental features of the mode, while the other contains its more aggressive inclinations. In effect, the scholiasts arrange satire's potential into two clear directions.

This dichotomy is achieved by using two distinct methods to discuss each possibility. In its treatment of each tendency, commentary employs a different style of investigation and summary. On the one hand, when exegesis records satire's ethical content it uses a strictly theoretical vocabulary. The moral capacity of the mode is seen in terms of 'materia' or 'utilitas', or else as part of the 'strynge' of rhetoric that

deals with 'dissolvynge and ful avoidaunce of contrary reasons'.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, satire's tendency to derogate only appears as a series of loose observations. It is noted by means of caution or metaphor, rather than being translated into formal terms. Commentary thus employs a different approach to describe each set of findings. It brings satire's moralistic content into sharp relief, while only hinting at its more scabrous capacities.

What causes this situation to arise is the character of the medieval critical framework itself. As Jane Chance states, a particular set of assumptions informs commentary. Exegesis operates on the basis that a 'cloaked [...] spiritual meaning' lies behind 'the apparent immorality or blasphemy of Greek and Roman myths used by the greatest classical poets'.¹⁴² One of the key convictions of exegesis is the belief that classical poetry has a moral content that can be uncovered by careful analysis. Its own purpose is to draw out and clarify this material. Accordingly, the apparatus of commentary is constructed with this 'spiritual aim in view'.¹⁴³ Its terms and approaches are keyed to identify shades of Christian doctrine in ancient literature. Following the lead of Augustine, the critical model of exegesis aims to seek out 'precepts of morality' among the 'superstitious fancies [...] of heathen learning'.¹⁴⁴

As a result, when this model is applied to satire, its definitions seize on the instructive content, simply because they are intended to isolate such material. Since commentary approaches 'poetry as a specifically ethical discourse, one inseparable from ethics as a philosophical discipline', its terms automatically focus on satire's didactic aspects.¹⁴⁵ Correspondingly, satire's more scornful inclinations can only be presented in some other manner, as they rank among the things that the scholiasts 'ignored, dismissed, or seemed unable to see'.¹⁴⁶ Because they fall outside the terminology of exegesis and its immediate concerns, these powers can only be registered in some

¹⁴¹ 'A Middle English Text on the Seven Liberal Arts', ed. by Linne R. Mooney, *Speculum* 68 (1993), p.1042.

¹⁴² Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography*, 2 vols. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994-5), I: *From Roman North Africa to the school of Chartres* (1994), p.18.

¹⁴³ Leslie G. Whitbread, 'Conrad of Hirsau as Literary Critic', *Speculum* 47 (1972), p.245.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, 'On Christian Doctrine', II.40.Ix, *St Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, trans. by Marcus Dods, ed. by P. Schaff, Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1890), p.554.

¹⁴⁵ Eugene Vance, *Marvelous Signals: poetics and sign theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p.xi.

¹⁴⁶ Allen, *Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages*, p.xi.

other way.

It may thus be said that commentary diverges into two distinct levels when addressing satire. Its definitions propose one set of functions, while its direct examination of classical satire reveals a different range of behaviour. The scholiasts theorise satire as a moralistic form, but discuss it as a comedic one. An effect of this is that their work places a firm boundary between the two directions the mode may follow. Exegesis does not merely conceive satire as a spectrum of various forms, but a literature which houses two distinct tendencies. Since these currents can only be conceived in different sets of terms, there is no likelihood that they can be subsumed into the same end, or treated as the same essential process. By producing two clear sets of statements, one theoretical and the other observational, commentary splits satire into a condemnatory and a deflationary aspect. Its 'theoretical hostility to the moral impact of pagan literature' on the one hand, and its determination to cherry-pick 'auctores' for 'precepts of morality' on the other, work together to impose dualism on the mode.¹⁴⁷

What is more, exegesis does not only distinguish these two tendencies, it also places them in a particular form of relationship. The commentators set these strands in direct competition with one another. Medieval critics demonstrate a clear bias towards satire's ethical direction. Their desire to subordinate poetry to ethics causes them to view exhortation as the optimal form of satire: Joachim du Bellay, for instance, declares that satire must endeavour 'to tax the vices of the age' while being 'removed from ill-speaking'.¹⁴⁸ For the commentators, satire should ideally be didactic. As a consequence of this, the scurrilous tendency is understood as a force which prevents such an outcome from being achieved. It is conceived as an impediment, keeping the moralistic aspect from its rightful dominance. This can be most clearly seen in John of Garland's *Morale Scolarium*. John openly states that satire can only be made respectful by eliminating its more 'spiteful' tendencies, by 'not sowing anger' and

¹⁴⁷ Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: figuring the Aeneid from the twelfth century to Chaucer*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.4.

¹⁴⁸ See Allen, *Ethical Poetics of the Later Middle Ages*, p.104; Joachim du Bellay, *The Defence and Illustration of the French Language*, II.ii, trans by Gladys M. Turquet, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch and others (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp.289-90.

'not mangling specific persons with a spiteful fang, but letting the pen play generally'.¹⁴⁹ A similar position is implied by Henry Watson, who characterises 'doctrynes mordautes' as a 'stone' which blocks access to the 'moral sens' of satire.¹⁵⁰ Satire's derogatory strand becomes a direct obstruction to its didactic processes, a force which opposes its formulations.

The scholiasts therefore understand the two forms as opponents: they are not allies or even neighbours, but must exist as competitors. As a consequence, exegesis creates a central tension within satire. Satire becomes not merely a varied mode, but one subject to an internal contest. It is not only dualistic, but divided into two mutually antagonistic currents. Commentary makes satire into a site at which two opposing tendencies converge. The model of satire it implies is one of rivalry and contestation. As Walter of Chatillon states, satire may 'sit as the prosecutor of criminals and destroy vice', but it is also 'vicious' in itself.¹⁵¹

In summary, what emerges from exegesis is a profoundly unstable notion of satire. The scholastic understanding of satire encompasses two competing ideas of the mode. The strand of comment derived from Isidore, in which satire is defined in comfortably didactic terms, exists alongside an idea of satire as something raucous and corruptive, with the ability to overturn systems of ideals. The framework of exegesis develops this ambivalence into a contest. Its apparatus not only separates the conservative and 'mordant' capacities of the mode but pits them against one another. Commentary's desire to privilege didactic material, and to repress anything which does not serve an instructive purpose, turns satire into the site of an ongoing struggle. Ultimately, commentary creates a version of satire that is torn between two radically opposed intents, seeking to be both hortatory and deflationary. It defines satire as a binary mode, not a univalent process.

¹⁴⁹ 'Ne seminet iram [...] Nullus dente mali lacerabitur in speciali, Immo metro tali ludet stilus in generali': *Morale Scolarium*, 1-4, p.187.

¹⁵⁰ *Stultifera nauis*, ff.5v.

¹⁵¹ 'Accusator criminum iudexque sedebo [...] vitiosus siquidem vitia delebo': VII.5-7, in *Moralische-Satirische Gedichte von Walter von Chatillon*, ed. by Karl Strecker (Heidelberg: Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften, 1929), p.35. See F.J.E Raby, *A History of Secular Latin Poetry in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), II, p.190.

Medieval Theories of Satire and Middle English Texts

The dual model of satire, with its two contrary possibilities of moral castigation and amoral denigration, makes its way directly into Middle English texts. The sense of satiric contest which emerges from exegesis comes to pervade vernacular literature. However, this dualism takes a slightly different form when it reaches English poetry. Although Middle English satire maintains a key connection to the schema outlined by exegesis, it also modifies satire's binarism, forcing it to adopt a slightly different shape. In this literature, the competition between two different methods of attack becomes a contest between two additional discourses. Middle English satire draws on two further types of language to give its statements their immediate form. Since these sets of practices correspond to the two strands of satire identified by exegesis, this borrowing preserves the basic instability created by commentary; but it also serves to enhance and sharpen this division, giving it a definite means of asserting itself. This will be made clear in the present section, which will examine satire's use of these secondary language forms, and assess their functions within the literature.

The first of these ancillary discourses is the medieval sermon. Satire's debt to homily has been frequently observed in criticism. The most extensive study of this link is Gerald Owst's *Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England* (1933). At one stage Owst remarks that vernacular satire represents 'the profoundest and most abiding influence of the English pulpit', and his work does much to verify this point.¹⁵² Although it is an inquiry into the sermon's 'shaping influence' on several 'other genres' of medieval literature, satire's appropriation of sermon material is the core of Owst's study.¹⁵³ Four of his nine chapters analyse the various loans preaching made to English satire, and give an exhaustive account of the techniques and motifs satirists drew from this source. Several later commentators have extended Owst's findings still further, and echoed his assessments. For instance, James Sutherland, Alexander Murray and Alvin Kernan also note that preaching had a direct formative impact on

¹⁵² Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p.213.

¹⁵³ G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: a neglected chapter in the history of English letters and of the English people*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961); Peter Happé, 'A Guide to Criticism of Medieval English Theatre', *Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, ed. by Richard Beadle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.314.

the 'native satiric tradition written in English'.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, J.R. Madicott considers the first English satires as a 'graft' on to 'the stem provided by the sermon'.¹⁵⁵

The second discourse to provide satire with tactics and forms is popular celebration. Again satire's borrowing from festivity has been widely noted by critics. Following the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on 'carnivalised literature' 'influenced [...] by one or another variant of carnivalistic folklore', several critics have traced the presence of festive material in medieval texts.¹⁵⁶ Examples include Derek Brewer's remarks on English fabliaux, essays by Deanna Evans and John Kelly on the 'carnavalesque' in Dunbar and Skelton, and the work of Jon Cook, Carl Lindahl and John Ganim on the 'democratic comedy' of the *Canterbury Tales*.¹⁵⁷ These studies have made clear that revelry equipped medieval English satirists with methods of ridicule, supplying several of the devices used in their compositions. Each of these writers has found that in medieval texts 'the dethroning power of Carnival serves [...] as a weapon to hit and run'.¹⁵⁸

The presence of these discourses in vernacular satire is further attested by satiric texts themselves. Many pieces of Middle English satire advertise their reliance on these two areas of medieval culture. The frameworks of individual poems are often directly taken from sermons and popular festivities. There are several instances, for example,

¹⁵⁴ Alvin B. Kernan, *The Cankered Muse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p.40; Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) p.295; James Sutherland, *English Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp.23-4.

¹⁵⁵ J. R. Madicott, 'Poems of Protest in Early 14th-Century England', in *England in the 14th-Century*, ed. by W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1986), p.142.

¹⁵⁶ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.107. See also Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

¹⁵⁷ Derek Brewer, *Medieval Comic Tales* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1973), p.141; Deanna D. Evans, 'Bakhtin's Literary Carnavalesque and Dunbar's "Fasternis Evin in Hell"', *Studies in Scottish Literature* 26 (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1991), pp. 354-65; Deanna D. Evans, 'Dunbar's Tretis: The Seven Deadly Sins in carnivalesque disguise', *Neophilologus* 73 (1989), pp. 130-41; John C. Kelly, 'A Perfect Feast of Fools and Plenty: Carnival in John Skelton's poem "The Tunning of Elinour Rummung"', *English Studies in Canada* 22 (1996), pp.129-48; Jon Cook, 'Carnival and the *Canterbury Tales*', in *Medieval Literature: criticism, ideology and history*, ed. by David Aers (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p.189; Carl Lindahl, *Earnest Games: folkloric patterns in the Canterbury Tales* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); John M. Ganim, 'Bakhtin, Chaucer, Carnival, Lent', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 2 (1986), pp.59-71; John M. Ganim, *Chaucerian Theatricality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

¹⁵⁸ Roberta Mullini, "'Better be sott Somer than Sage Salamon": carnivalesque features in John Heywood's plays', in *Carnival and Carnavalesque: the fool, the reformer, the wildman, and others in Early Modern Theatre*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler and Wim Husken, *Ludus* 4 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p.39.

of English satire characterising itself as a type of preaching. The clearest instance of this is the 'Lutel Soth Sermun' which, as its assumed title suggests, presents itself as a 'metrical homily'.¹⁵⁹ Despite recounting nothing more edifying than vicious caricatures, its narrator begins by stating 'style sitteþ a-dun/ And ich ou wile tellen/ a lutel sop sermun' (2-4). The poem candidly assumes the form of a sermon in order to voice its attacks. This habit is also found in a number of later pieces. Two notable examples are the 'Song Against the Retinues of the Great' (c.1340) and *On Simonie* (c.1321-7). Both of these pieces also mimic the structures of homily. In particular, each begins by outlining its theme, and emphasises the instance of its 'oration', announcing 'y ryme ant rede o mi rolle', or 'listneth and 3e muwen here'.¹⁶⁰ As John Yunck justly comments, 'even the most irresponsible railers were disposed to assume the mask of the preacher'.¹⁶¹ The authors of these pieces openly draw from preaching, casting their invective in the shape of a homily.

In much the same way, festive misrule also provides a platform for vernacular satire. Numerous pieces present themselves in terms drawn from popular ritual. A case in point is the *Owl and the Nightingale*. This text, which occurs in the same two manuscripts as the 'Lutel Soth Sermun', often seems to model itself on revelry. This can be seen most clearly in the birds' allusions to wrestling-matches. At one stage the Owl boasts that she has outwitted her opponent by stating 'go so hit go, at eche fenge/ þu vallest myd þin owe swenge', while the Nightingale directly compares the exchange to 'twey men [...] wrastlinge,/ & eyþer oþer vaste þringe' (1285-6, 795-6). This analogy has strong festive connotations, as several medieval sources note the importance of wrestling in seasonal play.¹⁶² In Robert Mannyng's attack on 'halyday' rituals in *Handlyng Synne* (1303), 'wrastlynges' head the list of 'somer games [...] of sacrylage', while William fitz Stephen, writing in c.1175, lists 'shooting, sprinting, jumping, wrestling' among games that 'the whole of the youth is exercised in playing during holidays in summer'.¹⁶³ The birds' dispute is equated with an event drawn

¹⁵⁹ Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p.227.

¹⁶⁰ 'Satire on the Retinues of the Great', 1, in *Historical Poems*, pp.27-9; *Of Simonie*, 4, in *Political Songs of England*, pp.323-45.

¹⁶¹ Yunck, *Lineage of Lady Meed*, p.5.

¹⁶² See F. Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan seasonal entertainment and the professional stage*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.36.

¹⁶³ See Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, p.283; ll.8987-92; 'In festis tota aestate juvenes ludentes exercentur arcu, cursu, saltu, lucta, jactu lapidum, amentatis missilibus ultra metam expendendis, parris

from 'the life of the carnival square': the text styles itself as an equivalent of this seasonal pastime.¹⁶⁴ It borrows its outward form from festive play.

A similar stance is evident in later texts. As its title makes plain, festivity supplies the framing device for John Bale's *Pageant of Popes* (1558), a digest of antipapal satire drawn from such sources as Liutprand of Cremona and Bartolomeo Platina.¹⁶⁵ Robert Copland also makes use of festive imagery in the mock-will *Iyl of Brentford's Testament* (c.1530).¹⁶⁶ In his 'Proface' Copland presents the text as a 'feast' for a 'company', and demands that normal standards of 'curtesy' be suspended while it is read. He states: 'Take no thought good sir how I shall be fild/ But come you neer & take parte of our swilling/ Leue your curtesy I pray you'.¹⁶⁷ Each of these texts likens its immediate structure to some aspect of festivity. Each portrays its form as a metaphoric version of popular ritual. For the authors of such pieces, revelry is an important resource in the performance of satire. All turn to the 'festive values of transgression' when articulating their work, phrasing their satire in the idioms of misrule.¹⁶⁸

It is evident that these two forms of language provide an important stock of images and styles for vernacular satirists. When satire is composed in English, it repeatedly turns to homily and festive misrule for its forms of expression. Some texts even draw from both simultaneously. John Lydgate's version of the *Dance of Death* (c.1426), for instance, shows that one source did not necessarily preclude the other. While the poem takes the form of a highly 'carnavalesque' dance, it is presided over by a priest-like 'auctor' who introduces the text by pointing out its 'doctryne ful notable/ ʒowre

duellionum': William fitz Stephen, 'Descriptio noblissimae civitatis Londoniae', in *Elenchus Fontium Historiae Urbanae*, ed. by C. Van De Kieft and G. Van Herwijnen, 3 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967-92), II: *Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Susan Reynolds, Wietse de Boer and Gearoid Mac Niocaill (1988), p.82.

¹⁶⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.123.

¹⁶⁵ John Bale, *The pageant of popes contayninge the lyues of all the bishops of Rome, from the beginninge of them to the yeare of Grace 1555*. (London: Thomas Marshe, 1574) (STC 1304).

¹⁶⁶ On the traditions of the mock-will, see Lorna Hutson, *Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.126-8.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Copland, 'Iyl of braintfords testament', 5-7, in *Robert Copland: Poems*, ed. by Mary Carpenter Erler (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p.177.

¹⁶⁸ Peter C. Herman, 'Leaky Ladies and Droopy Dames: the grotesque realism of Skelton's *The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng*', in *Rethinking the Henrician Era: essays on early Tudor texts and contexts*, ed. by Peter C. Herman (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p.147.

life to lede whiche that ys mortal'.¹⁶⁹ As Owst and Bakhtin's followers assert, Middle English satire owes a clear debt to preaching and revelry. These two discourses are an integral part of the production of satire in English.

However, it is important to note that this debt does not place vernacular satire outside the satiric framework sketched out in exegesis. While festive and homiletic material are key sources for Middle English satire, they do not displace the fundamental notion of satire derived from commentary. These two sets of practices are not alternatives to exegesis, but extensions of its overall conception of satire. When vernacular satire draws on these discourses, it does not abandon the 'influence of critical theory, emanating from medieval commentary'.¹⁷⁰ The texts remain firmly within the parameters of that theory, even as they turn to revelry and the sermon to articulate their attacks.

This is because these auxiliary discourses are already part of the scholiasts' conception of satire. Their presence in commentary is often overlooked. S.T. Knight, for instance, regards medieval exegesis of satire as entirely abstract, referring to no practicable discourses and providing merely a 'basis of auctoritee'.¹⁷¹ Along similar lines, John Norton-Smith claims that commentary on satire is 'conspicuously lacking' in 'detailed technical advice', again containing no reference to concrete forms of language.¹⁷² But the fact remains that when scholiasts engage with classical satire, they regularly cite the practices of misrule and homily. Their observations are often clarified with references to sermons and festivities. Satire is held to be analogous to these discourses: on occasion it is even defined as an ancient equivalent of these medieval practices. Owing to this, the appropriation of material by English poets does not represent a move away from commentary. Commentary is behind such an appropriation, directing its readers towards these two discourses. The connections to revelry and preaching are present in exegesis before they are pursued by English satirists.

¹⁶⁹ Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: ritual and representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), pp.156-7; John Lydgate, *The Dance of Death*, ed. by Florence Warren, EETS o.s. 181 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p.1.

¹⁷⁰ Miller, 'Medieval Literary Theory of Satire', p.207.

¹⁷¹ S.T. Knight, 'Satire in *Piers Plowman*', in *Piers Plowman: critical approaches*, ed. by S.S. Hussey (London: Methuen and Co., 1969), p.281.

¹⁷² Norton-Smith, *William Langland*, p.47.

These associations are evident in a number of texts. One of the clearest cases is the *accessus* of the *Glosae ad Iuvenalem*. The *accessus* draws a particularly strong link between satire and festivity, especially when hinting at the more riotous and scabrous aspects of satire. Its comparison of satire to swearing-matches is a case in point. In this passage, the *accessus* emphasises that the ‘outbursts of abuse’ which ‘anticipate’ satire take place among peasants, during their ‘celebrating and drinking, feasting for the greater part of the day’.¹⁷³ The allusions to festivity are unmistakable here. Satire is made comparable to an explicitly popular ritual, a seasonal game which ‘befits the peasantry’. In fact, it is possible that the *accessus* is actually hinting at the festive culture of the Middle Ages in this passage. The swearing-match resembles a documented medieval custom. One fourteenth-century sermon describes a contemporary ‘somer game’ which takes a similar form: ‘whoever knew how to torment and scorn him best was held to play the best [...] he who could make them drink and eat was well pleased’.¹⁷⁴ Further examples of these ‘folk flytings’ and ‘verbal duels’ are given by James Andreas and Carl Lindahl.¹⁷⁵ At any rate, satire is firmly connected with festivity by the *accessus*. The mode is likened to ritual ‘profanation’ of the kind practised in the Middle Ages.¹⁷⁶

The *accessus* is not alone in connecting satire’s scurrilous potential with festivity. The satyr etymon also serves as a conduit between satire and seasonal games. In fact, the satyr had powerful festive associations even before the scholiasts linked it with satire. In one of the exegetes’ favourite sources, the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, the ‘rude satyrs’ are specifically placed among ‘festivals, drunken and reckless’.¹⁷⁷ Likewise Aristotle links satyrs to Dionysian celebration, and the singing of ‘phallic songs’.¹⁷⁸ Overtones of revelry are innate to the satyr figure. In their own work on satire,

¹⁷³ Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, p.91.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted and translated in Siegfried Wenzel, ‘Somer Game and Sermon References to a Corpus Christi Play’, *Modern Philology* 86 (1989), p.279. See also the discussion in Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game: English festive culture in the medieval and Early Modern period* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), pp.72-4.

¹⁷⁵ James R. Andreas, ‘The Rhetoric of Chaucerian Comedy: the Aristotelian legacy’, *The Comparatist* 8 (1984), pp.56-66; Carl Lindahl, ‘Chaucer and the Shape of Performance’, in *Critical Essays on Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by Thomas C. Stillinger (New York: G. K. Hall and Co., 1998), p.22.

¹⁷⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p.123.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Spectator functusque sacris et potus et exlex’: Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 224.

¹⁷⁸ *The Poetics of Aristotle*, 1449a9, trans. and ed. by S.H. Butcher (London: Macmillan, 1902), p.19. See Dana F. Sutton, *The Greek Satyr Play* (Meisenheim: Verlag Anton Hain, 1980).

medieval commentators often draw out these connotations explicitly. For example, Isidore presents the creature as a licensed clown or buffoon. His satyrs are not only 'drunken', but are also 'allowed to speak with impunity', their riotous speech being 'permitted'. Their mockery is defined as a release from normal obligations or conditions, of the kind that characterises festivity. The references to satyrs 'dancing' in the works of Guido da Pisa and John of Garland show that festive links survive in later work. Dance was widely associated with disorderly celebration, a fact which is evident from John Mirk's stark warning to parishioners: 'hawkyng, huntyng, and dawnsyng./ Thow moste forgo for any thyng'.¹⁷⁹ As John Fyler comments, the scholiasts seem to promote a 'connection with Saturnalian license' in their work on satire.¹⁸⁰

A connection between satire and homily is no less persistent, particularly when the instructive functions of the mode are being recorded by scholiasts. This association is perhaps most apparent in John Ridevall's commentary on Augustine. As Beryl Smalley remarks, Ridevall directly identifies satire with 'preaching', presenting the satirists as 'spiritual ancestors' of the Christian minister: 'they ridiculed Roman society just as he might ridicule his contemporaries in his preaching'.¹⁸¹ The same identification occurs in a collection of *accessus* compiled at Tegernsee Abbey in c.1150. This directly compares the 'discourse' of satire to 'the preaching of bishops', defining both as types of 'sermo'.¹⁸² For this text and for Ridevall, the sermon and satire are virtually interchangeable forms. They are not merely comparable, but equivalent in their general purpose. Other works also link satire with preaching. The analogy is particularly strong in discussions of a further etymology, the 'lanx satura' or 'plate of diverse crops or first-grown fruits offered by the pagans before their temples'.¹⁸³ Accounts of the *lanx*, derived primarily from Diomedes and Macrobius, are often used by commentators to bind satire to the office of priest.¹⁸⁴ The *Dialogus*

¹⁷⁹ John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. by E. Peacock, EETS o.s. 31 (London: Trübner and Co. 1868), p.2; ll.39-42.

¹⁸⁰ John Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 4.

¹⁸¹ Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity*, p.128.

¹⁸² Quoted in *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100– c. 1375*, trans. and ed. by A.J. Minnis, David Wallace and A.B. Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p.34.

¹⁸³ See Diomedes, *Ars Grammatica*, pp.485-6; 'Seu ab illa lance quae diversis frugum vel pomorum generibus ad templa gentilium solebat deferri': Isidori, *Etymologiae*, VIII, viii: 8, I, p.192.

¹⁸⁴ See Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*, trans. by Percival Vaughan Davies (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp.206-7.

of Conrad of Hirsau gives an especially elaborate example of this. Conrad connects satire with this ‘dish filled with fruit or other types of things’ simply because of its treatment by the temple officials. He claims that the priest presiding over the ‘large dish’ was free to take from it what he desired, in the same way that satire can ‘freely reprehend all manner of vices, and pick out and deride bad habits’.¹⁸⁵ For Conrad, the human agent responsible for creating the precursor of satire is a priest. Satire resembles the *lanx satura* because it can freely select its material, like the priest who oversees the *lanx*. In effect, the priest is the first author of satire. He is the agent who performs this early version of the literary mode. Like Ridevall, Conrad believes that satire resembles the actions of a preacher.

It is clear from these allusions that the links identified by Owst and the followers of Bakhtin are already present in exegesis. The assumption that satire shares common structures with merrymaking and the duties of the clergy is a recurrent feature of the medieval theory of satire. Parallels between satire and the activities of priests and celebrants are regularly established by scholiasts, who often attach satire to a celebratory context and equate the satirist, at least in his early form, with the figure of the priest.

The presence of these ideas in medieval commentary is highly suggestive. It allows the link between the two discourses and Middle English satire to be brought into sharper focus. Taking these findings into consideration, it seems likely that satire used homiletic or festive material in response to commentary. The poets who drew their understanding of satire from the scholia may well have been steered towards festivity and preaching by exegesis, and its conviction that the two discourses are comparable to satire. The links that Owst and the Bakhtinian critics recognise might well be the responsibility of medieval theorists, who routinely suggest that the sermon and festivity are commensurate with satire. As a consequence of this, it cannot be said that Middle English satire is deserting exegesis and its theories by drawing on festive and hieratic material. Although its immediate forms may be derived from these two supplementary discourses, Middle English satire is still rooted in the conception of

¹⁸⁵ ‘Satiricum, quod vitia cuncta reprehendit [...] mores denudatur et deridentur, vel a satyra id est scutella magna que diversis plena frugibus vel aliis speciebus diis offerebatur’: Conradus Hirsaugiensis, *Dialogus Super Auctores*, p.76. See also pp.119-20.

satire taken from medieval commentary. It is still based in the ambivalent notion of satire produced by the scholiasts. Middle English poetry remains underpinned by a binary view of the mode, an inability to decide whether it provides ‘readily accessible [...] moral lessons’, or is more scurrilous and derisive in nature.¹⁸⁶ Its borrowings from sermons and festivity are really extensions of the dual model of satire outlined by commentators.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that these discourses have no influence of their own on the development of vernacular satire. Homily and festivity do not merely serve to bridge the gap between the scholiasts and the satirists, passively carrying forward the exegetes’ ideas. The two sets of practices also exert a profound effect of their own on the structure of satire. Each brings its own concerns to bear on the mode, directing it to assume a particular set of forms. Most importantly, this influence directly touches on satire’s internal division. Between them the two discourses magnify the latent frictions within satire, intensifying the sense of antagonism within the mode. The different tactics they pass on to satire not only reflect the dualism of exegesis, but entrench it even further, batten further rivalries on to it.

If the sermon is considered, for instance, it becomes immediately apparent that the forms of attack it contains are quite distinct from those of festivity. This can be seen particularly clearly in its tendency to schematise its material. It has often been pointed out that the late medieval homily is characterised by its use of systems and networks of categories. C.H. Lawrence describes its ‘peculiar rhetoric’ as consisting of ‘systematic analysis’, ‘definitions and marshalling’, and an overall dedication to ‘scholastic discipline’.¹⁸⁷ Richard Newhauser also notes that sermon discourse is above all ‘concentrated, complex, and systematic’, while D.L. D’Avray comments on its ‘passion for dividing and subdividing’.¹⁸⁸ This habit is especially noticeable in a treatise composed by John Gaytryge in 1357.¹⁸⁹ In the text, based on an earlier

¹⁸⁶ Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and ideas of learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.80.

¹⁸⁷ C.H. Lawrence, *The Friars: the impact of the early mendicant movement on Western society* (London: Longman, 1994), pp.120-1.

¹⁸⁸ Richard Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in the Latin and the Vernacular* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), p.195; D.L. D’Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: sermons diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), p.176.

¹⁸⁹ David Lawton, ‘Gaytryge’s Sermon, *Dictamen*, and Middle English Alliterative Verse’, *Modern Philology* 76 (1979), pp.329-43.

catechism by Archbishop Thoresby, Gaytryge outlines the ‘essential matters’ that secular clerics must relay to their congregations.¹⁹⁰ Gaytryge presents these articles as little more than a series of taxonomies: he cites such lists as ‘þe ten commandentes þat Gode hase gyfen vs’, ‘þe seuen vertus þat ilke man sall vse’, ‘þe Seuen dedly Synnes þat ilke man sall refuse’, and ‘þe fourtene poyntes þat falles to þe trowthe’. Furthermore, Gaytryge stresses that this material is interconnected. For him, it combines to form a single structure: he stipulates that these categories have a single source in ‘þe law and þe lare þat langes till Haly Kirke’, and commonly serve to help ‘creatours [...] to knawe God Almyghtyn, and, thorowe þaire knowynge, lufe Hym and serue Hym’.¹⁹¹ The sets of ‘poyntes’ that preachers should disseminate are part of one grand complex. Much as D’Avray, Lawrence and Newhauser state, the late-medieval sermon is concerned with systemisation. The discourse sees itself as based in a network of interrelated and interdependent terms.

This schematic outlook informs the tactics which the sermon transmitted to satire. When the sermon criticises an object, it invariably utilises a system of definitions. It generally strives to allocate its object a position in a series of classifications. The best illustration of this is a device commonly known as the ‘exemplum’, ‘fabula’ or ‘narracion’.¹⁹² As G.R. Owst’s work makes clear, the exemplum was often imitated by vernacular satirists. In fact much of his study consists of quoting exempla from handbooks and preaching manuals to prove that ‘the very phrases of satire’ owe their substance to this technique.¹⁹³ Even without Owst’s fastidious observations, there can be little doubt that the exemplum did provide an important model for vernacular satire. Its influence can be most immediately perceived in early sixteenth-century jest-books, which often reproduce exempla directly.¹⁹⁴ It also manifests itself in other texts: for instance, traditional exempla hover behind the portraits of the Deadly Sins

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Goering, ‘The Thirteenth-Century English Parish’, in *Educating People of Faith: exploring the history of Jewish and Christian religious communities*, ed. by John Van Engen (Cambridge: William Eerdmans, 2004), p.212.

¹⁹¹ John Gaytryge, ‘Sermon’, in *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, ed. by George G. Perry, EETS o.s. 15 (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p.2.

¹⁹² For an overview of critical work on the exemplum, see R.E. Kaske, Arthur Groos and Michael W. Twomey, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: a guide to interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp.88-90.

¹⁹³ Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p.224.

¹⁹⁴ See Stanley J. Kahrl, ‘The Medieval Origins of the Sixteenth-century English Jest-books’, *Studies in the Renaissance* 13 (1966), pp.166-83; Thomas Frederick Crane, *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories* (London: David Nutt, 1890), pp.158, 226, 230.

in *Piers Plowman*.¹⁹⁵ The exemplum is a key mechanism in vernacular satire, and a key link between the mode and sermon literature.

In terms of its general form, the exemplum typically took the form of a brief 'historical' narrative, which was embedded into a sermon to 'illustrate a proposition or an argument, usually a moral one'.¹⁹⁶ Through the use of an exemplum, the sermon purported to give an 'actual' case of a general truth, showing how a particular category of behaviour might manifest itself in practice. For instance, in Arnulf of Liege's *Alphabetum Narracionum* (c.1307) the idea that 'gluttony incites innocents to commit sins of the flesh' is dramatised by the story of a monk who experiences 'a pollution of his sede' after stealing and devouring a 'fruture'. In a similar manner, Arnulf also shows how 'anger' emerges in the actions of 'a rich mans doghter', or how 'jealousy' is instantiated by 'ij littel maydens'.¹⁹⁷ The device is designed to spell out how a general moral concept plays out in material reality. In H. Marshall Leicester's phrase, it serves to make 'the lives of actual persons prove that the general rule is true'.¹⁹⁸

As a mechanism, the exemplum is rooted in the sermon's complex pattern of definitions and groupings. As H.L. Spencer comments, it cannot really be extracted from this context, since it works to support its 'larger arguments'.¹⁹⁹ In fact, the main purpose of the exemplum is to enforce this system of classifications. It aims to draw phenomena into the sermon's network of headings. Since the exemplum operates by showing the larger concepts that underlie specific occurrences or actions, it has a squarely interpretive function. It does not just depict concepts in concrete terms, but seeks to translate concrete acts into conceptual form. Its purpose is not only to show that a particular idea is brought to light by a particular episode, but also to show how that episode can be understood in moral terms. As such, it can be termed a diagnostic

¹⁹⁵ See especially *The World of Piers Plowman*, ed. by Edward H. Peters and Jeanne Krochalis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), pp.111-3, 135-8.

¹⁹⁶ Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: studies in the reconstruction of the past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.301; Peter Dunn, *Spanish Picaresque Fiction: a new literary history* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.162.

¹⁹⁷ 'Gula aliquando in peccatum carnis innocentes inducit': *Alphabet of Tales: an English fifteenth-century translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum*, ed. by Mary Macleod Banks, EETS o.s. 126, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1904-5), I (1904), pp.238, 277, 272.

¹⁹⁸ H. Marshall Leicester Jr., *The Disenchanted Self: the subject in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1990), p.117.

¹⁹⁹ H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.81.

method. It aims to identify the particular abstractions that underlie specific events and figures. In short, it serves to categorise the incidents it relates.

When this technique is used for purposes of attack, it works by assigning the object a category with a negative value. It translates its specific figure into a concept that already carries a strong negative valence. A clear instance of this is a story from one of Owst's favourite sources, the fifteenth-century devotional manual *Jacob's Well*. This deals with a man whose funeral witnessed a strange event: while prayers were being recited for his soul, 'þe crucifix on þe bere loosyd his handys fro þe crosse, and stoppyd his eeres wyth his handys'.²⁰⁰ This event is explained in spiritual terms. The occurrence becomes a specimen of 'slewthe': the man was 'sluggy in goddys seruyse', seldom attending church, and so God refused to hear prayers for him, just as he did not hear prayers to God. This attack is in essence an act of interpretation. During the course of the exemplum, the specific dead man comes to be pinned to a general point within a network of definitions. Since this possesses a firmly negative value, it allows him to be securely condemned. The exemplum attacks its object by identifying it with a category predefined as inferior. This technique performs censure or degradation by drawing on a predetermined system of meanings, and fixing its object to a grouping that is already marked as defective.

However, despite its apparent simplicity, this process also carries other, less explicit functions. The ultimate point of this exercise is not merely to derogate. There is also a clear constructive aspect at work here. Because the sermon is working with a system of interconnected ideas, in which each component only has value relative to all others, any reference to a negative definition must necessarily signal towards some positive ideal. Since negativity only has meaning as the inverse of positivity, every attack must gesture towards a more elevated concept. The very act of condemning an object as guilty of a particular sin serves to endorse the opposed virtue, one of 'þe zeue uirtues þet byþ ayens þe zeue dyadliche zennes', as Michel of Northgate states.²⁰¹ In effect, this form of censure lowers the object only to raise the ideal connected to it. It is a productive form of attack, which ultimately serves to cement a

²⁰⁰ *Jacob's Well, an Englisht treatise on the cleansing of man's conscience*, ed. by Arthur Brandeis, EETS o.s. 115, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1900), I, pp.110-1.

²⁰¹ Dan Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, ed. by Richard Morris, rev. ed. by Pamela Gradon, EETS o.s. 23 (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.98.

particular form of behaviour as ideal. The sermon only attacks in order to correct, to reinforce a specific model of activity.

Furthermore, another form of promotion also takes place alongside this. The system which produces these concepts is also validated by this type of condemnation. By transplanting a concrete figure into its system, the exemplum has effectively demonstrated that existence is reflected in these concepts. It has 'proven' that its account is authoritative, that it describes reality fully and adequately. As Larry Scanlon writes, the exemplum always serves 'to establish' its own 'ideological authority', to show that its implicit categories do give a true account of reality.²⁰² In short, each attack in sermon literature is constructive. It serves to bolster something else, whether it is a positive model or a full system of definitions.

The type of derogation found in sermon literature thus works by integration. The forms that it offers satirical poetry are highly schematic, founded on a basic assumption that all phenomena can be assigned value in a single hierarchy of groupings. Homily presents a productive methodology, which only attacks in order to support a set of categories, and can only function with such a set at hand. Accordingly, by drawing on homiletic discourse, satire inherits a group of tactics which seek to uphold a particular set of truths and standards. It makes use of strategies which fundamentally aim to contain reality in one cohesive order. Satire is fixing itself to a set of positive criteria and models by drawing on the exemplum and related strategies, tying itself 'to a system [...] and an accepted and enduring system too'.²⁰³

In terms of exegesis on satire, the sermon supplies a definite means of realising one of the two tendencies located within the mode. The conception of satire as a form that portrays 'vices or defects' to 'give rise to [...] indirection' can be put into action by the techniques of the sermon, with its movement 'between historical reality and the eschatological', and its constant gesturing towards 'vertus þat ilke man sall vse'.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority and Power: the medieval exemplum and the Chaucerian tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.58.

²⁰³ Peter, *Complaint and Satire*, p.10.

²⁰⁴ Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), p.80; Gaytryge, 'Sermon', p.2.

The sermon allows this strand of satire to be articulated. However, it also brings with it a set of forms that are not present in commentary. It brings a schematic outlook into satire, a desire to accommodate all phenomena into a single set of categories. The sermon provides the means by which satiric judgment can be performed, but also impresses its own 'complex and systematic' shape on to it.²⁰⁵ The sermon offers more than a way of carrying out one of satire's two tendencies: it also dictates part of the basic structure of the mode.

It is at this point that homily and festivity begin to build on the divisions suggested by commentary, and to render them more acute. The systematic nature of sermon literature leads to direct confrontation with festivity. The types of mockery found in this second discourse resist the heavily structuralised forms displayed by homily. While the sermon's attacks enforce a single set of ideals, revelry behaves in a strikingly different manner. In fact several of its key mechanisms display an open hostility to the orders and systems of codification that are favoured by homily. At several points, festive ridicule is concerned with undermining and overturning such figurations.

This emerges most clearly from James Scott's study of inversion rituals.²⁰⁶ Scott emphasises that medieval festivity was above all founded in multiplicity. His work follows Mervyn James and Charles Phythian-Adams in seeing medieval 'ceremony' as a display of the 'social differentiation' within a community.²⁰⁷ Like these writers, he treats ritual as an essentially communal practice, designed to draw together disparate groups of participants in a single activity: he agrees that 'ceremonial occasions often provided at least the opportunities for bringing together in celebratory circumstances those who might be opposed or separated in their separate spheres'.²⁰⁸ However, Scott breaks with these earlier scholars in arguing that such commonality denies festivity any single meaning. He concludes that because several agencies

²⁰⁵ Newhauser, *Treatise on Vices and Virtues*, p.195.

²⁰⁶ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: hidden transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

²⁰⁷ Mervyn James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town', *Past and Present* 98 (1983), p.28.

²⁰⁸ Charles Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: the communal year at Coventry, 1450-1550', in *The Medieval Town: a reader in English urban history*, ed. by Richard Holt and Gervase Rosser (Harlow: Longman, 1990), p.246.

collaborate on merrymaking, it must be filled with several outlooks, values and desiderata. The fact that it involves numerous social groups must invest it with numerous interests and sets of ideas. Scott writes: 'carnival is infused with the signs, symbols and meanings brought to it, by its least advantaged participants as well'.²⁰⁹ For Scott, this entails that festivity must carry some element of competition. It must always be a locus of tension and rivalry between its various participants. The emphasis on 'differentiation' invites fierce negotiation, as the meanings transmitted to ritual will inevitably conflict with each other. Scott suggests that 'it makes [...] sense to see carnival as the ritual site of various forms of social conflict and symbolic manipulation, none of which can be said, prima facie, to prevail'.²¹⁰ Festivity is thus conceived as a vast arena in which various social forces compete, 'a site of actual and symbolic struggle'.²¹¹

Regarding festivity in this manner already begins to suggest some level of conflict with homily. Rather than seeking to reinforce a single set of a categories, or a single interpretation of reality, Scott's notion of festivity allows several outlooks to come into play at once. It calls attention to the existence of numerous positions and sets of interests, rather than placing one in a position of absolute precedence. The practices of festivity are already aligned against those of the sermon. Their focus is on irreconcilable plurality, not on the accommodation of all data into a single schema. But what is most important here is the presence of this multiplicity in satire. Scott's 'conflict' informs the devices that the medieval satirists drew from misrule. Conflict gives these devices their shape, and underpins the type of mockery that they are able to perform. One example of this is the election of mock-rulers at Midsummer and Yuletide. These parodic 'lords' or 'bishops' who 'presided over [...] seasonal release and unreason' are directly connected with English satire.²¹² Their pronouncements and activities serve as models for a number of vernacular texts.²¹³ For instance, an

²⁰⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.181.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.178.

²¹¹ Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), p.14.

²¹² Jan Walsh Holkenson, *The Idea of Comedy: history, theory, critique* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), p.151.

²¹³ On the discourse associated with these figures, see Malcolm H. Jones, 'The parodic sermon in medieval and Early Modern England', *Medium Aevum* 66 (1997), pp.94-114; Malcolm H. Jones, 'Proclaiming and prognosticating: World Upside Down Predicted – Official', *Medieval English Theatre* 21 (1999), pp.87-102.

anti-Lollard piece of c.1436, which Frederick Furnivall terms a 'satirical proclamation', uses the mock-king as its mouthpiece: it opens with the extravagant claim 'wot ye þat I am kyng of alle kynges, Lord of alle lordes, Souden of alle Surry, Emperour of Babilon, Steward of Helle, Porter of Paradise', before moving on to a diatribe against heresy.²¹⁴ This usage is unsurprising, since ridicule was an integral part of the ritual. According to Thomas More, the 'abbot of misrule in a christemas game' would traditionally be accompanied by one or more 'freres', who would 'make a mowynge sermon [...] and precheth ribauldrye'.²¹⁵ In 1443 a procession headed by the 'kyng of Cristmesse' was apparently used to deride the Earl of Suffolk.²¹⁶ The mock-rulers are a key link between satire and revelry: they both produce satire and are reproduced by it.

The election of mock-rulers also encapsulates Scott's notion of festivity. The ritual carries traces of several different intentions. For instance, a number of commentators have noted that the figure is at least partly authoritarian. Roger Sales and Umberto Eco argue that mock-rulers were the creation of 'ruling elites', designed to ensure that festive subversion remained within accepted limits. For these critics, the fact that the 'Kings and Queens' supervise revelry, and even replicate the forms of conventional authority, means that they guarantee 'the law' remains 'overwhelmingly present' during festivity.²¹⁷ There is certainly some truth to these claims. Mock-rulers were often directly sponsored by actual rulers: 'Bean Kings' and 'Abbots of Unreason' are documented at the courts of Edward II, Edward III, Henry VII and James IV, as well as in the households of 'the lord mayor of London and the sheriffs'.²¹⁸ The mock-ruler does at least partly represent the view of the dominant class: some of its content is evidently tailored to suit the needs of this class, since it proves acceptable to it.

²¹⁴ *Political, religious, and love poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 15 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1903), p.12.

²¹⁵ Sir Thomas More, *The Workes* (London: Iohn Cawood, Iohn Waly and Richard Tottell, 1557), p.358 (STC 18076).

²¹⁶ See Philippa Maddern, *Violence and Social Order: East Anglia 1422-1442* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp.174-98; Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: festive misrule in medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp.63-78.

²¹⁷ Roger Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: pastoral and politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p.169; Umberto Eco, 'Frames of Comic "Freedom"', in *Carnival!*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok and Marcia E. Erikson (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), p.6.

²¹⁸ Ronald Hutton, *Stations of the Sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.105, 249; John Stow, *A Svrvey of London. Contayning the Originiall, Antiquity, Increase, Moderne estate, and description of that Citie [...] continued, corrected and much enlarged* (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1618), p.149 (STC 23343).

However, the figure also contains other meanings, originating from other social groups. This is clear from Philip Stubbes' attack on the Lords of Misrule. Stubbes lists the various 'lordly' symbols that the figure lays claim to, including 'liveries', 'badges or cognizances', and 'certain papers', but points out that the Lord himself always retains some connection to a lower class. For Stubbes the 'graund captaine' is quite visibly a 'wilde heade [...] of the Parish' in disguise: 'to waite upon his lordly majesty [...] this king annoynted chooseth forth twentie, fourty, threescore, or an hundred lustie guttes, like to himself'. As this makes plain, the mock-ruler brings together two different areas of culture, fixing authoritative 'badges' on to a 'lurdane'. Moreover, the point seems to be to keep these areas distinct, even emphasising their discrepancy for comic effect. The Lord's 'innobling' is primarily designed to amuse: 'the foolish people they looke, they stare, they laugh, they fleere'.²¹⁹ The mock-king is, in Peter Burke's phrase, 'a palimpsest': it is a compromise, a balance achieved between various subcultures.²²⁰ As Scott's work makes clear, this polysemy stems from the ceremony's basis in 'social conflict', the fact that it emerges from a site of negotiation between different groups in society.

This state of affairs gives form to the festive 'mowynge' performed by mock-rulers. The mockery that the Lord of Misrule stages is a result of his composite nature, the fact that he is a collage of several different codes and outlooks. This can be witnessed in the even-handedness of his 'ribauldrye'. One of the figure's most important characteristics is that his attack is indiscriminate. Most sources that refer to his raillery indicate that it is far-reaching. The mock-ruler tends to deride every position that he cites. For example, in the 'satirical proclamation' printed by Furnivall, the narrator attacks both commoners for 'certeyn poyntes of lollerdy', and ridicules the pretensions of 'kynges crowned'. His caricature of royalty is particularly scabrous, as he lists a series of empty and impossibly grand titles: 'I am floure of alle þe worle: I may wel sai I haue þat cristen men prayn fore'.²²¹ The speaker's attacks move in several directions at once, treating each group mentioned as fair game for derision. Stubbes likewise notes that the Lord of Misrule 'flouts' his own social group as

²¹⁹ Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses in England in Shakspeare's Youth*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, 2 vols. (London: N. Trübner and Co., 1882), I, pp.147-8.

²²⁰ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), p.191.

²²¹ *Political, religious and love poems*, pp.12-3.

readily as any real 'lordly majesty': 'who will not show himself buxome to them and give them money, they shall be mocked [...] or otherwise most horribly abused'.²²² It seems that the mock-ruler uses a type of 'abuse' that is directed against each position equally. It does not side with any of its constituent codes, or denounce one in order to endorse the other, but attacks all at once. It evidently does not support any code in itself.

Another significant point is that the mock-ruler focuses his attacks on the idealistic aspects of its targets. It is less concerned with the conduct of its objects than with the symbols that each uses to represent itself. In each variation of the ritual, there is a concerted effort to debase the signs and modes of expression of the target. Ecclesiastic travesties such as the 'Fool Precentor' directly assault the outward forms of the priesthood, either ending Mass by 'braying three times', or burning 'old shoes [...] on the altar in place of incense'.²²³ More's Yuletide friars also degrade the symbols of their assumed office: they are 'pricked up in blankettes' instead of habits, and stand 'vppon a stole' to deliver their 'ribauldrye'.²²⁴ The same pattern is apparent in a 1601 account of a mock-preacher: this figure 'did represent the person of a Minister' by 'standing in a pulpitt fixed to the maypole' and issuing the benediction 'the Marcie of Musterd Seed and the blessing of Bullbeefe and the Peace of Potte-lucke be with you all. Amen'.²²⁵ The secular equivalents of these figures also ridicule the means by which actual 'lords' express their identities. Lords of Misrule violently burlesque the characteristic habits of the nobility: they hold hunts for cats, jousts on hobby-horses, and mock-duels of the kind that killed a reveller at Lincoln's Inn in 1524.²²⁶ The chief concern of the mock-ruler is the cultural forms that his objects employ. This shows a hostility towards the ideals that those objects represent. By attacking the symbols and codes of his object, he is also attacking the ways in which their ideals assert themselves, and the markers used to legitimise them. He is ridiculing the means by which positions are formulated, authorised and rendered distinct. In short, the mock-ruler targets the more conceptual side of his object. When

²²² Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses*, I, p.148.

²²³ John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), p.71.

²²⁴ More, *Workes*, p.358.

²²⁵ Quoted in N.J. O' Conor, *Godes Peace and the Queenes: Vicissitudes of a House 1539-1615* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp.119-20.

²²⁶ Hutton, *Stations of the Sun*, pp.105-9; *The Oxford History of the Laws of England*, ed. by John Baker, 12 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003-4), VI: 1483-1558 (2003), p.462.

this is coupled with the fact that he does not hold an idealised position of his own, it seems that the Lord occupies a neutral site in which all systems of ideals are equally questionable.

This free-ranging and negatory stance is a logical extension of festivity's concern with 'social conflict'. The very fact that misrule deals with several groups steers it towards irreverence, since it is compelled to view each as limited. In the state of competition it creates, each position becomes one of several contestants. This in turn places strict limits on each of the groups, and on the claims and interests that they declare. The outlook of each party becomes surrounded by territory into which it does not extend. Because it is enveloped by other rival groups, equipped with their own agency and consciousness, its understanding can only be considered a small fragment within a larger mass. Each of the contending groups in festivity's 'struggle' serves to mark the limits of its fellow participants. As a result of this, none of these viewpoints and none of the values that they pronounce can be treated as universal or indisputable. None can be considered intrinsically authoritative, or the source of ideals that are undeniably valid. On the contrary, all are equally restricted, being surrounded by material which does not fall within their parameters.

Drawing these positions into a state of open contest severely reduces them. Their outlooks and value-systems may not claim to represent disinterested truth, or to give a full account of the way things are. Instead they become narrow in scope, even negligible or trivial, and are forced to fight for precedence among a number of rival positions. In short, festivity is automatically inclined to reduce and devalue any position. Its emphasis on 'differentiation' involves treating all claims and outlooks as contingent and finite. In the words of Northrop Frye, festivity comes to assert 'that experience is bigger than any set of beliefs about it'.²²⁷ Being a site which contains several sets of conflicting values, it can regard all such values with scepticism.

When satire draws on conventions such as the mock-ruler, it inherits the same powers. It also comes to use multiplicity as a means of undercutting and devaluing the ideals associated with its objects. Satire may also erode its target's prestige by

²²⁷ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.229.

placing it in a context which exceeds it, thereby rendering its claims limited and negligible. This tactic can in fact be seen in a number of English texts. *Cokaygne* and 'Consistory Courts', for example, both assert that sets of ideals or values are limited, specifically by highlighting material that they do not account for. In effect, the mock-ruler, along with the other techniques that festivity supplies to satire, offers a means of realising the more disruptive tendency that exegesis detects in satire. What in exegesis is only a vague sense of unease, a suspicion that satire can undermine ideals as well as enforce them, becomes through the influence of festivity a definite set of methods. By imitating festivity's miscellany, the more 'mordaunte' and 'crazed' aspects of satire may be achieved. The 'boisterous, sometimes parodic' techniques of revelry provide a means for this strand to take shape.²²⁸

Furthermore, borrowing these forms from festivity also allows the conflict of exegesis to be expressed in vernacular satire. Its characteristic lines of attack are forcefully at odds with those of the sermon. The two discourses provide two extremely different sets of devices and tactics for satire. The sermon attacks by incorporating its object into a network of categories and definitions. It accommodates its object into a system, assigning it a position which guarantees its inferiority. Such an attack requires a series of positive models to act as firm criteria for this judgment: one of its ultimate purposes is in fact to cement such models even further. Festivity on the other hand serves to highlight the limits of its chosen object. It subsumes its object into a context that exceeds it in order to emphasise its finitude, and even its triviality. This process denies that any set of ideals can have real validity, asserting that all are merely small sections of a larger range of possibilities. The first depends on privileging certain standards, and imposing an interpretation on to reality, while the second hinges on destroying all bases of privilege, and awarding no outlook absolute dominion.

To put this another way, homily and festivity each attack the very method of appraisal that its counterpart employs. Both of them compare reality with a stipulated ideal, but each takes a different side when staging this comparison. The sermon's denunciation works by contrasting the real conduct of the object with the ideal form it should

²²⁸ Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game*, p.71.

pursue: it considers the ideal to be the object's true form, and any departure from it as a deviation or sin. Festivity on the other hand uses reality to deride ideals: it draws attention to the multiplicity of reality to highlight the limits of any one system, showing the existence of phenomena that it cannot account for. While one treats discrepancies between reality and an ideal as perversions on the part of reality, the other treats them as failures on the part of the ideal. One attacks reality for failing to uphold ideals, while the other attacks ideals for failing to encompass reality. The two discourses supply mechanisms to satire which move in directly opposing directions.

All of this means that the primary division within satire, its possession of two contrary potentials, is a firm presence in English satire. When vernacular satirists turned to homily and festivity in response to the comments of the scholiasts, they drew the dualistic model of satire into English. The two discourses in which they clothed their poetry replicate the central tension of satire commentary, one being principally judgmental and constructive, the other deflationary and irreverent. These discourses in turn attach their own forms to this division, bringing their own concerns to bear on it, with the result that they embed it even further. In fact, as a convenient short-hand for these two operations, the two forces should perhaps be designated the hieratic and festive tendencies, after the two fields that provide them with their basic forms. Since hieratic and festive practices supply the means by which these strands assert themselves, this terminology seems most appropriate for the two axiologies at work in Middle English satire. In subsequent chapters, this terminology will therefore be used to describe the two strands at work in the mode.

There is also a further point to emerge from this. This conception of Middle English satire has specific methodological implications, suggesting a definite way of reading satirical texts. Above all, it asserts the importance of historical factors in interpreting satire. Regarding satire as a contest between the values of homily and festivity places historical context at the centre of analysis. The wider attitudes, concerns and debates within medieval culture become indispensable for a proper understanding of the mode.

The reason for this rests with the character of homily and festivity. Each of these models may be termed a metadiscourse, in the sense that it is 'a discourse whose

object is another discourse'.²²⁹ Both operate as arenas for other sets of practices, outlooks and values, as they draw other types of language into their own frameworks. Sermon literature is particularly dependent on such an operation. Edwin Craun stresses this point, remarking that the medieval homily frequently seeks to 'judge' other discourses, aiming to assess 'their authenticity, their reliability and their claims as to what they do'.²³⁰ Craun points out that vernacular preaching manuals invariably contain sections that deal with 'peccata oris' or 'synnes of þi mowth', sorting discourses into such headings as 'ydel, auautyng, losengerie [...] stryuynges, grucchynges'.²³¹ These manoeuvres are vital for preaching, since they work to cement its authority. By evaluating other uses of language, homily represents itself as a grand order which transcends all verbalisation, a 'controlling discourse' designed 'to govern all speech'.²³² It places itself on a level beyond normal language, to which all other discourses are naturally subordinate. To borrow a phrase from Roland Barthes, it constitutes 'a semiological system which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system'.²³³ This safeguards the authority of its pronouncements: they seem to be delivered from a site beyond ordinary statements, gaining the status of objective truths. Ultimately, acting as a metadiscourse legitimises the sermon, asserting its superiority to other discourses, and the veracity of its claims.

Similar behaviour is also evident in festivity. As Mervyn James states, medieval ritual works by exposing the numerous factions within the community, emphasising the division of the 'social body' into several positions, interests and ideals. During festive occasions, 'the opposites of social wholeness and social differentiation could be both affirmed'.²³⁴ Taking this panoramic, fragmentary view of society means that festivity also acts as a stage on to which several other positions are drawn. Revelry deals with multiple sets of practices at once. To all intents and purposes, it is no less a metadiscourse than homily.

²²⁹ Maria Giovanni Tassinari, 'Texts and Metatexts in Alice', in *Semiotics and Linguistics in Alice's World*, ed. by Rachel Fordyce and Carla Morello (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), p.142.

²³⁰ Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander and Obscenity: pastoral rhetoric and the deviant speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.73.

²³¹ *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. by W. Nelson Francis, EETS o.s. 217 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p.55.

²³² Craun, *Lies, Slander and Obscenity*, p.9.

²³³ Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', in *Mythologies*, trans. and ed. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 2000), p.134.

²³⁴ James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body', p.4.

The two models for vernacular satire are thus platforms on which other discourses may be brought. They may differ in their treatment of these secondary language-forms: while homily subjects them to its own terms and criteria, festivity treats each one neutrally, as a valid set of concerns in its own right. But the fact remains that both rely on incorporating other voices into their own performance. This directly affects medieval satire, and determines how satirical texts must be read. In order for satire to implement hieratic and festive mockery, it too must borrow from other discourses. For its two tendencies to operate successfully, they must draw on other forms of language. This is especially true of the festive tendency, which attacks its object chiefly by placing it among codes which do not support its status, thereby deflating its standing. As a result, satire does not merely expose breaks in its own structure. It also brings to light wider fractures in medieval culture.

It might even be said that this factor makes satirical texts particularly worthy of analysis. They are driven to expose the points of friction within medieval culture as a basic part of their operations. The very structure of vernacular satire exposes the underlying tensions and pluralities of medieval society, as its central mechanisms rely on such conflicts. As a result, when reading actual instances of satire in the following two chapters, every attention will be paid to the wider concerns and debates in which such texts are situated. The nature of satire compels such an approach, since these threads are deeply woven into the fabric of each piece.

Theories of Wounding in Medieval English Culture

Having determined the basic machinery of Middle English satire, it is now possible to move to the final stage of this chapter, and establish why representations of wounding should prove so recurrent in this literature. Accordingly, this section will consider the role of injury in satire, assessing how it fits into the schema outlined above.

The affinity between mutilation and medieval satire has already generated some critical discussion. In 1912 Fred Norris Robinson proposed that early English satire may have developed from ritual ‘incantational verse’ designed to inflict ‘facial

disfigurement' on an enemy.²³⁵ Robinson's views received a good deal of later support. Mary Claire Randolph, John Heath-Stubbs and Robert Elliott all agree that the 'source of a native tradition of English satire' may well have been the 'sorcerer and magician' who aimed 'to destroy his victim, flesh, bone, nerve and sinew'.²³⁶ In the early 1970s, Alvin Kernan developed a slightly different version of this theory, based in Darwinian biology. Kernan argued that satire had been evolved by human beings as a safe outlet for aggression that would otherwise prove harmful. He describes the mode as a 'way of limiting and directing aggression without eliminating it': 'among those species who can kill with one slash [...] evolution has favoured those with strong inhibitory mechanisms [...] the art of satire, I would now like to suggest, might profitably, or at least interestingly, be approached as one instance of the way in which man has learned to control aggression'.²³⁷ Both of these views gives wounding a privileged place in the study of satire. Each argues that the literature is directly motivated by an intent to disfigure. Injury, in short, becomes the underlying stimulus of satire. The mode's very existence is founded on 'harming the human body'.²³⁸ Since these remarks statedly address the earliest examples of the poetry, the 'native tradition of English satire', they would seem to have particular relevance to Middle English literature.²³⁹

However, this school of thought is not particularly helpful when examining specific uses of injury in medieval texts. The main drawback here is that injury becomes something primordial, part of the 'primitive modes' which greater 'cultural [...] sophistication' has sought to repress.²⁴⁰ Mutilation belongs in the prehistory of culture, while satire represents it in a more 'civilised', sublimated form. This assumption makes it almost impossible to interpret individual episodes of wounding in satire. By this logic, injury cannot really mean anything in satirical texts. It has

²³⁵ Fred Norris Robinson, 'Satirists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature', in *Satire: modern essays in criticism*, ed. by Ronald Poulson (Eagleton Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p.14.

²³⁶ Mary Claire Randolph, 'The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satire: its possible relationships and implications', *Studies in Philology* 38 (1941), p.129; John Heath-Stubbs, *The Verse Satire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.1; Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: magic, ritual, art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

²³⁷ Alvin Kernan, 'Aggression and Satire: art considered as a form of biological adaptation', in *Literary Theory and Structure*, ed. by Frank Brady and others (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) pp.119, 121.

²³⁸ Randolph, 'Medical Concept in Satire', p.156.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.129.

²⁴⁰ Elliott, *Power of Satire*, pp.vii, 66-7.

been exchanged for satire: rather than playing a role within satirical texts, it has been replaced by such works. Consequently, rather than having an identifiable rhetorical function in satire, it becomes something underneath the literature, which texts can only 'point backward to'.²⁴¹ Injury cannot logically have any significance in satire, since it is anterior to the mode.

Even more importantly, this approach is also inaccurate when applied to the culture of the Middle Ages. Medieval culture did not seek to repress and nullify wounding at all. The opposite is closer to the truth. The Middle Ages claimed injury as a potent emblem, investing it with multiple and complex meanings. If anything, the wound was overdetermined in medieval culture rather than silenced or suppressed. As Carlo Mazzi and David Hillman emphasise, several areas of 'medieval life and thought' maintained an 'important role for corporeal partitioning', each one pushing its own specific meanings on to it.²⁴² Miri Rubin likewise sees mutilation as polysemous, a point 'at which discourses intersect and conflict': 'it dramatized the sense of vulnerability, the ubiquity of pain, and many other images [...] it evades the boundaries of gender, age, corporeal containment'.²⁴³ The wound was a highly charged figuration, in which several readings and understandings met and jostled with one another. The idea that injury and 'violence' occupied some 'substratum [...] just beyond the edges of art' is misleading.²⁴⁴ It makes much more sense to interpret satiric wounding in light of the codes that circulated in the culture of the Middle Ages.

Importantly, amongst the discourses that contributed meaning to injury are those that influenced English satire. Both festivity and homily are key participants in this multivalence, adding their own particular set of meanings to injury. This is especially true of homily, as the wound is a prevalent motif in almost every aspect of medieval religious discourse. In fact, it is no exaggeration to state that disfigurement gained a

²⁴¹ Randolph, 'Medical Concept in Satire', pp.156-7.

²⁴² David Hillman and Carlo Mazzi, 'Editorial Introduction', in *The Body in Parts*, ed. by David Hillman and Carlo Mazzi (London: Routledge, 1997), p.xiii.

²⁴³ Miri Rubin, 'The Body, Whole and Vulnerable in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Bodies and Disciplines: intersections of literature and history in fifteenth-century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hannawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), pp.21, 25-6.

²⁴⁴ Alvin Kernan, 'Satire', in *The Dictionary of the History of Ideas: studies of selected pivotal ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973-74), IV: *Psychological ideas in antiquity to zeitgeist* (1974), p.212.

central position in the religious literature and iconography of the later Middle Ages. The work of Rosemary Woolf, Robert Mills and especially Caroline Walker Bynum has amply demonstrated this point, showing that images of 'torture and fragmentation' were of great importance in late medieval spirituality.²⁴⁵

Perhaps the foremost aspect of this is the period's preoccupation with the Crucifixion, the 'new and extraordinary focus on the passion of Christ' which arose in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁴⁶ The countless vivid invocations of Jesus' 'loveliche handes [...] to-rent' and 'feet been al to-gnawe', his body 'ihanged all on blode [...] a sarp spere all to thine herte pithte', force a particular meaning on the wound.²⁴⁷ Such allusions promote corporeal damage as the consummate demonstration of God's love for humanity. As one fourteenth-century lyric declares, 'Crist made to man a fair present,/ His bloody body with love y-brent [...] for love of man whom sinne hath blent'.²⁴⁸ The work of Julian of Norwich also develops this idea. In Julian's twelfth 'shewing', Christ's injuries dramatically overwhelm any other aspect of his godhood: 'so plenteously the hote blode ran oute that there was neither sene skynne ne wound, but as it were al blode'.²⁴⁹ The disfigured body provides nothing less than a means of comprehending divinity itself, an image through which God is revealed. Other texts take this even further. In another fourteenth-century eulogy, injury is the very signature of Christ. The narrator demands that God inscribes his love on his heart: 'pogh my hert be hard as stone/ Yit maist þou gostly write þeron/ Wip naill and wip spere kene'.²⁵⁰ The wound becomes an emblem of Christ, the natural means by which his presence is recorded or asserted. As David Morris writes, 'bodily torment' develops into 'a sign that points to a realm of eternal truth'.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968); Robert Mills, *Visions of Excess: pain, pleasure and the penal imaginary in late-medieval art and culture* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p.13.

²⁴⁶ Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: identity, culture and society in late medieval writings* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.46.

²⁴⁷ 'The Hours of the Passion', 15, 21, in *Medieval English Lyrics*, ed. by R.T. Davies (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p.131.

²⁴⁸ 'Divine Love', 1-3, in *Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, p.235.

²⁴⁹ Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1976), p.13.

²⁵⁰ 'An Orisoun on the Passion', in *The Wheatley Manuscript*, ed. by Mabel Day, EETS o.s. 155 (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp.2-3.

²⁵¹ David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1993), p.129.

This association does not merely govern the sense of the wound, but also lends the wound a particular function in medieval spirituality. Injury does not merely betoken or memorialise Christ's torments, but may actively serve to reproduce them. Some level of semblance to Christ is attained, as wounds allow their sufferers to participate in the sacrifice of the Redeemer, and so become like him. This idea reaches its fullest pitch in the martyrologies. Here, mutilation sanctifies the body of the wounded. The vita of Alban from *The South English Legendary* (c.1285) provides a dramatic instance of this. As Alban is led out to be beheaded, his executioner refuses to carry out the sentence: 'his swerd þat he bar an honde fram him wel uer caste/ He fel to seint Albones fet'. For his insubordination the man joins Alban on the block. However, this only secures his own redemption: 'wiþ him deie þere/ So þat in oure Louerdes name boþe ymartered were'.²⁵² Injury is so strongly expressive of Christ that it supplies direct salvation, even to the unbaptised headsman. Bede, the likely source of this hagiography, makes this even clearer: 'there was no doubt that he was cleansed by the shedding of his own blood, and rendered fit to enter the kingdom of heaven'.²⁵³

This point is reiterated throughout the most widely read collection of saint's vitae, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* (c.1266). Here the saints George and Catherine assure fresh converts to the faith, as they are either beheaded or bludgeoned, that 'the shedding of your blood will count as your baptism', 'the blood you shed will be your baptism and your crown'.²⁵⁴ In like manner Saint Margaret, after 'her flesh was raked with iron combs until the bones were laid bare and the blood gushed from her body', serenely proclaims: 'this torture of the flesh is the soul's salvation'.²⁵⁵ Because injury evokes Christ, it may act as a vehicle for divine grace. As Bynum remarks, wounds behave as 'mediators between earth and heaven'.²⁵⁶

²⁵² *South English Legendary*, ed. by Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, EETS o.s. 87, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1956-9), I (1956), pp.240-1.

²⁵³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. by Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.54.

²⁵⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. by Christopher Stace (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), pp.336, 120.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.162-3.

²⁵⁶ Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, p.13.

However, while ‘butchered images of Christ’s body’ are a ‘central sign’ in late medieval Christianity, this does not prevent the wound from attracting other meanings.²⁵⁷ Michael Camille’s statement that ‘a host of competing notions of the body existed’ throughout the medieval period is no less relevant to mutilation of the body.²⁵⁸ Within religious discourse itself injury gains a strikingly different set of values and functions. A graphic instance of this occurs in *Handlyng Synne*. In his discussion of infidelity, Mannyng describes a woman who was ‘weddyd, and here wedlak/ Ful falsly an on-truly brak’. For this ‘hordam’, the adulteress has ‘here body cloue yn twey partye’ by ‘þe fende of helle’ once she is dead.²⁵⁹ Clearly the point here is to mark the woman with her sin. Just as the woman divided her body in life between two men, so her body in death is cut in half. What is noteworthy here, however, is that injury is analogous to the woman’s ‘hordam’. The tearing of her body ‘yn twey’ serves to engrave her sin on to her. The wound is emblematic of wrongdoing: it has no salvic value. A similar deployment occurs in the portrayal of the damned entertainers at ‘þe deofles curt’ in the *Ancrene Wisse* (c.1215). Each ‘wreaðfule’ man is forced to play with ‘sweord and cnif’, carrying blades ‘scharp ord up on his tunge’ until they ‘asneasen him þurh ut’. These wounds expressly betoken the ‘sharpe and keoruinde word þt he warpeð from him’ during his life.²⁶⁰ In these cases, injury denotes sin rather than purity. The damned of the Towneley *Judgment* put this succinctly: ‘oure wykyd Warkys can we not hide,/ Bot on oure bakys we must theym bere’.²⁶¹

It emerges from this that religious discourse charges wounding with two distinct values. Disfigurement is both a monument of Christ’s Passion, and a record of sin. While these two roles may appear to contradict one another, they are in fact essentially the same. Both are aspects of the same broad function. By permanently

²⁵⁷ Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: ritual and representation* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), pp.123, 125.

²⁵⁸ Michael Camille, ‘The Image and the Self: unwriting late medieval bodies’, in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.62.

²⁵⁹ Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, pp.65-7; ll.1833-4.

²⁶⁰ *The English Text of the Ancrene Wisse*, ed. by J.R.R. Tolkien, EETS o.s. 249 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp.110-1.

²⁶¹ *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by George England, EETS e.s. 71 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.368.

chronicling either the victim's 'wykyd warkys' or their similarity to Christ, mutilation dictates the status of its recipient. It works as a stamp, a means of classifying its bearer. It inscribes a meaning on to them. In short, wounding in medieval devotion is not far removed from Foucault's description of torture in later authoritative discourses. Like early modern 'torture [...] or the spectacle that accompanies it', it is designed 'to brand the victim': 'it traces around or, rather, on the very body of the condemned man signs that must not be effaced'.²⁶² Wounding in religious culture is definitive, using the body to attach the individual to a particular value or genus.

This has fairly obvious implications for vernacular satire. It places the wound directly in the service of the mode's most crucial mechanisms. Disfigurement becomes innately supportive of satire's hieratic tendency, its desire to catalogue and evaluate its objects. Just like this type of satire, this form of wound allows offenders to be coded and defined. Consequently, this goes some way towards establishing why the wound should be so prominent in medieval satire. Its unique ability to impose definitions makes it well-suited to satire's projects, allowing objects to be stamped with a particular classification.

This pattern is repeated in the second discourse to affect Middle English satire. Injury occupies a central position in merrymaking, proving no less integral to this field than to medieval religious life. Peter Burke goes so far as to make 'violence' one of the 'three major themes in Carnival'.²⁶³ The various calls for the reform of popular culture throughout the sixteenth century repeatedly draw attention to the damage sustained by celebrants. Thomas Elyot, writing in 1531, states that Shrovetide football games ought to 'be utterly abiected of al noble men' because injury is inextricably attendant on such occasions 'wherin is nothings but bestly furie and exstreme violence; wherof procedeth hurte, and consequently rancour and malice do remaine with them that be wounded'.²⁶⁴ A little later Philip Stubbes also condemns these rites, again because of the risks of injury: 'sometimes their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometime their legs, sometime their armes; sometimes one

²⁶² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p.34.

²⁶³ Burke, *Popular Culture*, pp.186-7.

²⁶⁴ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named The Governour*, ed. by Foster Watson (London: J.M. Dent and Co, 1907), p.133.

part thrust out of ioynt, sometime an other; sometime the noses gush out with blood, sometime their eyes start out'.²⁶⁵

Although Stubbes and Elyot present wounding as an incidental presence in revelry, something that is prevalent but not integral, there are numerous festive practices in which wounding is a deliberate, even principal, element. One such rite is wrestling. The *Tale of Gamelyn* (c.1360) makes clear the level of violence typical of these contests. At one point Gamelyn's treacherous brother suggests that he may wish to compete in a seasonal wrestling match, in the hope that he 'mighte breke his nekke in that wrasteling'. Although Gamelyn survives the bout intact, his opponent is not so fortunate: 'Gamelyn to the champioun yede smertely anon [...] And caste him on the lefte syde that three ribbes to-brak,/ And ther-to his oon arm that yaf a gret crak'.²⁶⁶ In some festive sports, this mutilation is even formalised. In Robert Herrick's rosy portrait of traditional summer games, at which the 'happy rustics' are 'best content [...] with the cheapest merriment', there is a brief account of such a rite. Herrick states: 'there will be a cudgel-play,/ Where a coxcomb will be broke/ Ere a good word can be spoke'.²⁶⁷ As Elizabeth Burton explains, cudgel-play was in fact a form of duel with 'hefty stone clubs'. The coxcomb was the 'red streak pouring from the scalp down the face' of the loser. In fact, 'the prime object of the game' was to inflict such an injury.²⁶⁸

These more purposeful uses of injury do much to expose the function of bodily damage in festive discourse. Herrick's coxcomb is a particularly revealing case. On the face of it, it seems to operate much like injury in religious discourse. Again it performs a definitive purpose, as it marks the inferior participant in the contest. Like the wound suffered by Mannyng's adulteress, it 'brands' the injured with inferiority. There are, however, considerable differences here. The coxcomb is not held to be a reflection of the object's internal essence. The entire point of the contest is that it can

²⁶⁵ Philip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses in England in Shakspeare's Youth*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, 2 vols. (London: N. Trübner and Co., 1882), I, p.184.

²⁶⁶ *The Tale of Gamelyn*, 194, 243-6, in *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. by Donald B. Sands (New York: Holt Rinehart, 1966), pp.160-1.

²⁶⁷ Robert Herrick, 'The Wake', in *Works*, ed. by Alfred Pollard, 2 vols (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1891), II, p.68.

²⁶⁸ Elizabeth Burton, *The Pageant of Elizabethan England* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p.187.

be applied to either competitor. Each participant in the cudgel-play is equally exposed to the possibility of being wounded. It may thus be said that the prospect of being injured becomes a shared platform on which the two participants are able to meet. Vulnerability becomes the common ground on which their confrontation is staged.

Much the same is true of wrestling. In John Hoby's version of *Il Cortegiano*, this point emerges very clearly. For Hoby, 'wrestling' matches put aside all criteria in favour of bodily violence: 'no comparison is there made of noblesse of birth, but of force and sleight, in which thinges many times the men of the countrey are not a whit inferiour to gentlemen'. Susceptibility to 'force' is a ubiquitous feature, a point shared by all. It therefore provides universal terms in which competition may be staged. In festivity the potential to be maimed cancels all prior relationships between the contenders, allowing free negotiation between them. Rather than cementing its objects' status in a larger framework, as the religious use of mutilation is assumed to do, festive wounding allows new relationships to be created. Hoby writes that during summer games one may often 'see a gentleman overcome by a carter, and especially in wrastling'.²⁶⁹ Wounding allows the negotiations of Scott's 'ritual site' to be staged. Common vulnerability bridges the spaces between classes and subcommunities, allowing free interplay between them, at least while the ritual is in effect.

The forms of language associated with festivity impose further significance on to injury. Bakhtin's work on the 'oaths' and 'improper speech' of carnival discourse makes this plain. Bakhtin observes that such curses were regarded as a form of 'dismemberment', figuratively 'rending the human body' by impugning against its various members. The most common target for this obscenity was the 'divine body': 'swearing was mostly done in the name of the members and the organs of the divine body: the Lord's body, his head, blood, wounds, bowels [...] so that he is entirely chopped up'.²⁷⁰

There is abundant evidence of this in medieval English culture, where swearing is credited with precisely the same properties that Bakhtin outlines. Numerous homilies

²⁶⁹ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Courtier*, trans. by John Hoby, in *Three Renaissance Classics*, ed. by Burton A. Milligan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp.345-6.

²⁷⁰ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p.192.

attack swearers who ‘hewen’ Christ with their words as ‘men dop a swyn in a bucherie’, ‘teryng his body all shente/ By blasphemynge’.²⁷¹ There is also a strong association between festivity and these profane assaults. For example, a Lollard attack on Yuletide entertainments complains that anyone who aims to be ‘holden most merie mon’ at Christmas must ‘swere bi herte, bonys and alle membris of crist’.²⁷² Michel of Northgate also mentions ‘playeres’ in seasonal games ‘þet zuo uyleynliche tobrekeþ Iesu cristes body [...] þet hit is dreduol and zorþe to hyere’.²⁷³ This link is reinforced by the long moral poem *Goddis Owne Complaynt* (c.1430), in which Christ upbraids humanity for its ‘vnkindenes’. During the protest against swearing ‘bi my body, and bi my blood’, the narrator quotes a telling simile: ‘Foule speech is to þee a feeste’.²⁷⁴ There is a clear kinship between festivity and curses, especially those which ‘bucher’ the body of Christ.

Bakhtin’s explanation for the ‘anatomization’ of these ‘oaths and curses’ is that they represent carnival-time feasts and banquets. He classes them as a subcategory of festivity’s ‘culinary theme’, its concern with ‘eating, drinking, defecation’.²⁷⁵ While this may be partly true, since one English carol likens ‘the borys hede, that we bryng here’ to the ‘prince withowte pere’, a broader imperative also suggests itself.²⁷⁶ The fact that merrymaking tends to bring disparate factions into one undifferentiated space renders its attack on the body, and especially Christ’s body, a logical extension of its projects. Throughout the Middle Ages the body of Christ was a powerful metaphor for hierarchy itself. Such a view was encouraged by no less an authority than the Pauline epistles. In a number of famous passages, Paul makes the physical body of Christ into a prototype for the Christian community, since both are earthly vehicles for the divine Word. As Romans 12.4-5 reports, ‘as in one body we have many members [...] so we, though many, are one body in Christ’.

This analogy forms the basis of a highly regimented view of society. Paul uses the

²⁷¹ *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. by W. Nelson Francis, EETS o.s. 217 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p.62; Alexander Barclay, *The Ship of Fools*, ed. T.H. Jamieson (William Paterson: Edinburgh, 1874), p.83.

²⁷² ‘The Ave Maria’, in *English Works of Wyclif*, p.206.

²⁷³ Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, p.70.

²⁷⁴ ‘Christ’s Own Complaint’, 528, 408, in *Political, Religious and Love Poems*, pp.217, 225.

²⁷⁵ Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, pp.193, 195.

²⁷⁶ ‘Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell’, in *Specimens of Old Christmas Carols, selected from Manuscripts and Printed Books*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Percy Society, 1841), p.50.

body-model to suggest that all authority should be fixed to one site within the group. Christ is specifically 'the Head' in Colossians 2.9, 'from whom the whole body, nourished and knitted together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is through God'. This is a monolithic social model: the community is governed from a single site, which fixes every other element into position. The absence of any further centre of power in this totality is directly stipulated in I Corinthians 12.25, which stresses that 'there may be no discord in the body'. The body represents a structure in which there is only one supreme will, existing without challenge. In Robert Yeager's summary, Paul's body-model is 'a larger unity which connects, coordinates and ultimately justifies the existence' of its constituent parts.²⁷⁷

As Mervyn James stresses, by the late Middle Ages the paradigm of Christ's body was readily applied to secular society. James writes:

The body of Christ was an essentially religious conception, involving a relationship between the self and a supernatural order. But the idea also had a secular and social relevance [...] social differentiation could be apprehended in terms of the various limbs and organs, all arranged in a hierarchical structure of different roles and functions.²⁷⁸

Medieval writers commonly understand the relationships between social classes and professional groups in physiological terms. For instance, John of Salisbury likens magistrates to shoes which protect the 'workers' or 'feet' of the state, while one of the various English versions of the *Secreta Secretorum* compares a monarch's intelligence network, 'messagers to fette and presente al that [...] Is necessarie', to 'the v wittys; of the wych euery of ham hath his Propyr dome, and bene in Sartayn Places I-sette'.²⁷⁹ Again the body is used to promote a uniform social order, one that is rigidly bound to a single power and ranking: in John Gower's words, 'alle resoun wolde this,/ That unto him which the heved is/ The membres scholden bowe'.²⁸⁰ As James writes, in the 'social body' all 'differentiation was taken up into social

²⁷⁷ Robert F. Yeager, 'The Body Politic and the Politics of Bodies in the Poetry of John Gower', in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*, p.146.

²⁷⁸ James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body', pp.6-8.

²⁷⁹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: of the frivolities of courtiers and the footprints of philosophers*, trans. by Cary J. Nederman, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.126; *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, ed. by Robert Steele, EETS e.s. 74 (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1898), p.208.

²⁸⁰ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Russell A. Peck, Medieval Academy Reprints For Teaching 9 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p.5; Pro.151-3.

wholeness'.²⁸¹

Christ's body is thus forcefully emblematic of qualities which are directly opposed to the more pluralistic, factional character of festivity. The festal acknowledgement of multiple points of consciousness is entirely contrary to this totalitarian model. The dismemberment enacted by 'sweryng' on Christ's body, leaving the 'hede all to-broke, and his Eyen drawn oute of his body, and layde on his breste, his armes broken a-two', as the *Gesta Romanorum* colourfully recounts, is an assault on hierarchic arrangement.²⁸² It imposes a greater equality and multiplicity on the system, symbolically wrenching components out of place, and allowing them free interchange. Dismembering Christ through swearing represents the dissolution of homogeneity.²⁸³ It undermines overlordship of the whole by one of its elements. Hence for Michel of Northgate, cursing on Christ's organs presents a full disavowal of his authority. The *Ayenbite of Inwyt* likens swearers to 'wode houndes/ þet biteþ and ne knaweþ naȝt hare lhord'.²⁸⁴ The language of festivity, as 'ale mak many a mane to swere by God and alhalows', draws on mutilation to support its most fundamental stance, the refusal to acknowledge any sovereign position or systematic arrangement of outlooks.²⁸⁵

There is thus an obvious and profound sympathy between injury and satire. Not only do both occupy the same conceptual territory, straddling the spheres of celebration and devotion, but laceration's broad range of symbolic functions encompasses those manoeuvres which are fundamental to satire. On the one hand the wound is diagnostic, applying the classifications of a single schema; on the other it collapses such regulation, disturbing stratification and drawing its elements on to a single level. Corporeal disfigurement is thus an extremely useful device for satire, an instrument for both condemnation and deflation. The fact that it can be directed at a specific

²⁸¹ James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body', p.8.

²⁸² *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, ed. by Sidney J.H. Herrtage, EETS e.s. 33 (London: N. Trübner and Co, 1879), pp.409-10.

²⁸³ See also Jacques Lacan's notion of the 'corps morcelé', a dream-symbol of 'disjointed limbs' which represents a loss of cohesion, or 'aggressive disintegration in the individual': Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', in *Écrits: a selection*, trans. and ed. by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), pp.4-5.

²⁸⁴ Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, p.70.

²⁸⁵ 'Doll thi ale, doll, doll thi ale, dole', in *Songs and Carols, now first printed*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Percy Society, 1847), p.82.

object, inflicted on a personage, only adds to its utility.

Yet more importantly, wounding also shares the innate instability of the mode. Because it can be used by each of these processes to promote its own designs, the wound becomes a point at which satire's two tendencies converge. It is a feature that each tendency can claim with equal force. Consequently, it is a site at which each axiology encounters the projects of its counterpart. Satire's irreconcilable dialogue is transmitted to the wound. Injury is not only a recurrent topos in satire, but a point of focus for the contest between its hieratic and festive elements. As such, it serves as a lens through which their engagement may be studied. When the wound is represented in medieval satire, it is a site of competition between its two strands.

To summarise all that has been said so far, it is clear that medieval satire is a highly complex literature. It contains various intents and procedures, several of which are inimical to one another. It is not reducible to any single overriding function: least of all can it be defined as a straightforward 'instrument of reform'. This point emerges most readily from medieval engagement with what Trevisa calls 'pre poetes [...] specialliche i-cleped satirici, Oracius, Percius and Iuvenal'.²⁸⁶ Exegesis of these classical authors remains undecided on the exact nature of satire. While it views the mode as a moral force, which attacks deviations from accepted standards, it also realises that it is capable of undercutting those same values. It appreciates that its subject has 'a variety of potentialities, not all of them progressive', hinting at two sets of functions in satire, one ethical and judgmental, the other indiscriminate in its denigration.²⁸⁷

From exegesis, the notion of a variable satire enters Middle English poetry. Here the vernacular poets turn exegetic dualism into a competition between two additional discourses. Responding to suggestions in exegesis that satire resembles homily and festivity, English satire turns to these areas of culture for its immediate forms. This borrowing enhances the latent divisions in the medieval theory of satire. The techniques that are drawn from hieratic and festive practices develop into two

²⁸⁶ *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, IV, p.179.

²⁸⁷ Dermot Cavanagh and Tim Kirk, 'Satire and Scurrility', in *Subversion and Scurrility: popular discourse in Europe from 1500 to the present*, ed. by Dermot Cavanagh and Tim Kirk (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.9.

antithetical currents in satire. From the sermon satire absorbs a tendency to classify its objects in the terms of a single system, weighing them against a single range of criteria: from festivity it takes an emphasis on plurality, the fact that any system can only be finite and partial, and its definitions ultimately inadequate. Middle English satire is a site of two continuous but contrary projects: a desire to install the object of mockery in a network of meanings, subject to one group of ideals, and a desire to explode all such networks by highlighting their limitations.

It is the presence of festive and hieratic discourses in satire that makes the wound a key emblem in satire, and conditions how it is used. Injury is integral to the processes that satire draws from preaching and misrule: it allows an entity to be branded in hieratic discourse, and opens it to positions beyond itself in festivity. This renders it a natural symbol for satire, but also a highly contested one. Its congeniality to both tendencies means that it brings to light their competition, highlighting the tension which underpins satirical literature. Moreover, since festivity and homily in themselves work by ordering other discourses, this competition reveals wider divisions in medieval culture, exposing points of friction and dispute. Each tendency takes up ideas and attitudes that are appropriate to its own intentions, and thus sets these outlooks against one another.

These propositions will guide analysis in the remainder of the thesis. The next two chapters will be supported by these ideas. Each will take as its main subject a specific tradition of vernacular satire: satire against women in the section immediately following, and satire against the clergy in the closing chapter. Both of these chapters will function in a fairly self-enclosed way, examining their subjects closely, and producing detailed readings of individual texts. Nonetheless, each will be grounded in the conception of satire outlined here, and the notion of wounding that accompanies it. In both cases, the motif of injury will be used to gain insight into the two tendencies within satire, and the wider attitudes and currents that these tendencies exploit. This will in turn lay bare the stress-points and discrepancies within medieval culture, allowing multiple, disparate viewpoints to surface.

In short, the following two chapters will stand as fully-fledged studies of misogyny and anticlericalism, giving close readings of their respective subjects. The interpretive

model put forward here will be used to guide analysis, but not to impose a particular direction or set of findings on to it. However, each chapter will be united by the central belief that the stratagems and ruses of satire give access to plural ideas and values. Both chapters will aim to show that medieval satire does more than simply deride or damn its object. They will demonstrate that satire exposes its object as a focus of wider social debate, part of an 'economy of rights and duties, expectations and negotiations'.²⁸⁸ Each chapter will work on the basis that wounding in satire is a junction, at which several interests and mechanisms meet and attempt to assert themselves.

²⁸⁸ Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), p126.

Do Not Forget Your Whip: Violence in Antifeminist Satire

She had broken her husbondes comaundement, and therfor he brake her legges.¹

The man who does not understand a woman [...] perceives the presence of a 'mystery' outside himself: an alibi, indeed, that flatters laziness and vanity at once.²

The main purpose of the present chapter is to extend the work of the previous section. It will use the models of satire and injury developed earlier to examine the place of violence in Middle English satire. Like the previous chapter, it will argue that representations of wounding in satire are inherently unstable, hosting a conflict between two rival value-systems. It will be shown that the tension between these festive and hieratic directions underpins the portrayal of wounding in satire. However, the current chapter will also emphasise that broader concerns work upon satiric texts. It will stress that satire's treatment of the body is derived from wider currents of thought, which are drawn into its framework, and adapted to support either one of its two innate principles. This will in turn show that the duality of satire brings to light fractures and discrepancies in the ideas it cites. As each of satire's tendencies grounds itself in a different set of opinions, satire becomes a forum in which larger conflicts and debates in medieval culture may emerge.

The specific form of satire this chapter will address is that which deals with women. Women are perhaps the single most important target for vernacular satire. They certainly generated an immense volume of satirical literature during the Middle Ages. As Rossell Hope Robbins observes, 'attacks on women, varying from short scraps in sermons to involved and lengthy art compositions, penetrated into almost every type of Middle English prose and poetry'.³ Roberta Kreuger echoes this assessment, commenting that the Middle Ages displays a 'pervasive antifeminism', producing a

¹ *Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, ed. by Thomas Wright, EETS o.s. 33 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1906), pp.82-3.

² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H.M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), p.285.

³ *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, ed. by Albert E. Hartung and others, 6 vols (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967-80), V (1975), p.1453.

body of work which satirised 'women of all classes' across Europe.⁴ This prevalence is further documented by the seminal work of Francis Utley, which catalogues no fewer than three hundred and eighteen satires on women written in English between c.1272 and 1568.⁵ Medieval English contains a rich seam of antifeminist writing.

Before investigating how violence against women functions in this highly fruitful tradition, and what attitudes and conceptions it calls on, it will be helpful to give a brief survey of antifeminism's overall features. Reviewing the operations which characterise misogynous satire will indicate the most effective manner in which the tradition should be considered. Surveying its chief qualities will indicate how it should be approached, both generally and in relation to disfigurement.

To begin, one of the most readily noticeable features of antifeminism, and one which is frequently highlighted by commentators, is its striking invariability. Jill Mann is one critic who calls particular attention to this. Describing 'a whole series of texts from the twelfth century to Chaucer's time and beyond', Mann writes of a 'vast echo chamber of anti-feminist commonplaces' in which 'the voices blur into each other, endlessly repeating the same message'.⁶ Other critics agree with this assessment. R. Howard Bloch's influential study reaches a similar conclusion, observing that antifeminism tends to avoid specificity in favour of a more generalised and uniform message. It is for Bloch 'a citational mode whose rhetorical thrust displaces its own source away from anything that might be construed as personal'.⁷ Likewise, Derek Pearsall states that by the late Middle Ages 'misogynous diatribes must have seemed one of the more sterile legacies of [...] traditional reading', while Alcuin Blamires terms antifeminism a 'small world' in which the same arguments, propositions and testimonies 'keep turning up over and over again'.⁸ Even during the medieval period writers were conscious of misogyny's unanimity. One English piece from the late

⁴ Roberta L. Krueger, 'Female voices in convents, courts and households', in *A History of Women's Writing in France*, ed. by Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.11.

⁵ Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib: an anthology index to the argument about women in English and Scots literature to the end of the year 1568* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1944).

⁶ Jill Mann, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p.50.

⁷ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.44.

⁸ Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.73-4; Alcuin Blamires, 'Introduction', in *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.7.

fifteenth century proudly asserts that ‘all bookes that poetes made and radde/ Seyen women most make men madde’, while Christine de Pizan in *Le Livre de la Cité des dames* (1405) complains that ‘so many men, both clerks and others, have said and continue to say and write such awful, damning things about women [...] all seem to speak with one voice’.⁹ For John of Salisbury, this consistency is a mark of truth, as ‘the whole chorus of correct thinkers chant the same tune’ with regards to women.¹⁰ Despite its vast quantity, antifeminist writing is by no means diverse. Instead, it constitutes a markedly homogenous tradition.

As an illustration of this constancy, it is worth considering a stratagem which is particularly favoured by English satire: the use of what *The Merchant’s Tale* (c.1392-5) calls ‘manye ensamples olde’ to demonstrate the villainy of women.¹¹ An early instance of this is contained in the *Thrush and the Nightingale* (c.1280-90), during the Thrush’s long tirade against ‘leuedies’. The Thrush asserts that all women ‘beþ fendes’ and ‘biswikeþ euchan mon’ by listing a series of ‘witnesses’, historical figures whose conduct typifies female behaviour. These include ‘costantines quene’, Eve ‘wycke and ille’, and Delilah, who ‘solde [...] saunsum þe stronge’.¹² In the early fifteenth century, Lydgate also uses a catalogue of ‘olde ensamples’ to prove that every woman ‘woll disceyue, there nature is so frayle’. He cites the cases of Eve, who ‘ffirst bygan,/ Deth to devise and poyson to man’, of Delilah, who ‘cowde so well fflatter, fforge and ffeyne’, and of the heathen wives of ‘Salamon’.¹³ A carol from the last half of the fifteenth century adopts the same tactic and exemplars:

Was not Adam, Hercules, and mythy Sampson,
 Davyd the kyng, with other many mo,
 Arystotyll, Vergyll, by a womans cavylacion,
 Browt to iniquyte and to mych woo?¹⁴

⁹ ‘O Mosy Quince’, 13-4, in *Cambridge Middle English Lyrics*, ed. by Henry A. Person (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1953), p.40; Christina de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Rosalind Brown-Grant (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), pp.5-6.

¹⁰ John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. and ed. by J.B. Pike (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), p.355.

¹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, IV.1470, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.157.

¹² *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, 139, 72, 18-9, in *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932), pp.101-7.

¹³ John Lydgate, ‘Examples against Women’, 28, 86, 105, in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. by Henry Noble MacCracken and Merriam Sherwood, EETS o.s. 192, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1911-34), II (1934), pp.443-4.

¹⁴ ‘Nova, nova, sawe yow ever such,/ The moste mayster of the hows weryth no brych’, 57-60, in *Songs and Carols, now first imprinted*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: Percy Society, 1847), p.66.

Later still, a treatise from the sixteenth century, before relating the usual biographies of 'Eue', 'Iezebel' and Solomon's wives, announces in its prologue:

Uyrgyll complayneth here and Hercules also
For all their will great power and strength
Sampson stronge, with many worthies mo
Haue bene begiled through women at length.¹⁵

The popularity of this approach is further verified by Gawain's speech at the end of *Gawain and the Green Knight* (c.1375-1400), which also takes the form of a traditional 'calumny of women'.¹⁶ Like Lydgate and the Thrush, Gawain lists a series of figures to prove that 'þurȝ wyles of wymmen be wonen to sorȝe': 'For so watz Adam in erde with one bygyled,/ And Salamon with fele sere, and Samson eftsonez [...] and Dauyth þerafter'.¹⁷

The popularity of this formula neatly demonstrates the lack of variation in English misogyny. The technique of listing 'ensamples olde' is repeated throughout satires against women, impressing the same shape on to several texts. The tactic of reciting archetypes is used time and again: even the same few 'ensamples' and 'witnesses' recur. Misogyny is above all a repetitive, highly ritualised literature, cultivating a firm uniformity. As modern commentators state, it is 'something on the order of a cultural constant [...] whose lack of history is bound in its effects'.¹⁸

The quotation of this catalogue of 'womans cavylacion' also foregrounds another significant trait of English satire. It shows the texts' dependence on earlier pieces of antifeminist literature. By reciting this roll-call of paradigms, the English poems are following a long-established precedent. The technique is already abundantly present in Latin and French satire. For instance, Walter Map's *Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum* (c.1180) refers to Adam, Solomon and David, while the stories of Hercules and Samson occur in Jean de Meun's continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* (c.1275), which 'by the end of the fourteenth century had firmly established itself as the

¹⁵ *The deceyte of women. to the instruction and ensample of all men, yonge and olde* (London: Abraham Uele, n.d.), p.2 (STC 6451).

¹⁶ Catherine Batt, 'Gawain's Antifeminist Rant, the Pentangle, and Narrative Space', *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992), p.137.

¹⁷ *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 2415-7, ed. by Israel Gollancz and E.V. Gordon, EETS o.s. 210 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.67; see also Gerald Morgan, 'Medieval Misogyny and Gawain's Outburst Against Women in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Modern Language Review* 97 (2002), pp. 265-78.

¹⁸ R. Howard Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', *Representations* 20 (1987), p.1.

vernacular authority on misogyny'.¹⁹ In fact, these figures considerably predate even Map and de Meun. As early as the third century, Tertullian draws on David and Solomon to prove that philogyny is comparable to 'idolatry' and 'heresy', while Jerome's *Adversus Iovianius* employs the 'lessons' of Adam, Samson, David and Solomon to show that 'wives and concubines [...] stir up strife'.²⁰ Clearly the English litanies of the 'wyles of wymmen' are echoing claims which are amongst the most enduring in misogynous literature. In fact, when Thomas Hoccleve, in his translation of Christine de Pizan's *L'Epistre au dieu d'Amours* (1402), singles out the devices which are most integral to the 'wikkid bookes' of 'clerkes' it is the stories of how women 'betrayeden, in special,/ Adam, Daudid, Sampson, and Salomon' which receive particular notice.²¹

The parade of archetypes thus gives clear insight into the overall temperament of English antifeminism. In particular, it reveals that the literature aspires to be nothing more than an extension or an echo of a larger discourse. In its productions, English satire visibly relies on established procedures. Each new piece adheres strictly to forms and protocols that precede it: the recitation of 'olde ensamples' is but one case of this. Owing to this habit, each text deliberately subsumes itself into the broader tradition of misogyny. By giving voice to older customs and techniques, each individual piece merges itself into the vast lineage of misogynous writing, allowing the tradition to prescribe and govern its content. To borrow an idea from Foucault-

¹⁹ See Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, trans. by M.R. James, ed. by E. Sidney Hartland, Cymmrodorion Record Series 9 (London: Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1923), pp.162-4; Guillaume de Lorris and Jeun de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, 9201-6, ed. by Ernest Langlois, Société des anciens textes français, 5 vols (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1914-24), III (1921), p.112; Rosalind Brown-Grant, *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: reading beyond gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.7.

²⁰ Tertullian, 'The Prescription Against Heretics', trans. by Peter Holmes, in *Latin Christianity: its founder, Tertullian*, ed. by A. Cleveland Coxe, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1878), p.244; Jerome, 'Against Jovinianus', in *St Jerome: letters and select works*, trans. by W.H. Fremantle, ed. by P. Schaff, Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II, VI (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1893), pp.363-4, 385. On the influence of the *Jovianus* on later antifeminism, see Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, pp.13-4.

²¹ Thomas Hoccleve, *The Letter of Cupid*, 197-9, in *Hoccleve's Works: the minor poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1892-1925), II: *The Poems in the Ashburnham MS*, ed. by Israel Gollancz, EETS e.s. 71 (1925), pp.20-6. I follow here Ethan Knapp's insistence that Hoccleve's *Letter* reproduces Christine's original sentiments and is not, as Karen Winstead maintains, a parody of *L'Epistre's* proto-feminism: see Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the literature of late medieval England* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp.45-76; Karen A. Winstead, "'I am al othir to yow than yee weene": Hoccleve, women, and the *Series*', *Philological Quarterly* 72 (1993), pp.143-55.

influenced criticism, English satire actively fixes itself to a body of 'pre-existing units of information [...] whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced'.²² Antifeminist pieces regard themselves as products of a code, which is in turn conceived as an entity in its own right. Each one derives its content from a family of interlocked ideas, a body of conceptions which transcends any one particular text or even language.

With this in mind, it is possible to establish a methodology suitable for the analysis of misogynous literature. In essence, antifeminist works should be read in the terms they claim for themselves, as a mass consolidated by a single grammar of ideas, to which each text is compelled to submit. This is the approach which the present chapter will adopt. It will regard individual pieces as specimens of the broader, highly centralised discourse of misogyny, and attempt to uncover the logic which underpins and unifies the specific texts. Not only this, it will also treat this discourse in the fullest, Foucauldian sense of the term: not purely as 'a corpus of propositions considered to be true' but also as the 'gestures' and 'procedures of exclusion' by which these propositions attempt to validate themselves, 'ground themselves, rationalise themselves, and justify themselves'.²³

Turning to the place of injury in this discourse, one of the first things to note is the frequency with which antifeminism portrays violence. Particularly in the later ballads and lyrics, the ridicule of women often spills over into representations of attacks on their bodies. Wife-beating becomes one of the commonplaces of misogyny, a logical consequence of women's offensive or sinful behaviour. The following lines, taken from a song of c.1500, encapsulate this tendency: 'The gudman myght no lengar forbere,/ But smote hys wyff on the ere [...] "Alas," she sayd, "I am but dede:/ I trow þe brayn be owt of my hed"''.²⁴ In this piece, which is strongly antifeminist throughout, injury appears not as a shift in tone or content, but as an extension of the satire. It is performed when the husband 'myght no lengar forbere' his wife's

²² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: western conceptions of the Orient* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p.94.

²³ Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse: inaugural lecture, College du France', trans. by Ian MacLeod, in *Untying the Text: a post-structuralist reader*, ed. by Robert Young (Routledge, London and New York, 1981), pp.59, 55, 63-4.

²⁴ "Alas," sayd þe gudman, "this ys an hevy lyff", 33-8, in *Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems*, ed. by Roman Dyboski, EETS e.s. 101 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1907), p.111.

molestation, and thus directly stems from her venality. A further example is supplied by the Towneley *Play of the Flood* (c.1460).²⁵ Throughout the play Noah is abused by an archetypal shrew of a wife, who resists her husband's orders, and at one stage wishes him dead: 'Lord, I were at ese and hertely full hoylle,/ Might I onys haue a measse of wedows coyll' (388-9). Noah in his turn terrorises the woman. He promises that she 'shal lik on the whyp' and be 'betyn [...] with this staf'(378, 381). At one point he evidently makes good his threats, causing his wife to protest, 'A, so, mary! thou smytis ill!' (220). Once again, the friction caused by women and their unpleasantness automatically gives rise to 'knockabout'.²⁶

Furthermore, antifeminist texts do not only present violence against women in this reflective or dramatic way. Often injury to women appears in a more generalised and imperative form. There are numerous texts which either instruct the reader to assault women, or turn willingness to perform violence into a form of wisdom, creating proverbs which endorse the beating of wives. English misogyny has several equivalents of Boccaccio's maxim 'for a good woman and a bad, the rod is required', or the fourteenth-century Occitan saying 'the man who beats his wife with a cushion [...] isn't doing anything'.²⁷ One instance of this occurs in the rhyming text of *Salomon and Marcolphus* (c.1529).²⁸ Here the 'coarse but clever fool' Marcolphus, whose speech is presented throughout as practical counsel, directly advocates the violent 'tossing' of women: 'A rybaude she is lost/ If she be nat well beate and tost'.²⁹ A comparable sentiment is found in all three versions of Langland's *Piers Plowman*: in the sermon of Reson, 'Tomme Stowue' is advised to 'take two staves/ And fecche Felice hom fro wyvene pyne'.³⁰ As Walter Johnson observes, the implication is that Tomme should 'fetch his wife home from the ducking stool' to be corrected

²⁵ *Noah and the Ark*, 381, 388-9, 220, in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. by George England and Arthur Pollard, EETS e.s. 71 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.23-40.

²⁶ Janet Hill, *Stages and Playgoers: from guild plays to Shakespeare* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), p.48.

²⁷ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. by G.H. McWilliam (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.708; quoted in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montailou: Cathars and Catholics in a French village*, trans. by Barbara Bray (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1990), p.192.

²⁸ On the history of this text, see *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus*, ed. by Donald Beecher and Mary Wallis, Publications of the Barnabe Riche Society 4 (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1995), pp.1-18.

²⁹ Beatrice K. Otto, *Fools Are Everywhere: the court jester around the world* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p.150.; *The sayinges or proverbes of King Salomon/ with the answers of Marcolphus/ traslated out of frenche into englysshe* (London: Richard Pynson, n.d.), f.3 (STC 22899).

³⁰ William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: a critical edition of the B-text*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1978), p.42; V.28-9.

discreetly at home, rather than in public.³¹ Wounding is a recurrent device in misogynous satire, presented in both an anecdotal and axiomatic form.

While the critical model of the present study assumes that this violence must always be ambivalent in some measure, most criticism has treated it as anything but. When discussing injury in satire on women, the bulk of criticism follows one particular line of interpretation. It is widely believed that antifeminism is wholly sincere in ordering husbands to 'take two staves' to their wives. Most discussions of the subject assume that misogyny is directly advocating violence. Angela Jane Weisl, for instance, claims that the *Canterbury Tales* is simply part of 'the history of normalized violence against women that Chaucer inherits and reflects'.³² The same standpoint also underpins the work of Josie Campbell, Richard Daniels and Maureen Fries.³³ Among critics there is a near-consensus that satirical texts are championing the behaviour they depict, promoting its use and celebrating its effects.

This conviction often leads to further assumptions about the functions of violence in the discourse of misogyny. It is usually claimed that injuring a woman is used as a means of bringing reality into line with an exalted, abstract scheme. At its most immediate level, this is achieved by establishing male power over women. As Weisl states, Chaucer's female characters are made to endure 'attacks on their bodies' because such measures 'maintain their subjection'.³⁴ However, this 'subjection' has a conceptual dimension. Since male authority is divinely ordained, commanded in Genesis 3.16 and reiterated throughout the Pauline epistles, injury comes to place the sexes in their proper ranks.³⁵ Violence against women becomes salutary, fixing its victim and its executor into their correct stations. It serves to neutralise any transgression or corruption of the hierarchy that God has instituted. The wife 'needs male control' and 'needs chastisement' because this will allow true 'order and

³¹ Walter Thomas Johnson, *The Prophecy of William Langland* (Irvine: University of California Press, 1977), p.50.

³² See Angela Jane Weisl, 'Quiting Eve: violence against women in the *Canterbury Tales*', in *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. by Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), pp.115-36.

³³ Josie P. Campbell, 'The Idea of Order in the Wakefield Noah', *Chaucer Review* 10 (1979), p.80; Richard J. Daniels, 'Uxor Noah: a raven or a dove?', *Chaucer Review* 14 (1979), p.27; Maureen Fries, 'Feminae Populi: popular images of women in medieval literature', *Journal of Popular Culture* 14 (1980), pp.79-86

³⁴ Weisl, 'Quiting Eve', p.115.

³⁵ In, for example, I Timothy 2.12, I Corinthians 11.9 and Ephesians 5.24.

harmony in the human family' to be preserved.³⁶ The wound allows an ideal schema to be realised and maintained, eliminating potential threats to its structures. In the words of Marina Warner, medieval antifeminism comes to identify 'women's torn and broken flesh' with the suppression of 'all that is vile, lowly, corruptible'.³⁷

In terms of reading these texts as satire, by this reasoning the hieratic tendency should govern 'the countless wife-beating scenes' in misogynous satire.³⁸ According to Weisl and Campbell, the *Towneley Flood* and similar pieces should be treated as texts which use violence to enforce a firm system of definitions and values. When they represent injury in the course of mocking femininity, they are asserting the proper role that women should adopt. They are bringing into their portrayals what Eileen Power dubs the 'ideal of submission', forcefully stating that 'the medieval wife, like the dog' ought to 'lick the hand that smote her'.³⁹ Violence shows how power should be distributed between the sexes. If this is true, then it allies violence with the hieratic set of satiric processes. It suggests that wounding is being used to condemn women. It implies that the main purpose of injury in satire is to enable a woman to be assessed against her ideal form. Wounding is spelling out a firm ideal when it is enacted, displaying male agency and female passivity in their most unmistakable forms. This means that any deviations from this ideal can be brought into sharp focus. Any behaviour which contravenes this schema can be compared to it, and securely identified as a departure or a distortion. Violence becomes a tool in a judgmental process, transporting a definite criterion into the text against which the object can be measured. Consequently, the position of Weisl and other critics makes violence part of the hieratic strand, 'in which evils are recited with the hope of correcting them'.⁴⁰ Misogyny's calls for women to be 'beate and tost' support a hierarchy of values regarded as absolutely and infallibly correct.

There are, however, a number of difficulties with this conception of injury. The ideas

³⁶ Martin Stevens, 'Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays', *Speculum* 52 (1977), p.111; Mary P. Freier, 'Woman as Termagant in the Towneley Cycle', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 2 (1985), p.159.

³⁷ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: the myth and cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1990), pp.71, 58.

³⁸ Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: rhetoric, memory, violence* (Ithaca University Press, 1999), p.19.

³⁹ Eileen Power, *Medieval People* (London: Methuen, 1926), pp.124-5.

⁴⁰ *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland*, trans. and ed. by Traugott Lawler (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p.103.

on which it rests are at least partly open to dispute. Particularly debatable is the view of medieval culture which it presupposes. This style of reading assumes that the society of the Middle Ages was supportive of wife-beating, to the exclusion of any other position. In the course of Weisl's remarks, for instance, it is claimed that 'man's need to control women through violence' went 'primarily unquestioned' during the Middle Ages.⁴¹ Kate Millet likewise attributes the 'brutalities' of 'literary misogyny' to the wider 'cruelties and barbarities' of medieval 'patriarchy'.⁴² The whole of medieval culture is held to encourage violence against women. The support shown by satire is merely an extension of a wider consensus, part of a general acceptance that assaulting women was acceptable, even desirable.

This view of medieval culture has a large number of adherents: as J.A. Sharpe writes, one of the most 'basic assumptions' made about life in 'medieval and early modern times' is the unremitting 'brutality of domestic relations'.⁴³ Numerous studies assert that the Middle Ages roundly endorsed wife-beating. For example, Del Martin claims that 'physical cruelty' was 'institutionalized' in 'medieval times', and that support for such cruelty spanned the course of medieval society:

Squires and noblemen beat their wives as regularly as they beat their serfs. The peasants faithfully followed their lords' examples. The church sanctioned the subjection of women to their husbands "in everything".⁴⁴

Martin's generalisations are echoed by Georges Duby in his famous analysis of the medieval family, which states that 'the first duty of the head of the household was to watch over, punish, and if necessary kill his wife, sisters and daughters'.⁴⁵ Similar ideas are also outlined by Katherine Gravdal and Vern Bullough, for whom anti-female violence was 'naturalized' in the period.⁴⁶ A recent collection of essays dedicated to the issue of domestic violence in medieval culture reiterates the same

⁴¹ Weisl, 'Quiting Eve', p.117.

⁴² Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp.45-6.

⁴³ J. A. Sharpe, 'Domestic Homicide in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 24 (1981), pp.29-30.

⁴⁴ Del Martin, *Battered Wives* (San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1981), p.29.

⁴⁵ Georges Duby, 'The Aristocratic Households of Feudal France', in *A History of Private Life*, ed. by Phillipe Ariés and others, 3 vols (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987-90), II: *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. by Georges Duby, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (1988), p.77.

⁴⁶ Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: writing rape in medieval French literature and law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p.141; Vern L. Bullough, 'Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women', *Viator* 4 (1972), p.489.

argument.⁴⁷ Few analysts consider any alternative position, or detect any opposition or resistance to these tenets. In fact, Emily Detmer even claims that English society only grew 'sensitive about husbands beating their wives' at the turn of the seventeenth century: before this point, there existed only a general 'willingness to discipline rebellious women, sometimes brutally'.⁴⁸ It is widely assumed that medieval society was convinced that 'the rod is required' for women, and unanimous in its support for wife-beating. This belief underlies the hieratic reading of violence in antifeminist satire. For analysts of misogyny, injury must be read as dictatorial, because this is only view that existed in the period.

However, these observations are highly problematic. It is not that they are necessarily invalid or incorrect. There is undeniable evidence to suggest that violence against women was widely accepted in the Middle Ages, and in many areas of society. Several sources make this point clearly: canon law proclaims that wives should be held 'under the rod and in the power' of their husbands, while vernacular texts such as *Sawles Warde* (c.1200) compare disciplining 'te fulitoh wif' to suppressing all that is 'untohene ant rechelese' in the human 'seolf'.⁴⁹ There is no doubt that the Middle Ages did support and foster 'inhumane attitudes' towards women.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the question is whether this view can be fairly seen as the only one. It may not be entirely accurate to regard this position as the lone attitude in the Middle Ages, and therefore the sole view that satire can be expected to express. A recent essay by Barbara Hanawalt outlines a counter-position. Drawing equally on forensic and folkloric sources, Hanawalt concludes that 'indiscriminate violence' was deemed 'not manly' and accordingly discouraged: 'medieval English social norms limited patriarchal power by calling attention to responsibility, restraint, and good judgment'.⁵¹ In a separate study, Martha Brozyna notes that 'many popes and

⁴⁷ *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrall L. Price (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002).

⁴⁸ Emily Detmer, 'Civilizing Subordination: domestic violence and *The Taming of the Shrew*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997), p.273.

⁴⁹ Robert C. Palmer, 'Contexts of Marriage in Medieval England: evidence from the king's court c.1300', *Speculum* 59 (1984), p.50; *Sawles Warde: an early Middle English homily*, ed. by R.M. Wilson, Leeds School of English language texts and monographs 3 (Kendal: University of Leeds, 1938), p.166. See Julie Bond Hassel, *Choosing Not To Marry: women and autonomy in the Katherine Group* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp.95-9.

⁵⁰ Martin, *Battered Wives*, p.29.

⁵¹ Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Violence in the Domestic Milieu of Late Medieval England', in *Violence in Medieval Society*, ed. by Richard W. Kaeuper (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), pp.207, 214.

canonists were sympathetic to wives who found themselves in particularly sadistic marriages', listing Alexander II, Innocent III, Bernard of Parma and Henry of Segusio among the legislators who 'supported marriage separation on the grounds of cruelty'.⁵² At least in official quarters there is some degree of hostility to the practice of wife-beating. These precepts may not have stood unquestioned at all.

Perhaps surprisingly, such counter-ideals are present in texts that are designed to have a direct bearing on actual marriages. Vernacular preaching manuals and handbooks routinely instruct priests to condemn male parishioners for physically abusing their wives. Aggression is attacked in the strongest possible terms, as an act that will place the assailant in deadly sin. One instance of this occurs in Michel of Northgate's *Ayenbite of Inwyt* (1340). Michel ranks abuse of one's wife amongst the symptoms of 'wreþe', giving a vivid and wholly deprecatory sketch of a 'wreþuolle' man who mistreats 'his wyue': 'Vor þe man/ is oþerhuyl zuo out/ of his wytte: þet ha beat/ and smit/ and wyf/ and children/ and mayné. and brekþ potes/ and coppes/ ase ha were/ out of his wytte. and zuo he is'.⁵³ The corresponding passage in the *Book of Vices and Virtues* (c.1375) agrees that the man who would 'smyt and betep his wif' is 'oþerwhile wod'.⁵⁴ In the same manner, Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* (c.1400) sets living 'in chost and stryf/ Wyþ þy meyne and wyþ þy wyf' among the sins of 'wroth'.⁵⁵ Although Martin claims that the church was complicit in the physical abuse of wives, these texts suggest that accord within a household, rather than a constant readiness to castigate, was the overriding concern. Mirk even warns confessors not to share the details of a wife's confession with her husband, 'leste for þe penaunce sake/ Wo and wrapþe by-twene hem wake'.⁵⁶ The same message even makes its way into works of popular instruction: one of the adages collected in 'Proverbys of Howsholde-kepyng' (c.1530) states that 'thowe shalte bettyr chastise a

⁵² Martha A. Brozyna, 'Not Just a Family Affair: domestic violence and the ecclesiastical courts in late medieval Poland', in *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Isabel Davis and others, *International Medieval Research* 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), p.301.

⁵³ Dan Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyt*, ed. by Richard Morris, rev. by Pamela Gradon, EETS o.s. 23 (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.30.

⁵⁴ *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. by W. Nelson Francis, EETS o.s. 217 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p.25.

⁵⁵ John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. by E. Peacock, EETS o.s. 31 (London: Trübner and Co. 1868), p.45.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.50.

shrode wyfe with myrthe, then with strokes or smytyng'.⁵⁷

Interestingly, in the course of these condemnations, violence gains a meaning that is diametrically opposed to the functions outlined by Weisl and Duby. Attacks on women are often regarded as a disruption of proper arrangements. A famous passage in *Hali Meidhad* (c.1215-20) testifies to this. The author of the treatise presents husbands who 'beateð [...] ant busteð' their wives as destroyers, not champions, of correct order. In the text, physical attacks do not restore women to their rightful place, but push them into positions that are wholly inappropriate. The belligerent husband is said to treat his wife as 'his ibohte þrel' or 'as huler his hore', improperly transforming her into either a prostitute or slave.⁵⁸ Violence here is not conceived as a means of imposing or stabilising the true order, but as a threat to it. The same view underpins the remarks in the preaching manuals, albeit in a less dramatic form. Condemning abusive husbands as 'wod' and full of 'wrappe' also marks their violence as an affront to the way things should be, defining it as a contravention. As Hanawalt observes, 'marriage was a sacrament of the church [...] the position of patriarch required forbearance and responsibility': punishing a woman's transgression by violent means was in itself profoundly transgressive, violating the proper role that a husband should fulfil, and deviating from the correct form of marriage.⁵⁹

What is particularly interesting is that this suspicion of violence against women makes its way into the traditions of misogyny. Even the most canonical antifeminist texts warn against wounding females, conceiving it as a disruptive, rather than constructive, activity. This view appears in no less a piece than the *Roman de la Rose*. At one stage the character Ami or 'Friend' describes a man who believes it is necessary to 'berate and beat his wife'.⁶⁰ Ami portrays this abuse in copious detail: in Horgan's translation, 'he takes her there and then by the hair and pulls her and tugs her [...] he strikes her and beats her, flogs her and thrashes her'. However, this assault only makes the husband's own position less secure, not more so. He 'seriously imperils his life; indeed, whether sleeping or waking, he should go in fear lest she

⁵⁷ *Political, religious, and love poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 15 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and co., 1903), p.58.

⁵⁸ *Hali Meidhad*, ed. by Bella Millet, EETS o.s. 284 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.15.

⁵⁹ Hanawalt, 'Violence in the Domestic Milieu', pp.202, 207.

⁶⁰ 'Chastie sa fame e bat': De Lorris and de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, III, p.82, 8457.

take her revenge by having him poisoned or cut to pieces'. It is no longer possible for the husband to predict his wife's actions, whether she will murder him or 'decide to run away'.⁶¹ Far from serving to bind the woman to her ordained role, 'keeping women under control' and 'in check', violence drives the woman to acquire greater mobility.⁶² Andreas Capellanus' *De amore* (1180s), which is now recognised as a primarily satiric and 'funny' work and not 'a serious code of conduct', also describes the futility of such violence.⁶³ *De amore* straightforwardly asserts that even if a man keeps his wife 'tied hand and foot, and applies all manner of torture to her, he could not [...] diminish her arrogance of mind'.⁶⁴ The same point is made in the highly sarcastic *Quinze Joyes de Mariage* (c.1430), translated into English as *The fyftene Ioyes of maryage* (c1507). It tells of a typical husband who 'falleth Ialouse in a rage [...] than wyll he bete her bytterly and curse/ Wherby the werkes maketh he moche worse'.⁶⁵

In each of these texts, violence does not serve to protect a true hierarchy. It does not shore up the proper distribution of power between the sexes. On the contrary, it actively diminishes the husband's authority. Implementing violence leaves the husband at the mercy of his wife, as he is made to fear her, or is left unable to control her. The order which allocates him power is profoundly upset by his aggression. These ideas are not confined to continental literature. At several points they spill over into English satire. An English equivalent of de Meun's enraged husband is featured in *The Owl and the Nightingale*: if Neil Cartlidge's dating of the poem is correct, then this episode may even be derived from the *Roman*.⁶⁶ The Owl tells of a mistreated wife who 'oft hwan heo noȝt ne misdeþ,/ heo haueþ þe fust in hire teþ': apparently such abuse may only yield one result, 'la, Godd hit wot! heo nah iweld,/ þah heo hine makie kukeweld'.⁶⁷ Once again, assaulting women seems to diminish male authority,

⁶¹ Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.143-4. In Langlois' edition of the *Roman*, these lines occur at III, pp.118, 120, ll.9361-64, 9403-5.

⁶² Bullough, 'Medieval Medical and Scientific Views of Women', p.496.

⁶³ Larry D. Benson, 'Courtly Love and Chivalry in the Later Middle Ages', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: recent essays*, ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden: Archon Books, 1984), p.239.

⁶⁴ Andreas Capellanus, *On Love*, trans. by P.G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982), p.315.

⁶⁵ *The fyftene Ioyes of maryage* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, n.d.), f.Civ (STC 15258).

⁶⁶ See Neil Cartlidge, 'The Date of the *Owl and the Nightingale*', *Medium Ævum* 65 (1996), pp.230-47.

⁶⁷ *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ed. by Neil Cartlidge (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), p.130; 1538-44.

rather than to protect or enhance it.⁶⁸

Evidently there is a marked tendency in misogynous satire to deny that inflicting pain on women has any merit or advantage. This recalls Rüdiger Schnell's warning that 'the image of women and marriage presented in dogmatic, speculative discourse' cannot be accepted as 'the single or dominant image of women and marriage in the Middle Ages'.⁶⁹ Satire is not completely bound to a theoretical, prescriptive understanding of women's place, of the kind outlined by Duby and Martin. It also shows an awareness of more practical considerations. In relation to satire, this begins to suggest that wounding may play a role beyond the purely hieratic. If attacking women is held in low regard, it means that injury may be capable of undercutting authority as well as bolstering it. The presence of these values in medieval culture, the fact that they are accessible to medieval satire against women, begins to suggest that a more festive element may occupy instances of wounding in antifeminism.

To summarise what has been said so far, even this brief review of medieval attitudes towards antifeminist violence gives some idea of the issue's complexity. It is clear that assumptions regarding a supposed imperative 'to watch over, punish, and if necessary kill' women should not be allowed to govern readings of misogynous texts.⁷⁰ It would be rash to dismiss these notions outright, as there are several indications of their relevance, but it would be equally reckless to suppose that they monopolise the texts. The discourse of antifeminism, and the broader behavioural standards of medieval society, display enough opposition to such militancy to render wounding the female body an ambiguous act. Therefore, it is best at this stage of the present inquiry to regard beating women as dually interpretable, simultaneously subject to approbation and reprobation by misogyny and by medieval English culture alike. Injury in antifeminist literature cannot be seen as univocal, but a practice occupied by a number of meanings. It is coloured by what Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski calls a larger 'ideological impasse' within the 'debate structure that governs

⁶⁸ Even the *Decameron* questions the efficacy of beating women: for instance, in VIII.3 Calandrino only humiliates himself by viciously attacking his wife, silencing her attempts to disprove the lies he has been told by two tricksters. See also Millicent Marcus, 'Misogyny as Misreading: a gloss on *Decameron* VIII.7', *Stanford Italian Review* 4 (1984), pp.23-40.

⁶⁹ Rüdiger Schnell, 'The Discourse on Marriage in the Middle Ages', trans. by Andrew Shields, *Speculum* 73 (1998), p.786.

⁷⁰ Duby, 'Aristocratic Households of Feudal France', p.77.

many texts dealing with women'.⁷¹

This is certainly the fairest approach to take, since English antifeminist satire exhibits a myriad of contradictory attitudes towards violence. One piece in which this plurality becomes particularly acute is Chaucer's celebrated *Prologue of the Wife of Bath* (c.1392-5).⁷² Arthur Lindley has justly described this piece as 'one of the most ambiguous, dialogic texts in our literature': this ambivalence directly transmits itself to the depiction of injury in the text.⁷³ As a piece that alternately interrogates and perpetuates antifeminist conventions, the *Prologue* is particularly illustrative of injury's range of meanings: it brings into sharp focus the broad significance of wounding in misogynous literature.⁷⁴ This is best shown by the climax of the text, in which the narrator Alisoun is beaten unconscious by her fifth husband, 'Jankyn clerk' (III.548). The Wife relates this episode in extensive detail:

He up stirte as dooth a wood leoun,
And with his fest he smoot me on the heed,
That in the floor I lay as I were deed
And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wolde han fled his way,
Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde (III.794-9).

Almost immediately, the assault creates interpretive problems, complicating the exact meaning of violence against women. In the lines which follow the attack, the *Prologue* appears to assign a confidently hieratic, definitive property to Jankyn's blow, of the kind described by Bullough and Duby. Firstly, beating directly increases the docility and compliance of the Wife. Immediately after she is 'smoot', Alisoun becomes 'as kynde/ As any wyfe from Denmark unto Ynde/ And also trew' to Jankyn (III.823-5). It would seem that Jankyn's assault has restored the Wife to her correct

⁷¹ Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 'Jean le Fevre's *Livre de Leesce*: praise or blame of women?', *Speculum* 69 (1994), p.705.

⁷² *Canterbury Tales*, III.1-856, in *Riverside Chaucer*, pp.105-16. Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

⁷³ Arthur Lindley, "'Vanysshed was this Daunce, He Nyste Where": Alisoun's absence in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale', *English Literary History* 59 (1992), p.2.

⁷⁴ On the *Prologue* as a continuation of stock antifeminist conceits, see William Matthews, 'The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect', *Viator* 5 (1974), pp.413-43, David S. Reid, 'Crocodilian Humour: a discussion of Chaucer's Wife of Bath', *Chaucer Review* 4 (1969), pp.73-89, and S.H. Rigby, 'The Wife of Bath, Christine de Pizan, and the Medieval Case for Women', *Chaucer Review* 35 (2000) pp.133-65. On the *Prologue* as a challenge to anti-female conventions, see Walter C. Long, 'The Wife as Moral Revolutionary', *Chaucer Review* 20 (1986), pp.273-84, and Susan K. Hagen, 'The Wife of Bath: Chaucer's inchoate experiment', in *Rebels and Rivals: the contestive spirit in the Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Susanna Freer Fein and others, *Studies in Medieval Culture* no. 29 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991), pp. 105-24.

station in the conventional hierarchy, made her resemble the acquiescent 'mulieres' championed by Ephesians 5. 22, 'subject to their husbands'. The phrase 'as any wyf' is particularly suggestive of integration into an ideal framework. Alisoun begins the *Prologue* as the very 'embodiment of experience' in Charles Muscatine's description, as a spokesperson for life outside any codification: however, her use of this phrase after she is struck indicates that she now considers herself a member of a generalised category, upholding an abstract function.⁷⁵ As Hope Weissman summarises: 'the Wife, in struggling to free herself from imprisoning images, has merely transferred her cell'.⁷⁶ Stephen Knight likewise comments that Alisoun's capacity for rebellion has been 'feebly extinguished' by the end of the *Prologue*, her wound successfully enclosing her within her rightful, subservient rank.⁷⁷

Secondly, Jankyn's 'fest' imposes a precise shape on Alisoun. The attack imprints itself permanently upon the Wife, damaging her ears: she complains that, 'he smoot me so that I was deaf' (III.668). From the very opening of the *Canterbury Tales* this wound operates as a mark which confers meaning on Alisoun. Significantly, the injury is the first detail given about her in the *General Prologue*: 'A good WIF was ther OF biside BATHE;/ But she was somdel deaf, and that was scathe' (I.445-6). The injury to Alisoun's ear is the trait by which she is introduced, a quality to which all others are secondary. This wound, imposed on her by her husband in a successful bid to dominate and contain her, has become her defining feature, the insignia which identifies her. She is primarily what Jankyn has made her. In Miri Rubin's phrase, Alisoun has been mastered and produced by the 'masculine principles within medieval culture', 'made and written, receiving marks like those of pen on pliant wax'.⁷⁸ She is in every sense now subject to masculine rulership, which has even constructed the basis of her identity.

Thirdly, the beating also imposes itself on Alisoun's discourse, moulding and

⁷⁵ Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition: a study in style and meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p.213.

⁷⁶ Hope Phyllis Weissman, 'Antifeminism and Chaucer's Characterization of Women', in *Geoffrey Chaucer: a collection of original essays*, ed. by George D. Economou (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), p.110.

⁷⁷ S. Knight, 'Chaucer and the Sociology of Literature', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer II* (1980), p.34.

⁷⁸ Miri Rubin, 'The Body, Whole and Vulnerable, in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Bodies and Disciplines: intersections of literature and history in fifteenth-century England*, ed. by Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p.23.

defining it. The *Prologue* is a notoriously disordered text. Derek Pearsall notes that no other section of the *Tales* 'is richer in texture or in contradiction', while an early commentator less charitably remarks 'Womans Tongue is like a River,/ Set it once going, it will go for ever'.⁷⁹ For Knight the *Prologue* has an almost improvisational quality, 'dealing with human experience' that has 'not yet found its self-expressive mode'.⁸⁰ Certainly it seems to lack any internal logic. Although the Wife nominally aims to 'speke of wo that is in mariage', her digressions on such subjects as astrology and wine threaten to overwhelm this remit: at one stage Alisoun breaks off sharply to remark 'But now, sire, lat me se, what I shal seyn?', having supposedly forgotten her initial theme (III.3, 585).⁸¹ It is even unclear for whose benefit she is speaking, as she moves from addressing the 'lordynges' around her to all 'wise wyves, that kan understonde', before eventually claiming that for 'every man this tale I telle' (III.4, 224, 413).⁸² Even her forceful denial that promiscuity is immoral, which is the main thrust of her speech, is heedlessly capsized in the single line, 'allas! that evere love was synne!' (III.614). As H. Marshall Leicester summarises: 'what comes into focus in the Wife's account is an image of her life as manifold [...] absolute hierarchies of function or importance do not exist'.⁸³ Yet despite this unruliness, Jankyn's assault functions in the Wife's speech as something like an architectural force, impressing form and unity on to her monologue. Appearing in lines 175, 511, 668 and 712, before being fully recounted in lines 794-810, the beating is the pivot of Alisoun's oratory, the linchpin to which her words are fixed. The continual resurfacing of this event curbs the spontaneity and profusion of her discourse. Jankyn retains his grip on Alisoun purely by virtue of his brutality. Just as his blows have permanently marked her body, causing her to complain 'feele I on my ribbes al by rewe/ And evere shal unto myn endyng day', his attack has left an indelible imprint on her voice, sculpting and controlling it (III.506-7).

⁷⁹ Pearsall, *Canterbury Tales*, p.81; Richard Brathwait, *Comments, in 1665, upon Chaucer's Tales of the Miller and the Wife of Bath*, ed. by C.F.E. Spurgeon (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1901), p.70.

⁸⁰ Stephen Knight, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.99.

⁸¹ On this habit, 'the verbal corollary of her "wandrynge by the weye"', see John A. Alford, 'The Wife of Bath Versus the Clerk of Oxford: what their rivalry means', *Chaucer Review* 21 (1986), p.122.

⁸² See Helen Phillips, *An Introduction to the Canterbury Tales* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p.95.

⁸³ H. Marshall Leicester, *The Disenchanted Self: representing the subject in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp.99-100.

These details suggest that Jankyn's blow is designed to carry out the hieratic functions described by Duby and Weisl. It restores Alisoun to her proper, subservient place within an organising structure, even etching her husband's authority directly on to her body and speech. As a satiric device, Jankyn's violence thus appears to be largely hieratic. It is a method by which a conceptual hierarchy can be made manifest, as its very execution locks the two spouses into their correct positions, establishing male command and female deference. Because of this, it permits firm judgments to be made. Once Alisoun has been forced to conform to the 'ideal of submission' her previous behaviour gains a new value in relation to it. Her activity when she was 'yong and ful of ragerye/ Stibourn and strong' becomes a visible deviation from the ideal, and is thus securely condemnable in its name (III.455-6). Jankyn's punch brings a firm criterion into the text, a point against which actions can be measured and denounced. From the moment that Jankyn 'smoot me so that I was deaf', the text assumes a hieratic tenor, promoting a single order as rightful and discrediting any alternative to it (III.668).

However, certain features of Jankyn's onslaught invite a somewhat different reading. Alisoun's wound possesses several traits which are broadly classifiable as festive. Among these is the fact that Jankyn's violence has the immediate result of diminishing his own status. One indication of this appears even as he attacks Alisoun, when he is said to 'up stirte as dooth a wood leoun' in order to strike her. In its context this simile has special resonance. Earlier in the *Prologue*, while the Wife is recounting some of the imprecations which men have made against women, she suddenly breaks off to interject: 'Who peynted the leon, tel me who?' (III.692). Her comment makes reference to an Aesopian fable, which Caxton later designated 'the Fable of a man and of a lyon which had stryf to gyder [...] for to wete and knowe/ whiche of them bothe was more stronger'. The key section of the fable reads:

The man sayd/ that he was stronger than the lyon/ And for to haue his sayenge veryfyed/ he shewed to the lyon a pycour/ where as a man had vycory ouer a lyon /As the pycour of Sampson the stronge/ Thenne sayd the lyon to the man/ yf the lyon coude make pycour good and trewe/ hit had be herin paynted/ how the lyon had had vycorye of the man.⁸⁴

The animal's critique of the 'pycour of Sampson' suggests that all claims to natural

⁸⁴ William Caxton, *Here begynneth the book of the subtil historyes and fables of Esope which were translated out of Frensshe in to Englysshe* (London: William Caxton, 1483), ff.74v-75 (STC 175).

superiority must rest on narcissism, a generalisation which includes his own hypothetical 'pyctour [...] the lyon coude make'. The lion is thus an emblem of demystified discourse, a figure which represents all systems of gradation as basically self-serving. In the *Prologue*, Jankyn becomes leonine as soon as he 'with his fest [...] smoot' Alisoun. This comparison suggests that Jankyn has undermined his position through his attack. He has lost any claim to be upholding a supremely valid system by striking Alisoun. It is implied that his aggression has cast doubt on his precedence over his wife, propelling him into a space in which his primacy is questionable, in which the 'maistrie, al the soveraynetee' is not necessarily his (III.818).

The Wife's own conduct in the beating episode explains why this should occur. For the *Prologue*, violence is by no means a device which is accessible only to the dominant party. The power to injure is available to the Wife herself, and duly exercised by her against her husband. It is in fact Alisoun who initiates the fight, who establishes that the couple's encounter will occur in these terms, by striking Jankyn 'with my fest [...] on the cheke' (III.792). The ability to injure, and to receive injury, is therefore common to both spouses. Rather than simply cementing the pattern of dominance and subjection between the couple, the brawl works rather like the 'cudgel-play' encountered in the previous chapter: it is also a neutral site of convergence, attributing the same powers to both participants. It negates all given relationships between the two. The *Prologue* depicts this evenness in a highly literal fashion: both characters drop to the ground during their combat, each coming to occupy the same level as the other. Alisoun lies 'in the floor [...] as I were deed' after she is struck, while Jankyn also kneels 'faire adoun' at her request (III.803). Violence has caused both to be suspended at a single depth. This sense of equalising, of establishing parity and equilibrium, continues throughout their battle: Alisoun punches Jankyn a second time specifically to balance his attack against her, telling him 'theef, thus muchel am I wreke' (III.809). Moreover, the aftermath of the fight, as either spouse has harmed the other, is marked by diplomacy and concession: 'atte laste, with muchel care and wo,/ We fille acorded by us selven two' (III.811-2). For Alisoun, wounding possesses a markedly festive dimension, permitting free negotiation as well as hieratic stratification.

The tension between the hieratic and festive import of the wound is highly significant, with implications well beyond the *Prologue*. These same sets of concerns are equally locatable in other pieces of English antifeminist satire. The hieratic properties of wounding are articulated with particular force in a piece preserved in Bodleian MS Engl. Poet. e.I (c.1480):

An adamant stone it is not frangebyll
With no thyng but with mylke of a gett;
So a woman to refrayne it is not posybyll
With wordes, except with a staffe pou hyr intrett.⁸⁵

Another lyric from the same source makes a comparable statement:

There were three wold be beten, three wold be beten there were:
A myll, a stokfish, and a woman.⁸⁶

These clearly share the *Prologue*'s emphasis on the definitive power of injury. In both of these lyrics, beating serves to maintain a woman's proper locale in a larger schema, sustaining her ideal rank. This outlook is particularly visible in each carol's selection of analogues and similes. In the second poem, the comparison of women to 'a myll' implies that, like a piece of machinery constructed to perform a particular function, women are predicated on one exclusive purpose. They are equipped with a single valence which must be continually maintained through beatings. Injury pins them into their ideal place and operation. Similarly, when the first poem likens 'adamant stone' to an obstinate woman, this recalls the description of the godless in Zacharias 7.12, who 'made their heart as the adamant stone lest they should hear the law': the Vulgate text even contains the word 'adamantem', stating 'cor suum posuerunt adamantem ne audirent legem'. This allusion places the unruly woman not only in opposition to her husband but in conflict with the very 'law and the words which the Lord of hosts sent': her obstinacy violates the divine word and law, dissenting from the supreme truth which orders all things. The wound thus becomes the instrument of reality's underlying code, safeguarding it by 'refrayning' seditious females. These poems exploit the same hieratic logic evident in the *Prologue*. Just as Jankyn resolves Alisoun into a 'trewe [...] wyf' by injuring her, so these pieces claim that violence can force women into their proper category. Wounding again is the means by which the ideal order asserts itself, bringing into the satire a standard against which women

⁸⁵ 'Nova, nova, sawe yow ever such', 46-9.

⁸⁶ 'Herfor and therfor and therfor I came', 9-10, in *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, ed. by Celia Sisam and Kenneth Sisam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.466. Compare 'There be iij thyngs take gret betyng.', in *A Common-Place Book of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: Trübner, 1886), p.13.

can be appraised.

However, the festive tendency is equally part of the discourse in which the English poems are situated. Alisoun is not the only woman who has access to wounding. Women's capacity for physical aggression is firmly embedded in the logic of misogyny, forming a substantial part of its network of ideas and themes. For instance, Jerome refers to wives as perpetrators and instigators of violence, citing the case of a woman who 'killed her husband for the sake of an adulterer', and claiming that women cause 'parents to take up arms against their children [...] on account of the rape of one wretched woman Europe and Asia are involved in a ten years war'.⁸⁷ In Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c.1350), women are more than capable of equalling male belligerence.⁸⁸ In the sixth tale of the ninth day a woman finds her husband with a prostitute, and responds by raking 'him with her nails, clawing his face all over before seizing him by the hair and dragging him round the floor'.⁸⁹ In English, Lydgate's version of the goliardic poem *De conjuge non ducenda* (c.1200) states that wives 'every day [...] gynneth a bataile', rendering 'wedlok [...] a martirdome and a contynuaunce/ Of sorowe ay lastyng, a deedly violence'.⁹⁰

The violent nature of women gains special prominence in a rash of fifteenth-century carols. The injury of men by their quarrelsome spouses is the central theme of these. In one lyric dating from c.1440 the husband-narrator laments that 'If I aske our dame bred,/ She taketh a staf and breketh myn hed [...] if I aske our dame flesh,/ She breketh myn hed with a dish'.⁹¹ Elsewhere a similarly unfortunate husband bemoans: 'If I sey ought of hyr but good,/ She loke on me as she war wod,/ And wyll me clought about the hod'.⁹² One of the carols from the Bodleian MS makes a similar complaint: 'Dyspleas nott yowr wyvys whom that ye have;/ For whan thei be angry

⁸⁷ Jerome, 'Against Jovinianus', p.385.

⁸⁸ For a full discussion of the issue, see Marilyn Miriel, *A Rhetoric of the Decameron* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003), pp.147-59.

⁸⁹ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, p.722.

⁹⁰ Lydgate, 'Payne and Sorowe of Evyll Maryage', 66, 73-4, in *Minor Poems*, pp.458-9. On the Latin text see Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997-2002), II: *The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250-1500* (2002), p.444.

⁹¹ 'How, hey! It is none les:/ I dare not sayn when she saith Pes!', 15-6, 11-2, in *Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, pp.440-1.

⁹² 'Care away, away, away/ Care away for evermore', 6-9, in *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. by Rosell Hope Robbins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p.52.

or sumwhatt dysplesyd,/ Thei wyl gyffe a man a mark'.⁹³ The women in these pieces do not only share Alisoun's proclivity for violence, but also reproduce the manner in which she employs it. The important thing to note is that in each of these pieces injury works as a rejoinder. In the first lyric the beatings enacted by the 'dame' are direct responses to her husband's aims, answering his requests for 'bred' or meat. The same is true of the other two examples: in either lyric wounding the husband is again a reaction, as it is his behaviour or speech that causes the wife to grow 'dysplesyd' or 'wod' and to strike him. The three poems thus present female violence more as an act of negotiation than of domination. Since each blow is a form of counter-expression, it carries with it an implicit acknowledgement of a position beyond its own. The 'marks' which women inflict only proclaim their position in relation to another agency: they can never lose sight of the other agency's presence because this is the basis of their own existence. For these women violence is innately festive and dialogic, seeking to respond rather than 'to refrayne'. It does not aim to subjugate other positions to its own, lacking this hieratic ambition, as its very nature compels it to recognise other subjectivities.

The York play of the Flood (c.1477) creates an even more forceful association between female violence and negotiation.⁹⁴ Like its counterpart in the Towneley cycle, the play features a bitter argument between Noah and his shrewish wife: he informs her that 'al this worlde shuld synke for synne', but she remains unconvinced, branding him 'nere woode' (36, 91). At one stage Noah attempts to conclude their discussion by asserting that his position embodies 'Goddis wille withowten doutte' (118). According to him, no room remains for further disputation, no 'doutte'. She replies with her fists: 'What, wenys thou so for to go qwitte?/ Nay, be my trouthe, thou getis a clowte' (119-20). Her employment of violence, as she administers a 'clowte' to her husband, is specifically designed to sustain their debate. Her blow reopens the concerns he has attempted to finalise. For Noah's wife damaging her husband's body is a means of ensuring continued engagement in dialogue. Her actions parallel those of the wives of the lyrics and the Wife of Bath, as again the wound is used to initiate open consultation: as Alisoun describes the brawl she orchestrates between Jankyn and herself, 'with muchel care and wo,/ We fille acorded

⁹³ 'Nova, nova, sawe yow ever such', 51-3.

⁹⁴ *Play IX*, in *The York Plays*, ed. by Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), pp.83-91.

by us selven two' (III.811-2).

The collapse of precedence which occurs in the *Prologue* is also central to other pieces of satire which include scenes of violent confrontation. One example is a carol from the late fifteenth century, which features a character ironically named 'Margret meke'. At one stage Margret boasts that:

I know no man þat is a-lyve,
Pat gevith me II strokis, bvt he haue V:
I am not afferd,
Thowgh he haue a berde.⁹⁵

By means of her violence, Margret pronounces her indifference towards any feature capable of marking distinction between the sexes. This attitude is encapsulated by her disregard for her opponent's 'berde', an obvious badge of masculinity, and one which she purports to ignore when perpetrating her assaults. As in the *Prologue*, the dissimilarity between man and woman, on which the primacy of one over the other is predicated, is rendered marginal and discountable during the exchange of 'strokis'. In another lyric which relates 'a stryfe,/ Betwex an old man and hys wyfe', the beard again makes an appearance, this time as the very focus of the woman's attack.⁹⁶ At one stage of their battle, the woman seizes her spouse 'by the berd so fast,/ Tyll both hys eyn on watyr gan brast' (5-6). As well as displaying further contempt for this emblem of maleness, the wife's attack effectively feminises the man, causing tears to 'brast' from 'both hys eyn'. Medieval texts generally code tearfulness as a female attribute: the *Roman de la Rose*, for instance, insists that 'all women have the power to weep well in any situation'.⁹⁷ Along similar lines, Liz Herbert McAvoy notes the prominence of 'tears' in medieval female mysticism, and links this to the 'contemporary Aristotelian belief' that women inhabited 'an unsealed body [...] characterised by blood-loss, lactation and weeping'.⁹⁸ Drawing such behaviour from the man creates similitude between him and his wife, eliminating the distance between the sexes. Again violence leads to a state of festive parity.

⁹⁵ 'Hoow, gossip myne, gossip myn,/ Whan will we go to þe wyne', 91-5, in *Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems*, p.108.

⁹⁶ 'Hey howe, selymen, God helpe yowe', in *Songs and Carols*, p.51.

⁹⁷ 'Chascune est assez maniere/ De bien plourer en quelque place': De Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, IV, (1922), p.17, 13368-9.

⁹⁸ Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2004), p.80.

In these particular texts misogynous satire appears to be directly undermining and devaluing the 'ideal of submission' identified by Power. The pieces cited above depict a reality in which the 'subjection of women to their husbands' is unattainable.⁹⁹ It becomes purely an abstract paragon with no foundation in authentic existence. The ideal is made to appear flimsy and unrealistic, existing in a context which is intrinsically disposed to exceed and resist its strictures. These pieces of satire, by making a vehicle of male command available to women, display a festive bias against any force that attempts to impose a single code, order and authority on to existence.

Some provisional conclusions may be drawn regarding the position of violence in the logic of antifeminism. On the one hand, there is a clear insistence that violence is a hieratic mechanism: English satire echoes Boccaccio's view that 'the rod' keeps women from stepping 'beyond their permitted bounds'.¹⁰⁰ Injury makes manifest a definite criterion against which other forms of feminine behaviour can be assessed and censured. However, antifeminist satire also gives free rein to the festive conception of violence. Repeatedly it allows wounding to cancel the imbalance of power between men and women, rather than simply reinforce it. Time and again injury functions as an intersection, a point at which the two sexes may confront one another and stage a form of conference. The ideal is therefore not sovereign in the poems, its command not innate and indissoluble: it is open to challenges from other powers beyond its range of control. Aggression may convey order in antifeminist satire, but it also renders that order vulnerable.

It seems as though these deployments of violence straddle the two attitudes towards wounding females which are identified by Martin and Duby on one side, and by Hanawalt and Brozyna on the other. While convinced that blows to the female body can transmit proper order and value, antifeminist discourse also denies that these actions can automatically claim total legitimacy. By granting wives equal access to the wound, by allowing women to confront this form of coercion in its own terms, the tradition indicates that male violence is not in itself indisputably veridical. Rather, injury to females takes place on a neutral plane, one on which the directives it communicates can be questioned, discounted and even overridden. The satiric texts

⁹⁹ Martin, *Battered Wives*, p.29.

¹⁰⁰ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, p.722.

do present violence as regulatory, as Duby and Martin describe; yet at the same time they refuse to award it any intrinsic authority, recalling Hanawalt's assertion that 'medieval English social norms' demanded 'restraint' rather than belligerence from husbands.

Thus the satires, with their inherent disposition to flirt between the didactic and comedic modes, radically problematise injury. In each case, they assign it two contradictory roles. It comes to enforce an order, working to support a single network of categories and roles, and buttressing ideals that such a network regards as correct. Yet at the same time it opens up a festive arena, in which negotiation and confrontation may be staged, and for which no single position is automatically deemed truthful. Injury in antifeminist satire latches on to two separate functions, each of which is based in ideas circulating in medieval society at large.

However, matters are complicated even further by the presence of an additional set of functions in antifeminist wounding. Misogyny attributes a third distinct group of meanings to violence, one which is perhaps even more important than the two already cited, since it places wounding at the very centre of the discourse. In essence, there is a visible and widespread tendency in the satires to regard injury as a force directly linked with antifeminist language. Throughout the antifeminist corpus, wounding and misogynous speech are associated. Numerous texts recognise some form of kinship between the two, some even treating them as interchangeable terms.

As an example of how this conflation is constructed, one of the lyrics from the Bodleian MS proves particularly illustrative. In a stanza quoted earlier, this piece claims that 'a woman to refrayne it is not posybyll/ With wordes, except with a staffe thou hyr intrett'.¹⁰¹ In these lines the lyric openly presents violence and misogynous language as homologous. Its main point is that beating can take the place of any 'wordes' designed 'to refrayne [...] a woman'. The 'staffe', it stipulates, can be employed as a direct substitute for verbal censure. Antifeminist language and injury are therefore directly exchangeable for one another, each able to fulfil the other's purpose. One is more effective than the other, but in terms of their substance they are

¹⁰¹ 'Nova, nova, sawe yow ever such', 48-9.

equivalent. This affinity is underscored by the phrase 'with a staffe thou hyr intrett'. By using the word 'intrett' to describe injuring a woman the poem again posits antifeminist violence as an analogue of derogatory speech. Blows become conceivable in the same terms as language, as the same vocabulary is applicable to both. The carol doubly implies that misogynous violence and misogynous language are aligned and interconnected. Wounding seems to be bound up with antifeminist 'wordes', deriving much of its significance from this second term.

The Bodleian carol is far from an isolated or anomalous example of this identification. A further, more detailed version of the same idea occurs in the monologue of Godfrey Gobylyue, from Stephen Hawes' long allegorical poem *The Passetyme of Pleasure* (1505-6).¹⁰² Gobylyue is unequivocally an agent of antifeminist discourse. He is unflinching in his denunciations of women, swearing that 'I can fynde none that is good and meke/ For all are shrewes in the worlde aboute' (3549-50). To corroborate his views, he recounts an anecdote in which 'the famous Vyrghyle' takes revenge on a woman who has humiliated him.¹⁰³ Virgil begins his plot by casting a spell which will extinguish every fire in Rome; next he uses his sorcery to castigate the woman:

He at her buttockes set a brennyng cole
No fyre there was but at her ars hole [...]
All about Rome dyde fetche theyr fyre therat
One of an other myght no fyre get (3716-21).

The woman is forced to endure both the pain of having her body scorched, and the degradation of being lit up for public display, as the people of Rome use her to light their own tapers and torches. In these lines violence and Gobylyue's own antifeminist satire become inextricably enmeshed. Setting light to the woman's 'ars' is explicitly a form of satirising her. It is intended to exhibit her treachery, to warn 'euery man' how the woman 'with shame [...] her loue rewarded': in much the same way Godfrey aims to 'scole' young men with such revelations as 'Lete not thy lady of thyn herte be rother/ Whan thou arte gone she wyll soone haue another' (3706, 3725, 3740-1). Moreover, the very fact that the author of the *Aeneid* perpetrates this assault identifies it with Gobylyue's rhetoric. Virgil is a figure of great significance in the *Passetyme*.

¹⁰² Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. by William Edward Mead, EETS o.s. 173 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928). Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

¹⁰³ On the early versions of this story, see Maurice Delbouille, *Le lai d'Arioste de Henri d'Andeli* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1951), pp.30-5.

Earlier in his narrative, Hawes honours Virgil as a founder of all poetic language, as the pioneer who 'claryfyed [...] the well of fruytfulnesse' for his successors to 'attaste' (1160-1). More than merely an author, he has fashioned the very material from which verse is constituted. All poetry in effect originates from him, a rule which must necessarily include Hawes' own work and Gobylyue's speech within it. Furthermore, Virgil's ability to damage the female body is defined as an extension of his poetic skill. His incantation is described as an 'art' or a 'crafte', terms which are as relevant to poetry as to enchantment: in the *House of Fame*, for instance, Chaucer declares 'here art poetical be shewed [...] I do no diligence/ To shew craft, but o sentence'.¹⁰⁴ By means of these suggestions, the *Passetyme* claims the disfigurement of the Roman woman as the prototype of Gobylyue's satire. Godfrey's statements are formed from material which was used by its originator to mutilate an actual female body, and for precisely the same ends.

Gobylyue's speech and the Bodleian lyric share a common comprehension of injury. Both of these avowedly antifeminist texts make an effort to claim violence against women as an organ of their own processes, creating parallels between beating and the production of their statements. Clearly, injury is given a third function by antifeminism, one that cannot immediately be reduced to the meanings previously identified: it is made concomitant with misogynous discourse itself. Violence against women is not identified with language as a whole, but with antifeminist language in particular. It is claimed as a continuation of the discourse's own performance, its own imposition of terms and definitions on to women. Since this is a major determinant of the status of wounding in the satires, it is necessary for the present inquiry to address this third set of implications, and attempt to uncover the lines of reasoning which make it possible.

The *Prologue of the Wife of Bath* does much to reveal the rationale which underlies this association. The *Prologue* contains many of the same ideas which inform the *Passetyme* and the Bodleian carol. Jankyn the clerk is no less a representative of antifeminist discourse than Gobylyue. He possesses a so-called 'book of wikked wyves' which he religiously pores 'nyght and day', studying its contents whenever

¹⁰⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The House of Fame*, 1095-1100, ed. by John M. Fyler, in *Riverside Chaucer*, p.361.

'he hadde leyser and vacacioun/ From oother worldly occupacioun' (III.685, 669, 683-4). This tome is a repository of traditional misogyny, containing Map's 'Valerie' along with work by 'tertulan' and 'a cardinal, that highte seint jerome' (III.671-6). It also quotes the customary parade of archetypal villainesses, from 'eva' and Delilah to Hercules' 'dianyre' (III.715-25). Not only does Jankyn absorb antifeminist discourse from his book, there is a strong indication that it is the only knowledge of women he has. Mary Caruthers points out that his age, a mere 'twenty wynter oold', implies that he is unaware of a reality beyond scholarly types: he is 'all "auctoritee" and no "experience"', lacking any information that may disprove or invalidate his reading (III.600).¹⁰⁵ His stance towards women seems to be wholly conditioned by antifeminist literature.

The tradition which is upheld by Jankyn gains through him a firm connection to aggression. Alisoun's first reference to Jankyn details his fondness for domestic abuse:

And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,
 Whan that he wolde han my *bele chose*;
 That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,
 He koude wyne agayn my love anon (III.509-12).

In these lines Jankyn treats language and wounding as complementary forces. Both are methods by which he can control Alisoun, and the effects of each bolster those of the other. For Jankyn, beating his wife differs little from 'glosing' her, as both acts have a common motivation, the domination or 'wynning' of Alisoun. Like the narrator of the Bodleian lyric, he sees 'staffe' and 'intrett' as transposable terms. Moreover, this fusion of language and violence does not only apply to Jankyn's individual voice: the entire antifeminist canon is implicated in these two couplets. Peggy Knapp and Carolyn Dinshaw have each pointed out that the word 'glose' in l. 509 is polysemous, that 'this telling line' is loaded with 'potential implications'.¹⁰⁶ The *Middle English Dictionary* bears this out, giving three principal definitions of glose: 'to comment on, interpret, explain', 'to obscure the truth of', and 'to use fair words, talk smoothly or courteously'. On the face of it, the third sense of glose seems most pertinent here: the dictionary cites 'Chaucer CT. WB. 509' as an example of

¹⁰⁵ Mary Caruthers, 'The Wife of Bath and the Painting of Lions', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America* 94 (1979), p.219.

¹⁰⁶ Peggy Knapp, *Chaucer and the Social Contest* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.115; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp.113-31.

glosing as 'fair words'. However, it is highly significant that the first of these definitions is evoked at the very opening of the *Prologue*. The Wife begins her 'long preamble' with an attack against biblical interpreters who 'devyne and glosen' to prove that 'God comanded maydenhede' rather than 'weddyng' (III.831, 26, 69-70). By associating glosing with discussions of virginity and its superiority to wedlock, Alisoun applies the word to one of the main stems of antifeminism. Tracts on this subject by patristic writers often include overtly misogynous material, as the disagreeable nature of wives becomes the chief proof that married life is imperfect. Jerome's condemnations in the *Adversus Jovinianum* begin as a defence of the thesis 'virginity is to marriage what fruit is to the tree', while Tertullian, in *De exhortatione castitatis*, is the earliest commentator to allocate women three 'species' of value according to their marital status: 'virginity from one's birth', 'widowhood' and 'monogamy [...] a third grade'.¹⁰⁷ As Katharina Wilson and Elizabeth Makowski have documented, countless medieval authors followed these Fathers in using misogamy as a vehicle for misogyny.¹⁰⁸ In the *Prologue*, 'glosing' thus comes to denote one of the deepest foundations of antifeminist thought. The word does not simply mean 'to comment on, interpret' in general, but specifically describes misogyny's interpretation of women.

This seems to signal that the act of glosing mentioned in the lines 'therwithal so wel koude he me glose [...] thogh he hadde me bete' should be read as a deployment of misogynous discourse. As Knapp observes, such a reading is perfectly tenable. This section can be taken to mean that Jankyn is using his stock of anti-female arguments against the Wife, interpreting 'his authorities so well that Alisoun was weakened in their domestic debate', or that Jankyn is using antifeminist topoi as a template for understanding his spouse: 'Jankyn could interpret [...] Alisoun so well that he could get his way'.¹⁰⁹ Either way, it is strongly implied that the type of language which Jankyn supports with violence is the antifeminist tradition 'he wolde rede alway' (III.670). His beatings serve to supplement the readings of femininity collected in his 'volume'. There is thus a clear indication in the *Prologue* that antifeminism is linked

¹⁰⁷ Jerome, 'Against Jovinianus', p.347; Tertullian, 'The Exhortation to Chastity', trans. by S. Thelwall, in *Fathers of the Third Century*, ed. by A. Cleveland Coxe, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1869), p.50.

¹⁰⁸ Katharina M. Wilson and Elizabeth M. Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage: misogynous literature from Juvenal to Chaucer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁹ Knapp, *Chaucer and Social Contest*, p.116.

to violence, that aggression must necessarily underpin its utterance and its forms.

The key to understanding this association lies precisely with the *Prologue*'s treatment of glosing. This detail allows the text to suggest why a connection should exist between misogyny and wounding. A particularly revealing feature in this regard is the 'up and doun' motion which glosing supposedly performs. Such a movement is attributed to glosing twice during the *Prologue*: at one point Alisoun states that 'men may devyne and glosen, up and doun'; later she issues the challenge, 'glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and doun' (III.26, 119). Several important inferences are conveyed by this telling phrase. Firstly, it carries overt sexual connotations. The same idiom appears in an amatory context in both the *Man of Law's Tale* and in Alisoun's own 'game': in the first instance Chaucer himself is said to 'hath toold of loveris up and doun/ Mo than Ovide', while in the second women are seduced by friars 'up and doune/ In every bussh' (II.53-4, III.878-9). In other English texts the phrase is even more explicitly sexualised: the *Land of Cokaygne* (c.1300) describes an order of promiscuous nuns and monks who fornicate 'wip iambleue vp and dun'.¹¹⁰ By drawing on this idiom, the *Prologue* establishes that some form of resemblance exists between glosing and coitus. This in turn implies that glosing should be considered as an action inflicted by men on to women: it becomes a procedure which makes direct contact with its object. Rather than monitoring women empirically and remotely, it manhandles females, seizing hold of them. This idea is reinforced by a second, congruent meaning of 'up and doun'. In the context of exegesis, the phrase suggests outright deformation. To 'glosen up and doun' is to perform an act of decoding which subverts one of the most basic processes of reading, travelling in a vertical rather than horizontal direction. Glosing therefore twists what it assesses, wrenching its object into a new alignment instead of studying it as it stands. By means of these connotations, glosing becomes less a hermeneutic and more an editorial procedure, taking hold of the entity it claims to describe in order to manipulate and reconfigure it. As Alfred David comments, the word is made 'practically synonymous with distortion'.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ 'The Land of Cokaygne', in *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1400: an anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2004), pp.431-5.

¹¹¹ Alfred David, *The Strumpet Muse: art and morals in Chaucer's poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p.138.

Crucially, during the *Prologue* Alisoun herself undergoes just such a reinvention by antifeminism's glosing. This fact is noted by several critics, David Aers foremost amongst them. Aers reads the *Prologue* as an illustration of how 'subordinate groups or individuals may so internalize the assumptions and practices of their oppressors that [...] their very acts of rebellion may perpetuate the outlook against which they rebel'. In Alisoun's specific case this takes the form of her embodying the stereotypes she strives to denounce: despite her 'rebellious experiments' she achieves only a 'significant conformity' with misogyny's claims. For instance, she vehemently attacks spokesmen of traditional misogyny who 'liknest eek wommenes love to helle [...] also to wilde fyr;/ The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir' (III.371-4). However, for all her fury, the fact remains that these clichés are accurate summaries of Alisoun's opinions and behaviour: at one stage she declares of her fourth husband 'By god! in erthe I was his purgatorie', and wistfully remarks of Solomon's polygamy, 'wolde God it levelful were unto me/ To be refreshed half so ofte!' (III.489, 37-8). The point is, as Aers emphasises, that she has absorbed the beliefs which suffuse the only vocabulary available to her for self-formulation: inevitably these ideas come to pervade her 'expectations and values' since they inhabit the language she uses to produce and understand herself.¹¹² H. Marshall Leicester likewise notes that Alisoun finds herself operating in a field 'in which the experiential immediacy of the moment of speaking appears to be always already conditioned and dominated by the past and a hostile masculine authority'.¹¹³ The echoes of antifeminism in her voice are extraneous ideas which have been introjected by the Wife: her very self-understanding has been colonised by the tropes of antifeminism, as 'received auctoritee' is continually 'taking her over'.¹¹⁴

What makes this significant is that Jankyn seems to be the direct source of the anti-female elements in Alisoun's speech. These conceptions have, as W. Davenport writes, obviously been 'brought into the Wife's supposed sphere of knowledge by the agency of her one educated husband, Jankyn, and his collection of anti-feminist

¹¹² David Aers, *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1980), pp.147-50.

¹¹³ Leicester, *Disenchanted Self*, p.70.

¹¹⁴ Aers, *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination*, p.149.

literature'.¹¹⁵ Jankyn's incessant reading 'every nyght and day' from his book has exposed, in fact overexposed, Alisoun to misogyny's motifs. They have been hammered into her understanding by his interminable recitals, when he 'often tymes wolde preche,/ And me of olde romayn geestes teche' (641-2). To all intents and purposes, the conventional interpretations of women have caused Alisoun to adhere to their outlines. Alisoun is speakable in misogynous terms because those terms have been projected on to her, rather than due to any prior correspondence. Jankyn's misogynous ideas only become valid by forcing their object to conform to their schema: 'Alisoun is in the eye of the beholder [...] interpretation creates the thing it pretends to describe'.¹¹⁶

It is apparent from this that a tendency towards impressing a new shape on to women, towards a type of violence, is already present within antifeminist glosing. Jankyn's beatings are physical manifestations of a process latent in his discourse. Just as he imprints his influence 'on every bon' of Alisoun, so traditional misogyny seeks to resolve the structure or skeleton of its object. As Carolyn Dinshaw states, in the *Prologue* 'masculine glossing does not come without violence to the feminine corpus'.¹¹⁷ Alisoun's 'preable' demonstrates that misogyny is not merely supplemented by actual attacks, but functions in itself as a form of aggression. Disfigurement serves as the tradition's model as well as its partner, occupying its very pronouncements.

Shades of these ideas occur in both the Bodleian carol and Gobylyue's diatribe. When the lyric equates thrashing a woman to 'intretting' her, this is elaborated with a further metaphor. These twinned activities are said to be like softening 'adamant stone' with the 'mylke of a gett' to render it 'frangebyll'. The simile suggests that the identification between beating a woman and upbraiding her rests on the fact that both exercises resolve their object into a new form. As in the *Prologue*, antifeminist language refashions the woman instead of distantly assessing her. A similar position is implicit in Hawes' *Passetyme*. When Virgil converts a woman into a bonfire so that 'all the cyte vpon her dyde wonder', his choice of punishment only makes sense if

¹¹⁵ W. A. Davenport, 'Fabliau, Confession, Satire', in *Chaucer*, ed. by Corinne Saunders, Blackwell Guides to Criticism (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001), p.265.

¹¹⁶ Lindley, "'Vanysshed was this Daunce'", p.17.

¹¹⁷ Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, p.130.

modifying the female body is seen as the most effective means of displaying female 'dyshoneste' (3729). The fact that Virgil has not merely used his 'famous poetry' to broadcast the woman's deceit is a strong indication of this: even such a master-poet seems unable to express the 'falshede and doublenes' of a woman without transforming her body (1050, 3726). Again the antifeminist message must work by stamping itself on to its object's flesh, like Jankyn's collection of formulae or the Bodleian lyric's 'intretting'. Interestingly, this notion is not confined to English antifeminist satire. A related posture is apparent in Villon's 'Ballade de la Grosse Margot', a short piece embedded in *Le Grand Testament* (c.1461). Here the narrator speaks of using a 'length of wood' to print his text directly on to his mistress' face: 'just above her nose it forms its script'.¹¹⁸ Again the articulation of antifeminism revises and reshapes the female, literally overwriting her with its own statements, mutilating her body.

A significant feature of antifeminism's conception of wounding thus presents itself. To review, there appears to be a widespread conviction that violence is deeply engrained in misogyny. Repeatedly, injury is seen to be directly comparable with the tradition's most fundamental mechanisms. Gobyleue, Jankyn and Villon's 'paillart' each use damaging the female body as an emblem of antifeminist discourse, regarding it as an accurate image of misogyny's processes. This attitude seems to be underpinned by the belief that misogyny is a transformative literature: the discourse does not consider itself passively reflective, but active and transmutative, forcing its referent into new shapes as it applies its statements. The very enunciation of the discourse becomes an act of distortion, serving to reshape and disfigure its object. Misogyny is a form of violence in its own right, its every proposition changing and disfiguring its referent.

At first glance, this posture seems deeply problematic, only inviting further questions. As criticism has repeatedly argued, such a candid attachment to violence can only weaken the discourse which exhibits it, loosening its authority. Elaine Hansen approaches the *Prologue of the Wife of Bath* in such a way, seeing Jankyn's onslaught

¹¹⁸ 'Lors empoingne ung esclat/ Dessus son nez lui en faiz ung escript': François Villon, *Le Testament*, 1608-9, in *Oeuvres de François Villon*, ed. by Jean Dufournet and André Mory, Edition illustrée de 17 reproductions (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1970), p.98.

as the moment at which his discourse collapses, profoundly ‘unsettling’ the ‘language and mythology’ of antifeminism.¹¹⁹ R.A. Shoaf also writes that Jankyn’s assault proves conclusively that his ‘book is a lie’.¹²⁰ Every other instance of violence in misogyny is open to similar charges. By abandoning description in favour of coercion, and by doing so openly, misogyny hints that its claims are more fanciful than truthful. If women must be forcibly brought into the range of the discourse’s terms, its ‘glosing’ and ‘intretting’, then it follows that these terms do not already apply to females. Women as they stand are outside antifeminism’s set of definitions. Its categories do not describe the genuine state of femininity with any accuracy or conviction. Misogyny may only fabricate its own vision of women and impose it on to reality: the discourse does not seem capable of delivering a legitimate account of femininity. By modelling itself on aggression, by insisting that it must force itself on to its object, the tradition forfeits any claim to be stating the truth. As Hansen and Shoaf infer, the logic of misogyny appears to have lapsed fatally in assuming this position, largely discrediting itself. Its pose is tantamount to an admission of irrelevance and mendacity. If this is the case, it raises the question of exactly why antifeminism should wish to adopt such a detrimental stance.

The solution to this puzzle lies with the object at the centre of the discourse. Simply, antifeminism is compelled to assume a violent approach by what it considers to be the essential nature of its object. In particular, there is one feature which directly invites an alterative stance: the supposed unspeakability of women. The prominence of this idea in satire cannot be overstated, as the conviction that women are somehow able to evade language ranks among misogyny’s most abiding beliefs. Claims that women are incommunicable, even actively capable of resisting verbalisation, pervade the literature. As early as the work of John Chrysostom in the fourth century, female venality is said to exceed the power of language to convey it. Chrysostom begins one tract by complaining that he cannot hope to ‘enumerate all the anxieties concerned with the care of virgins’, as females habitually ‘occasion no small trouble’.¹²¹ In

¹¹⁹ Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.32.

¹²⁰ R. A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer and the Currency of the Word: money, images and reference in late medieval poetry* (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1983), p.179.

¹²¹ John Chrysostom, ‘Treatise on the Priesthood’, in *St. Chrysostom: on the priesthood; ascetic treatises; select homilies and letters; homilies on the statues*, ed. by Philip Schaff, Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series I, IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1888), p.58.

English poetry the same idea develops into one of the most popular conventions of misogynous satire. A lyric from c.1470 provides an arresting example of this tendency:

In sothe to say, though all the erthe so wan
Were parchemine smothe, white and scribabill,
And the greet see, that called is the occian,
Were torned into inke, blacker then is sabill,
Every stik a penne, iche man a scrivener abill,
They coude not writen wimmenes treiterye.¹²²

The fantastic transformation of the world into a collection of either signifiers or speakers pointedly excludes 'wimmene'. The poem's basic point is obvious: everything may be processed into some form of language except women, who will always remain at least partly outside its power. In a word, women are the only things in existence which are not completely 'scribabill'. The same impotence affects the opening stanza of the Bodleian lyric, which finds similar difficulty in fully delineating women's arrogance: 'the uttermost expresse may no thong,/ Ne pene cane scribull the totall declaracyon/ For women upon them tak such domynacyon'.¹²³ Another fifteenth-century piece also draws on this idea, beginning its scurrilous portrait of a 'fayre lady' by stating 'Now what she beryth I wyl yow telle/ Al though I can not armys blase/ Nor to the fulle rynge hire belle'.¹²⁴ Inexpressibility is among the most prevalent and time-honoured of misogyny's topoi: it is one of the most elementary components in the discourse's understanding of women.

The presence of this notion explains why misogyny is required to identify itself with violence. Plainly, what necessitates the link between misogynous discourse and wounding is the belief that women are elusive objects, continually slipping beyond the grasp of language. The discourse is obliged to resculpt its objects because they are foreign to language itself and must be brought into its compass: it wounds women in order to make them intelligible. Due to this, the aggression of misogyny cannot be simply dismissed as a weak spot, as Hansen and Shoaf contend, because such a view

¹²² 'Looke well aboute, ye that lovers be', 36-41, in *Medieval English Lyrics*, ed. by R.T. Davies (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p.240. On this particular trope, see Linn's study, which traces its development from Sanskrit literature to 'folk rimes of the present day': Irving Linn, 'If All the Sky Were Parchment', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 53 (1938), pp.951-970.

¹²³ 'Nova, nova, sawe yow ever such', 3-5.

¹²⁴ 'My fayr lady so fressh of hewe', 129-31, in *A Selection from the Minor Poems of Dan John Lydgate*, ed. by James Orchard Halliwell, Percy Society 2 (London: Percy Society, 1840), p.204.

is at odds with the tradition's own understanding of its stance. For misogyny, violence is not a cause of deficiency or weakness, but a means by which a deficiency in its discourse may be overcome. Antifeminist discourse only attacks and reformulates its object in order to surmount the perceived obstinacy of that object.

The texts themselves bear this out. More often than not it is women's unspeakability which moves satire to seek the support of injury. The Bodleian carol proclaims this quite straightforwardly. In the carol it is simply 'not posybyll' to rebuke a woman 'except with a staffe thou hyr intrett'. If a husband 'for a fawt hys wyff wyl not bett' she will not only remain as intractable as 'adamant stone', but 'many thynges mo may be sone hyddyn': much of her activity and character will be left in silence, outside the grasp of language (40, 44). Hawes' *Passetyme* raises much the same point. There is an odd discrepancy between Virgil's supremacy as a poet, which Hawes further augments by making him a laureate at 'the courte of Rome', and the fact that he resorts to violence to publicise the woman's treachery (3628). The *Passetyme* seems to suggest that Virgil's discourse is somehow not up to the task of broadcasting female cruelty. The fault cannot lie with him, since his mastery over language is indisputable. It must therefore arise from the discourse itself, from a discontinuity between its words and its object. Ultimately Virgil is driven to employ violence because even his 'latyn pure swete and delycyous' 'vayled hym ryght nought' when confronting the woman (1162, 3709). Both pieces apparently use injury to bridge a gap between signifier and signified, eliminating the shortcomings of antifeminist discourse with aggression.

Further evidence of this reasoning arises in *Mayd Emlyn* (c.1525).¹²⁵ This is the comic history of a wife who 'thought/ That her husbände was nought [...] and redy was alwaye/ In Uenus toyes' (90-5). Typically enough, the licentious Emlyn does not merely stray from wedlock, but also drifts continually beyond the range of words. She defies any accurate designation: the poem at one stage complains that 'these wanton dames/ Ofte chaungeth theyr names/ As An/ Iane/ Besse and Kate' (160-1). The adulteress proves too variable to be decisively named. However, the situation alters

¹²⁵ *The boke of mayd Emlyn that had .v. husbändes and all kockoldes she wold make theyr berdes whether they wold or no/ and gyue them to were a praty hoode full of belles* (London: Iohn Skot, n.d.) (STC 7681).

once one of Emlyn's dalliances lands her 'in the stockes [...] in myddes of the market' (364-6). This chastisement immediately renders her determinate: now all comers can readily 'dysceyuer' her identity, as 'men at her gape' (373). This has the direct consequence of making Emlyn speakable. It is only after her punishment that reports of infidelity reach her husband, 'sore dyd he it rewe' (385). Physical castigation serves to prepare the woman for verbalisation, rendering her less impervious to speech. Again, a partnership between language and violence achieves what language on its own is unable to perform.

From these examples it can be seen that women's alleged immunity from language compels satire to use injury. In these texts wounding serves as a device which allows antifeminism to neutralise women's inexpressibility. This factor signposts the next direction which the present study must take. It is evident that the purpose of injury in antifeminism can only be understood in relation to the discourse's inability to delineate its object. Because mutilation is used to perform what antifeminist language alone cannot, its function is dictated by the failures of that language. Consequently, the meaning of antifeminist violence may only be fully established by determining exactly what makes women unutterable. Surveying women's relationship to language in medieval satire will allow this use of injury to be more thoroughly explicated.

When tracing the ways in which satire links women with language, the first important fact to note is that women do not only frustrate and confound words. On the contrary, they are often placed in a radically different relation to language, and regarded as its users and producers. As Henrietta Leyser comments, the uses to which women put language are extensively detailed by satire, as 'women's tongues' prove to be 'the ready butt of medieval misogyny'.¹²⁶ Bloch also observes how readily antifeminism incriminates the female voice in its complaints, noting 'the extent to which [...] the reproach against women is a form of reproach against language itself'.¹²⁷ In fact antifeminism goes so far as to claim that all women are members of a single speech-community, a private society based on the verbal exchange of information and advice. In the words of the English *Quinze Joyes de Mariage*, women constitute a 'company'

¹²⁶ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: a social history of England 450-1500* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1999), p.152.

¹²⁷ Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', p.3.

of 'gossyppes [...] that they/ May talke of tryffles'.¹²⁸ The importance of this topos has often been emphasised in criticism. For Karma Lochrie, the characterisation of women as a network of speakers, a circle of 'wagging tongues', is a crucial aspect of the medieval conception of femininity.¹²⁹ Patricia Spacks also observes a 'significant' tendency in medieval texts to 'evoke a female alliance at least partly antipathetic to men', a fully-fledged 'community of women'.¹³⁰

The concept of a female subculture is certainly deeply engrained in anti-female thought. Its classical precedents include Ovid's *Amores* I.8, in which the narrator relates a secret 'sermo' he has overheard an old woman giving to his mistress, and Lucian's dialogues between Crobyle and Ampelis and their proteges.¹³¹ In the Middle Ages the theme continues with the *Roman de la Rose*'s La Vielle, who covertly disseminates 'des jeux d'Amour' for women to employ, and recurs in the dialogue of Eulalia and Xantippe from Erasmus' *Colloquia Familiara* (1518).¹³² Even the New Testament lends support to this belief: I Timothy 5. 13 claims that when women are left 'idle' they inevitably 'go about from house to house: and are not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not'. As Sarah Kay notes, medieval antifeminism constantly acknowledges 'the possibility (or threat) of women having access to the language of knowledge', attaching all women to a female underworld through which intelligence is clandestinely circulated.¹³³

If anything, the notion of a female cabal becomes even more prevalent in English satire. Chaucer's Alisoun is a member of a caucus comprised of her 'gossib, dwellynge in oure toun' and 'another worthy wyf', both of whom know 'myn herte, and eek my privetee,/ Bet than oure parisshe preest' (III.531-2, 529-37). Later,

¹²⁸ *Fyftene loyes of maryage*, f.Jiii.

¹²⁹ Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: the medieval uses of secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp.45-57.

¹³⁰ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p.35.

¹³¹ Ovid, *Heriodes and Amores*, trans. by Grant Showerman and G.P. Goold, 2nd ed., Loeb Library 41 (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1977), pp.347-9; Lucian, *Satirical Sketches*, trans. by Paul Turner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), pp.39-43. On Ovid's central role in 'defining' medieval gender, see Majorie C. Woods, 'Rape and the Pedagogical Rhetoric of Sexual Violence', in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Rita Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.73

¹³² De Lorris and de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, IV, p.2, l.13002; Desiderius Erasmus, *The Colloquies*, ed. by E. Johnson, trans. by N. Bailey, 2 vols. (London: Reeves and Turner, 1878), I, pp.241-60

¹³³ Sarah Kay, 'Women's Body of Knowledge: epistemology and misogyny in the *Romance of the Rose*', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p.219.

Edward Gosynhyll's *Scholehouse of Women* (1541) describes the conferences held between women: 'And when these gossyps are ones met/ Of euery tale, and newe tidyng/ They bable fast, and nothyng forget [...] This lerne the yonger, of the elders guydyng'.¹³⁴ A similar idea even appears in the twelfth-century *Proverbs of Alfred*: while warning that 'wymmon is word-wop/ and haueþ tunge to swift', the text hints at a powerful allegiance between female speakers, as each man's wife 'hine schal steorne/ to-trayen [...] for ofte Museþ þe kat./ after hire moder'.¹³⁵ As in the Latin and French pieces, women inhabit an enclave unified by conversation and communication: for Chaucer and Gosynhyll they even create their own versions of 'schole' and auricular confession, aping male institutions designed to convey information.

What becomes central in the English texts is the isolation of this female community from the society of men. Throughout English satire there is a concerted effort to consign men and women to two parallel and absolutely distinct coteries, which rarely overlap or achieve any contact with one another. The two sexes are routinely defined as two closed groups of speakers. This is particularly noticeable in a device common throughout fifteenth-century verse, in which a male narrator claims to have penetrated the female sphere and gained first-hand experience of women's secret utterances.¹³⁶ One poem from late fifteenth century typifies this formula. It promises to 'tell þow a tale,/ Howe .x. wyffys satt at þe nale', before stipulating that each of these women is speaking only to her 'felowys', and there is 'noman hem a-monge'.¹³⁷ The lyric states from the outset that it grants access to purely and exclusively female discourse. A slightly later poem exhibits the same posture: its narrator begins by vowing that 'I shall you tell a full good sport,/ How gossippis gader them on a sort', claiming to deliver a sample of authentic female discourse for the 'sport' of inquisitive men.¹³⁸ The best known instance of the convention is Dunbar's *Treatis of the Tua Mariit*

¹³⁴ [Edward Gosynhyll], *The Scholehouse of women: wherein euery man may rede a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women* (London: Thomas Petyt, 1541), f.Aii (STC 12104.5).

¹³⁵ *The Proverbs of Alfred*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p.17.

¹³⁶ See A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹³⁷ 'Leve, lystynes to me/ Two wordys or thre', 3-6, in *Jyl of Brentford's Testament and Other Short Pieces*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall (London: Taylor and Company, 1871), p.29.

¹³⁸ 'Hoow, gossip myne, gossip myn,/ Whan will we go to þe wyne', 1-2. For a further example of this topos, see 'My loving frende, amorous Bune', in *The Welles Anthology: MS Rawlinson C. 813, a critical edition*, ed. by Sharon L. Jansen and Kathleen H. Jordan, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* 75 (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), p.180.

Wemen and the Weido (c.1508), which similarly relates the ‘pastance most mery’ of ‘thre wantoun wiffis’.¹³⁹ All three poems offer themselves as insights into a strictly female domain, reporting from a sphere generally closed to men.¹⁴⁰ The *Treatis* is most emphatic on this point: it stipulates that its narrator has only heard the ‘pastance’ by becoming feminised himself. The narrator explains that he spied on the ‘ladeis’ by concealing himself in a bramble, among the ‘pykis of the plet thorne’ (15). In order to gain access to female speech he has been forced to make his body penetrable, like those of the women he observes, who each tell how their husbands ‘fyle my flesche’ (134). His entry into female territory is only possible because he has become womanly. The fact that such measures are necessary signals the outright disconnection between the two speech-communities.

The supposition that men and women comprise two societies, and are impassably separated from one another, suffuses misogynous literature. Of course, this notion does not in itself explain why satire should need to force its conceptions on to its object through injury and violence. However, satire develops the topos in a way that does reveal why aggression is required. Misogyny’s segregation of male and female speakers does not end with the placement of each sex in its own society. Difference is not merely founded on the companies to which each sex speaks, but extends to the very means by which they speak. Misogynous satire fixes both women and men into what can be termed ‘speech genres’, Bakhtin’s useful term for the ‘relatively stable types of [...] utterances’ which are particular to ‘each sphere in which language is used’.¹⁴¹ According to Bakhtin, a distinct speech genre will inevitably arise where a group of individual speakers are organised around the same common activity or position: it is the set of conventions which governs how a speaker may address their fellow members in a particular group. Bakhtin writes: ‘every socially significant verbal performance has the ability [...] to infect with its own intention certain aspects of language that had been affected by its semantic expressive impulse, imposing on

¹³⁹ *The Treatis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Weido*, 526, 529, in *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp.42-58. Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

¹⁴⁰ See Lisa Perfetti, *Women and Laughter in Medieval Comic Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp.99-125.

¹⁴¹ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, ‘The Problem of Speech Genres’, in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. by Vern McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p.60.

them specific semantic nuances and specific axiological overtones'.¹⁴² This is precisely the situation which misogynous satire depicts: the confinement of either sex to its own community gives rise to a genre peculiar to either sex, a set of linguistic conventions which are distinct from the practices of its counterpart. Edwina Burness has noted this in connection with the *Treatis*, stating that Dunbar presents a 'radical characterisation of the female, and, to a lesser extent the male, register', although she interprets this as a reflection of genuine 'communication strategies' rather than the development of a venerable antifeminist convention.¹⁴³

What is most notable about antifeminism's portrayal of the female genre is the extent to which it contrasts with its own discourse. This may seem an odd claim to make in the light of Howard Bloch's work, which emphasises that attacks on female language ultimately reflect back on misogyny's own performance: Bloch states that 'the discourse of misogyny becomes a plaint against the self or against writing itself'.¹⁴⁴ However, Bloch over-generalises the conception of language present in the discourse. In reality antifeminism is careful to mark a distinction between its own language-use and the genre it ascribes to women, rather than seeing both as united by the same purpose and processes. In fact, this differentiation takes the most extreme possible form, as antifeminism systematically defines the female genre as the inverse of its own speech-patterns. Purporting to comment on the feminine voice, it instead projects on to it features contrary to its own idiolect.¹⁴⁵ All of the tactics that satire assigns to female speech are opposed to facets of its own genre. To cite one instance of this, throughout the Middle Ages female discourse is linked with subjective experience: as critics from Tilde Sankovitch to Mary Case have noted, women's voices are allegedly shaped by 'the actions and events of ordinary, daily life [...] the concreteness of a bodily lived experience'.¹⁴⁶ In satire, this underlies the comment of Dunbar's Weido

¹⁴² Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: four essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p.290.

¹⁴³ Edwina Burness, 'Female Language in the *Treatis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*', in *Scottish Language and Literature*, ed. by Dietrich Strauss and Horst W. Drescher, Medieval and Renaissance Fourth International Conference 1984 Proceedings (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986), p.359.

¹⁴⁴ Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', pp.19-20.

¹⁴⁵ On this 'specularizing' tendency in masculine thought, see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), especially pp.82-3.

¹⁴⁶ Tilde Sankovitch, 'The French Woman Writer in the Middle Ages: staying up late', in *Medieval Studies* 7 (1990), p.4; Mary Anne C. Case, 'Christine de Pizan and the authority of experience', in

that her 'lessonis' have all stemmed from 'the legeand of my lif' (503). Similarly, the heroine of John Skelton's *Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng* (c.1517-21) verifies her advice by stating 'ye may proue it by me/ Beholde, she sayde, and se'.¹⁴⁷ For the female genre, statements are considered valid if the speaker has directly undergone what they describe. This appeal to practical experience is recognisably at odds with antifeminist discourse, which regards prior incidents and texts as the exclusive sources of truth. As Lydgate stipulates, 'olde ensamples' contain everything about 'ffemynyte' that needs to be known: 'Thise olde ensamples ought i-nowgh suffice/ Men to be ware, though ther were no newe'.¹⁴⁸ For misogyny, the past is the only source of accurate knowledge: all learning must be retrospective. Women's consultation of the present, their learning from immediate experience, is the inverse of this 'avowedly derivative' approach.¹⁴⁹

This is only the first in a chain of such oppositions. Other features attributed to female discourse also prove to be antitheses of misogyny's own traits. Leyser notes that volubility is routinely ascribed to women, that 'it was something of a commonplace that women were garrulous': this idea informs such satirical adages as a 'wyuys tong [...] is neuer in rest but euer mouyng and styrryng', and 'Where many gese be, be many tordes/ And where be women, are many wordes'.¹⁵⁰ Such profusion is in direct contrast to antifeminism's own finitude. Since misogyny is only capable of repeating a single 'cluster of anti-feminist motifs', it embodies finality, the opposite of female profusion.¹⁵¹ Along the same lines, women's speech is also said to possess a reckless diversity: one lyric from the 1460s warns that 'schrewes [...] cane whister, and some cane crie;/ Some cane flater, and some cane lye'.¹⁵² Such variegation is clearly opposed to the unity of misogynous discourse. Antifeminism's

Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference, ed. by Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp.71-87.

¹⁴⁷ John Skelton, *The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng*, 2.59-60, in *John Skelton: Poems*, ed. by Robert S. Kinsman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp.53-70. This idea is at least as old as Ovid's *Amores* – here the old woman Dipsas maintains that her advice is true because 'lengthy practice' has taught it to her: 'usu mihi cognita longo' (105).

¹⁴⁸ John Lydgate, 'Examples against Women', 99-100.

¹⁴⁹ Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, p.47.

¹⁵⁰ Leyser, *Medieval Women*, p.152; John Rastell, *A. C.mery talys* (London: Johannes Rastell, 1526), f.3v (STC 23665); *Scolehouse of Women*, f.Bivv. For a fuller list of such commonplaces, see F.P. Wilson, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p.510.

¹⁵¹ Mann, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, p.50.

¹⁵² 'Women, women, love of women/ Maketh bare pursis with sum men', 27-9, in *Songs and Carols*, p.104.

continuous 'chanting the same tune', in John of Salisbury's phrase, maintains the consistency which women's speech palpably lacks.¹⁵³ The female genre described by antifeminism is thus nothing but a methodical reversal of its own discourse, an upturned double of itself. The devices which characterise the womanly speech-genre are merely the counterparts of misogynous stratagems, collected together and superimposed onto women.

Why antifeminism should wish to construct a genre which is the opposite of its own is readily understandable. Misogyny benefits greatly from this enterprise. It profits in three distinct ways. Firstly and most obviously, this manoeuvre allows the discourse to define its own identity. It can claim the voice of women as a limit, as a point to mark out its own being. Misogyny is using this mythic female discourse as a linguistic dumping-ground, a space into which it may expel all the possibilities of language it seeks to eradicate from itself. Through such expulsion, the discourse gains an added cohesion, and reinforces its connection to the types of speech it cultivates: in Simone de Beauvoir's phrase, misogyny 'attains itself through that reality which it is not, which is something other than itself'.¹⁵⁴ Secondly, this inversion also serves as an extreme form of exclusion. The opposition denies women any right or ability to confront misogyny's statements. The only language that women are permitted to speak is emphatically not of the same order as masculine discourse. It is as far removed from it as possible, with no point of intersection or contact. Due to this estrangement, womanly speech is not deemed capable of approaching misogyny in order to interrogate or answer its claims. This leaves women vulnerable to misogyny's verdicts and narratives: the style of language they are given is close to silence, since it fails to equip them with any means of challenging the discourse that assesses them. The authority of antifeminist discourse over its object is thus secured. Thirdly, this device also allows antifeminism to claim active control of its object. Because women's voices simply mirror the genre of antifeminism, antifeminism is the chief determinant of their speech. Their voices are therefore conditioned by misogyny, reliant on its forms and conventions for their own patterns. In a sense the female genre is a product of misogyny, an offshoot or side-effect. Owing to this, misogyny obtains the right to shape female speech as it wishes, since it is already

¹⁵³ John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, p.355.

¹⁵⁴ De Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, p.171.

something that has arisen out of its own original, founding voice. Characterising women's discourse as the opposite of its own evidently works to misogyny's advantage.

However, while antifeminism clearly profits from defining female speech in this way, the ruse nonetheless has one severe drawback. It is this obstacle which is at the core of women's alleged inexpressibility, and which forces the discourse to adopt violence as a model for its processes. By making the female represent the inverse of its language, antifeminism undermines any claim to encapsulate women wholly or conclusively. While this stance prevents women from challenging misogyny, it also has the reciprocal effect of keeping misogyny from gaining full access to femininity. Misogyny's insistence on the absolute alterity of the female voice places that voice outside the range of its own discussions. Women's speech comes to represent the total absence of masculine speech, becoming a region into which misogyny cannot hope to extend. It is not merely an alternative version of misogynous discourse but a negative version of it, constituted from the overturning of its mechanisms. The twin ideas of a separate female speech-community and speech genre push women into a territory which is foreign to antifeminist discourse, which its words are unable to pierce. Through the mode of speech allocated to them, women ceases to be fully available to the discourse.

In short, defining the voice of women as the inverse of misogyny has the unavoidable result of foregrounding female subjectivity. Confining women to their own culture, their own network of active speakers, concedes that they possess a form of agency. Women are themselves speakers, armed with their own sentience. This recognition underlies the admission that antifeminism cannot fully commit women to language: any assessment of them as objects must necessarily be incomplete because they are subjects, beings that exceed simple objectivity. Reducing women to an object of discourse automatically leaves much of them unsaid. The impassable distance which misogyny sets up between the female genre and its own discourse is a tacit acknowledgment that women are unconquerable as a subject, always escaping total objectification. No 'pene cane scribull the totall declaracyon' of women because they

are not inert entities to be passively described, but active speakers.¹⁵⁵ What Felicity Riddy writes of Chaucer is true of antifeminism in general: in spite of its ‘ventriloquism’, misogyny is always defied by ‘the inwardness of the feminine sub-culture’, and consequently unable to give a full account of women.¹⁵⁶

Examining texts in which women prove unspeakable confirms that their subjectivity is indeed the root of the problem, whether or not beating is specifically prescribed as a solution. A colourful example of this is provided by a piece from the close of the fifteenth century, which Catherine Sanok links to a broad ‘antiphrastric’ current in antifeminist satire.¹⁵⁷ Ostensibly this lyric outlines the laudable qualities of women: its second quatrain begins, ‘The stedfastnes of women will neuer be don,/ So jentyll, so curtes they be euery-chon,/ Meke as a lambe, still as a stone’.¹⁵⁸ The ‘ffote’ or burden of the piece, however, exposes its true orientation. Each stanza ends with the phrase ‘cuius contrarium verum est’, or ‘of which the opposite is true’ (39-40). By this device, the poem presents itself as unable to give an accurate description of women in English: it is forced to look to a language outside its own to regain its real, antifeminist meaning. This implies that words are in danger of perversion when they approach women. The mere presence of women in the language of the poem is enough to invert its meaning, robbing its statements of their reliability. Here, it is as though women are capable of exercising some form of influence over language once they are brought into its range: words applied to women become distorted, introduced to new messages and meanings. It is only by retreating into Latin, a language which is inaccessible to women, and free from their power, that the poem can convey its true argument.¹⁵⁹ For the lyric females cannot quite be classified as the objects of language as they have a direct effect on its words, having as much influence on the final text as the original narrator. The poem thus calls attention to the agency of

¹⁵⁵ ‘Nova, nova, sawe yow ever such’, 3-5.

¹⁵⁶ Felicity Riddy, ‘Women Talking About the Things of God: a late medieval sub-culture’, in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.117.

¹⁵⁷ See Catherine Sanok, ‘Reading Hagiographically: the *Legend of Good Women* and its feminine audience’, *Exemplaria* 13 (2001), pp.323-54.

¹⁵⁸ ‘Of all creatures women be best’, in *Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems*, p.112.

¹⁵⁹ On the masculinity of Latin, see for instance the fourteenth-century translation of *The Trotula* which states that it is necessary to ‘drau oute of Latyn into Englysch’ its content because ‘whomen of oure tonge kunne bettyre rede and undyrstande thys langage than eny other’: *The Knowing of Woman’s Kind in Childing*, in *Women’s Writing in Middle English*, ed. by Antonia Barratt (Harlow: Longman, 1992), p.30.

women, and defines this quality as a force which imperils antifeminist language, serving to weaken and undermine it.

Despite its apparent playfulness, the lyric brings to light a genuine point of anxiety within the logic of antifeminism: its play with inference and subtext marks a deep concern that misogynous discourse is unable to convey its object successfully as an object. The poem approaches female subjectivity as something which causes resistance to its language, as a means by which women can defy the definitions of misogyny. This articulates the basic problem which underlies antifeminism's creation of a 'feminine sub-culture': women are unsuitable as an object of discourse because they are not exclusively an object. Female agency denies misogynous discourse a total knowledge of women, depriving its statements of full authority and accuracy.

Since it is this difficulty which causes antifeminism to claim that women are never fully recordable, it is also the cause of satire's use of violence to fortify its assertions. Misogynous aggression owes its meaning and function to women's problematic subjectivity: it is a direct response to this property, a tactic designed to counteract its presence. This is readily apparent throughout antifeminist satire. A conspicuous feature of violence against women is that time and again it performs the same specific function. Beating repeatedly operates as a means of stripping women of their perilous control over language, depriving them of their subjectivity as speakers. This is especially perceptible in Noah's attack on his wife in the Towneley play of the Flood. When Noah initiates the exchange of blows, the stated purpose of his punch is to keep his spouse from speaking: Noah swears, 'We! hold, thi tong, ram-skyt/ or I shall the still'.¹⁶⁰ His blow is so centrally intended to mute the woman that the word 'still' comes to describe both the attack and its result. The same pattern emerges in one of the 'gossipis' carols. One of the assembled women recounts how pitilessly her husband thrashes her:

For my husband is so fell,
He betith me lyke þe devill of hell,
And þe more I crye,
þe lesse mercy.¹⁶¹

Again, the husband beats the wife in order to silence her. The carol emphasises this

¹⁶⁰ *Noah and the Ark*, 217-20, in *The Towneley Plays*, p.29.

¹⁶¹ 'Hoow, gossip myne, gossip myn', 80-3.

by making the violence increase in proportion to the woman's 'crye': the husband's blows multiply as her vocalisation escalates. It is as though the more she verbalises her resistance to him, the more needful his beating becomes, and the 'lesse mercy' she is shown. The advice given in a thirteenth-century lyric also infers this same link: a woman asks a 'wist y þe brom' how to end her husband's mistreatment of her, only to be told 'þyf þy bonde ys ylle/ Held þy tonge stille'.¹⁶² Once more, cruelty is only necessary when the woman speaks: her silence can fend off further abuse, because the purpose of that abuse has already been achieved.

Comparable mechanisms are at work in a popular exemplum collected in John Mirk's *Festial* (1403), with analogues in both *Handlyng Synne* and *Jacob's Well*. The story tells of an abbess 'þat was a clene woman of hyr body', but who had an unfortunate 'luste to talke'.¹⁶³ She dies and is interred in the grounds of her abbey. The night after her burial, 'fendes token vp þe body, and beten hyt wyth brennyng scorgyes from þe nauell vpward', the upper being the half of her body tarnished by imprudent gossiping. The main point is that the abbess is not condemned in perpetuity. The beating is merely a 'penaunce', a punishment designed to expurgate her sin, a function it performs in a highly literal way: the 'scorgyes' leave the afflicted half of the abbess' body 'blak as pych'. Effectively, the fiends have blotted out the part of her anatomy that is guilty of the 'luste to talke'. In the same way as Noah's punch, pummelling the body erases the woman's capacity for speech, not simply censoring her voice but abolishing it. Antifeminist discourse uses violence as an antidote to female speech. Beating a woman is presented in the texts as an immediate and effective method of cancelling the vehicle of women's troublesome subjectivity.

The *Prologue of the Wife of Bath* gives an even clearer account of this association, forcefully spelling out the rationale which underlies it. Jankyn's blow yields precisely the same effect as those of Noah or Mirk's 'fendes', severing the Wife from language. Alisoun specifically declares as she lies prostrate from Jankyn's punch that she 'may

¹⁶² 'Sey, wist y þe brom', 1-6, in *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, p.21.

¹⁶³ John Mirk, *Festial*, I, ed. by Theodor Erbe, EETS e.s. 96 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1905), pp.96-7. Also see *Jacob's Well, an Englisht treatise on the cleansing of man's conscience*, I, ed. by Arthur Brandeis, EETS o.s. 115 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. Ltd, 1900), p.232; Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Handlyng Synne with those parts of the Anglo-French treatise on which it was founded*, 2 vols., ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 119 (London: Kegan, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1901-3), I (1901), p.64, 1547-1600.

no lenger speke': violence has successfully rendered her dumbstruck (III.810). What is more, she also proves unable to hear the words of others, as from the moment of that 'strook' Alisoun's 'ere wax al deaf' (III.636). Jankyn has doubly isolated the Wife from her language, incapacitating her as both speaker and addressee. However, what is most significant here is the circumstance which prompts Jankyn to 'smyte' Alisoun. In the figure of Alisoun, the female ability to disrupt the language of men takes an extreme and unambiguous form. Immediately before she is struck, the Wife very purposefully disturbs Jankyn's discourse, mutilating the compendium from which he derives his utterances. As she proudly reports, 'I rente out of his book a leef' (III.635). It is her ability to inflict this damage which necessitates Jankyn's attack against her, as a means of shielding his discourse: Alisoun is, she resentfully reports, 'beten for a book, pardee' (III.712). Jankyn's assault on Alisoun is ultimately a defence of his antifeminist language from female interference: it attains this by stripping away women's own linguistic ability. The *Prologue* thus makes clear the link which is implicit throughout antifeminist discourse. The exercise of female subjectivity, which Alisoun calls her 'ragerye', is a direct threat to the integrity of male discourse: this danger can be overcome by cancelling the language that is the chief vessel of that subjectivity. The *Prologue* brings into sharp focus a nexus of ideas that are deeply entrenched in the logic of misogyny.

The conception of violence as a force which negates the power to use language recalls the work of Elaine Scarry. For Scarry, whose findings are in part derived from such Middle English texts as *The Book of Margery Kempe*, pain's ability to incapacitate its sufferer's linguistic capability is a central part of its 'meaning': she argues that 'physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it'.¹⁶⁴ The chief reason Scarry gives for this is the powerful association between pain and infancy. Pain works to displace adult eloquence with the sobs and yells of childhood. The infliction of pain brings 'about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human makes before language is learned'. For Scarry, pain does not simply delete or overwrite existing pieces of language, but goes on to dissolve the possibility of language itself, in effect tearing speech out by its roots. Consequently, the sufferer of pain may no longer claim subjectivity in language:

¹⁶⁴ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the making and unmaking of the world* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.4.

having been rendered unable to speak or be spoken to, the only position left is to be spoken of. Pain seals the sufferer into the position of object, preventing them from becoming anything further.

This explains why antifeminism should wish to define its own utterances as acts of violence. The association of injury with the performance of misogyny on one hand, and with 'stilling' female speech on the other, are in fact two aspects of a single process. If physical damage can be used to neutralise the parts of women which are inaccessible to discourse, its desirability for misogyny is self-evident. By conflating itself with physical aggression, by making 'intrett [...] with a staffe' and 'refrayne' into equivalent terms, antifeminism ensures that its very articulation strips women of speech, the chief manifestation of their subjectivity. Antifeminist literature guarantees its own reliability through this identification, trimming away that aspect of femininity which escapes its descriptions and designations. As Scarry underscores and the satires themselves assume, violence fulfils one of the main projects of misogyny, enabling satire to speak of its object as an object.

Reviewing the functions which violence assumes in antifeminism, what becomes clear is the full extent to which the discourse benefits from this association. Through its basis in wounding, misogyny is able to deploy several strategies at once and, most crucially, to overcome any contradictions which this may entail. When it chooses to reinforce its genre by equipping women with a genre diametrically opposed to its own, violence enables it to defuse the subjectivity which this implies, and to fix women into passive objectivity. The marriage of the discourse to violence allows it to enjoy the advantages of defining woman as the opposite of man, without losing her as a referent.

It is also clear that satire's identification with injury builds on the hieratic properties of the wound. Injury here carries out a simple variation of the functions outlined by Martin, Duby and Power. Disfigurement is again being employed to enforce an ideal system, to make the object conform to a given schema. The only real difference is that the system in question is antifeminism's own cache of definitions of womanhood. Antifeminism is exploiting the definitive potential of the wound, its ability to maintain subjection and reinforce power, using this capacity to impose its statements

on to women. Just as wounding a woman will ensure that she keeps to her 'permitted bounds' in the correct hierarchy, so wounding causes the woman to adhere to the categories and tropes of antifeminist satire. Misogyny is developing the belief that wounds establish the 'ideal of submission', adapting injury to convey submission to its own conceptions. It is enacting the same practices which are championed by its more didactic, hieratic aspect.

Not only is satire exploiting the hieratic properties of wounding, it seems to be doing so in order to attain a hieratic end. Making the woman submit to the definitions of antifeminism enables a stronger level of evaluation and condemnation. It not only brings an ideal into the satire, a model against which female behaviour can be judged, but also ensures that antifeminist discourse has the right to perform such a judgment. It guarantees that its declarations do give an accurate account of their object, doctoring the object to prevent its summaries from falling short. Wounding aids the hortatory aspect of satire, making the woman subordinate to its analyses, ensuring that she may not disprove the validity of its appraisals.

However, this is not quite the full extent of violence's meaning in antifeminist satire. Due to satire's admixture of exhortation and comedy, and its refusal to fix firm limits between the two, these ideas are forced to coexist with material which directly contradicts them. The ambivalence of injury entails that the festive capacities of the wound remain attendant, serving to undercut this hieratic posture. By fusing itself with violence, antifeminism does not only assert its supremacy and veracity, but often introduces irony into its statements. Beating can undercut the very pronouncements which it elsewhere serves to fortify. The fact that violence against women lacks any inherent moral endorsement, the fact that 'society as a whole did not believe that violence by a husband was excusable on all grounds', enables it to operate as a more deflationary, comedic device.¹⁶⁵

The hieratic and festive principles in fact prove to be so intimately fused that the very same mechanisms are placed in the service of both tendencies. In several antifeminist texts the power of violence to dissolve speech, its capacity to enact a 'shattering of

¹⁶⁵ Brozyna, 'Not Just a Family Affair', p.309.

language', is not simply restricted to the female genre.¹⁶⁶ Violence places no less profound constraints on the discourse of misogyny itself. Throughout the satires, there is a curious reluctance to recount the injury of women with any degree of thoroughness. The texts frequently recoil from treating anti-female violence in anything but the scantest detail. When compared to the lurid descriptions of violence and torture in Capellanus, Boccaccio and de Meun, or even the 'experiences of mutilation and dismemberment' which characterise the vernacular lives of female saints, English antifeminist satire is remarkably taciturn.¹⁶⁷ In spite of its professed reliance on aggression, wounding comes to operate as a suspension of the misogyny's voice, or even a blank-spot in its discourse.

The reticence of satire is compellingly demonstrated by the narrative poem *A treatyse of the smyth whych that forged hym a new dame*.¹⁶⁸ The text survives in three printed editions, dating from c.1505 to c.1565.¹⁶⁹ These imprints evidently represent a much earlier work: a handwritten note in a copy at the Bodleian Library mentions the year 1440, although R.C. Graham suggests a date closer to the middle of the fourteenth century.¹⁷⁰ The story's many continental analogues would also tie it to the late Middle Ages.¹⁷¹ In many respects *The smyth* is a highly unusual piece, marked by an irreverence that almost verges on blasphemy: John Wells classifies it as a 'pious tale', only to be puzzled by the 'rude jest' and 'impropriety' it displays towards Christ.¹⁷² However, in spite of its 'impudence', *The smyth* is wholly orthodox in its portrayal of women as peevish and obstinate.¹⁷³ It is even more conventional in its unwillingness to detail the injury of the female body. The poem recounts the adventures of a

¹⁶⁶ Scarry, *Body in Pain*, p.5.

¹⁶⁷ Katharine Park, 'The Criminal and the Saintly Body', from *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994), p.26.

¹⁶⁸ *A treatyse of the smyth whych that forged hym a new dame*, in *Altenglische Legenden: Neue Folge*, ed. by Carl Horstmann (Heilbronn: Verlag von Gebr. Henninger, 1881), pp.323-8.

¹⁶⁹ The STC lists editions printed by Wynkyn de Worde in c.1505 (STC 22653), Richard Pynson in c.1510 (STC 22653.7) and William Copland in c.1565 (STC 22653.9). Of these, only Copland's is fully extant.

¹⁷⁰ R.C. Graham, 'On a Legend from the Island of Tiree', *Scottish Historical Review* 1 (1904), pp.113-22; *A treatyse of the smyth whych that forged hym a new dame* (London: Wyllyam Copland, n.d.), f.Ai.

¹⁷¹ See George L. Hamilton, 'Review of *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer* by William Henry Schofield', *American Journal of Philology* 28 (1907), p.466; Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales. A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004), ATU753: 'Christ and the Smith'.

¹⁷² John Edwin Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p.174.

¹⁷³ See Malcolm Jones, 'Folklore Motifs in Late Medieval Art II: Sexist Satire and Popular Punishments', *Folklore* 101 (1990), p.74.

conceited blacksmith, full of 'pompe' and 'moche boste', who is visited by none other than 'our heaven kynge': the purpose of the visit is simply to humiliate the smith, as Christ has determined that 'his pryde should be layed' (38, 36). To counter the smith's arrogant claim that he is 'the kynge [...] of all maner of cunnyng', and to show his own superiority, Jesus miraculously restores the smith's elderly 'beldame' or mother-in-law to youthfulness. Heating her 'tyll she was reed as a gled', he places her on the 'styth' and beats her 'wyth hamer and wyth mall' until she becomes 'lovesome of chere,/ Bright as blosome on brere' (25-7, 182, 212-4). However, this alone fails to humble the craftsman. Once Christ has departed, the smith attempts to rejuvenate his wife in the same way, and only succeeds in dismembering and killing the woman: 'Fast on her he layed,/ "Waxe yong, dame!" he sayd./ Than bothe her legges at a brayd/ Fell sone her fro' (465-8). What is significant here is how thinly the wife's mutilation is sketched, despite its extensiveness and its fatal consequences. Only two lines are dedicated to the means of her death: 'Than he [...] layed her on the stethy/ And hamered her strongely' (461-3).

This vagueness is thrown into even sharper relief when the woman's injuries are compared to those sustained by the smith himself. As he wrestles his wife into his workshop, he is savagely attacked by the woman. In contrast with the brisk account of his wife's injuries, the wounds to his body are related in abundant, highly dysphemistic terms. On her way to the anvil she claws his throat 'that bloud out gan fare', kicks him until 'hys shynnes bothe two/ In-sonder she there brake', beats him 'above the pate' with a hammer that almost 'stryken out his one eye', and finally tears at his scalp: 'Of his lockes gan she pull/ Many great handfull/ Rent the skyn from the skull,/ The pan gan appeare' (367-428). By the end of the episode, the man's entire form 'ranne on reed blode/ All to-rent and rasshed' (415-6). There is a categorical imbalance between the volume of words applied to each wounded body. The wounds of the man are elaborately described, while the woman's mutilation all but disappears in brief, exiguous language. This cannot reflect a broad distaste for all injury, since whatever prevents the poem from outlining the woman's disfigurement does not govern its presentation of the smith's body. The poem's near-silence only extends to the mutilation of women.

This is not restricted to *The Smyth*. Other pieces also shy away from depicting female

injury. In four of the verses previously quoted, the blandness of the rhetoric is striking:

An adamant stone it is not frangebyll
With no thyng but with mylke of a gett;
So a woman to refrayne it is not posybyll
With wordes, except with a staffe þou hyr intrett.

There were three wold be beten, three wold be beten there were:
A myll, a stokfish, and a woman.

Stockfysshe is of valewe none
Except it be trewly layde vpon
And often tourned and beaten [...]
A rybaude she is lost
If she be nat well beate and tost.¹⁷⁴

For my husband is so fell,
He betith me lyke þe devill of hell.

The aggression these lines describe, and even invite the reader to emulate, is presented in a rarefied, impalpable manner. This supremely bodily act is stripped of its physicality. In the first lyric, violence is only represented by an impersonal implement, 'a staffe': it is disconnected equally from the bodies of the wielder and recipient, isolated from any human physiology. In the second and third poems, injury is thoroughly separated from the woman's body. It is instead transferred to other objects, to stone or salted cod, which become the primary and most appropriate targets for beating. The final couplet offers most detail, at least at first glance, illustrating brutality with the simile 'lyke þe devill of hell'. However, this conceals more than it reveals, driving the actual logistics of violence from view: the devil's beating simply cannot be visualised, since he is outside the scope of human experience. None of the pieces has anything to say regarding specific injuries, even though beating can scarcely possess any other intention. In short, violence is continually either half-spoken or left entirely unsaid.

This laconism suggests, once again, that misogyny's use of violence cannot quite be taken seriously. It brings to light a fundamental irony implicit in antifeminism's use of assault and mutilation. The very portrayal of aggression, the force which allegedly subdues the object and enables the discourse to operate, causes satire to fall silent. In

¹⁷⁴ *Proverbes of Salomon with the answers of Marcolphus*, f.3.

its efforts to quieten women, satire itself moves beyond words. From this it appears that antifeminism does not only seek to enforce the 'ideal of submission' in its management of women: it also documents the inevitable failure of the ideal to be practically achieved. Even the discourse's variation on the ideal, as it causes women to submit to its own language, cannot be realised. As Hanawalt contends, violence against women can not be supposed to carry any intrinsic authority, as here it fails to support the discourse which is based on it. Antifeminist aggression proves unsatisfactory.

The mute quality which attends on satire is thus an innately festive mechanism. It is not of course simply language in the poems that is being supplanted, but the entire machinery by which firm definitions and hierarchies may be constructed and maintained. Silence creates a void in which no clear pattern of authority may assert itself. No single ideal or axiology can dominate, as none has the means to define itself as dominant. This carries the automatic result of emphasising an irreducible plurality of positions, the characteristic process of satire's festive principle. Violence creates a levelling of male and female subjectivities, since it situates both equally beyond the perimeters of language. Without language to assert the dominance of its particular order, every position is made into a competitor among several others. Silence is a festive dispersal of power, a mechanism which displays the impossibility of any one position achieving unproblematic and uncontested governance. As a suppressor of language, antifeminist violence ceases to be 'the cornerstone of the system of values that governed behaviour', and instead promotes the relativity and impracticality of any abstract model.¹⁷⁵ It denies any system the right to claim that its codes and definitions are universally applicable.

A fuller understanding of how this festive process works can be gained by returning once more to the *Prologue of the Wife of Bath*. At the end of the text, after Jankyn has struck the Wife in the name of his damaged volume, a recognisable collapse occurs in the language he attempts to protect. Jankyn's voice suffers a sudden curtailment. His first reaction after knocking Alisoun to the ground is pointedly not verbal but bodily, as shock renders him dumbstruck: 'He was agast and wolde han fled his way'

¹⁷⁵ Duby, 'Aristocratic Households of Feudal France', p.77.

(III.798). When he does eventually attempt to speak, his words are too choked with contradiction to report anything meaningful. He states, 'That I have doon, it is thyself to wyte./ Foryeve it me, and that I thee beseke!' (III.806-7). He is simultaneously attempting to utter contrite apology and self-validating accusation: consequently, he cannot express either. The results of his violence have weakened his speech. Moreover, the structure of the *Prologue* further robs him of his voice. At this point, the tradition he upholds falls silent: the full account of the beating in line 795 literally cuts short his misogynous discourse, interrupting the summary of Jankyn's 'olde romayn geestes' which has dominated the text for the last hundred and fifty lines. Again, once violence appears in the *Prologue*, antifeminist speech is brought to an end.

What is more, when Jankyn and Alisoun eventually begin to negotiate, ultimately managing to resolve their dispute through 'a delicate process of attunement', their bargaining is not carried out through the medium of language.¹⁷⁶ It is a kiss which concludes their battle, as Alisoun tells her husband, 'er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee' (III.802). The point here, as Peggy Knapp makes plain, is that 'the kiss is not a word'.¹⁷⁷ In fact, if anything this gesture indicates the deliberate obliteration of dialogue, closing off each participant's organ of speech: as Adam Phillips remarks, 'when people kiss, they've stopped talking'.¹⁷⁸ The kiss is emphatically not a linguistic engagement. Nonetheless, it is an engagement of a different type. It is a gesture which centrally involves contact and parity, literally closing the space between entities. The fact that Alisoun slaps Jankyn while he is kissing her, reciprocating his attack and therefore placing herself on an equal footing with him, further confirms the levelling function of the kiss. Such a meeting as equals is in itself a form of negotiation, and here it becomes the basis of further negotiation, as the two go on to be 'acorded by us selven two'. What has happened in the text is that the physiological has replaced the linguistic as a means of communication. Language has been dissolved, and a more open form of interchange has taken its place, one less burdened with predetermined evaluations and interrelations. The body has become the new site of intersection for the two spouses, an arena which, being ubiquitous,

¹⁷⁶ Mann, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, p.85.

¹⁷⁷ Knapp, *Chaucer and the Social Contest*, p.125.

¹⁷⁸ Adam Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p.99.

allocates equal powers to both parties. Most importantly, this transition has been ushered in by Jankyn's punch. In itself a bodily act, his blow has transferred the mode of exchange between himself and Alisoun from the verbal to the corporeal. Again, injury does not operate here as a straightforward buttress of male authority, disabling the unruly subjectivity of the female in the name of male power: if anything it calls into question the eminence of the masculine, carrying it into a festive space in which it may be cross-examined by other positions. Violence propels Jankyn and Alisoun, even the *Prologue* itself, into a more unfixed, festive state.

The *Prologue* is by no means alone in expressing these ideas. The Towneley Flood can also be cited in connection with this line of thinking. After Noah and his wife have exhausted one another fighting, they too are rendered incapable of speech: as Noah wheezes, 'Se how she can grone and I lig vnder' (409). Due to their silence, the couple are left defenceless as their children rebuke them, and force them to obey the command 'Ye shuld not be so spitus/ standyng in sich a woth' (416). The sequence of events which features in the *Prologue* is also present here, as is the *Prologue*'s festive conception of violence. Aggression causes language to be cast aside, along with its notions of a proper hierarchy: hence Noah's children are able to issue orders to their parents after they have fought. This abolition of words allows genuine, unimpeded reconciliation. Noah and his wife end their battle by vowing, 'we will no more be wroth' (418).

Hence it can again be seen that as soon as antifeminist satire has recourse to violence, a non-linguistic force enters the text which its language cannot hope to control. The silence of the lyrics also reflects this basic notion. With the arrival of injury and aggression into the text, an entirely new and markedly more neutral mode of exchange takes over. The language of misogyny, and the stratification it describes, is festively disrupted by aggression.

In conclusion, satire's inherent ambivalence brings to light the sheer number of meanings that inhabited anti-female violence in the Middle Ages. The texts admit that such aggression does have a constructive aspect, using it to support the more hieratic and authoritarian tendency in their satire. It can be used to establish a clear ideal against which women can be evaluated. In fact, it may even authorise antifeminist

speech itself, ensuring that its object successfully adheres to its appraisals. However, satire is also sensitive to violence's lack of any substantial footing in popular morality, a fact which often brings such authority into question in the texts. Violence frequently opens authority up to challenges, forcing it to acknowledge and reckon with positions beyond itself, directly creating a platform on which festive arbitration may be staged. The fact that satire situates itself in the space between the abstract ideal and material praxis, 'between institutionalized male superiority and occurrences of marital *mundus inversus*', means that it cannot side entirely with either conception.¹⁷⁹ Neither of these values of violence can become wholly predominant, as the texts distribute wounding between the festive and hieratic directions. As its two principles seek to ground themselves in whatever wider attitudes are available to them, and are conducive to their projects, satire automatically becomes a point of intersection between two opposing sets of ideas. It is driven to pit them against one another: in so doing, it exposes a deep cleavage in the medieval comprehension of aggression against women, its standing as both 'a legitimate means of resolving conflict' and 'a threat to social stability'.¹⁸⁰

Misogynous satire also confirms a truth about medieval satire in general. Antifeminism differs visibly from other traditions of satire in that it seeks to make its own authority into a target: this departure from normal practice serves to bring an innate facet of satire into stronger light. The reason for antifeminism's self-censure lies wholly with its object. Women, despite the sheer abundance of philippics and diatribes written against them, are something of an anomaly among the objects of medieval satire. Unlike the clergy, the aristocracy or even the mercantile classes, women do not arrive into satire with any institutionalised power which satire must diminish. Yet satire seems obliged to collapse some power, carrying out such a practice mechanically, as a compulsory part of its functions. What this in turn suggests is the festive element's fundamental place in medieval satire's construction. Ironic and humorous deflation is so firmly embedded amongst even its simplest moral judgments that the satire begins to corrode its own authority in the absence of any other. Satire's innate tendency to drop all positions on to a single level compels it to

¹⁷⁹ Wilson and Makowski, *Wykked Wyves and the Woes of Marriage*, pp.6-7.

¹⁸⁰ Steven Badnarski, 'Keeping it in the Family? Domestic Violence in the Later Middle Ages: examples from a Provençal town (1340-1403)', in *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, p.296.

undermine its own pronouncements. Ultimately, misogynous satire proves that the festive tendency is inextricable from the hieratic.

Church and Destroy: Violence in Anticlerical Satire

Pei don iniurye to men when þei wiþdrawon prechyng.¹

To speak the truth is to inflict a wound.²

This chapter will examine the role of injury in English satire ridiculing the clergy, a literature which emerged in the mid fourteenth century and quickly developed into an extensive corpus of work. The same historicising approach previously applied to antifeminism will also be used here, to show how the two chief mechanisms of satire derive their immediate forms from wider ideas and debates. Once again, it will be stressed that satire's framework, its balancing of two opposing sets of values, creates a dialogue within each satirical text. This interplay between different elements will be traced by examining satire's use of bodily disfigurement: injury's variability as a symbol renders it a natural focus-point for such inconsistencies, concentrating and magnifying the negotiations at work in the texts, and making each one conspicuous.

However, this does not mean that the present chapter will simply reprise the findings reached in the last section, and redundantly echo the same conclusions. On the contrary, it will also consider the differences between anticlericalism and antifeminism, in order to obtain a fuller understanding of medieval English satire, and the range of forms it could assume. The two traditions lend themselves well to such comparison, since they diverge sharply from one another, despite being written in the same basic mode. Different values occupy the wound in anticlerical satire, different objectives govern anticlerical texts, and the interplay between the festive and hieratic directions is of a very different kind to that found in misogyny. All of this will emerge throughout the course of the current chapter from a detailed reading of anticlerical satire and its management of the injured body.

Before this inquiry can begin, there is a difference of overriding importance which needs to be addressed, since it dictates how such a reading should be conducted. Anticlericalism and antifeminism differ drastically in their construction. As the last

¹ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, ed. by Anne Hudson and Pamela Gradon, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983-96), II (1988), p.348.

² Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarch's Book Without a Name: a translation of the Liber sine nomine*, trans. by Norman P. Zacour (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1973), p.74.

chapter asserted, misogyny is above all else a continuous tradition, a discourse which affects the status of 'a cultural constant' by 'endlessly repeating the same message'.³ Such constancy and repetition mean that misogyny may only be read as a consolidated body of work, as a network of ideas and motifs underpinned by a single unifying logic. However, anticlericalism resists definition in such terms. As a consequence, the same style of interpretation may not be fruitfully applied to it. Unlike antifeminism, this tradition is not continuous and changeless. On the contrary, change is one of its most prominent characteristics. At every point in its lifespan, from the earliest stages onwards, some form of alteration is perceptible.

This association with change manifests itself in three principal ways. Firstly, English anticlericalism is itself a product of a particular social shift. Its roots are not as deep as vernacular misogyny: the literature has a definite origin, arising from a specific historical development. Essentially, criticism of the clergy in English was the result of a rise in lay literacy, and the 'enlargement of the range of those [...] equipped to deal with matters of philosophical theology' that accompanied it.⁴ By the mid-fourteenth century increasingly large numbers of laymen were 'questioning the clerical monopoly' on literacy and learning, and educating themselves in spiritual matters.⁵ As Peter Heath states, this religious knowledge brought with it a new tendency 'to view the clergy and the church with greater independence and growing impatience'.⁶ Broadly speaking, literacy enabled the 'devout and involved' to examine the principles of the church, to reassess the functions it ought to fulfil, and gave them enough self-assurance to complain when these expectations were not met.⁷ It is in this context that English anticlerical satire was produced. The texts themselves often advertise their connection to the new 'vigorous literate culture' among the

³ R. Howard Bloch, 'Medieval Misogyny', *Representations* 20 (1987), p.1; Jill Mann, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p.50.

⁴ Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: authority and the interpretation of texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.15, 2. See also Janet Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), pp.13-67.

⁵ Joel T. Rosenthal, 'English Medieval Education Since 1970: so near and yet so far', *History of Education Quarterly* (1982), p.505. See also Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Forging the Past: the language of historical truth in Middle Ages', *The History Teacher* 17 (1984), p.269; Richard W. Kaeuper, 'Two Early Lists of Literates in England: 1334, 1373', *English Historical Review* 99 (1984), p.365; Franz H. Bauml, 'Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Speculum* (1980), pp.237-265.

⁶ Peter Heath, *Church and Realm 1272-1461* (London: Fontana, 1988), p.165.

⁷ Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.10.

laity.⁸ One example is the poem *On Simonie*. This piece is unequivocal in its attacks on the church: it rails bitterly against ‘abbotes and priours’ who ‘contrefeten knihtes’, bishops who will ‘wid a litel silver stoppen’ their mouths, and friars who ‘wole to the dirige, if the cors is fat’.⁹ *Simonie* is clearly a text for a devout lay reader. Its earliest version is found in the Auchinleck manuscript, a ‘single-volume library’ compiled in the 1330s to suit ‘the taste [...] of the aspirant middle-class citizen’ who had a clear desire for religious instruction: other texts in the same collection include hagiographies, tracts on Purgatory and the ‘dedli sinnes seuene’, and an English gloss on the Paternoster.¹⁰ Like *Piers Plowman* after it, *Simonie* was evidently meant to be read by ‘prosperous, literate laymen’ with an ‘interest [...] in the foundations of Christian authority’.¹¹ Satire against the church is closely linked with a new interest in religious affairs among the middle classes. It is a product of a definite social change, rather than a ‘cultural constant’. It may be termed, after Wendy Scase’s important study, an identifiably ‘new anticlericalism’.¹²

Secondly, even when English anticlerical satire draws on older material, it substantially modifies it. Unlike vernacular antifeminism, English attacks on the priesthood do not merely reprise the charges of Latin and French authors without adjusting them. Instead, they force these complaints and motifs to accommodate a new outlook and set of values. Earlier anticlerical satire had invariably been written by one order against another, usually as a result of some larger dispute or feud. As John Van Engen writes, ‘whenever a religious movement attained an institutional status surpassing and threatening the privileges of others [...] satire commonly sprang

⁸ D. H. Green, ‘Orality and Reading: the state of research in medieval studies’, *Speculum* 65 (1990), p.279.

⁹ *Of Simonie*, 122, 92, 188, in *The Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: J.B. Nichol and Son, 1839), pp.323-45.

¹⁰ Timothy A. Shonk, ‘A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: bookmen and bookmaking in the early fourteenth century’, *Speculum* 60 (1985), p.91; *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.2.1*, ed. by Derek Pearsall and I.C. Cunningham (London: Scolar Press, 1977), p.viii; Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.76.

¹¹ J.A. Burrow, *Essays on Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p.107; Anne Middleton, ‘The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*’, in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: seven essays*, ed. by David Lawton (Cambridge: Brewer, 1982), p.104.

¹² Wendy Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

up'.¹³ Important examples include Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem* (1125) and William of St-Amour's *De periculis novissimorum temporum* (1256): the first is an attack on Cluny in the name of the newly-founded Cistercian order, while the second supports the secular clergy's 'monopoly on instruction' against challenges by the mendicants.¹⁴ Latin satire against the priesthood invariably denigrates one group of clerics in order to vindicate another. However, when its 'topoi of criticism' and 'symbolic language' began to be used in English texts, this aspect gradually disappeared.¹⁵ Since the 'new anticlericalism' was articulated from a lay perspective, it gained a greater breadth. English satirists were 'not writing in partisan support for any particular clerical group', and could therefore hold a more 'even-handed view of where clerical corruption in the Church lay'.¹⁶ Being without allegiance to any specific order, they were capable of moving between the various traditions of earlier satire, treating their critiques as a single vocabulary with 'implications for all clerics'.¹⁷ In short, the vernacular anticlericalism of the late fourteenth century fundamentally modified the traditions it drew upon. As Wendy Scase stresses, even at its most 'derivative' it impressed radically 'new meanings' on to the conventions it appropriated, reforming them into something 'wider, less stable [...] more dangerous'.¹⁸

Thirdly, anticlerical satire also proved to be changeable in itself. It is not a stable tradition, but one that is forced to adapt to outside pressures. A major instance of this is the anti-Wycliffite legislation passed at the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the form of *De haeretico comburendo* (1401) and Archbishop Arundel's

¹³ John Van Engen, 'Late Medieval Anticlericalism: the case of the new devout', in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 51 (Leiden, New York and Koln: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp.19-20.

¹⁴ William de Saint-Amour, *De periculis*, in John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of matters most speciall and memorable, happenyng in the Church* (London: Iohn Daye, 1583), pp.317-22 (STC 11225); Bernard of Clairvaux, *Apologia ad Guillelmum abbatem*, in *The Cistercian World*, trans. and ed. by Pauline Matarasso (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), pp.42-58; Arnold Williams, 'Chaucer and the Friars', *Speculum* 28 (1953), p.501.

¹⁵ Frantisek Graus, 'The Church and its Critics', in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, pp.68-9; Penn R. Szittyá, 'The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English', *Speculum* 52 (1977), p.287.

¹⁶ Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.156, 160.

¹⁷ Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, p.7.

¹⁸ Wendy Scase, 'Satire', in *Medieval England: an encyclopedia*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach and others (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), p.667; Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, p.123.

Constitutiones (1409).¹⁹ The second of these statutes has direct implications for satire: Arundel's third constitution prohibits discussing 'the faults which spring forth among churchmen' among 'laymen'.²⁰ As Anne Hudson notes, the chief effect of these sets of laws was to create a clear point of departure between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Prior to these acts 'to express a view was not immediately to invite classification as pro- or anti-Wycliffite', whereas afterwards 'two opposing and incompatible groups' could be defined.²¹ The statutes became the basis on which lay believers, who had previously demonstrated a wide range of opinions, could be divided into two discrete camps. This sense of division is mirrored in anticlerical satire. While a small quantity of confrontational texts were produced after 1409, just as Lollardy lingered on well into the reign of Henry VIII, a new strain of English anticlerical satire arose beside them.²² The fifteenth century came to prefer a ludic satire of the kind described by Martha Bayless, which might 'play with religious institutions' but ultimately displays 'an ease with religion': it was apolitical and playful, quite deliberately more 'entertainment than polemic'.²³ Such works as *The frere and the boye* and *Dane Hew* are typical of fifteenth-century anticlericalism: grotesque comedies which eschew the open critique of *On Simonie*, and so remain 'closer to orthodox morality'.²⁴ Nicholas Watson's remark that the anti-Lollard statutes 'left their scar' on every product of the 'nascent vernacular religious culture' is also applicable to vernacular religious satire.²⁵ English satire responded to these laws by developing a new, less aggressive strand. As a result, it may not be seen as an immutable literature, but one that is subject to transformation.

All of this signals precisely why English anticlericalism should not be treated as a

¹⁹ *Sources of English Constitutional History: a selection of documents from A.D. 600 to the present*, trans. and ed. by Carl Stephenson and Frederick George Marcham (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1937), p.274.

²⁰ 'Clero praesertim praedicans de vitiis pullulantibus inter eos, et laicis de peccatis inter eos communiter usitatis, et non e contra': *Consiliae Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, ed. by David Wilkins, 3 vols (London: Sumptibus Gosling, 1737), III, p.315.

²¹ Anne Hudson, *Premature Reformation: Wycliffite texts and Lollard history* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp.398, 408.

²² See John A. F. Thomson, *The Later Lollards, 1414-1520* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

²³ Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp.7, 202.

²⁴ Melissa Furrow, 'Middle English Fabliaux and Modern Myth', *English Literary History* 56 (1989), p.13.

²⁵ Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: vernacular theology, the Oxford translation debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409', *Speculum* 70 (1995), pp.858-9, 825.

continuous discourse, and should not be read in the same manner as antifeminism. Any examination of anticlerical satire must take into account the instability which characterises this form of English satire. The tradition is founded on change: it only came into being after an important social shift, changed the material it drew upon, and was forced to alter and develop by external circumstances. In short, English anticlericalism is a result, an agent and a subject of change. Consequently, appraising it as an unvarying whole would overlook one of its most important features. In view of this, the method the present chapter will adopt is one that allows such alterations to be brought to the fore. It will review anticlerical satire diachronically, assessing one text at a time, in approximately chronological order. Each text will be analysed in detail, before its place in the development of religious satire is established. Such a methodology will lay bare the individual transitions in anticlericalism's progression. This is particularly important because the wounded body, as a central figure in medieval satire, proves to be especially sensitive to change: injury and violence are substantially revalued as they move between generations of satirists writing against the church. The present chapter will be primarily concerned with these shifts, but will also determine the wider issues which inform them, and investigate what injury reveals about those issues in turn.

This inquiry begins with *Wynnere and Wastoure*, a dream-vision in alliterative long lines which survives in one incomplete copy.²⁶ In many respects *Wynnere* is a problematic starting-point for a diachronic investigation, since the poem has never been conclusively dated. Israel Gollancz, the first modern editor of the text, confidently assigned it the date 1352. His evidence was a probable allusion to the Treasons Statute, and a reference a 'kyng' reigning for 'fyve and twenty wyntere': this is most likely Edward III, whose twenty-fifth year as monarch did indeed fall in 1352 (206).²⁷ Gollancz's hypothesis was disputed almost immediately. J.R. Hulbert and George Neilson are two important early critics, whose assessments were later echoed and extended by Elizabeth Salter and Stephanie Trigg.²⁸ In response to this

²⁶ *Wynnere and Wastoure*, ed. by Stephanie Trigg, EETS o.s. 297 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

²⁷ *A Good Short Debate Between Winner and Waster: an alliterative poem on social and economic problems in England in the year 1352*, ed. by Israel Gollancz (London: Oxford University Press, 1920).

²⁸ George Neilson, 'Wynnere and Wastoure', *Athenaeum* 3942 (1903), p.626; J.R. Hulbert, 'The Problems of Authorship and Date of *Wynnere and Wastoure*', *Modern Philology* 18 (1920), pp.31-40;

controversy, the poem's two most recent editors have diplomatically used Gollancz's date as a *terminus post quem*, placing the poem between the years 1352 and 1370.²⁹ However, despite its uncertain date, *Wynnere* is still the most suitable place to begin the current inquiry, more so than the other potential candidate, Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Even if *Wynnere* was composed at the latest possible point in the range of dates assigned to it, it would still antedate at least two of the versions of *Piers*. Moreover, the only critic to propose that 'the formerly accepted relationship between *Piers Plowman* and *Winner and Waster* should be reversed', making *Piers* the older of the two, is David Lawton. Although Lawton's suggestions are often cited, little evidence is given in support of this proposal.³⁰ Aside from these questions, thematic factors also render *Wynnere* a good point at which to start this chapter. Although it introduces some of the concerns which recur throughout vernacular anticlericalism, it does so tentatively, displaying them in a more or less immature form. Furthermore, its use of injury as a satiric mechanism is highly significant: not only does wounding occupy a central place in the piece, but its role touches on several themes which are developed further in later texts.

In terms of its general character, *Wynnere and Wastoure* seems to belong to the same cultural climate from which Scase's new anticlericalism emerged. The poem owes at least its preservation to the rise in literacy among the laity and the related 'spirit of inquiry' into religious affairs.³¹ Its single surviving manuscript is much like the Auchinleck MS, containing such devotional works as the *Four Leaves of the Truelove* and the *Cursor Mundi*.³² It also seems to have been copied for a middle-class

Stephanie Trigg, 'Israel Gollancz's *Wynnere and Wastoure*: political satire or editorial politics?', in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: essays in honour of G.H. Russell*, ed. by Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), pp.115-27; Elizabeth Salter, 'The Timeliness of *Wynnere and Wastoure*', *Medium Aevum* 47 (1978), pp.40-65.

²⁹ *Old and Middle English, c.890-c.1400: an anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.535; *Wynnere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. by Warren Ginsberg, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992).

³⁰ David A. Lawton, 'The Unity of Middle English Alliterative Poetry', *Speculum* 58 (1983), pp.80-1. For a brief critique of Lawton's proposals, see Hoyt M. Duggan's review of Lawton's *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background* in *Speculum* 60 (1985), pp.170-3. Langland is treated as a follower of *Wynnere* in S.S. Hussey, 'Langland's Reading of Alliterative Poetry', *Modern Language Review* 60 (1965), pp.163-70, and John A. Burrow 'The Audience of *Piers Plowman*', *Anglia* 75 (1957), pp.373-84.

³¹ A.R. Myers, *England in the Late Middle Ages: 1307-1536* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), pp.67, 71.

³² On these texts in this manuscript context, see *Four Leaves of the Truelove*, in *Moral Love Songs and Laments*, ed. by Susanna Greer Fein, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute

readership. The manuscript was compiled by one Robert Thornton, a manorial lord at Ryedale, probably for use in his own household.³³ Thornton evidently had a taste for comedy mocking the church: another manuscript known to be his contains the 130-line poem 'Lyarde es an olde horse', a bawdy satire on the lechery of the Franciscans.³⁴ However, it is harder to determine whether *Wynnere* actually originated from this same middle-class milieu. Thornton copied his version between 1425 and 1450, at least fifty-five years after the text's composition, and the number of dialects detectable in the poem suggests that it has been rewritten several times.³⁵ Its later context may therefore not be that in which it initially appeared. Nonetheless, the emphasis on economic factors found in the poem would suggest that it was written for a lay, possibly mercantile audience. Thomas Bestul notes that *Wynnere*'s prevailing concern is 'analysis of economic problems', almost entirely confining 'the issues at question to the use of wealth', while for Gardiner Stillwell the poem presents strongly 'middle class [...] characteristics'.³⁶ *Wynnere* may therefore be reasonably classed as an early product of the 'broadening of the circles in which theological [...] issues might be discussed': it is fair to read its derision of the priesthood in connection with the new, lay-oriented anticlericalism.³⁷

As has already been stated, wounding holds a fundamental position in *Wynnere*. The text is concerned with exploring conflict, and injury plays an important part in this. *Wynnere*'s 'analysis of economic problems' is presented as a contest between two contrary positions. Most of the poem takes the form of a 'refreyte' or debate between the two figures named in its title, each of whom represents a different attitude towards

Publications, 1998); John J. Thompson, *The Cursor Mundi: poem, texts and contexts*, Medium Ævum monographs n.s. 19 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1998).

³³ John J. Thompson, *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript: British Library MS Additional 31042*, Manuscript Studies 2 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987).

³⁴ Lincoln Cathedral MS 91: 'Lyarde' occurs at f.148. See *Reliquiae Antiquae: scraps from ancient manuscripts, illustrating chiefly early English literature and the English language*, Thomas Wright and James Orchard Halliwell, 2 vols. (London: John Russell Smith, 1845) II, p.280; Melissa Furrow, 'A Minor Comic Poem in a Major Romance Manuscript: *Lyarde*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 32 (1996), pp.289-302; George Keiser, 'Lincoln Cathedral Library MS.91: life and milieu of the scribe', *Studies in Bibliography* 32 (1979), pp.158-79.

³⁵ Trigg, *Wynnere and Wastoure*, pp.xviii-xxi.

³⁶ Thomas H. Bestul, *Satire and Allegory in Wynnere and Wastoure* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), p.80; Gardiner Stillwell, 'Wynnere and Wastoure and the Hundred Years' War', *English Literary History* 8 (1941), p.242.

³⁷ Anne Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books* (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon Press, 1985), p.175. See also Margaret Aston's two essays 'Lollardy and the Reformation: survival or revival?' and 'Lollardy and Literacy', in Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: images and literacy in late medieval religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), pp.193-217, 219-42.

goods and capital. Wynnere is a 'negarde' who hoards his goods in 'wyde howses full of wolle sakkis' until 'the bemys benden at the rofe', while his opponent embodies the opposing principle of 'vnthrift', blithely spending 'for a repaste a rawnsom of silver' (436, 250-1, 267, 363). These two figures plead their cases before the monarch of *Wynnere's* imaginary 'ende', who aims to determine 'where the wronge ristyth' between them (200). The poem is thus, in essence, a trial between the two economic principles Wynnere and Wastoure represent. It is designed to ascertain whether Wynnere's 'eye on the what-is-to-come' or Wastoure's 'eye on the here-and-now' is the correct and truthful stance.³⁸

Violence in the poem is firmly rooted in this contest. It is simply another method by which the two figures can compete. As the narrator's dream opens, Wynnere and Wastoure are in a state of open warfare with one another, 'bown for to mete' (52). Each of the figures is a 'knyght' in command of a large army of followers, 'ane here in hawberkes full brighte' (50). Their combat is likely to be exceptionally bloody: 'if thay strike one stroke stynt þay ne thynken/ Till owthir here appon hethe be hewen to dethe' (195-6). The battle is only prevented by the king, who summons Wynnere and Wastoure to his pavilion and forces them to parley.

The point to stress here is that the 'bolde battel' is also an examination of the two positions, no less than the debate which supersedes it (105). Like a trial by judicial combat, only on a much larger scale, it is 'a means of determining the truth in a doubtful case of dispute', establishing which of the combatants can claim legitimacy over the other.³⁹ Each army is assembled for the sole reason of discrediting its opponents on the battlefield: as Wastoure states, 'wyth brandes to smyte/ To schon schenchiþe and schame þer schalkes are gadird' (431-2). In the framework of the current discussion this factor is of utmost importance. It reveals the exact function that is being attached to wounding here. In the context of an armed conflict, especially one designed 'the sothe for to telle', mutilation becomes a means of disproving or approving a position (221). As Wastoure's speech indicates, injuries are tokens of falsehood, of 'schame' and 'schenchiþe'. The greater the number of

³⁸ Lois Roney 'Winner and Waster's "Wyse Wordes": teaching economics and nationalism in fourteenth-century England', *Speculum* 69 (1994), pp.1089, 1092.

³⁹ William Seal Carpenter and Paul Tutt Stafford, *Readings in Early Legal Institutions* (New York: Crofts, 1932), p.302.

'strokes' or 'dynttis full many', the greater the error of their holder's proposals (153, 142). The corollary of this point is also true: the more wounds a side can inflict, the greater the veracity of its position. If one 'here' is 'hewen to dethe', it will securely ratify its opponents' views. A true 'deme' will be established by fighting 'furthe with oure folke to owthire fey worthe', as Wynnere declares at one point (244-5). The function of 'dynttis' in *Wynnere* is an epistemic one. Wounding is a method of corroborating a given set of propositions, a force which serves to authenticate or invalidate a position. In short, the text's use of violence inclines towards the festive tendency, employing injury as a method of negotiation.

What is most interesting is that injury is not simply presented as an alternative to the debate. *Wynnere* portrays it as a more reliable mode of validation. The arbitration between Wynnere and Wastoure proves to be something of a fiasco. In the words of A.C. Spearing, 'it does not propound any solution of a kind that would bring the conflict to an end', not managing to 'grant [...] a decisive victory' to either of the two plaintiffs.⁴⁰ By the end of the debate the king finds himself unable to 'deme þow this day' (220). He cannot side with either the skinflint or the spendthrift and instead dismisses them both, sending Wynnere to the papal court at Avignon and Wastoure to 'þe chepe' (474). Nor does either disputant succeed in proving their position. As several critics have observed, their arguments lack any consistent logical or moral ground. Stephanie Trigg notes that 'the linguistic element of the debate exhausts itself in paradox and hyperbole', and identifies 'an uneasiness in the poet as to how traditional moral schemes and homiletic exempla can apply'.⁴¹ David Harrington also notices that aporia litter the interchange, while Stillwell points out that each speaker simultaneously 'makes use of religious idealism' and 'seems to protest against religious observance'.⁴² The speakers fail to state their cases in either ethical and rational terms. Ultimately their debate is an exercise in empty language, 'brethe and [...] brode worde' (457). The battle, on the other hand, does present a concrete means of deciding between the two stances. It will decisively corroborate one position and discredit the other, producing 'dynttis' to signify 'schenchipe'. In contrast to the

⁴⁰ A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.134.

⁴¹ Trigg, 'Israel Gollancz's *Wynnere and Wastoure*', pp.126-7.

⁴² David V. Harrington, 'Indeterminacy in *Winner and Waster* and *The Parliament of the Three Ages*', *Chaucer Review* 20 (1986), pp.246-57; Stillwell, 'Wynnere and Wastoure and the Hundred Years' War', p.244.

abortive dialogue, combat becomes a much more dependable method of resolving the dispute.

Moreover, injury underlies every position that the poem does present as legitimate. The supreme authority in *Wynnere* is the 'comely kyng'. The other characters defer to him without question: 'nowthir wye be wrothe to wirche als he demeth' (201). His influence is such that he is capable of preventing the skirmish between the two armies simply by means of 'his erande' (125). Yet even his command seems to rest on violence and disfigurement. At one stage the poem cites the 1352 Treasons Statute, as the armies are warned that 'any beryn [...] withinn þe kyngdome' who bears a private banner will forfeit 'bothe his two eghne' (131-2, 126). This reading of the statute, while technically inaccurate, does emphasise that wounding is a vital component in the king's power.⁴³ By insisting that mutilation will befall anyone who would 'lede rowte in his rewme so ryall to thyneke', these lines show that royal precedence is asserted by disfiguring rival powers (128). Again physically damaging a dissenter guarantees the verity of a position. Nor is the king alone in this: even the command of his herald is based on his licence 'dynttis to dele' (103). Mutilation is evidently an important aspect of *Wynnere*: it is a vital part of the poem's general system of evaluation. All claims seem to be confirmed by maiming their contenders. Any other means of validation simply fizzles out.

This stance possesses a satirical and anticlerical dimension, which emerges when *Wynnere* applies its logic directly to the priesthood. The poem makes several references to the clergy during its description of the battlefield. Numerous religious orders are set among the soldiery, carrying elaborate standards which identify them as churchmen. For instance, the presence of the pope 'that hede es of holy kirke' is announced by a 'banere' displaying 'thre bulles' or 'bibulles' 'of ble white' (144, 147). Further 'synes [...] sette appon lofte' symbolise the four fraternal orders: 'sexe galegs [...] of sable' signify the Franciscans, a 'balle [...] reghte siche as the sonne' represents the Dominicans, while 'thre bore hedis' and 'beltys of blake bocled togedir' respectively denote the Carmelites and the Augustinians (188, 157, 164-5,

⁴³ See Salter, 'Timeliness of *Wynnere and Wastoure*', pp.41-3.

175, 182).⁴⁴ All of these ‘ferse and [...] fresche’ ecclesiastics are fully prepared to participate in the altercation: ‘there es no man appon molde to machen þaym agayne’ (160, 172).

Wynnere’s placement of the church on the battlefield is clearly a festive manoeuvre of the most audacious kind. By setting the ‘hede of holy kirke’ and his retinue of mendicants in a space where authority relies on ‘dynttis’, the priesthood loses any claim to inherent supremacy (147). Instead of being able to rely on automatic authority, it becomes dependent on bodily disfigurement to ratify its assertions. Since this is a ubiquitous form of validation, one which can be made to support any claim, the church must compete in order to gain legitimacy. The church is thus reduced to one faction within a number of others, with no more or less authority than any of its peers. It is made subject to the same circumstances that govern the other parties on the field, the ‘marchandes’ and the ‘bolde sqwyeres of blode, bowmen many’ who are also mentioned (190, 194). *Wynnere*’s epistemic use of wounding, and its insistence that this applies to the church just as it applies to everything else, is obviously a festive technique. It satirises the priesthood by decreasing its status, stripping it of any innate prestige.

This is made all the more striking by the fact that it resembles some of the trends which make up Scase’s ‘new anticlericalism’, albeit in an inchoate and imperfect form. As Scase emphasises, the new anticlericalism departed from the practice of earlier satire by developing new criteria for its judgments. Previous generations of critics invariably used religious rules as the basis of their attacks. Their chief strategy would be to compare the present state of an order or office against its original template. To cite one example from many, the attack against John XII in Liutprand of Cremona’s *Historia Ottonis* (c.964) lists a series of outrageous charges, including homicide, perjury, ‘sacrilege’, adultery, and even ‘drinking wine for the love of the

⁴⁴ Attempts to relate these devices to heraldic designs of the fourteenth-century nobility, principally those of Scotland and Italy, have now been largely dismissed: see George Neilson, ‘The Parlement of Thre Ages’, *Athenaeum* 3861 (1901), pp.560-1; Henry Bradley, ‘Wynnere and Wastoure’, *Athenaeum* 3943 (1903), p.657; Neilson, ‘Wynnere and Wastoure’, *Athenaeum* 3955 (1903), p.221. Trigg has outlined the shortcomings of Neilson and Bradley’s work, while Bruce Moore concludes: ‘There is some limited use of heraldic terminology, but the dominant emphasis is on emblematic detail used to satirical ends’: *Wynnere and Wastoure*, p.27; Bruce Moore, ‘The Dominicans’ Banner in *Wynnere and Wastoure*’, *English Language Notes* 26 (1988), p.7.

devil'. However, such conduct is only condemned because it does not accord with the position of supreme pontiff, 'your most holy wisdom'.⁴⁵ The new anticlericalism turned away from this approach, measuring churchmen against much wider standards. Having its roots in lay devotion, the new anticlericalism placed special emphasis on the fundamental duties demanded of every Christian. These became the models with which it appraised clerics. Scase describes 'the authority of private religious rule' losing its force as a means of evaluating behaviour, as clerics' conduct came to be judged according to 'biblical law' or 'the law of holy church which binds both clergy and laity'.⁴⁶ *Wynnere's* treatment of the church is reminiscent of this process. The poem's placement of clergymen in 'ane here in hawberkes full brighte' also insists that the church is subject to the same conditions and laws which govern everything else. Clerics are denied any special status or peculiar set of rules, and instead are placed within a universal system of values. *Wynnere* shares with the new anticlericalism a marked indifference towards clerical privilege. The poem's attitude can best be summarised by a phrase from the work of A.R. Myers: it evinces a thorough 'resistance to clerical pretensions', regarding 'the clergy as only one profession among others'.⁴⁷

However, the differences between the new anticlericalism and *Wynnere's* satire are every bit as significant as the parallels. Chief among these is *Wynnere's* failure to use 'biblical law' to mount its attack against the church: as Spearing notes, 'religious implications are not finally brought to bear' on the poem's 'political and economic meaning'.⁴⁸ The poem undermines the church's standing, maintaining that it is subject to universal values, but morality plays no detectible part in this process. This factor is highly suggestive, and does much to illuminate the poem's basic attitude towards the priesthood. It implies that *Wynnere* fundamentally accepts the present state of the church, rather than seeing any need for large-scale reform. The absence of 'religious implications' in the poem's anticlerical satire suggests that it cannot

⁴⁵ Liutprand of Cremona, *Liber de Rebus Gestis Ottonis*, X, in *The Works of Liutprand of Cremona*, ed. and trans. by F.A. Wright (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1930), pp.222-3. On Liutprand as a satirist, see Ross Balzaretto, 'Liutprand of Cremona's sense of humour', in *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Gary Halsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.114-30.

⁴⁶ Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, pp.135-6.

⁴⁷ Myers, *England in the Late Middle Ages*, p.68.

⁴⁸ Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p.134.

differentiate religion from the existing structure of the church. It is not able to evaluate the church in religious terms because the church is the embodiment of religion. The poem simply cannot separate Christian doctrine from the clergy in order to side with one against the other. This signals that *Wynnere* does not propose, or perhaps does not even see, any alternative to the church in its current form. The church as it stands simply is Christianity, representing its tenets fully and completely. No other system is conceivable for the poem. *Wynnere's* eschewal of religious appraisal in favour of violence and injury reveals a tacit conservatism within the poem, a basic acceptance of the priesthood as it exists. As far as the poem is concerned, reform is neither necessary or desirable.

It is also noticeable that *Wynnere* is not prepared to subject the church to a wholly festive, deflationary treatment. While the church is ready to participate in conflict, it is also set slightly apart from the processes which govern the battlefield. The very fact that the friars and the pope are carrying banners automatically distinguishes them from their fellow combatants. The remainder of the 'heres' are largely unidentifiable, being described only in the vaguest terms. When depicting the soldiery the narrator does little to individualise the fighters. His report concerns the most unvarying aspects of the armies, dwelling particularly on the homogenous costume of the troops: 'hawberkes full brighte,/ Harde hattes appon hedes and helmys with crestys' (50-1). Each warrior is subsumed into a faceless mass: 'in schiltrons þay felle [...] stuffede in stele' (142). However, because the clergy are carrying banners, they are set apart from this indistinction. They are rendered immediately recognisable, separated from the other, more nondescript fighters. The presence of the banners even isolates the clergymen from the conflict itself. The battle, as a trial of two rival claims, is a contest for definition. The two sides are basically competing for the terms 'sothe' and 'schame', for the ability to attach one term to their own position and the other to that of their opponents. Their value is in the process of being determined. But the same is not true of the clergy. They are not subject to this lack of definition, since each order's banner bestows on it a level of innate meaning. Each standard is indisputably the property of its bearers. There is no trace of ambiguity in their descriptions, as each blazon evokes its order without difficulty: 'thies are Sayn Franceys folke'; 'that was Domynye'; 'Carmes thaym semyde'; 'Austyns [...] I wene' (159, 167, 176, 186). Ecclesiastics are afforded fixed value, granted an essence which is beyond challenge.

Just as their escutcheons are 'brayde appon lofte', so the churchmen themselves are partly set above the combat (165). Their symbols detach them from the festive contest.

It also significant that the standards allude to the founding ideals of the various orders. Each one presents either its bearers' rule or their principal purpose. The Black Friars' golden 'balle [...] siche as the sonne es in the someris tyde' is the most straightforward example, clearly referring to the order's foundation by Saint Dominic (164-5). Dominic was conventionally likened 'to a light breaking out upon the darkness [...] vera mundi lumina': an English translator of Catherine of Siena states that 'his principal vertu þat he sette his religioun vpon was þe liȝt of kunnyng which he took myȝtily upon himsilf'.⁴⁹ The 'balle' thus refers to the 'bigynnyng' of the Dominican order. A similar function is performed by the boars' heads on the flag of the Carmelites. This motif most likely represents Christmas, the festival at which such fare was traditionally consumed.⁵⁰ The feast of the Nativity would have special resonance for the White Friars, who were committed to the service of the Virgin: a popular gloss on Isaias 35.2 held that 'beauty of Carmel' was dedicated to Mary.⁵¹ Again, the standard evokes a founding ideal of its order. The other escutcheons are a little more complex, as they contain elements of mild ridicule. For instance, the Franciscans' 'galegs' or sandals directly echo the order's rule, which stipulates 'the bretherne shalle were no shone': however, the footwear portrayed on the flag is lined with 'sable withinn', suggesting corruption and laxity (157).⁵² The Austins' characteristic cinctures or 'beltys of blake' carry the same connotations of indulgence, as they 'schynethe alle for scharpynyng', while the Pope's 'thre bulles' or 'bibulles' are similarly elaborated, 'brouden' and 'seled with a sade lede' (182-5, 144-6). Yet it is apparent that these symbols still honour founding ideals, even as they present them satirically. In each of these signs corruption stems from alien materials

⁴⁹ Moore, 'Dominicans' Banner', p.8; *The Orchard of Syon*, ed. by Phyllis Hogson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS o.s. 258 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p.389.

⁵⁰ See Hans Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), p.45, P.H. Ditchfield, *Old English Sports, Pastimes and Customs* (London: Methuen and Company, 1891), pp.123-4, and the numerous 'boar's head' carols collected in *Ancient English Christmas Carols: 1400-1700*, ed. by Edith Rickert (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914), pp.256-60.

⁵¹ On the Carmelite exegesis of Isaias, which appears in John Baconthorpe's *Speculum de institutione ordinis* (c.1300), see Andrew Jotischkey, *The Perfection of Solitude: hermits and monks in the Crusader states* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

⁵² *Monumenta Franciscana*, ed. by J.S. Brewer and Richard Howlett, Rolls Series, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1858-82), I (1858), p.572.

or qualities that have been added to the basic symbol: the fur, embroidery and polish are all adornments, features which have been appended or attached to the item which represents the rule. Each ideal is itself spared from criticism, as the sense of contamination does not penetrate it, only skirting its surface. The founding ideals of the orders are isolated from mockery or denunciation: each standard is a symbol of its order's principles. *Wynnere* thus sets the ideals of the church beyond its festive use of injury. By means of its banners and the matter they display, the poem curbs its depreciation of the priesthood.

In summary, *Wynnere*'s use of bodily injury marks the poem as a transition-text. It is a work which contains elements of the new anticlericalism and of the older traditions without being classifiable as either. *Wynnere* follows the new anticlericalism in its willingness to regard the priesthood as 'only one profession among others'. By subordinating clerics to the battlefield's code, overlooking their specific rules and subjecting them to a universal value-system, the poem enacts something like a hallmark strategy of Scase's new anticlericalism. Yet the old ideals are still respected by *Wynnere*, and the code which it forces on to the church is emphatically non-religious. Both of these factors render the text's movement towards the new anticlericalism at best a cautious one. However, by the same token, *Wynnere* cannot merely be considered a vernacular extension of the older satiric traditions. Its main line of attack is far more corrosive than any tactic found in Latin and French anticlericalism. The earlier satires were invariably written to endorse the claims of one order against a rival. Not only does *Wynnere* not side with any specific order, but its chief stratagem is inimical to such an objective. The poem's insistence that churchmen are as subject to violence as any other entity simply cannot be used to 'support [...] any particular clerical group' because it is equally applicable to every order. Such a strategy could even be conceivably used against the whole of the clergy. It is only by carefully limiting the range of its comments that the poem does not achieve a wholesale assault: the fact remains that its satire does hold the potential to attack the entire church.

Ultimately *Wynnere*'s position can only be described as incipient and half-formed. Its basic stance contains a high degree of implicit radicalism, but the poem cannot fully accommodate this. It proves unable to follow its satire to the fullest possible extent.

In terms of satiric disfigurement *Wynnere* is also recognisably incomplete. The poem's use of wounding lacks a more firmly judgmental, hieratic element. Wounds are not being used here to mark and define, but only to deflate and reduce. Although it is acknowledged that 'dynntis' can 'deme' an entity, the poem forestalls such an act of definition, replacing it with the fruitless 'refreyte'. Such a retreat from the hieratic function of injury is a further indication of the hesitancy of the poem's satire. *Wynnere* cannot claim sufficient authority to inscribe the priesthood with its own designations, or give any direct appraisals of the church.

The issues present in *Wynnere* are more fully pursued by one of the monumental texts in medieval English, and one which occupies a unique place in the emergence of vernacular anticlericalism, Langland's *Piers Plowman*.⁵³ *Piers* overlaps *Wynnere* both in its range of concerns and its possible dates of composition. It is generally believed that the poem was first produced in the 1360s and rewritten almost continuously until the late 1380s or early 1390s, producing three distinct versions of the text, A, B and C.⁵⁴ However, even this much cannot be asserted with total certainty, as John Bowers has recently demonstrated.⁵⁵ In fact very little can be decisively stated about the work, since every aspect of its composition seems to be open to debate. For instance, William Langland's authorship has been attacked as a questionable piety by C. David Benson, problematised by David Fowler, and wholly rejected by Stella Pates.⁵⁶ Stanley Hussey, however, has rigorously defended the

⁵³ The following editions of *Piers* are used here: William Langland, *Piers Plowman: the A version*, ed. by George Kane (London: Athlone Press, 1988), p.330; William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: a critical edition of the B-text*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1978); William Langland, *Piers Plowman: the C version*, ed. by George Russell and George Kane (London: Athlone Press, 1997). References appear in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁴ These are largely the conclusions of *Piers'* Victorian editor Walter Skeat which, despite numerous challenges, are still widely accepted: see W.W. Skeat, 'Section VIII', in Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry*, ed. by W. Carew Hazlitt, 4 vols (London: Reeves and Turner, 1871), II, pp.244-63; Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Present State of Piers Plowman Studies', *Speculum* 14 (1939), pp.215-32; Malcolm Godden, *The Making of Piers Plowman* (London: Longman, 1990).

⁵⁵ See John M. Bowers, 'Dating *Piers Plowman*: testing the testimony of Usk's *Testament*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 13 (1999), pp.65-100; John M. Bowers, '*Piers Plowman*'s William Langland: editing the text, writing the author's life', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 9 (1995), pp.65-90.

⁵⁶ C. David Benson, 'The Langland Myth', in *William Langland's Piers Plowman: a book of essays*, ed. by Kathleen M. Hewett-Smith (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp.83-99; David C. Fowler, 'Piers Plowman: in search of an author', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 5 (1988), pp.1-11; Stella Pates, *The Rock and the Plough: John Grandisson, William Langland and Piers Plowman, a theory of authorship* (Cirencester: Fairford Press, 2000).

established attribution.⁵⁷ Likewise, the traditional chronology of the three versions has been challenged by Jill Mann, only to be reasserted by George Kane and Traugott Lawler.⁵⁸

In terms of interpretation *Piers* has proved no less negotiable. Every reading of the text seems to provoke myriad rejoinders, a fact made particularly evident by the 2001 issue of the *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, in which twelve of the twenty-two articles are 'responses' to other critics' work.⁵⁹ Such controversy is hardly surprising, since contest over *Piers*' meaning is almost as old as the poem itself. Even in the fourteenth century readers demonstrated diverse reactions to *Piers*, from Chaucer's refashioning of the Plowman-figure into a 'trewe swynkere [...] lyvyng in pees' to 'Jakke Carter's' adoption of 'Pers plouȝman' as a mascot of rebellion.⁶⁰

As a poem which has elicited such a variety of responses, it would certainly be reductive to read *Piers* as a purely satirical, anti-ecclesiastic piece. As John Norton-Smith states, the view of the poem as 'a type of rough satire' against the church is in

⁵⁷ S.S. Hussey, 'Langland the Outsider', in *Middle English Poetry, Texts and Traditions: essays in honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. by A.J. Minnis (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), pp.129-37.

⁵⁸ Jill Mann, 'The Power of the Alphabet: a reassessment of the relation between the A and B versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994), pp.21-50; George Kane, 'An Open Letter to Jill Mann about the Sequence of the Versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 13 (1999), pp.7-34; Traugott Lawler, 'A Reply to Jill Mann, Reaffirming the Traditional Relation between the A and B Versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 10 (1996), pp.145-81.

⁵⁹ See Ann W. Astell, 'Response to Lawrence Clopper', pp.43-46; James J. Paxson, 'Sick Of Allegory: response to Clopper', pp.47-57; Wendy Scase, 'Plowing Parallel Furrows? The Textual Cultures of *Piers* and Preaching: response to Alan Fletcher', pp.85-8; Judith Dale, 'The Author, the Dreamer, his Wife, and their Poet: Thoughts on an Essential-Ephemeral Langland: response to Fletcher', pp.89-94; Fiona Somerset, 'Response to Anna Baldwin', pp.109-14; David Lawton, 'Response to Andrew Galloway', pp.129-33; Louise M. Bishop, 'Response to Galloway', pp.134-39; Bruce W. Hozeski, 'Response to Anne M. Scott', pp.154-57; Joan Baker, 'Response to Scott', pp.158-65; Geoffrey J. Wilsbacher, 'Culture Wars? All's Not Quiet on the Langland Front: response to Joseph Wittig', pp.196-200.

⁶⁰ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I.531, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.32. On the appearance of *Piers* in the letters of the 1381 insurgents, see Richard Firth Green, 'John Ball's Letters: Literary History and Historical Literature', in *Chaucer's England*, ed. by Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp.176-200; David C. Fowler, 'Star Gazing: *Piers Plowman* and the Peasants' Revolt', *Review* 18 (1996), pp.1-30; Anne Hudson, '*Piers Plowman* and the Peasants' Revolt: a problem revisited', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994), pp.85-106. On Chaucer's putative emulation of *Piers*, see Neville Coghill, 'Two Notes on *Piers Plowman*: II, Chaucer's Debt to Langland', *Medium Ævum* 4 (1935), pp.89-94; J.A.W. Bennett, 'Chaucer's Contemporary', in *Piers Plowman: critical approaches*, ed. by S.S. Hussey (London: Methuen, 1969), pp.310-24; Daniel F. Pigg, 'Authorial Insertion and Identity Poetics: figuring subjectivity in *Piers Plowman C* and *The Parson's Tale* and *Retraction*', *Style* 31 (1997), pp.428-440. Subsequent references to the *Canterbury Tales* appear in parentheses in the text.

reality ‘a gross renaissance distortion’.⁶¹ Historically, such a perception is bound up with the sixteenth-century belief that the poem was a Lollard production, if not the work of Wyclif himself.⁶² John Bale’s list of the works of ‘Ioannes Wicleuus [...] who had dared to acknowledge Christ in the presence of the entire Church of Antichrist’ attaches a piece called ‘Petrum Agricolam’ to the heretic’s canon.⁶³ Along similar lines, Robert Crowley, the first Tudor editor of the text, ranks ‘Roberte langelande’ beside Wyclif as one who stood ‘agaynste the workes of darckenes’. Crowley’s edition seems consciously designed to promote this opinion of the work: its ‘sume of the principall poyntes that be spoken of in thys boke’ calls the reader’s attention to such issues as ‘what shameful Simony reigneth in the church’, ‘Howe Wrath teacheth the Fryers’, and the supposed contention that ‘Abbayes shoulde be suppressed’.⁶⁴ George Puttenham, an Elizabethan reader, also treats Langland as a critic of the church with Wycliffite leanings, naming ‘he that wrote the Satyr of Piers Ploughman’ as a ‘malcontent’ attacking ‘specially the pride of the Romane Clergy, of whose fall he seemeth to be a very true Prophet’.⁶⁵ Again the militancy of the poem is exaggerated to emphasise its hypothetical Lollard content. The notion of a wholly anticlerical *Piers* is, as Anne Hudson states, part of a ‘concerted plan to produce suitable reading matter of a reforming cast’ in the late sixteenth century.⁶⁶

Such a view of *Piers* is indeed a ‘gross [...] distortion’, since the poem is almost certainly not a Lollard text. Anne Hudson and Christina von Nolcken have each interrogated the poem point by point, heresy by heresy, and ultimately reached the same conclusion as Pamela Gradon: ‘Langland may well be thought to express

⁶¹ John Norton-Smith, *William Langland* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), p.8

⁶² See Hudson, *Lollards and their Books*, pp.227-48, especially pp.227, 247-8; Sarah Kelen, ‘Plowing the Past: “Piers Protestant” and the authority of medieval literary history’, *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 13 (1999), pp.101-36.

⁶³ ‘Ioannes Wicleuus [...] qui coram tota diaboli Syngoga ausus fuerat confitieri Christum’: John Bale, *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae scriptorum, hoc est, Angliae, Cambriae, ac Scotiae summarium in quasdam centurias diuisum* (Ipswich: D. van der Straten, 1548), ff.154v, 157 (STC 1295).

⁶⁴ *The vision of pierce Plowman nowe the second time imprinted*, ed. by Robert Crowley (London: Robert Grafton, 1550), ff.2, 4v (STC 19906). See R. Carter Hailey, “‘Geuyng Light to the Reader’”: Robert Crowley’s editions of *Piers Plowman*, *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America* 95 (2001), pp.483-502; John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: the Tudor origins of the Protestant tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 319-39.

⁶⁵ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (Menston: Scolar Press, 1968), p.50.

⁶⁶ Anne Hudson, ‘Epilogue: The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*’, in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. by John A. Alford (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), pp.251-66.

widely held popular views rather than purely the views of Wyclif'.⁶⁷ Langland's supposed Wycliffism is also thrown into doubt by the revisions in the C-text, which are widely seen as 'prudent modifications' intended to remove any intimation of heterodoxy from *Piers*. It would appear that Langland recoiled from, rather than embraced, the more militant strains of religious curiosity.⁶⁸ All of this makes it rather difficult to class the poem as a simple attack on 'the pride of the Romane Clergy'. Modern criticism has certainly turned against this view. Since the pioneering work of Henry Wells and Neville Coghill in the 1930s, critical focus has drifted away from the poem's 'social concern' towards its more penitential dimensions.⁶⁹ For subsequent generations of critics 'the deepest' meaning of *Piers* has been one of 'a most subtle spirituality'.⁷⁰ The poem is seen as a principally mystical work, which is only incidentally satirical or censorious, fulfilling 'a primarily religious function'.⁷¹ Anne Middleton's work on marginal notes in the *Piers* manuscripts strongly reinforces this view, revealing that the poem was initially received, and presumably intended to be read, as 'a compendiously didactic work'.⁷²

Nevertheless *Piers*' criticisms of the priesthood are an important facet of the poem, even if they cannot be regarded as its dominant aspect. *Piers* is Scase's principal witness to 'new anticlericalism', and its virulent antimendicantism has attracted recent analysis from Edwin Craun, David Fowler and Lawrence Clopper.⁷³ The text itself proves something of a digest for the various currents of late-fourteenth-century anticlerical thought. It contains numerous scattered complaints against the various

⁶⁷ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp.403-8; Christina Von Nolcken, 'Piers Plowman, the Wycliffites, and Pierce the Plowman's Creed', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 2 (1988), pp.71-102; Pamela Gradon, 'Langland and the Ideology of Dissent', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 66 (1980), p.191.

⁶⁸ On this issue see G.H. Russell, 'Some Aspects of the Process of Revision in *Piers Plowman*', in *Piers Plowman: critical approaches*, pp.27-50; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Piers Plowman', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.513-38.

⁶⁹ Edward Vasta, 'Introduction', in *Interpretations of Piers Plowman*, ed. by Edward Vasta (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p.xii.

⁷⁰ Elizabeth Zeeman, 'Piers Plowman and the Pilgrimage to Truth', in *Style and Symbolism in Piers Plowman: a modern critical anthology*, ed. by Robert J. Blanch (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p.117.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Salter, *Piers Plowman: an introduction* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1969), p.24.

⁷² Middleton, 'Audience of *Piers Plowman*', p.104.

⁷³ Edwin D. Craun, "'Ye, by Peter and by Poul!': Lewte and the practice of fraternal correction', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 15 (2001), pp.15-25; David C. Fowler, 'Response to Craun's "'Ye, by Peter and by Poul!'", *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 15 (2001), pp.26-30; Lawrence M. Clopper, 'Response to Craun's "'Ye, by Peter and by Poul!'", *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 15 (2001), pp.30-32.

orders, varying from Wrathe's alleged fondness for monasteries to Ymagenatyf's damning indictment that 'holy chirche [...] druyeth vp dowel' (C.XIX.21-2). But what is perhaps more important than these open declarations is the unspoken hostility to the church which pervades the poem. A major aspect of this is *Piers'* conception of moral authority. In this, the text awards a great deal of prominence to such forces as 'Conscience' and 'love'. The figure which bears the name Conscience is unquestionably exemplary: he is the lone challenger to Lady Mede, whose treachery is not even noted by 'a confessour coped as a frere': later, the 'holy men' of the early church are said to have required 'no boek but Conscience' to sustain them (B.III.35, C.XVII.197). As Scase writes, conscience 'becomes the site of truth [...] the renewal of charity must be located in the conscience'.⁷⁴ P.M. Kean makes a similar point about the importance of love in the poem. Based on the injunctions 'lerne to love [...] leef alle othere' and 'set alle sciences at a sop save love one', Kean concludes that for Langland 'love is the sine qua non of all moral action', another infallible indicator of proper conduct (B.XX.208, XIII.124).⁷⁵

From the poem's treatment of these two qualities, it can be seen that *Piers* makes a definite move towards promoting interior forms of religious life. The text 'cares nothing for the letter of the observance unless the spirit is there', as genuine enlightenment stems from the mind and emotions, not from any external source.⁷⁶ What makes this attitude all the more significant is its implicit depreciation of the institutions of the church. The priesthood loses its reliability in this schema: its instruction, and the rituals in which it involves the believer, become at best superfluous and at worst misleading. As Claire Marshall states, the poem rejects 'ecclesiastically mediated subjectivity' in favour of 'a new emphasis on the individual as a locus for divine grace'.⁷⁷ The outward machinery of the church is quietly discarded in favour of more intuitive, internal forms of moral guidance.⁷⁸ More

⁷⁴ Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, p.119.

⁷⁵ P.M. Kean, 'Justice, Kingship and the Good Life in the Second Part of *Piers Plowman*', in *Piers Plowman: critical approaches*, p.82.

⁷⁶ George Kane, *Middle English Literature: a critical study of the romances, the religious lyrics, Piers Plowman* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), p.198.

⁷⁷ Claire Marshall, *William Langland, Piers Plowman* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2001), p.27.

⁷⁸ See also Mary Clemente Davlin, *A Game of Heuene: word play and the meaning of Piers Plowman B* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1989), p.122, which suggests that *Piers'* famously oblique, ambiguous style is designed to engage readers in a 'play of mind', compelling them to participate actively in devotion, rather than passively receive instruction.

importantly, these ideas often stimulate direct mockery of the priesthood. One instance is the caricature of a pedantic and hypocritical 'doctour' or 'dyvynour', 'Goddess gloton [...] with hise grete chekes', a figure who is decisively condemned by Conscience for his reliance on external 'texts' and 'sciences': 'me were levere, by Oure Lord, and I lyve sholde,/ Have patience parfitliche than half thi pak of bokes' (B.XIII.77, 198-200). The poem's 'emphasis on the individual' gives it a firm ideal against which it may appraise clerics. This in turn enables it to redress, ridicule and denounce their conduct. *Piers* may possess a 'primarily religious function', but anticlerical satire remains a significant product of this, arising from it readily and immediately. While the Tudor conception of the text as an anti-ecclesiastic document was certainly reductive, it was not entirely unwarranted.

The poem's use of injury is no less significant than its mistrust of the clergy. Such is the level of violence in *Piers* that one commentator has dubbed parts of the text 'a poetic pillory'.⁷⁹ Langland's conception of wounding differs considerably from that found in *Wynnere*, not least of all in its complexity, as mutilation proves a much more variable symbol in the later poem. This is not surprising, given the fundamental place that the body occupies in *Piers*.⁸⁰ The body is an extremely pervasive trope in Langland's work, and disfigurement, as a related theme, shares in this general prevalence. In fact the body proves to be such a key motif in the text that it wholly dominates its treatment of wounding. As a result of this, it is imperative to understand the functions of the body in *Piers* before the meaning of injury in the poem can be determined.

Lavinia Griffiths' work on personification gives a good indication of the importance of corporeality in *Piers*, as well as hinting at its overall purpose.⁸¹ Griffiths bases her study on Roland Barthes' discussion of character, citing his view that 'the proper name acts as a magnetic field for [...] semes, referring in fact to a body'.⁸² According

⁷⁹ C. David Benson, 'Piers Plowman as Poetic Pillory: the pillory and the cross', in *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: essays in honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. by David Aers (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp.31-54.

⁸⁰ On the body in medieval allegory generally, see Maureen Quilligan, 'Allegory and the Textual Body: female authority in Christina de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*', in *The New Medievalism*, ed. by Marina Brownlee and others (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp.272-300.

⁸¹ Lavinia Griffiths, *Personification in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), p.5.

⁸² Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), pp.67-8.

to this position, personification chiefly works by fixing abstractions to the rules which govern the body, drawing the conceptual into the corporeal. In light of the sheer volume of personifications in *Piers*, this factor alone makes the body a key symbol in the poem. Virtually everything featured in the poem 'may not be withoute a body to bere' it: according to Griffiths, 'over eighty inanimate and abstract nouns' are fitted into human anatomies, 'becoming persons' (C.XVI.178).⁸³ Carnality is an all-embracing metaphor for Langland, a grand symbol into which all concepts are convertible.

What makes this all the more significant is that the body is the very basis of Langland's allegory. As Gay Clifford writes, allegory is a highly systematic mode. Above all else it aims to determine the connections and hierarchies between concepts, rather than simply pointing out their existence: 'the concern is always with process, with the way in which various elements of an imaginative or intellectual system interact'.⁸⁴ For *Piers*, the body is a crucial tool in the attainment of this end. In the poem the various concepts frequently engage with one another by means of their bodies. The body allows suggestions of kinship or complicity to be formulated: examples include the conspiratorial 'wynke' shared by Mede and the 'men of lawe', and the 'kisse' which binds Truthe, Rightwisnesse and Pees 'in covenant' (B.IV.152, XVIII.419).⁸⁵ Elsewhere carnality serves to differentiate concepts: the proportions of 'petit' Poverte and Coveitise 'of a long lengthe' clearly mark the distribution of power between them, while the corrupted features of the vices, such as Wrathe's 'niuilynge nose' and Sleuthe's 'slimy yes', establish a firm contrast between sin and divinity, since each figure presents 'God's image befouled' (B.XIV.242; C.VI.104, VII.1).⁸⁶ Corporeality is a key medium for establishing and displaying abstract relationships. The body allows the text to organise the concepts it cites, to assign them values relative to one another, and to locate them within a general schema. It is a vital component in Langland's work, 'distilling ideas into palpable form for discursive manipulation'.⁸⁷

⁸³ Griffiths, *Personification in Piers Plowman*, p.3.

⁸⁴ Gay Clifford, *The Transformations of Allegory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p.11.

⁸⁵ See J.A. Burrow, 'Gestures and Looks in *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 14 (2000), pp.75-83.

⁸⁶ Salter, *Piers Plowman*, p.34.

⁸⁷ James J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.57.

The poem's use of wounding is a natural extension of this. The mutilations which the body may sustain and implement are simply a further means of demonstrating associations between the personified concepts. Usually, violence is used by the poem to indicate the balance of power between abstractions. For instance, when Hungir attacks the gluttonous Wastour, seizing him 'be þe mawe,/ And [...] be þe wombe þat al watride his eiȝen', and when Piers smacks Hungir 'amydde his lippes' with a 'bene batte', the poem is arranging these figures into a straightforward hierarchy (A.VII.159-60, 164-5). Similarly, when Pees is left with 'his panne bloody' by the tyrannical purveyor Wrong, it again shows which force is capable of disrupting or overpowering the other (A.IV.64). Injury, like every other somatic quality in the poem, serves to lay bare 'a complex pattern of connections between various ideas and abstractions'.⁸⁸

Piers' use of wounding may thus be classified as hieratic. For the poem damage is a descriptive device, reflecting the innate meanings of the concepts. Rather than leading to a negotiation of new relationships, which a more festive use of violence would allow, injury articulates values which are part of a changeless order, a 'configuration of symbolic relationships'.⁸⁹ Piers possesses the means to overcome Hungir as a permanent attribute, just as Hungir exists to scourge the indolent and Wrong will always harass the passive Pees. Exactly the same is true of Elde's assault against Will at the end of the poem, which causes him to complain: 'he buffeted me aboute the mouth and bette out my wangteeth,/ And gyved me in goutes' (B.XX.191-2). The act portrays the dominance which Elde will always hold over humanity, rather than founding it. Disfigurement is being used to record each entity's place in an unalterable system. This marks an important difference between *Piers* and *Wynnere*. The later work is fully capable of exploiting the hieratic functions of injury. It uses mutilation in order to designate and evaluate, a process which is largely absent from *Wynnere*.

Yet for all the confidence with which injury is deployed by *Piers*, there are curious limits to its application. These have a particular bearing on the present discussion,

⁸⁸ Clifford, *Transformations of Allegory*, p.11.

⁸⁹ Barthes, *S/Z*, pp.67-8.

since they involve the two main themes being considered here. Although anticlericalism and mutilation are both extremely prominent in the text, the two topics are seldom brought into conjunction. In fact, at several points the poem actively shies away from allowing them to converge. A close reading reveals the inaccuracy of simply restating Margaret Goldsmith's comments that Langland 'would certainly like to take a stick to cheats, spongers and corrupters, and double-dealers of all kind - especially if they walk under the protection of a tonsure and a habit'.⁹⁰ If anything the contrary is true. The poem is careful to separate the clergy from any mention of injury. For instance Hungir's onslaught, as he drubs a 'Bretoner aboute the chekes', does not extend to the 'prestes' and 'freres' who appear later in the Passus, or even the B-text's 'heep of heremytes': these figures merely experience 'fere of hunger', specifically not its direct, injurious effects (C.VIII.173-4, 190-1; B.VI.187). Elsewhere, it is proposed that any commoner bearing 'brood swerd or launce' ought to 'be demed to þe deeth but if he do it smythe/ Into sykkel': however, the 'prestes and persons' in the immediately subsequent lines stand only to have their 'benefice worth bynomen' for similar offences (B.III.305-7, 311-4). Any discussion of violence dwindles as soon as the clergy are introduced into the text.

Even more significant is the moral harangue delivered by Consience in the A-text, and by Reson in the later versions. Consience and Reson call for a full-scale restoration of the social order, demanding that the elements of society are returned to their correct positions. Aggression and injury are heavily involved in this project: 'Thomas he tauȝte to take two staues/ And fecche hom felis fro wyuene pyne [...] He chargide chapmen to chastice here children' (A.V.15, 28-9, 31). In the B-text this call is extended, as Reson also bids 'Bette kutte a bough outhere tweye/ And bete Beton', and invokes the authority of Proverbs 13.24: 'whoso spareth the spryng spilleth hise children' (B.V.32-3, 40). These demands for social renovation clearly depend on the corrective power of violence. But what is most remarkable here is the direction these speeches take as they turn their attention to 'prelatis and prestis togidere' (A.V.34). Both speakers signally fail to apply the same brutal programme to the clergy: 'prestis' are merely asked to 'libbe as ȝe lere vs, we wile leue ȝow þe betere' (A.V.36). The curative potential of injury is exhausted before it reaches the priesthood. Once again,

⁹⁰ Margaret E. Goldsmith, *The Figure of Piers Plowman: the image on the coin* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), p.90.

all talk of wounding stops short of churchmen.

The C-text, however, takes a different course at this point, although still does not break fully with this tendency. The prophecy of Clergie from Passus X of the B-text is transplanted into Reson's diatribe, which now promises that 'þer shal come a kyng and confesse ȝow alle/ And bete ȝow [...] for brekyng of ȝoure reule' (C.V.168-9). It is also promised that 'þe abbot of engelond and the abbesse his nese/ Shal haue a knok on vpon here crounes and incurable þe wounde' (C.V.176-7, B.X.323-4). Although it would appear that wounding is now being extended towards the church, the eschatological colour of these lines neutralises such a suggestion. Since wounding becomes the inevitable destiny of clerics, the need for any action against them in the present disappears. The clergy are isolated from the immediate measures which, for instance, Bette must take against Beton, or merchants must take against 'here children'. They are still placed beyond the range of injury.

All of this could be dismissed as coincidence if the first vision did not clearly spell out this trend. In all three versions of *Piers*, the King orders that the members of Mede's wedding party should be rounded up and tortured: he demands that Leizere be put 'on the pillorie' and Falsnesse be 'feterip [...] faste' (A.II.162, 167). When news of this reaches Falsnesse and Leizere, they run to the priesthood for refuge. Falsnesse 'for feer fleiȝ to þe Freris', while Leizere takes shelter among the secular clergy: 'liȝere lep away þennes [...] til pardoners hadde pite and pulden him to house/ Wysshon hym & wipede him [...] And senden him on sonendayes with seales to churches' (A.II.173-83). Such action successfully allows the vices to evade capture and punishment. This episode underscores *Piers'* general reluctance to associate wounding and the clergy. As these figures are absorbed into religious orders they are actively protected from injury. In the poem, the church is so completely isolated from mutilation that it may provide sanctuary from it.

It is clear that, for all the intricacy of disfigurement in *Piers*, the poem is beset by the same difficulties which restrict *Wynnere's* use of injury. The poem may be able to produce firm definitions by means of wounding, to pronounce hieratic judgments and construct hierarchies, but it is unable to include the clergy in this process. As in *Wynnere*, the clergy are placed outside the operations that injury is capable of

performing. Once again, the satiric potential of wounding cannot be brought to bear on the priesthood. *Piers* can produce bold and sustained critiques on the church, assuming a 'thrust [...] blatantly hostile to the institutional church', but it cannot expose the church to the definitions and assessments that wounding may implement.⁹¹ It is not able to subject the priesthood to its valuations. The poem shares *Wynnere's* ultimate deference to the church, its belief that the authority of the clergy will always exceed its own.

However, this also highlights an interesting discrepancy between *Piers* and *Wynnere*. While both texts encounter this same obstacle, they approach it in different ways. The later poem is able to use its difficulty productively, even to enhance its anticlerical current. While the clergy may be immune from injury in *Piers*, the poem relates them to mutilation in another way. Frequently priests are depicted as the inflictors of wounds. As David Aers observes, throughout *Piers* the church demonstrates several 'collusions with organized violence'.⁹² All three Prologues contain an episode which sharply delineates this relationship. The deceit of pardoners is translated into a physical onslaught, an attack on the people they swindle. Will watches as a crowd of 'lewede men' gather around a pardoner, who responds by clubbing them with a letter of indulgence: 'He bunchide hem wiþ his breuet and bleride here eiȝen/ And rauhte with his ragemon ringes and broches' (A.Pro.71-2). This link between clerics and aggression is reiterated at several later points. At one stage, *Wrathe* describes the gossiping of nuns and monks as a spur to violence, causing the communities to 'crache with [...] kene nayles' and 'bloody [...] chekes' (C.VI.140, 150). Later still, the stupidity and lethargy of parish priests becomes a source of agony to their congregations, as 'men ben lad [...] thorw vnkunynge curatours to incurable peynes' (C.XV.15-6). The poem even ends with a sustained depiction of clerical savagery, as Antecrist assembles an army of 'freres', 'al the convent' and 'inparfit prestes and prelates' (B.XX.58-60). This garrison is armed with 'longe knyues' and 'brode hoked Arwes' and sent to storm *Piers's* barn of Unitee, damaging 'wikkedly many a wise techere' during the attack (C.XXII.218-20, B.XX.303). Once again, the behaviour of churchmen becomes a series of assaults, a readiness to inflict wounds.

⁹¹ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p.408.

⁹² David Aers, 'Visionary Eschatology: *Piers Plowman*', *Modern Theology* 16 (2000), p.17.

All of this exposes a clear pattern in *Piers*, bringing to light its precise attitude towards the clergy and mutilation. It is apparent that the church damages but is itself immune from damage. The clergy routinely commit violence in the poem, but prove entirely unsusceptible to the attacks of others. Even on the battlefield Antecriste's 'proute prestes' are impervious to Consience's barrage of 'feveres and fluxes', left free to create victims 'thorough synne ywounded' (B.XX.218, 82, 306). Wounding is accessible to clerics, but cannot be used against them.

While it is more usual to satirise an object by wounding its body, opening it up to festive degradation and hieratic valuation, *Piers* succeeds in using these 'collusions with organized violence' to impugn the church. Portraying the clergy as aggressors becomes a method of vilifying them. The text achieves this by imposing very clear values on wounding. In *Piers*, violence is not only used to chart relationships of power between concepts. It is also connected with edification, with spiritual or practical improvement. Sustaining injury is invariably presented as a movement towards an ideal form. For instance, Hungir's savage assault on Wastour is of immediate benefit to Piers' 'comune': it stirs false beggars into productivity, as all men 'that seten to begge silver, soone were thei heeled [...] Piers was proud therof, and putte hem to werke' (B.VI.192-6). Similarly, the figure Dame Studie claims that violence is a necessary part of religious instruction, thrashing her pupils 'with a baleyse bute yf þei wolde lerne' (C.XI.121). For *Piers*, bodily damage is an integral part of attaining goodness: the work is filled with references to what Ralph Hanna terms 'desirable maiming'.⁹³

The poem pursues this idea to the fullest possible extent. Its later sections even claim that injury can provide a form of communion with God. Langland follows most medieval art in regarding Jesus' death and 'al his grete wounde' as a pivotal event in Christian history (B.XVIII.99).⁹⁴ The poem treats Christ's Passion as the very bedrock of the faith, underlying and unifying the community of believers: Scripture flatly declares that 'cristendoem gan spring' from 'cristis bloed', while the walls of

⁹³ Ralph Hanna III, 'School and Scorn: gender in *Piers Plowman*', *New Medieval Literatures* 3 (2000), p.225.

⁹⁴ See for instance Hans Belting, *The Image and Its Public in the Middle Ages: form and function of early paintings of the Passion*, trans. by Mark Bartusis and Raymond Meyer (New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1990); Laurelle LeVert, "'Crucifye hem, Crucifye hem": the subject and affective response in Middle English Passion narratives', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 14 (1997), pp.73-90.

the barn of Unitee are said to be 'wateled [...] with his paynes' (C.XII.110, XXI.326). This continued emphasis on the Crucifixion has an interesting effect. By the end of the poem the agonies of Christ are such a vital part of the divine identity that suffering has become a path to godliness. In the penultimate vision Piers himself undergoes an apotheosis through wounding, appearing in a mutilated form 'peynted al bloody' (B.XIX.6). These injuries have the specific effect of rendering the Plowman indistinguishable from Christ. On witnessing Piers, Will is forced to ask, 'is this Jesus the justere [...] that Jewes dide to dethe?/ Or is it Piers the Plowman?', only to be told that the figure is both at once: 'Thise arn Piers armes [...] ac he that cometh so bloody/ Is Crist with his cros' (B.XIX.10-1, 13-4). The wounds to Piers' body blur his identity with that of the 'conquerour of Cristene', effectively conflating him with the Messiah (B.XIX.14). Mutilation and pain have become a means of merging with God, activating 'empathetic bonds' between the human and the heavenly.⁹⁵ As Britton J. Harwood explains:

Suffering itself has become cognitive: because of God's love, God chooses to suffer as the means of knowing human sin. Because of human sin, humanity suffers as the means of knowing God's love. Suffering itself is a kind of hypostatic union.⁹⁶

Piers thus takes its valorisation of injury to the furthest conceivable extreme. For the poem injury is a common ground between God and humankind, the point at which their existences coincide. Pain is the medium through which direct engagement with God can occur. Wounding does not only improve its sufferer in mundane and practical terms, but becomes nothing short of a passage to the divine.

In terms of anticlericalism this is highly significant. When considered alongside the poem's view of the clergy as inflictors of wounds, who are at the same time immune from injury, it is clear that this view of wounding has anticlerical implications. The transcendental power of mutilation pointedly does not extend to the 'religious pat haen no reuthe' (C.V.164). Being insusceptible to injury, the clergy may not undergo the sanctification that Piers experiences. This in turn suggests that the route to holiness is not necessarily to be found within the structures of the church: after all, the poem is promoting a force which lies wholly beyond the priesthood. The

⁹⁵ Mitchell B. Merbeck, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), p.20.

⁹⁶ Britton J. Harwood, *Piers Plowman and the Problem of Belief* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p.138.

'soverayn vertue' of 'suffraunce' seems to be accessible only to laymen (B.XI.378). *Piers'* use of injury powerfully dramatises the basic point that total reliance on the church is inadvisable.⁹⁷ Like much of the text, it encourages a degree of independence from the priesthood.

This employment of wounding also suggests what may underlie such mistrust. What isolates the clergy from the salutary power of injury is the fact that they can only be its subjects, not its objects. They are the cause of disfigurement, not its victims. Through this line of reasoning, the poem is tacitly condemning the church's exercise of power. By being in a position of command rather than submission, the clergy succeeds in isolating itself from a potent connection with divinity. Once again, this reflects a general complaint in the poem. *Piers* often laments that churchmen improperly 'leten hem as lordes', arrogating improper levels of temporal command (B.X.313). Although *Piers* cannot make the church into an object of satiric injury, this does not prevent the wounded body from becoming a highly suggestive figure in the poem. Injury is fully integrated into its anticlerical outlook.

Nevertheless, while disfigurement makes a clear contribution to *Piers'* anticlericalism, it also exposes its limits. *Piers'* handling of injury reveals a high level of conservatism. It lays bare two important factors. Firstly, while the poem's championing of injury awards validity to a non-clerical position, it does not allocate any power to it. In fact quite the opposite is true, since the position's contact with truth stems wholly from submission. It is the patient endurance of pain, as 'al hir lif han lyved in languor [...] after boote waiten', that brings the sufferer into proximity with God (B.XIV.116-7). By valorising suffering in this way, *Piers* is claiming that the ideal state for those beyond the church is one of total passivity. Resignation and powerlessness are turned into virtues. Secondly, the poem does not call for the clergy to be deprived of their injurious power. Although depicting the priesthood as figurative mutilators obviously stigmatises their conduct, the results of such behaviour are invariably portrayed as beneficial, as all who 'lay on þe gredyre/ Lokede vp to oure lord' (C.II.133-4). The positive value of wounding, and its identification with clerical power, works to support the privilege of the church. It

⁹⁷ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p.408.

implies that good will arise from this apparent wrong. The poem's treatment of the clergy does not demand that their power needs to be curtailed.

Injury in the poem thus upholds the existing state of the church, the dominance of cleric over layman, even as it criticises the conduct of ecclesiastics. It praises the laity but does not grant them the right to command, and denigrates the clergy without making their displacement necessary. Langland's use of disfigurement does radically redefine the positions of cleric and layman, awarding greater legitimacy to the latter, but it lacks any call for an alteration of their relationship. Its attack is purely cosmetic, revaluing the existing hegemony without wishing to reshape it. The values of the positions shift, but the positions themselves remain intact.

Piers' anticlerical satire is undoubtedly more fully developed than that presented by *Wynnere*: this is reflected by the simple fact that the wounded body contains more meaning in the later poem. *Piers'* satire is more assertive in its attacks, able to formulate its criticism more completely. Yet in spite of this, the text's position is as unformed as that of the earlier poem. Both its deployment of mutilation and its general attitude towards the clergy indicate a level of hesitation. The key point here is that both poems allocate agency to the priesthood in their depiction of injury. In both texts the clergy occupy the subjective position in the relationship between wounder and wounded, and do so completely without challenge. For *Piers* the clergy mete out wounds but would 'leve swowe or swelte than suffre any peyne', while *Wynnere's* priestly 'hathells' are capable of inflicting wounds while transcending harm themselves: their dual existence as a 'here in hawberkes' and disembodied 'synes' enables them to injure and be sheltered from injury (B.V.162). Mutilation is a privilege that clerics may exercise, but none may exercise against them.

This is really the main conclusion to be drawn from these two early examples of vernacular satire against the church. *Piers* and *Wynnere* share the same inability to subject the church to wounding, and to the hieratic judgment which this conveys. Neither of the texts can reduce the clergy to an object of injury or of satire. Their positions are simply not secure enough to permit this. The texts can only defer to the church's authority, and accept its ultimate primacy. This is not to say that the poems are utterly hidebound. They are undeniably critical of the priesthood, even damning,

and demonstrate a conspicuous bias towards the laity. Langland's veneration of the 'sicknesses and sorwes [...] we suffren ought' and *Wynnere's* exposure of the church to universal criteria are radical departures from the older satire: both poems use tactics which can be deployed against each and every order, and show no support for any particular clerical group (B.XVII.336-7). But the texts cannot deny the precedence of the clergy, or break with the established relation between layman and cleric. They can attack the priesthood but not override its dominance. In both pieces the 'presons and preestes and prechours of Holi Chirche' may be 'roten' and 'inparfit', but they remain 'the roote of the right feith to rule the peple' (B.XV.99-101).

In summary, *Wynnere* and *Piers* both give voice to 'the aspirations and needs of a more articulate laity', addressing 'readers who were perhaps products of the new blurring between clergy and laity', but they also reflect a lack of subjectivity among this group.⁹⁸ They show that pious laypeople are still content to occupy a subordinate position in 'the assembly of all the faithful', despite having a new awareness of their place in this assembly.⁹⁹ The texts' conception of the wound, with its absence of a hieratic aspect, is an index of their basic passivity and caution.

The values allotted to injury in *Piers* and *Wynnere* are almost completely overturned by the next generation of vernacular satirists. Even though there are obvious continuations between these two early pieces and subsequent writing against the church, wounds are extensively altered as they move from one group of texts to the other. In the next set of poems that will be studied here, namely *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, *Mum and the Sothsegger* and 'Of þes frer mynours me thenkes moch wonder', several new meanings come to inhabit injury. One of the most important factors in this revision is the influence of Wycliffism. Of the satires just named, all demonstrate Lollard sympathies to a greater or lesser degree. Anticlerical satire is still connected to 'religiously conscious quarters within the secular establishment', but the next phase in its development is heavily coloured by

⁹⁸ Rex, *Lollards*, p.10; Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, p.46.

⁹⁹ Benjamin Thompson, 'Habendum et Tenendum: lay and ecclesiastical attitudes to the property of the church', in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastic Careers in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), pp.237-8.

Such an affiliation carries considerable weight, since Lollardy possesses strict new ideas concerning the proper function of the church: these in turn lend a new force and range to anticlerical satire. The Lollards insisted that many ministerial powers rightly belonged to all believers, rather than being the exclusive property of a separate, ordained elite.¹⁰¹ For instance, the notorious proposition that the Lord's Supper is purely commemorative, that 'þe sacrid oost is uery bred in his kynde' and only 'Goddis body in figure', pointedly denies that the wafer must be consecrated by a priest: instead, 'on þis wise may every trewe man and womman in Godis lawe make þe sacrament of the bred'.¹⁰² Similar suggestions underlie the notion that confession must be made 'to god truly by herte': this specifically entails that 'confessioun made to prestis' is 'not nedful'.¹⁰³ Some Lollards even held that 'oonly consent of love betuxe man and woman is sufficiant for matrimonie', once again transferring a priestly function to the Christian community at large.¹⁰⁴ All of this amounts to a systematic erosion of the priesthood's duties, decreasing the number of offices it may rightfully perform. In essence, the Wycliffites sought to remove from the clergy all the functions they believed were unnecessary or groundless. However, this mode of thought had a positive as well as negative aspect. It led the group to champion one clerical responsibility beyond all others. For Lollardy 'prestis' ought to be nothing

¹⁰⁰ Maurice Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages, 1348-1500* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.292.

¹⁰¹ See Stephen E. Lahey, *Philosophy and Politics in the Thought of John Wyclif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.187.

¹⁰² *English Wycliffite Sermons*, III (1990), p.161; *The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards*, in *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. by Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.25. On Wyclif's views on the Eucharist, see Gordon Leff, 'Ockham and Wyclif on the Eucharist', *Reading Medieval Studies* 2 (1976), pp.1-13; J.I. Catto, 'John Wyclif and the Cult of the Eucharist', in *The Bible in the Medieval World: essays in memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. by Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History Subsidia* 4 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp.269-86; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁰³ *English Works of Wyclif*, ed. by F.D. Matthew, EETS o.s. 74 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1902), pp.327-8.

¹⁰⁴ *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, ed. by Norman P. Tanner (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), p.57. On the competing conceptions of marriage in the Middle Ages, and the official prescriptions of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), see Edith Ennen, *The Medieval Woman* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p.105; Esther Cohen and Elliot Horowitz, 'In Search of the Sacred: Jews, Christians and rituals of marriage in the later Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 20 (1990), pp.225-249; Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: the making of modern marriage in medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

more than educators, serving only to 'heelee blynde men in Goddis lawe'.¹⁰⁵ The movement holds that the clergy's single task should be the dissemination of the gospel, insisting that priests should follow the 'apostolic life laid down by Christ when he sent his disciples into the world'.¹⁰⁶ As the English version of Wyclif's *De Officio Pastoralis* declares, Christ 'haþ ordeyned' the clergy 'to telle generally his lawe': clerics should have no further purpose, since 'each christenman haþ power of god to sue crist'.¹⁰⁷

The Lollards' diminution of the priestly ideal enables a fuller anticlerical stance than had previously been available. All clergy claiming a function beyond instruction are now open to attack. Even their rules and principles are assailable if they deviate from Wycliffism's evangelical ideal.¹⁰⁸ Thus monastic life is presented as an aberration in Lollard texts, enclosing 'in coolde stones' the 'newe lawe' that should be 'fre and large'.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, fraternal 'reweles' are classed as 'euel & come of lawe of lucifer', since the 'rewle of apostlis was to haue alle þingis in commune & be partid to ilche as he hauede nede, & þise ordris don þe contrarie'.¹¹⁰ In John Capgrave's summary, the Lollards concluded that 'reules mad be Augustin, Benet, and Fraunceys adde no more perfeccion ouyr þe gospel þan doth lym-whiting onto a wal'.¹¹¹ This outlook strengthens English satire, allowing it to develop a 'moral position [...] more secure than that of *Piers*'.¹¹² It enables a new, more comprehensive form of attack, removed from *Wynnere*'s deferential disembodiment of its objects and *Piers*' 'deeply conservative fidelity to traditional social arrangements'.¹¹³ Lollard satire is not obliged to honour its targets, but is capable of challenging their very foundations.

¹⁰⁵ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, III, p.73.

¹⁰⁶ Helen Barr, 'Introduction: Pierce the Ploughman's Crede', in *The Piers Plowman Tradition: a critical edition of Pierce the Plowman's Crede, Richard the Redeless, Mum and the Sothsegger and The Crowned King*, ed. by Helen Barr (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), p.11.

¹⁰⁷ *English Works of Wyclif*, pp.408-9.

¹⁰⁸ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p.22; compare Graus, 'Church and its Critics', p.70.

¹⁰⁹ *English Works of Wyclif*, p.478. See also Thomas Renna, 'Wyclif's Attacks on the Monks', in *From Ockham to Wyclif*, ed. by Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwells, 1987), pp.267-80.

¹¹⁰ *English Works of Wyclif*, pp.316-7

¹¹¹ *John Capgrave's Abbreviation of Cronicles*, ed. by Peter J. Lucas, EETS o.s. 285 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.181.

¹¹² Ordelle G. Hill, *The Manor, the Ploughman and the Shepherd: agrarian themes and imagery in late medieval and early Renaissance English literature* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press), p.93.

¹¹³ Elizabeth Fowler, 'Civil Death and the Maiden: agency and the conditions of contract in *Piers Plowman*', *Speculum* 70 (1995), p.792.

This in turn affects the use of wounding in the texts, as it too absorbs greater confidence, a fact that detailed analysis will reveal.

The impact of Wycliffism on vernacular satire and satiric mutilation is already discernible in *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* (c.1393-1400), amongst the first pieces of English poetry to draw explicitly on Lollard doctrine.¹¹⁴ *Crede's* allegiance to Wyclif and his followers is indisputable, as its approval of Lollardy is expressed in the most unabashed terms. The heresiarch himself is praised by name, as the poet directs his readers to 'wytnesse on Wycliff þat warned hem wiþ trewþe;/ For he in goodnesse of gost graypliche hem warned/ To wayuen her wikednesse' (528-30). A favourable reference is also made to one 'Wat Brut, whou [...] seyde hem the sothe', Brut being a Wycliffite who was examined by Bishop Trefnant of Hereford in the early 1390s (657-8).¹¹⁵ In the words of George Kane, the *Crede*-poet was evidently 'a contemporary of Wyclif' who 'found his proposals for moral reform commendable and was not [...] alarmed by his heterodoxy'.¹¹⁶ Another unmistakable influence on the poem is Langland. Although not a dream-vision, *Crede* is clearly modelled on *Piers*, closely following its 'vein of political commentary and satire': *Crede* even goes so far as to borrow the Plowman himself, turning him into an apologist for Lollard doctrine.¹¹⁷ The text is not alone in using Langland's figure for such ends. Amongst *Piers'* other medieval incarnations are his appearances in the *Plowman's Tale* (c.1400), *The prayer and complaynt of the ploweman vnto Christ* (fifteenth century) and 'A Dyalog betwixt the gentyلمان and the plowman' (c.1531), in each case as a delegate for either Wycliffism or Protestantism.¹¹⁸ *Crede* is an early

¹¹⁴ *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, in *Piers Plowman Tradition*, pp.61-97. Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

¹¹⁵ See *Registrum Johannis Trefnant*, ed. by W.W. Capes (London: Canterbury and York Society, 1916), pp.278-394; David Aers, 'Walter Brut's Theology of the Sacrament of the Altar', in *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. by Fiona Somerset and others (Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), pp.115-26; and the exhaustive treatment of the 'actes and doinges of Gualter Brute' included in Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, pp.475-501.

¹¹⁶ George Kane, 'Some Fourteenth-Century "Political" Poems' in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature*, p.89.

¹¹⁷ Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p.181.

¹¹⁸ See *Six Ecclesiastical Satires*, ed. by James M. Dean, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991); *The Praier and Complaynte of the Ploweman unto Christe*, ed. by Douglas H. Parker (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1998); *Political, Religious and Love Poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 15 (London: N. Trübner and Co, 1866), pp.62-3.

example of this adoption of the Ploughman-figure by heterodox groups.¹¹⁹

In terms of its actual narrative *Crede* is fairly straightforward. Its main targets are the mendicants, chief among Wycliffism's 'newe ordris' or 'pseudo-prophetis' who have abandoned the model of 'moste profiȝte to Cristus chirche'.¹²⁰ The text's protagonist is a laymen who has memorised nearly all of the rudimentary devotional texts: he has 'patred in my pater-noster' and can recite the 'Aue-marie almost to þe ende' (6-7). His Creed, however, he does not know. He seeks assistance from the four fraternal orders in turn, but each friar he meets merely criticises his fellow mendicants before offering to 'assoile' the narrator for not knowing the Creed. Naturally enough, this absolution comes at a price: 'þou mowe amenden our hous wip money oþer elles,/ Wip som katell oþer corne or cuppes of siluer' (396-7). None of the friars makes any attempt to educate the narrator, sustaining his ignorance as they exploit it. Exasperated, the narrator goes 'be þe waie wepyng' and encounters a peasant, who is none other than 'Peres [...] pore man þe plowe-man' (420, 473). After delivering a long tirade against the friars and their persecution of the Lollards, Piers agrees to 'techen þe þe trewþe', imparting the Creed to the narrator in the manner of a Wycliffite 'trewe prechour', 'treuli & frely prechyng þe gospel as crist biddiþ' (794).¹²¹ Even this sequence of events marks the poem's debt to Langland. It seems to be an expansion of *Piers* B.VIII or C.XI, in which Will interviews two 'maistres of Menours, men of grete witte' during his attempt to find 'where that Dowel dwelleth'.¹²² Like their counterparts in *Crede*, these friars offer only minimal assistance.

Where *Crede* differs from Langland is in its use of injury. The poem breaks utterly with *Piers* in this respect. This can be seen during Piers' outburst against the friars, especially when he protests:

¹¹⁹ See the final section of Justine Rydzeki, *Radical Nostalgia in the Age of Piers Plowman: economics, apocalypticism, and discontent* (New York: P. Lang, 1999).

¹²⁰ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, II, p.330.

¹²¹ *English Works of Wyclif*, p.27. An interesting analogue of Piers' recital 'al beslombred in fen' appears in the 1457 proceedings against two Lollard brothers, William and Richard Sparke of Somersham, Cambs. The ninth article against the Sparke brothers accuses them of professing that 'a prayer made in a field or other unconsecrated place is just as efficacious as if it were made in a church': *Lincoln Diocese Documents, 1450-1544*, ed. by Andrew Clark, EETS o.s. 149 (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p.93.

¹²² See *Piers Plowman Tradition*, p.10.

But whoso for-gabbed a frere y-founden at þe stues,
 And brouyte blod of his bodi on bak or on side,
 Hym were as god greuen a greit lorde of rentes
 He schulde sonner bene schryven schortlie to tellen
 Þouȝ he kilde a comlye knyyt and compased his morþer,
 Panne a buffet to beden a beggere frere (631-6).

There are a number of points to draw from this highly significant passage. Firstly and most strikingly, it portrays injury as a power that can be wielded against churchmen. Unlike *Wynnere* and *Piers*, the poem does countenance the possibility of striking clerics. It describes beating them on the 'bak or on side', raising 'blod' from their bodies. There is even an attempt to characterise such violence as the most fitting way to approach a friar. Line 636 is worth noting for its use of the word 'beden' in connection with aggression, a word that means 'donate' or 'bestow on'.¹²³ Representing an assault on a 'beggere frere' as a form of alms-giving suggests that 'buffeting' fulfills the mendicants' purpose, treating them according to their design. Injuring a friar is not only a legitimate action, but is demanded by their basic identity. Clearly *Crede* has reclaimed the wound, seeing it as a force that can be used against clerics. Secondly, the poem works to separate the priesthood from the power to maim. Although the friars still possess some ability to damage, this power is not presented as theirs by right. The friars have in fact arrogated the capacity to injure from 'lordes of rentes', imitating the bloodlust of a station outside their own. In fact violence is so foreign to their estate that it displaces the friars' own functions. In line 634 the friars' vengefulness leads to a refusal to 'schryve', an office mendicants are only too willing to perform in other texts.¹²⁴ In order to carry out violence they must discard their own, true character. This sense of impropriety is reinforced later in the poem, as *Piers* adds a further accusation. He claims that 'no waspe in þis werlde [...] will wilfulloker styngen' than a friar (648-9). This statement makes fraternal violence into something which transgresses the patterns of nature: the friars' belligerence is perverted and abnormal, exceeding even that of wasps. The clergy's ability to inflict injury is an alien attribute here, something that the church has wrongfully adopted.

¹²³ *Piers Plowman Tradition*, p.88.

¹²⁴ According to Fitzralph's *Defensio*, 'In my diocesy Armacan, y trowe y haue two þousand sugettes, mansleers, comyn þeeves, incendiaries þat settip houses afyre, & oþer evel doeres, þat beþ acursed by sentence euereche ȝere [...] & me trowip, þat þei beþ assoyled, & by noon oþer þan by freres, wiþ-oute drede, for noon oþer men assoileþ hem': trans. by John Trevisa, in *Trevisa's Dialogus, etc.*, ed. by A. Jenkins Perry, EETS o.s. 167 (London: Oxford University Press, 1925), pp.44-5.

Thirdly and most crucially, the poem has recognisably redefined the wound. *Crede* departs from the patterns shown in *Piers*, in which the performance of violence has an implicitly negative value while the endurance of pain is a 'soverayn vertue'. Instead the infliction of wounds becomes in itself a praiseworthy activity. The 'stues' or brothels from which aggressors seize friars provide a context which legitimises the attack against them. *Crede*'s implication is clearly that it is correct to flog the patrons of such places, whether they are clerics or not. The beating does not dishonour its executor in the way that the 'longe knyues' of Langland's 'inparfit prestes' signposts their venality. The allusion to the 'morþer' of 'a comlye knyyt' likewise serves to justify the whipping. Mentioning these two crimes together sets up a tacit comparison between them, one in which the antifraternal assault is the more reasonable and acceptable. From these details, it is evident that *Crede*'s violence lacks the sense of wrongfulness assigned to it by Langland.

Correlatively, the actual reception of injury becomes a form of disgrace. The whipping described by the poem is not a 'desirable maiming' of the kind found in *Piers*. It is a punitive measure, meted out to friars who have demonstrably engaged in unseemly behaviour, frequenting the 'stues'. Rather than improving its sufferer, its chief function seems to be to brand him a sinner. The poem's description of the friar's punishment refers only to the physical marks of the beating, the 'blod of his bodi on bak or on side'. Since no mention is made of pain or humiliation or even deterrence, disfigurement seems to be the principal objective of the action. The punishment thus seems to work by recording the misdeed on the friar's body, marking or scarring him. Mutilation serves to stigmatise the recipient, not move them towards an ideal form. It is a mark of dishonour, a token of their sin. *Crede* thus inverts the model of wounding displayed by *Piers*, freeing the wound from the analogies to the Passion, and charging it with a new, more scandalous meaning.

As a result of this, *Crede* can make full use of injury in its satire against churchmen. Its description of scourging friars is a completely developed satiric device, one which contains aspects of both festive ridicule and hieratic censure. The poem's aggressive treatment of friars is obviously reductive. The emphasis on their bodies as targets for violence opens the orders up to forces beyond their power, presenting the limits of their influence. Rather than being the exalted representatives of some abstract and

universal truth they are depicted as bounded and bodily creatures, of no special distinction, vulnerable to challenges from other entities. The 'buffet' is a festive deflation of its object. The fact that this injury is chiefly punitive, etching the friar's lechery on to him, also suggests a hieratic element. Because the wound is an inscription of its recipient's sins, it serves to establish his value, impressing a definite rank on to him. The flogging described in the poem is at once an act of festive degradation and of hieratic definition. It is an acutely satiric manoeuvre: *Crede* is the first English text to use injury as a fully formed anticlerical apparatus.

This power to use wounding against the church can be directly attributed to *Crede*'s Wycliffism. By aligning itself with a group which claims to embody the true law of God, the self-proclaimed 'tresoreris of crist and his apostolis', the poem gains supremacy over the friars, who are alleged deviants from this law, 'vnteyned opon trewthe' (516).¹²⁵ This position obviously grants the text primacy over its targets, awarding it the necessary authority to judge and satirise them. The marriage of anticlericalism to Lollardy has clearly increased the confidence of the satire, allowing it to stage an attack on the bodies of clerics.

The poem's Lollard sympathies also enable satiric wounding in another way. Like all Wycliffite texts, the poem claims to oppose the 'veyn nouelries' of 'newe religious' with 'cristis religioun' that 'lastiþ euer, boþe to þe dai of dom & aftir'.¹²⁶ It claims to be arguing in favour of the eternal word of God against the newly devised rules of the various orders. As *Crede* states, it defends those that 'han þe benison of god' against 'losels' who have been recently by 'some wikked wyght wroughte' (654, 478). This position renders the friars suitable targets for wounding, since it suggests that they are primarily physical objects. The notion that 'þese false freris [...] cam last into þe chirche', that they are not members of the 'endles' 'Church of the Christ', suggests that they are only bound to temporal existence (4).¹²⁷ Not having existed in 'praeterita, praesentia et futura', they cannot claim a more conceptual dimension. They may only possess a material mode of existence, being bound to worldliness, to

¹²⁵ *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards*, p.24.

¹²⁶ *English Works of Wyclif*, pp.306, 19.

¹²⁷ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, II, pp.67-8; Von Nolcken, 'Piers Plowman, the Wycliffites, and Piers the Plowman's Creed', p.94. On the polarity between 'transitory' and 'eternal being' in Wyclif's thought, see especially Anthony Kenny, *Wyclif* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.14-9.

'sensible signes' and 'bodyly habites' as the Wycliffite *Vae Octuplex* declares.¹²⁸ *Crede* presents this idea quite openly in its famous portrait of an overfed Dominican. The Black Friar's anatomy is likened to a series of massive but empty vessels. His face is 'a full bledder,/ Blowen bretfull of breþ', while his stomach is 'growen as a tonne' and his cheeks 'as a bagge honged' (221-4). Such a colossal, hollow frame entirely lacks any dimension beyond the outward: as Barr summarises, the friar is 'corpus without Christ'.¹²⁹ He is nothing beyond the perceptible, his existence purely and grossly physical. The fact that the poem views the friars in this way, as creatures grounded in a 'sensible', 'bodyly' mode, sanctions its use of violence against them. Their emphatic corporeality renders them appropriate objects for wounding. *Crede*'s link to Wycliffism once again proves to be a decisive spur for its disfigurement of the priesthood, invigorating its satire. It is not for nothing that one critic has termed *Crede* 'the most effective piece of social criticism in Middle English'.¹³⁰

But it is important not to overstate this. Although *Crede*'s use of antimendicant injury is bold and largely successful, it is nonetheless subject to an important restriction. Despite the poem's ruthless embodiment of the friars, violence itself remains a largely theoretical force in the text. *Crede*'s portrayal of wounding is imprecise in one vital respect. The poem does nothing to reveal the identities of those 'whoso for-gabbed a frere'. It does not suggest whether they are Wycliffites, or magistrates, or even laymen in general. Although anticlerical wounding is proposed, it is not fully applied. The power to assault mendicants is not granted to a specific actor. As a consequence of this, the poem's satire fails to valorise any particular set of values, failing to award any faction direct power over the church. The poem cannot pursue its position to the full extent of its militancy. Despite doing much to overcome the hesitancy of *Wynnere* and *Piers*, *Crede* still retains a recognisable degree of caution.

Before discussing the implications of this limitation and drawing any conclusions

¹²⁸ *Ingressus Fratris Johannis Kynyngham Carmelita contra Wiclyff*, in *Fasciculi Zizaniorum Magistri Johannis Wyclif cum Tritico*, ed. by Walter Waddington Shirley, Rolls Series (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1858), pp.9-10; *English Wycliffite Sermons*, II, p.373.

¹²⁹ Helen Barr, *Signes and Sothe: Language in the Piers Plowman Tradition* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994), pp.86-7.

¹³⁰ 'Pierce the Ploughman's Crede', in *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. by Margaret Drabble and Jenny Stringer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.440.

from it, it will be instructive to consider whether similar problems arise in other pieces of Wycliffite satire, and if so how they are confronted. One text in which many of the same ideas are addressed is *Mum and the Sothsegger* (c.1409), a later alliterative piece which also combines elements of *Piers* with Lollard polemic.¹³¹ As Siegfried Wenzel summarises, this poem is a ‘quest for an answer to the puzzling question of whether it is wiser to “keep mum” or to speak out’.¹³² These two options are represented by the personifications of the poem’s title. The poem is narrated by a man who is attempting to find ‘who shulde haue/ The maistrie’ between them (574-5). As in *Crede*, this mission at first proves futile. Despite travelling widely through late-medieval society, everyone the narrator meets gives immediate preference to Mum and refuses to discuss the matter further, ‘without mo wordes’ (400). Worse still, he cannot find a truth-sayer anywhere who will defend his position. He is also repeatedly harrassed by Mum and his followers, who urge him to call off his hunt and assume a tactful silence, telling him: ‘Nomore of þis matiere [...] þees sothe-siggers seruen noon pankes’ (232-5). The narrator ignores such injunctions, but despite his persistence his quest remains fruitless. At length he sinks into a despairing sleep, ‘wel fleuble and faynt’ (856). While sleeping he receives a vision, in which he encounters a wise beekeeper in a verdant garden. This apiarist denounces Mum as ‘a man-sleer’ and informs the dreamer that the power to be a truth-teller is latent in all men (1301). Waking, the narrator himself becomes a champion of fearless disclosure, administering ‘a newe salue’ with his own outspoken attacks: ‘Now forto conseille þe king unknytte I a bagge/ Where many a pryue poyse is preyntid withynne/ Yn bokes unbredid in balade-wise made’ (1343-5).

Although *Mum* and *Crede* are separated by little more than a decade, the circumstances of their composition are highly dissimilar. As a result, the two texts differ in several important respects. Perhaps the most obvious indication of this is that

¹³¹ *Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. by Mabel Day and Robert Steele, EETS o.s. 199 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936). Day and Steele attach a piece, edited earlier by Skeat as *Richard the Redeless*, to their edition of *Mum*, in the belief that ‘the two fragments form part of one larger composition’ (p.x). Following Dan Embree and Helen Barr, and the practice of most subsequent commentators and editors (i.e., David Lawton, Helen Barr, James Simpson, James Dean), the two fragments are treated here as distinct poems: see Dan Embree, ‘*Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*: a case of mistaken identity’, *Notes and Queries* 220 (1975), pp.4-12); Helen Barr, ‘The Relationship of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*: some new evidence’, *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 4 (1990), pp.105-33. The title *Mum and Sothsegger* refers here to the 1751-line section which Day and Steele term the ‘M-fragment’. Subsequent references to *Mum* appear in parentheses in the text.

¹³² Siegfried Wenzel, ‘*Mum and the Sothsegger*, lines 421-2’, *English Language Notes* 14 (1976), p.87.

unlike *Crede*, and somewhat ironically given its praise of open speech, *Mum* only hints at its Wycliffite sympathies. In fact its heretical attitudes are so deeply buried that V.J. Scattergood is able to examine the poem in some detail without making reference to Lollardy, while Hudson is unconvinced that it displays any unorthodoxy at all.¹³³ Yet traces of Wycliffism do pervade the text. Barr detects several borrowings from the ‘Wycliffite sect vocabulary’ in the poem.¹³⁴ Perhaps the most telling instance of this is an acronym the poem forms from the names of the fraternal orders: C is taken from ‘þees Carmes’, A from the Augustinians, I from the ‘Iacobynes’ and M from the Minorites in order to prove that ‘of Caym alle came’, the murderous ‘frater’ of Genesis 4 (501-4, 498). As Penn Szittyta writes, this device is something of a hallmark of Lollardy, appearing ‘only and often in Wycliffite literature’.¹³⁵ There is a further echo in the claim that the friars ‘mellen with no monaye [...] but stiren it with a sticke’, an accusation also levelled against the friars by a Wycliffite homilist and named by Bishop Pecock as a typical Lollard imputation ‘holden aʒens’ Franciscans (429-30).¹³⁶ David Lawton also points out that ‘the type of truth that the narrator postulates’ is reminiscent of much Wycliffite literature: like the Lollard writer who advises ‘kepuþ myche in hondis of seculer lordis’ and out of the ‘stynkyng pruyde of þis pope’, *Mum*’s truth-tellers are ‘religious, not political, nonconformists’, taking every opportunity to display their loyalty to the crown.¹³⁷ But these are mere whispers: the *Mum*-poet recoils from proclaiming open allegiance to Wyclif. As Barr and James Simpson point out, this is probably due to ‘the fact that expressing views on religious topics had become more dangerous since the writing of *Crede*’, and particularly since the enactment of *De heretico comburendo* and the

¹³³ V.J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth-Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1971), pp.225-8, 237; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p.400.

¹³⁴ Barr, *Signes and Sothe*, pp.95-132. On the ‘Lollard sect vocabulary’, see Hudson, *Lollards and their Books*, pp.164-80.

¹³⁵ Penn R. Szittyta, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p.196. Barr traces this device to Wyclif’s virulently antifraternal *Dialogus* (1380s): *Piers Plowman Tradition*, p.230.

¹³⁶ ‘þei wolen telle golde and money and touche it wiþ a sticke’: *English Works of Wyclif*, p.49; Reginald Pecock, *Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*, ed. by Churchill Babington, Rolls Series, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860), II, pp.543-4, 555-6. See *Piers Plowman Tradition*, pp.214-5.

¹³⁷ David Lawton, ‘Lollardy and the *Piers Plowman* Tradition’, *Modern Language Review* 76 (1981), p.788; *English Wycliffite Sermons*, II, p.331. On *Mum*’s deference to royal authority, see Diane A. Facinelli, ‘Treasonous Criticisms of Henry IV: the loyal poet of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*’, *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 10 (1989), pp.51-62.

Constitutiones.¹³⁸ *Mum* is evidence of a continuing radical strand in English anticlerical satire after 1401, although its unorthodoxy is much less brazen than that of *Crede*.

Mum also differs from *Crede* in the sheer force of its anticlericalism. *Mum* belongs to a period in which, as John van Engen writes, 'anticlerical themes' had become an increasingly 'crucial' part of Lollard thought, contributing 'to the strength of Lollardy's persistent appeal in the face of persecution'.¹³⁹ The first group of Lollards proved much more deferential to the authority of the church than later generations of heretics. Edward Cheyney calls attention to the surprising fact that many of the first Wycliffites 'abjured their beliefs, acknowledged the authority of the Church, and conformed themselves to its behests almost as soon as they were bidden to do so by its accredited officials'.¹⁴⁰ Several of Wyclif's earliest and fiercest supporters eventually recanted, including John Purvey, William Swynderby, Walter Brut, Nicholas Hereford, William James and Philip Repingdon: Hereford and Repingdon even ended their lives as a Carthusian and a bishop respectively.¹⁴¹ Yet after *De heretico*, Wycliffites proved much less ready to 'submit themselves without resistance to ecclesiastical authority', both in practice and in ideology.¹⁴² Harassment from the church authorities decisively militated the Lollards against the clergy, switching their main thrust 'from heresy to dissent', in Michael Wilks' phrase.¹⁴³

Mum shows this increasingly uncompromising stance in its satire, which is formidably expansive in scope. The poem methodically attacks friars, monastic houses, 'cathedrale churches' and parish priests as the narrator finds only that 'Mvm be a more frende to [...] paire houses' (554, 402). In fact, the blame for all the

¹³⁸ Barr, *Signes and Sothe*, p.132; James Simpson, 'The Constraints of Satire in *Piers Plowman* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*', in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Tradition*, ed. by Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp.11-21. *Mum* appears to allude to the *Constitutiones* at several points: see *Piers Plowman Tradition*, pp.23, 310.

¹³⁹ John Van Engen, 'Anticlericalism Among the Lollards', in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, p.67.

¹⁴⁰ Edward P. Cheyney, 'The Recantations of the Early Lollards', *The American Historical Review* 4 (1899), p.423.

¹⁴¹ See Maureen Jurkowski, 'New Light on John Purvey', *English Historical Review* 110 (1995), pp.1180-90; Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, p.465; Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books*, p.80; Margaret Aston, 'Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni: heresy and the Peasants' Revolt', *Past and Present* 143 (1994), p.42; *The Register of Philip Repingdon, 1405-1419*, ed. by Margaret Archer, 3 vols. (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1962-82).

¹⁴² Cheyney, 'The Recantations of the Early Lollards', p.423.

¹⁴³ Michael Wilks, *Wyclif: political ideas and practice* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2000), p.113.

‘mysse-reule þat in þe royaulme groweth’ is chiefly assigned to ecclesiastics (1115). As Arthur Ferguson states of the *Mum*-poet: ‘the clergy, he suggests, have the greatest responsibility [...] they are more culpable for their refusal to criticize abuse’.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, there are firm ties between the clergy and the villain of the piece, the tyrannical Mum. Mum is twice said to wear a ‘myter’, signifying that he holds a bishopric: this is further hinted by the line ‘bisshoppz han begged to binde al’ (579, 1236, 1349). The church for its part treats him with absolute loyalty, as ‘the cloistre and þe quyre were so accorded/ To yeue Mvm þe maistrie’ (399-400). As Barr states, ‘the contemporary church is explicitly associated with “mumming” discourse’.¹⁴⁵ Through this association, the entire poem becomes an indirect protest against the clergy. *Mum*’s anticlericalism is even ‘wider, less stable [...] more dangerous’ than that of *Crede*, outstripping it in the scope and strength of its hostility. It does not even bother with *Crede*’s claim that it has no quarrel with clerics ‘that faithfully lybben’, evidently regarding the church with absolute enmity (825).

Despite these differences, one feature that *Mum* does share with *Crede* is its willingness to use injury as a satiric device against the church. Throughout the poem resistance to the church is presented as a form of wounding. Truth-tellers are said to cut into clerical oppression as though into a body, driving ‘þe nayle-is ende’ into abscesses ‘til þe foule flesh vomy’, bursting ‘alle þe boiches and blaynes [...] and lete þe rancune renne oute’ (51-3, 1120-3). Opposition to the church is understood as an act of figurative mutilation, pricking or piercing ecclesiastic dominance. However, the poem does not only consider injury in purely symbolic terms. By the end of the piece metaphorical attack has been converted into literal disfigurement, as defiance of the church becomes a direct assault on the bodies of the clergy. This shift occurs during the dream-vision, as the beekeeper is describing his hives. In a speech based on Bartholomaeus Anglicus, the keeper praises the bees’ ‘castelles’ as ideal communities, depicting them as kingdoms that ‘dooth moost equyte & ryht [...] with lordshyp & magestee’.¹⁴⁶ He claims that the bee ‘of alle bestz beste is y-gouerned’,

¹⁴⁴ Arthur B. Ferguson, ‘The Problem of Counsel in *Mum and the Sothsegger*’, *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955), p.78.

¹⁴⁵ Barr, *Signes and Sothe*, p.107.

¹⁴⁶ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things*, trans. by John Trevisa, ed. by M.C. Seymour and others, 3 vols (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975-88), I (1975), p.610. Bee-hives are portrayed as ideal kingdoms in numerous other medieval and classical works. See John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. and ed. by Cary J. Nederman, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge:

as each member of the hive shows total obedience to the 'king by kinde þat þe coroune bereth', and is 'pretiest in his wirching to profite of þe people' (997-9, 991). Yet such perfect order is not achieved without stringent effort. The narrator is told that the bees' utopia can only be preserved by exterminating and maiming undesirable elements. The beekeeper describes 'wormes þat worchen not but wasten my herbes' and 'dranes þat deceipuen [...] and doon no þing elles', and details the measures he takes against these pests: 'I daisshe þaym to deeth and delve oute thaire dennes'; 'whenne dranes furste entren [...] nape thaym on þe nolle' (980-1, 1052, 1061).

Although the narrator refuses to disclose its exact 'menyng', this passage seems to be describing the mutilation of churchmen. The beekeeper's complaints against the slugs and drones echo many of the general criticisms which *Mum* makes against the church. For instance, the clergy and the drones are both credited with the power to disguise themselves. The contemporary church is made up of impostors who claim to be priests, despite following 'no foote of þaire forne-fadres' and being 'not knytte in conscience as Crist dide þaym stable', while the drones pass themselves off as normal bees: the beekeeper must kill the drones before they enter the hives, 'for been þey oones ynned his eyen shal be dasid' (1738-42, 1062).¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, priests and pests both commit offences that are negative in character. Each drone does nothing, 'travelyn no twynte', while each cleric says nothing, 'sorowe on þe sillable he shewed of þat matiere' (985, 617). There is a further parallel in the severity of the crimes that the two groups perpetrate. Just as the clergy 'have the greatest responsibility' for the corruption in the kingdom, so the drones and slugs 'doon worste' to the bees' communities (982). Both groups are the chief causes of decadence in their respective societies. These similarities signal that the attacks on the drones are coded attacks on churchmen. Just as the hive is offered as a model for human society, so the beekeeper

Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.127; Vergil, *Georgicon IV*, in *Opera*, ed. by Frederick A. Hirtzel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), especially ll.153-5: 'consortia tecta/ urbis habent magnisque agitant sub legibus aevum/ et patriam solae et certos novere penatis'. For a more comprehensive review of this idea with some suggestive findings, see Colin Wilcockson, '*Mum and the Sothsegger, Richard II, and Henry V*', *Review of English Studies* 46 (1995), pp.219-24.

¹⁴⁷ Bartholomaeus calls the drones 'fals bein' or 'Fuci', defining them as a separate species of 'vnperfyghte bein' which hide among 'the very bein' in order to 'etyth & deuouryth hony': *On the Properties of Things*, I, pp.611, 659. A 1465 letter of John Paston II also considers 'idel' drones to be a species distinct from the bee, referring to the 'drane amonges bees which labour for gaderyng hony in the feldes and the drane doth nought but takyth his part of it': *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Norman Davis, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971-75), I (1971), p.128.

is suggesting that his measures should be implemented against the priesthood, inferring that in a perfect culture they would be 'naped [...] on þe nolle'.

Mum's deployment of wounding is of the same order as *Crede*'s attacks. The 'naped' insects are directly comparable to *Crede*'s 'for-gabbed [...] frere'. Like the earlier poem, *Mum* uses its assault on priests to carry out both festive and hieratic processes. The fact that the keeper seeks to 'daisshe' clerics 'to deeth' emphasises that there are powers beyond the clergy, that its precedence is not innate and beyond challenge. The 'quelling' asserts that the authority of the priesthood is not total, not universally applicable, but limited and contestable. In a clear festive manoeuvre, the clergy cease to be agents of a grand, all-enveloping system and become part of a context that exceeds and overshadows them. This procedure is also accompanied by a clear hieratic element. The insistent link between injury and destroying falsehood, as 'to bable þe sothe' is 'to breste oute [...] þattre', infers that the victims of injury are automatically marked as impediments to 'soþe' (165, 1126-7). These injuries, by resonating with the wider symbolism in the poem, serve to define their sufferers as opponents of truth. Once again, a Lollard text proves capable of utilising the wound as a fully developed anticlerical device, simultaneously degrading and condemning the church.

However, this is not the full extent of *Mum*'s use of wounding. In the poem mutilation does not always follow the example of *Crede*. Often it behaves in a manner that is more reminiscent of *Piers*. Like Langland, *Mum* portrays the clergy as inflictors of wounds: throughout the poem 'Mvm and his ferys' are responsible for much bodily damage (1341). Any truth-sayer who opposes Mum is apparently at risk of a wide range of punishments, including being 'y-pyned to deeth/ Or y-brent', or 'y-bete and y-bound'; whenever Mum's accomplices capture a rebel, they invariably 'teereth his toppe', 'hewe of þe heede' or 'batre hym with battz' (48, 183-8, 166-76). Mum warns the narrator that his quest is 'not holsum for þy heed', and orders him to 'carpe no more of clergie' for if 'þou come on þaire clouche, þou crepis not þens' (676-8, 697-8). Nor are these empty threats: the only truth-teller glimpsed before the vision is a wretched man who sits 'in a shoppe and salwyn his woundes' (847). Under Mum's stewardship, the kingdom is said to 'groweth al to grevance and gurdyng of heedes'(1160). It is almost as though injury becomes a literal version of Mum's

oppression: just as he creates an absence of ‘sope’ by placing a ‘locke’ on every ‘lippe’, so physical cavities and ‘woundz’ become his signature (690, 117). The clergy retain the power to inflict injuries, acting much as they do in *Piers*.

Mum thus simultaneously attaches wounding to the priesthood and to its opponents. Injury in the poem symbolises both resistance to the church and the exercise of its authority. Evidently, disfigurement is an overpopulated trope in the text, holding several contradictory values. It is not possible to define injury as the exclusive property of either the church or its critics, as it is at the disposal of both parties. What is more, this sense of ambivalence intensifies as the poem progresses. *Mum* also makes injury indefinable in moral terms, loading it with both positive and negative valences. The text seems to exalt and denigrate the experience of mutilation, often at one and the same time. Like *Piers* before it, *Mum* valorises the reception of wounds, celebrating martyrdom in several passages.¹⁴⁸ It unequivocally hails ‘martires’ for having ‘more might and more mynde’ than a thousand ‘clercz’, and even criticises the friars because ‘suche a cumpaignye of confessours cunne not yelde/ Oon martir’ (632, 488-9).¹⁴⁹ The description of the sothesigger ‘salwyn his woundes’ is even accompanied by a quotation from Matthew 5.10 which glorifies agony: ‘beati qui persecucionem patiuntur’, or ‘blessed are they that suffer persecution’. As in *Piers*, wounds are treated as badges of virtue. Even closer to Langland is the suggestion that injury provides a fusion with Christ: at one stage anyone who ‘chosid þe death’ is said to possess ‘kindenes to oure creatour þat creed vs alle’ (639-40).

Yet such commendations are evenly balanced by the assumption that violent death is opprobrious. The beekeeper’s speech obviously treats injury as something to be directed against malefactors: his aggression is focused on those elements that should be removed from society. For him, receiving a wound has a sharply negative value, being appropriate to ‘cursidnesse’ and ‘wrongz’ (1067, 1086). Other sections of the poem reinforce this idea, especially a passage which describes a group of friars being put to death. After searching among the mendicants for a truth-sayer, and hearing only tributes to *Mum*, the narrator recites a prolonged attack on ‘alle þe foure ordres’:

¹⁴⁸ Barr suggests that this attitude is typical of post-*Comburendo* Lollardy: see *Signes and Sothe*, pp.106-7.

¹⁴⁹ Resistance to persecution is also William of Saint-Amour’s twentieth sign of the ‘false Apostles’: Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, pp.319-20.

during this, he states that ‘þaire lesingz have lad þaym to lolle by þe necke;/ At Tibourne for traison’ (392, 419-20). This evidently refers to the events of 1402, the year in which eight Canterbury Franciscans were hanged, and two from Leicester were beheaded, for ‘speaking against Henry IV and claiming that Richard II was still alive’.¹⁵⁰ The allusion to these deaths is similar to *Crede*’s ‘buffet to beden a beggere frere’. It also presents wounding as a form of punishment rather than persecution, an act designed to fix a criminal to their crime rather than refine or improve them. The poem even gloats that ‘þe churle ʒafe a dome whiche came by hym aftre’, emphasising that the friars’ execution is part of a final judgment against them (422). Thus injury in *Mum* seems to be a stigma as much as it is a blessing. Being ‘y-pyned to deeth’ is at once nefarious and noble, as it is equally possible to ‘token þe deeth for trouthe’ and for ‘lesingz’ (632).

In essence, the text’s treatment of injury constantly veers between the two precedents of *Crede* and *Piers*. It is both emblematic of disgrace and righteousness, and rests in the hands of both the church and its critics. Disfigurement in the poem does not possess a single straightforward value, but is crowded with numerous discordant meanings.

What is all the more remarkable is that this mixture of values serves to fortify *Mum*’s satire, rather than weaken it. The elements of Langlandian injury are not a dilution of the bolder tactics of *Crede*: both are part of a single strategy which enables *Mum* to engage with its object more effectively. There is an important reason for the poem’s overdetermination of injury. Andrew Wawn’s work on the text does much to highlight this. Wawn connects *Mum* to ‘an important late medieval tradition [...] of literature about truth-telling’ which deals with ‘whether rather than what or how to speak’.¹⁵¹ However, as Wawn points out, while *Mum* resembles this tradition it also departs from it: James Dean agrees that the poem only ‘ostensibly’ deals with ‘the

¹⁵⁰ ‘Verbis dictis contra Regem [...] dicens quod Rex Ricardus vivit’: *Eulogium, historiarum sive temporis: Chronicon [...] a monacho quodam Malmesburiensi exaratum*, ed. by Frank Scott Haydon, Rolls series, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1858-63), III (1863), pp.389, 394.

¹⁵¹ Andrew Wawn, ‘Truth-telling and the Tradition of *Mum and the Sothsegger*’, *Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983), p.270.

merits of [...] speaking out'.¹⁵² Its choice of Mum as the antithesis of truthful speech is highly unconventional. It is more usual for honesty to be contrasted with forms of false speech, rather than outright silence.¹⁵³ For instance, in Skelton's *Bowge of Courte* (c.1498), which Wawn places in the same tradition, the truth-teller Dreede struggles against such 'Full subtyll persones' as Dysdane, Dyssymuler and 'Fauell, full of flattery'. Dreede's candid register 'of moralyte' and 'trouth' competes with other forms of language-use rather than the non-language which Mum embodies.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, 'trouthe, which is lief' and 'double speche' are paired as inverses.¹⁵⁵ *Mum* is highly unusual in making 'be stille' the contrary of 'bable', opposing candour with silence rather than another, more devious form of speech (291).

This choice leads to a central problem in the text. Mum is not simply a different form of speech but the endpoint of all speech, representing the complete absence of discourse. This means that he is not technically comparable to 'soþe', or to any other form of verbalisation: he cannot be placed alongside a type of language, since he is founded on the abolition of expression. It is not possible to convene Mum and 'Melle-sumtyme' since the very natures of the two figures are at variance (526). *Mum* cannot draw its two key terms on to a common surface to compare their claims, because they are essentially incompatible, each being the limit of the other. In short, they 'mighte not accorde./ For þay been contrary of kynde, who-so canne spie' (331).

The poem even directly acknowledges this. It views Mum and the sothseggers as entities with their own distinct territories. Mum is obviously lord of the world in which the narrator stages his quest: not only does he command 'alle [...] estatz every after other', but he seems able to erupt without warning from this scenery, 'manachid me euer' (579). It as though he permeates the world, not merely governing but infusing it. The truth-sayers on the other hand occupy a completely different plane,

¹⁵² *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. by James M. Dean, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), p.58.

¹⁵³ See Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: pastoral rhetoric and the deviant speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.10-24.

¹⁵⁴ John Skelton, *The Bowge of Court*, 133-5, in *Poetical Works of John Skelton*, ed. by Alexander Dyce, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856), I, pp.42-3.

¹⁵⁵ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. by Russell A. Peck, Medieval Academy Reprints For Teaching 9 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p.378; VII.1724-73.

inhabiting the lush garden of the narrator's dream. It is here that the narrator first learns of truth-saying's superiority, and here that the Sothsegger is ultimately said to reside: 'mynde is his mansion' (1225). Not only is this an internal rather than external landscape but, as Alcuin Blamires observes, its character is quite at odds with Mum's cowed and dispirited realm: it presents 'a wide panorama whose unifying function seems to be natural fruitfulness, in contrast with all the frustration that has gone before'.¹⁵⁶ The poem places the two disputants in two entirely different provinces. It recognises that its chief figures cannot be brought together, but belong in two disparate fields.

It is unsurprising that a Lollard text of the post-*Constitutiones* era should hold such views. In the first two decades of the fifteenth century, the distance between the church and its opponents had indeed become impassable. During the reign of Richard II, Lollardy could claim several supporters within the secular government, proving 'enormously popular among the lesser nobility and the gentry': Knighton mentions a group of six 'Lollard knights' who defended Wycliffite preachers with 'sword and shield [...] that none might dare to go against them'.¹⁵⁷ In the 1380s Wyclif himself enjoyed the protection of no less a figure than John of Gaunt, for whom he became a form of 'government pamphleteer and propagandist'.¹⁵⁸ Even as late as 1399 Sir John Cheyne was elected speaker of the House of Commons, a man who was at the very least 'inclined towards the Wycliffites'.¹⁵⁹ However, by the time of *Mum* the Lollard movement had become much more marginalised politically. It lost any 'chance of [...] becoming a significant force at a political level' with the accession of the unsympathetic Henry IV, and 'its political power drained away' under Lancastrian

¹⁵⁶ Alcuin Blamires, 'Mum and the Sothsegger and Langlandian Idiom', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 76 (1975), pp.597-8.

¹⁵⁷ Attila Bányai, 'The Crown and the Lollards in Later Medieval England', in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Csaba Levai and Vasile Vese (Pisa: Edizioni Plus, 2003), p.144; Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle, 1337-1396*, trans. by G.H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.295.

¹⁵⁸ Brian Moynahan, *The Faith: a history of Christianity* (London: Pimlico, 2003), p.300.

¹⁵⁹ William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891-1903), III (1903), p.18. For a more recent account of Cheyne's career and sympathies, see J.S. Roskell, 'Sir John Cheyne of Beckford', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 75 (1956), pp.43-72; K.B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp.162-76.

rule.¹⁶⁰ *Mum*'s belief that the church and its disputants are far removed from one another, each inhabiting a different world, reflects Lollardy's genuine loss of political influence after 1399.

However, the poem must work to reduce this incompatibility. Its own conclusions would be jeopardised if it allowed the distance between *Mum* and truth-sayers to persist. The poem ends with the narrator himself emerging triumphantly to 'saye sumwhat of svth', newly capable of mobilising his language against *Mum* (1336). Apparently he is successful in this project: from his metamorphosis to the point at which the poem breaks off, *Mum* is banished completely from the text. Such confidence would be wholly undermined if the poem continued to emphasise *Mum*'s absolute isolation from honest declaration. It is imperative that some form of common ground is located, in order to bridge the space between them. Mutilation serves to provide this. Its ambivalence, its absorption of values from both *Piers* and *Crede*, allows it to traverse the gap between the two figures. The fact that injury is at the disposal of both *Mum* and the Sothsegger, each of whom may take their opponent and 'batre hym with battz' or 'daisshe þaym to deeth', suggests a linkage between them. Their shared vulnerability to violence, and their common ability to commit it, establishes a point at which they converge. Wounding furnishes them with an important mutual term, facilitating the confrontation between them.

The overdetermination of injury is thus a deliberate attempt to shift the adherents of 'bable' and 'be stille' into the same domain. Because both exist as combatants, it is possible to stage a contest between them. It should also be noted that this posture has further implications, directly affecting the poem itself. *Mum*'s conception of injury enables its own engagement with its object. Since the poem openly identifies itself with truth-telling, as its narrator vows that he will 'spareth for no spurnyng, but spedith þe matiere', wounding also serves to create a common ground between the church and itself (1190). Mutilation has thus become the symbolic basis of the text's challenge to the clergy, authorising its disputation. This tactic marks an important development in anticlerical satire. Injury has become an even more prominent and

¹⁶⁰ Keen, *English Society*, p.292; Wilks, *Wyclif*, p.113. See also Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: usurpation and the language of legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

central part of anticlerical discourse. Rather than appearing only sporadically, as in *Crede*, violence is implicit in *Mum*'s entire confrontation with the church. Aggression provides the very terms in which the poem approaches its object, permeating its language. *Mum* is rendered capable of addressing its object by injury. This means that *Mum* is willing to take into its own voice all the powers that wounding is capable of performing. Aggression becomes an insistent and integral part of its attitude towards the church, its every statement gaining the ability to deflate and condemn its object. *Mum*'s use of wounding as a satiric mechanism is scarcely more developed than that of *Crede*: but it is more fully integrated into the poem, forming the very backbone of its pronouncements.

Yet despite this militancy *Mum* is not free from the difficulties which hamper *Crede*'s antifraternalism. Once again, there is a marked reluctance to attribute the ability to wound clerics to any specific faction. No steps are taken to create a point of greater authority than the church: if anything the text actively veers away from championing any group. This is particularly apparent during the dream-vision. While the beekeeper is allowed to crush the symbolic churchmen that pollute his garden, it is difficult to determine what he actually represents. As Barr points out, 'the precise allegorical aspect of the beekeeper's actions is unclear [...] his defence of the hive intrudes on the symbolism of the bee-community because it creates a king figure inside as well as outside the hive'.¹⁶¹ While the other aspects of the dream are relatively straightforward in their import, the apiarist is far more opaque. He is a blind spot, the one element of the allegory that cannot be easily decoded. The poem refuses to reveal exactly who has the power to harm clerics, even though it is relatively explicit in describing their disfigurement.

Even *Mum*'s claim that aggression permeates its own language fails to grant injury to a specific actor, since the poem, like the beekeeper, represents nothing. It does not situate itself in any wider position, but emphasises the individualism of its stance throughout. Its narrator is presented as the only man in the kingdom who is willing to question *Mum*'s dominance: he is a lone troublemaker filled with 'wilde wordes þat maken wretthe ofte' (251). He is not the spokesman for any community or wider

¹⁶¹ *Piers Plowman Tradition*, p.339.

group, but is at odds with every figure he meets on his journey. Even the solution to his struggle underscores his isolation. His torments are only resolved by turning his inquiry inwards, looking to his own 'witte and his wil' (231). Unlike the narrator of *Crede* he does not make contact with an external figure or group 'in goodnesse of gost graypliche': he finds 'soþe' by moving away from all external phenomena, especially human society. The poem is thus not speaking or acting on behalf of any 'cumpaignie' (262). The even-handedness of the poem's satire also implies that its voice is not collective but singular. While its rejection of the church is fairly categorical, *Mum* does not demonstrate any faith in the secular authorities either. The narrator's quest takes him among 'fre men and frankeleyns', 'bonde-men and bourgeois', 'knightz', 'comunes and craftz-men', and even a 'maire': unsurprisingly, he finds that these entities are also infected with secrecy, discovering 'mo mvmmers atte moneth-ende/ Than of sothe-siggerz by seuene score thousand' (788-95, 812). Once again, the text's 'momeling' does not possess any broader implications or affiliations (233). Its injurious discourse is not attached to a particular position. Even the Lollards are an unspoken, 'y-mummyd' presence in the poem.

The problems evident in *Crede* thus affect *Mum* to an equal degree, hindering its satire to the same extent. Antisacerdotal injury still remains without a subject to implement it. *Mum* and *Crede* show more interest in presenting the church as assailable than privileging any definite assailants. These texts are undoubtedly strengthened by their Lollardy, by their attachment to a set of concrete values or ideals, but neither of them can transmit this to satiric mutilation. Both fail to exploit injury's positive aspect, its ability to endorse a specific position.

What neither *Mum* nor *Crede* reveal is exactly why Wycliffism suffers from this setback. That Lollardy should prove such an imperfect basis for satire is surprising. After all, the sect did generate powerful, consolidated and stubborn opposition to the clergy. The strength of the church's reaction alone attests to this, from Archbishop William Courtney's censures in the 1380s to the Council of Constance of 1414-18, which condemned over three hundred of Wyclif's propositions and ordered his

remains to be disinterred.¹⁶² Clearly the church recognised the threat posed by ‘the disciples of Antecrist that ben cleped lollardes’ who ‘hauen made moche dissencioun and diuisioun in holy chirche and putte many men in to errour’.¹⁶³ Nonetheless for all this Wycliffite satire is fundamentally incomplete, unable to use the major satiric symbol of the wound to its fullest advantage. In spite of its sustained and forceful defiance of the clergy, it still neglects to place a specific faction in a position to maim clerics. Why Lollardy should not be able to create a full anticlerical satire needs to be addressed.

Some light is shed on this issue by a third Lollard text, a carol of uncertain date which is preserved in MS Cotton Cleopatra Bii.¹⁶⁴ The poem’s focus is far narrower than *Mum* and even *Crede*, as it concerns itself purely with the iconography of the Franciscans. It details several Minorite religious tableaux, describing how Grey Friars ‘gabben on God þat all men may se/ when þai hangen him on hegh’, and roundly condemning such spectacles as blasphemies: ‘þat was neur Goddes son by my leute’ (7-8, 10). Such iconoclasm is typically Wycliffite, recalling the numerous complaints against ‘ymages [...] grauen wip mannes hondes’ found throughout Lollard literature.¹⁶⁵

The lyric eventually implicates the Franciscans’ bodies in its attack:

A cart was made al of fyre, as it shuld be,
A grey frer I sawe þer-inne, þat best lyked me.
Wele I wote þei shal be brent, by me leaute;
God graunte me þat grace þat I may it se (31-4).

Laying aside the issue of whether a dramatic or graphic spectacle is being described here, the method by which the carol achieves its satiric wounding is clear enough.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² See *Fasciculum Zizaniorum*, pp.272-86; Heinrich Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. by Roy J. Deferrari (St. Louis: B. Herder Books, 1957), pp.208-12.

¹⁶³ Nicholas Love, *Mirroure of the blessed lyf of Jesu Christ: a translation of the Latin work entitled Meditationes Vitæ Christi*, ed. by Lawrence F. Powell, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908), p.320.

¹⁶⁴ *On the Minorites*, in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. by Rossel H. Robbins (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp.163-4. On the poem’s MS, see Anne Hudson, ‘Contributions to a Bibliography of Wycliffite Writings’, *Notes and Queries* 218 (1973), p.447. Subsequent references to this lyric appear in parentheses in the text.

¹⁶⁵ *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Gloria Cigman, EETS o.s. 294 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.114.

¹⁶⁶ On this debate, see *Political poems and songs relating to English history, composed during the period from the accession of Edw. III to that of Ric. III*, ed. by Thomas Wright, Rolls Series, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1859-61), I (1859), pp.lxix-xx; Rossell H. Robbins, ‘XIII. Poems Dealing With Contemporary Conditions’, in *A Manual of the Writings in*

The lyric's satire works by shifting the 'cart [...] al of fyre' from a fictional to an actual incineration. As Joseph Grennen explains: 'the friars will be "brent" - consigned to the flames, not as the self-regarding myth [...] would have it, but to the flames of hell-fire'.¹⁶⁷ The fiction by which the Minorites characterise themselves comes to engulf them, turning against the very material it is designed to display. Most important here are the processes which underlie this technique. The lyric is requisitioning the Franciscans' own representation of themselves. It is seizing the statements of the 'mynours' and directing them against their authors, using them to wound their bodies. Such a stratagem can best be described as a form of hijack. The lyric's satire functions by turning some aspect of its target against itself, loading this borrowed material with new intentions.

Such a manoeuvre is deeply significant. Despite the confidence with which the poem delivers its protests, this tactic suggests a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the Minorites. By assuming this approach, the poem seems in some way to recognise the authority of the friars. Its reliance on its opponents' fictions to scourge them, rather than a force of its own creation, signals a partial acceptance of the Franciscans' position. The poem finds in the entity that it ostensibly opposes some element which agrees with its own intentions. Its own wishes can be accommodated into the framework of its supposed enemy. The lyric's condemnation is clearly not a total, unilateral one. Although the lyric does assume a stance of greater authenticity than the friars, its opponents' ideas supply the means by which it mobilises its challenge. Its stance is partly indebted to the object of its ridicule and violence: the carol fights 'not wholly honourably, with weapons plundered from the enemy'.¹⁶⁸

This is the critical point here, not only for the lyric itself but for the other examples of pro-Lollard satire. In its playful and ironic way, the lyric spells out the problems attendant on all Wycliffite satire. It is not difficult to see a relation between the

Middle English 1050-1500, ed. by Albert E. Hartung and others, 6 vols (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967-80), V (1975), p.1444; *Medieval English Lyrics: a critical anthology*, ed. by R.T. Davies (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p.331; Beverly Brian, 'Franciscan Scenes in a Fourteenth-Century Satire', *Medium Ævum* 41 (1972), p.29; Szittyá, *Antifraternal Tradition*, p.217.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph Grennen, 'The "O and I" Refrain in Middle English Poems: a grammatology of Judgment Day', *Neophilologus* 71 (1987), pp.620-21.

¹⁶⁸ Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, pp.163-4.

poem's parasitism and *Crede* and *Mum*'s reluctance to specify a particular subject. In the lyric, the same entity is both the subject and the object of injury: the friar's ideas are integrated into the poem's own stance, as the friar's own 'dedes' provide the means by which they are scourged. Although the poem does tie injury to a specific actor, thereby granting it power and authorising its stance, this actor is also part of the object. The ideals that wounding comes to support are those that are embodied by its target. In essence the lyric comes to defend the position it attacks.

This is why Lollardy proves to be an unsuitable platform for satire. The carol is dramatising the basic problem that afflicts the longer satires. The ideals Lollardy embraces and espouses are at root those of the church. As Rex states, despite its 'radical reconstruction of everyday religious experience', the movement strove to preserve 'the essential parochial structure from the past'.¹⁶⁹ Lollardy's ideals in fact derive their value from supposedly representing the church in its purest, least corrupted form. As William Thorpe allegedly testified before Archbishop Arundel in 1407, the 'lore of maistir Ioon Wiclef' is for his followers 'þe moost acordinge lore to þe lyuyng and to þe techyng of Crist and his apostlis, and moost opinli schewyng and declaryng how þe chirche of Crist haþ be and ʒit schal be rulid and gouerned'.¹⁷⁰ Wycliffism characterises itself as the church at its truest and most rudimentary, representing 'þat staat þat Crist ʒaf'.¹⁷¹ Its very force depends on this, its ability to claim any authority for its statements. Owing to this, Lollardy is not a position outside the clergy. It does not possess its own values and desiderata, but firmly upholds aspects of the existing church.

The result of this is that the power to wound clerics cannot be attached to the position *Mum* and *Crede* support. This prospective subject is too entangled in the act's object. Their inability to nominate a subject for their attacks is caused by their inescapable proximity to the target of their satire. While Wycliffism may bolster anticlerical satire, giving it firm ideals and criteria, its essentially reformist nature also prevents satiric texts from achieving a full level of denunciation. The Lollard pieces are not capable of detaching themselves completely from the church: while their satire is

¹⁶⁹ Rex, *Lollards*, p.24.

¹⁷⁰ *The Testimony of William Thorpe*, in *Two Wycliffite Texts*, ed. by Anne Hudson, EETS o.s. 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.40.

¹⁷¹ *English Wycliffite Sermons*, III, p.321.

venomously anticlerical, it is never anti-ecclesiastic. Their opposition to the church is fundamentally incomplete, and this naturally effects their employment of satiric wounding, limiting its operation.

As mentioned earlier, the post-*Constitutiones* era also produced another strand of satire against the church. This is chiefly found in the burlesque narrative poems or 'bourds' which were popular throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The overall character of the bourds is clearly distinct from the alliterative satires. Rather than adopting a tone of direct protest, these poems take a more anecdotal and broadly comic approach. They are more closely related to the work of Chaucer than that of Langland, owing a particular debt to the fabliaux of the *Canterbury Tales*. As Melissa Furrow writes, this 'flurry of comic writing in the fifteenth century' came 'hard on the heels of Chaucer'.¹⁷²

The choice of Chaucer as a literary archetype is itself highly revealing. The work of John Bowers and David Lawton shows that such emulation indicates a high degree of orthodoxy. In the first decades of the fifteenth century, Chaucer became the favoured model for a corpus of work directly 'connected with the structures of power'.¹⁷³ Such writers as Lydgate and Hoccleve, often working with the 'active sponsorship' of 'the twin orthodoxies of Church and Crown', sought to create an 'official' vernacular literature. Their aim was to rehabilitate English writing, to make it less an instrument for 'contestation of the dominant ideology', and more supportive and laudatory of the existing social order.¹⁷⁴ Chaucer became the figurehead of this enterprise, as his successors imitated his poetry and celebrated his name. In the fifteenth century Chaucer's work thus became the 'approved' model for English poetry, a safe-ground for composition in the vernacular.

The bourds' adherence to Chaucer's literary example signals a basic conservatism. By following his poetic forms, the bourds are showing their deference to the given power structure, and their unwillingness to challenge or condemn it. A general lack of

¹⁷² Furrow, 'Middle English Fabliaux', p.12.

¹⁷³ David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *English Literary History* 54 (1987), p.793. See also Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the "Chaucer Tradition"', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 5 (1982), pp.3-32.

¹⁷⁴ John M. Bowers, 'Piers Plowman and the Police: notes towards a history of the Wycliffite Langland', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 6 (1992), pp.35, 36.

subversion is perceptible throughout these works: in stark contrast with Lollard satire, they eschew any doctrinal or political irregularities. As John Hines writes, the genre as a whole 'piously respects conventional standards'.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to view these poems as entirely cowed and restrained. The ostensible conservatism of the bourds does not prevent them from satirising the church in an extraordinarily savage way. Several of these works contain a high level of sustained anticlerical violence. In fact in certain respects their satire is oddly complementary to that of the Wycliffites. It often seems to complete the shifts begun by *Mum and Crede*, developing their satire more fully: frequently the satire of the bourds seems closer in spirit to the Lollard texts than to Chaucer's work. Consequently, this tradition repays analysis. The remainder of the present chapter will address the bourds, examining their relationship to the general currents of anticlerical satire in Middle English.

The influence of Chaucer looms particularly large in the *Prologue of the Tale of Beryn* (c.1410-20), one of the earliest imitations of Chaucer's fabliaux.¹⁷⁶ The *Prologue*, or *Canterbury Interlude*, is in fact written as a direct continuation of the *Canterbury Tales*. Much like the opening section of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (1420-2), it details the pilgrims' arrival at Canterbury.¹⁷⁷ However, unlike Lydgate's work, it develops their sojourn into a colourful narrative, a 'tale glad and mery' in its own right (2). The poem gives a full description of the pilgrims' visit to Becket's shrine, their lodging at the 'Cheker of the Hope' tavern, their supper together, and their departure the following morning (14). These episodes are enlivened by various arguments and feuds within the company.

Although it contains references to most of Chaucer's 'sondry folk', the *Interlude* is

¹⁷⁵ John Hines, *The Fabliau in English* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p.208.

¹⁷⁶ *The Canterbury Interlude*, in *The Canterbury Tales: fifteenth-century continuations and additions*, ed. by John M. Bowers, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), pp.60-85. The dating is Derek Pearsall's, and is accepted by most critics: see Pearsall, *Old and Middle English Poetry*, p.298. Subsequent references to the *Prologue* appear in parentheses in the text.

¹⁷⁷ See *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, ed. by Axel Erdmann, EETS e.s. 108, 125, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co, 1911-30), I (1911), pp.2-9. The two texts are compared in John M. Bowers, 'The Tale of Beryn and The Siege of Thebes: alternative ideas of The Canterbury Tales', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 7 (1985), pp.23-50.

much less polyphonic than its source-text.¹⁷⁸ Almost from the outset it is dominated by one pilgrim in particular, who becomes the main focus of its action, and the butt of its satire. The Pardoner is quickly established as the chief figure of the poem: he is so central that John Urry, who included the bourd in his 1721 *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, gave it the title 'the mery adventure of the pardonere and tapstere at the Inn at Canterbury'.¹⁷⁹ After the visit to the cathedral, the poem is more or less the Pardoner's alone: the other pilgrims filter off 'townward', while he remains at the Cheker (296). The poem concentrates on his attempts to seduce and rob Kit, a barmaid at the inn. The results of this are catastrophic: the Pardoner is not only denied entry to Kit's bedchamber, but his pack is stolen, and he is drawn into a nocturnal battle 'among the pannes' in the tavern's kitchen (565). Here he is set upon by Kit's 'paramour' and the proprietor of the Cheker, the 'hostelere', who takes him for an intruder (21).

Significantly, during this skirmish the Pardoner accumulates various injuries. The text's treatment of him is remarkably brutal. After pleading at 'Kittes dorward', his own staff is sharply 'leyd [...] on his bak' (477, 525). Once he is chased into the scullery, he receives 'strokes ryghte inowghe [...] on his armes, his bak, and his browe' (597-8). He is at length forced to hide until morning in the bed of a 'grete Walssh dogg', which 'spetously' bites him on the thigh (633, 641). Such is his ordeal that before he can rejoin the company on the road back to Southwark, he is forced to 'wissh away the blood' (661). The Pardoner, as Richard Firth Green comments, 'has finally met his match' in this text.¹⁸⁰

These humiliating injuries have attracted a good deal of critical attention. Several commentators have pointed out that the *Interlude's* violence resembles Chaucer's own treatment of the Pardoner, and classed it as a simple extension of this. Bradley Darjes and Thomas Rendall remark that 'the fifteenth-century author's purpose is to continue the comic deflation of the Pardoner that begins in the *Tales* when the Host

¹⁷⁸ On 'how well' the *Beryn*-poet 'kept up Chaucer's characters', see E.J. Bashe, 'The Prologue to *The Tale of Beryn*', *Philological Quarterly* XII (1933), pp.2-11; on the tighter focus of the *Interlude*, see Stephan Kohl, 'Chaucer's Pilgrims in Fifteenth-Century Literature', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1983), pp.221-36.

¹⁷⁹ *The Tale of Beryn*, ed. by F.J. Furnivall and W.G. Stone, EETS e.s. 105 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1909), p.1.

¹⁸⁰ Richard F. Green, 'The Sexual Normality of Chaucer's Pardoner', *Medievalia* 8 (1985), p.353.

makes his rude reference to the Pardoner's coillons'.¹⁸¹ The allusion here is to Bailly's outburst when the Pardoner attempts to sell his 'relikes' to the pilgrims. Bailly rages: 'I would I hadde thy coillons in myn hond/ In stide of relikes or of seintuarie/ Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie' (VI.951-3). Peter Brown also cites this threat, and agrees that the Pardoner is 'pilloried and vilified by the *Beryn*-author' as part of the 'process [...] initiated by Harry Bailly'.¹⁸² According to these interpretations, the composer of the *Interlude* is merely prolonging this episode from the *Tales*, importing its style of aggression directly into his own text without alteration or innovation.

But such readings do a disservice to the *Interlude*'s employment of satiric violence. While it is undeniably true that the *Interlude* is 'on the whole Chaucerian in both spirit and accomplishment', as much of its content continues or directly engages with the earlier text, its use of injury owes very little to Bailly's curse.¹⁸³ Using Chaucer's treatment of the Pardoner in order to explain or illuminate the *Interlude*'s satire misses much of its purpose. There are clear and critical discrepancies between the two authors' use of wounding against this figure. Reviewing these will help to determine the anticlerical sensibilities of the *Interlude*, and for that matter several of the later bourds.

The key difference between the two texts is that, while the *Interlude* leaves the Pardoner with 'akyng of his hede', Chaucer shies away from damaging the figure's body (672). Harry Bailly does not need to put his threat into action: as it turns out, the insult alone is enough to silence the cleric, 'so wrooth he was, no word ne wolde he seye' (VI.957). Moreover, it is a curious fact that if Bailly did wish to make good his abuse, he would be unable to do so. One of the Pardoner's most salient features is his lack of testicles. As Robert Miller observes, 'the images [...] of lechery do not prevent notice that this man is also described as a eunuch'.¹⁸⁴ In the *General*

¹⁸¹ Bradley Darjes and Thomas Rendall, 'A Fabliau in the *Prologue to the Tale of Beryn*', *Mediaeval Studies* 47 (1985), p.431.

¹⁸² Peter Brown, 'Journey's End: the Prologue to the *Tale of Beryn*', in *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen (London: King's College Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1991), p.158.

¹⁸³ Karen A. Winstead, 'The *Beryn*-Writer as a Reader of Chaucer', *Chaucer Review* 22 (1988), p.225.

¹⁸⁴ Robert P. Miller, 'Chaucer's Pardoner, the Scriptural Eunuch, and the Pardoner's Tale', *Speculum* 30 (1955), p.182. See also Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp.54-70; Robert Lumiansky, *Of Sondry Folk: the dramatic principle in the*

Prologue the Pardoner is said to be a 'geldyng': many of the features associated with emasculation are also attributed to him, such as a 'voys [...] as hath a goot' and 'no berd' (I.691, 688-9). The Pardoner thus has no 'coillons' that can be 'kutte' and 'shryned in an hogges toord' (VI.954-5). The quaestor is out of the range of Bailly's threatened mutilation. Chaucer seems to be averse to the idea of wounding the Pardoner. Although he hints at violence against this cleric, he only does so in conditions that safely distance him from injury's full force. Bailly's insult more closely resembles *Wynnere* or *Piers* than the *Interlude*: rather than abandoning the churchman to a fierce physical attack, Chaucer carefully isolates him from the effects of violence.

The fact that one text is willing to injure the Pardoner while the other is reluctant to do so is highly significant. These two differing levels of violence imply two different means of satirising clerics. Underlying them are two distinct methods of presenting and dealing with the misdeeds of churchmen. When Chaucer's refusal to enact Bailly's violence is compared to his depiction of the Pardoner as a whole, it is clear that this episode is part of his general view of the cleric, and his flaws. The quaestor's immunity from violence reflects the governing principle of his character. As numerous critics have observed, it is not only the Pardoner's testes that prove elusive: his entire self seems to be absent. In Derek Pearsall's phrase, the Pardoner seems to have 'no "within" [...] rather like one of those apples that grow near the Dead Sea, that look like true apples but turn to "wynnowande askes" when touched'.¹⁸⁵ He seems utterly to lack any substance. In his *Prologue*, he describes himself as a ravenous vacuity, a bottomless pit into which all things vanish: 'I wol have moneie, wolle, chese, and whete [...] of the poverest wydwe in a village,/ Al sholde hir children sterve' (VI.448-51). As Carolyn Dinshaw writes, he is 'an enormous lack, an unquenchable *cupiditas*'.¹⁸⁶ He is also scattered, not anchored to any firm centre but spread throughout 'sondry landes' and 'every toun' (VI.443, 453). He is primarily an absence of identity, possessing no cohesion. The fact that he is impervious to violence

Canterbury Tales (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955), p.203; Michael Hoy, *Chaucer's Major Tales* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p.107; Monica McAlpine, 'The Pardoner's Homosexuality and How It Matters', *PMLA* 95 (1980), pp.8-22.

¹⁸⁵ Derek Pearsall, 'Chaucer's Pardoner: the death of a salesman', *Chaucer Review* 17 (1983), pp.361-2.

¹⁸⁶ Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.162.

is part of this general nothingness. His insusceptibility to even the threat of mutilation is a further sign that he is formless and immaterial, 'virtually nothing'.¹⁸⁷

This nothingness is in turn the means by which Chaucer marks the Pardoner as a venal figure. As Alfred Kellogg has observed, the Pardoner's absence recalls the Augustinian view of sin as non-being, 'nec illa effectio sed defectio'.¹⁸⁸ His portrayal as 'an enormous lack' with 'no within' suggests that his behaviour has steered him away from the 'summae essentiae' or 'summit of being' that is God.¹⁸⁹ Chaucer's use of violence is thus based on the idea that the cleric's misconduct is a type of inexistence. What makes this conception of sin particularly crucial is that it dictates how the Pardoner may be treated by his author, determining the satiric methods available to Chaucer. Such an understanding does not permit explicit judgments or condemnations to be made against the quaestor. The Pardoner's crimes cannot be anatomised and analysed, since they are fundamentally unclassifiable, consisting only of vagueness and lack. Hence Chaucer may only extend towards the Pardoner what E.T. Donaldson calls a 'tolerant' treatment: he may not offer any firm assessments or censures of him, may not 'moralize' or seek 'to ameliorate'.¹⁹⁰ He presents a figure who is impossible to pin down in conclusive and concrete terms. The Augustinian conception of the Pardoner's faults is responsible for placing him beyond denunciation, just as it places him beyond aggression.

The *Beryn*-poet's approach towards the Pardoner is entirely at odds with this, assuming an altogether different tack. The *Interlude* possesses a dissimilar understanding of the nature of clerical abuse and how it should be described and managed. It is immediately noticeable that the later poem does not follow Chaucer in presenting the Pardoner and his sins as dissipated and untouchable. The very fact that the poem directly subjects the character to violence indicates a move away from this conception. The poem's assault on the cleric proves that it has rejected the view that

¹⁸⁷ David Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), p.27.

¹⁸⁸ Alfred L. Kellogg, *Chaucer, Langland, Arthur: essays in Middle English literature* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1972), pp.245-68.

¹⁸⁹ St. Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. by George E. McCracken and others, Loeb Classical Library 411-7, 7 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1957-1972), IV (1966), trans. by Philip Levine, pp.10, 32.

¹⁹⁰ E. Talbot Donaldson, 'Chaucer the Pilgrim', in *Chaucer Criticism*, ed. by Richard Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, 2 vols (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1960-1), I (1960), p.10; George Lyman Kittredge, 'Chaucer's Pardoner', *The Atlantic Monthly* 72 (1893), pp.829-30.

he is governed by absence, that he is nebulous and indistinct, 'virtually nothing'. It instead considers him as a tangible and concrete body, an object that can be reached and struck. The *Interlude* is able to convert Chaucer's purely symbolic, 'ritual' violence into definite injury because it deems the Pardoner to be determinate and solid, not overcome with a 'speciei priuatione'.¹⁹¹

Most importantly, Chaucer's underlying notions of wrongdoing have also been abandoned. The nature of the *Interlude's* violence attests to this. Chaucer's Augustinian understanding of the Pardoner's sinfulness has been wholly dismissed by the *Beryn*-poet. The *Interlude* leans more towards categorising and interpreting the Pardoner's behaviour: it sees his activity as determinable, something that can be pinned down in positive terms, rather than simply a privative force. The beating is strongly hieratic in character, aiming above all to mark and define its target. Such an intention is stated quite candidly by the poem. The paramour openly boasts that his blows have made the Pardoner identifiable: he tells the hostler that they will be able to recognise the seducer and 'theff' in the morning because he 'bereth a redy mark/ Wherby thow maist hym know' (612-3). The injury demarcates its victim, specifically declaring his criminality. It fixes a definite value to him, marking him as a 'bribour'.

This contusion is in fact loaded with further condemnations. It is a potent hieratic device, recording several other vices on to the Pardoner's body. It is noticeable that the Pardoner is struck precisely on a point which recalls his behaviour after he has delivered his *Tale*. The staff is 'leyd [...] on his bak,/ Right in the same plase as chapmen bereth hir pak' (525-6). These mercantile connotations recall the Pardoner's constant attempts to hawk his wares, to persuade all-comers to 'unbokele anon thy purs' (VI.945). The wound inscribes his underlying avarice on to him, stamping his body with his wrongdoing. The *Interlude* mutilates the Pardoner in order to label him: it treats him throughout as an appropriate object for hieratic injury. He is not an imprecise, amorphous creature, whose crimes are also indefinable. Both he and his sins are firmly assessable and damnable.

¹⁹¹ See John M. Bowers, "'Dronkenesse is Ful of Stryvyng": alcoholism and ritual violence in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*', *English Literary History* 57 (1990), pp.757-84.

The *Interlude*'s treatment of the Pardoner is thus of a very different kind to that deployed in the *Canterbury Tales*. The claims of Darjes, Rendall and Brown do not accurately summarise the processes at work in the later text. Far from reiterating Chaucer's ideas, the *Interlude* has no room at all for his portrayal of the Pardoner, or for his conception of priestly corruption as something ineffable and inexact. It possesses an utterly different view of how corrupt clerics should be satirised, a different set of anticlerical sentiments with different possibilities and constraints. Its satire requires that clerics can be precisely judged, their crimes determined and printed on to them. While Chaucer criticises a corrupt ecclesiastic by showing him to be dispersed and barely existent, the *Interlude*-poet satirises him by engraving clear valuations on to his body. Quite obviously, the *Interlude*'s anticlericalism is not a simple echo of Bailly's 'rude reference to the Pardoner's coillons': the later poem is more decisive and castigatory, demanding that venal churchmen should be opened up to firm appraisals, and using violence to achieve this.

Of course, satirical violence is not entirely foreign to Chaucer. The Pardoner's many 'sores' are not far removed from John's 'brosten [...] arm' and Symkyn's 'smoot [...] skulle' in the tales of the Miller and the Reeve (619, I.3829, I.4306). It could even be said that the *Interlude* is simply extending notions of 'fabliau justice' to the clergy. But, given all that such a movement implies, the importance of this should not be overlooked. The very fact that the *Interlude* is willing to subject a cleric to this viciously punitive code is itself noteworthy. The poem does not seem to be deterred in any way by its target's priesthood, subjecting him to a beating in spite of it. Quite plainly it regards clerical authority as something that can be overruled and contested, or at the very least ignored. The poem's desire to condemn a corrupt priest outweighs its respect for his office. In short, the *Interlude*'s anticlericalism has more in common with *Mum* and *Crede* than with the *Canterbury Tales*. It shares the same desire to scourge its object, to 'nape' him 'on þe nolle' and bring 'blod of his bodi on bak', and is similarly undaunted by the fact that he is a member of the church.

However, the interesting point here is that the *Interlude* also goes further than *Mum* and *Crede*. Unlike the Lollard texts, it explicitly identifies the perpetrators of anticlerical injury. The aggressors in the poem are all members of the laity. Laymen are responsible for the wounds that the Pardoner sustains, acting as the agents of the

poem's violence. The fact that the *Interlude* names the performers of its mutilation is extremely significant. This detail has implications for both its festive and hieratic satire. Allowing the laity to inflict wounds obviously enhances the festive nature of the attack. Being beaten by the very party that should be under his authority radically decreases the Pardoner's status. The conventional hegemony in which the laity is subordinated to the clergy becomes divided into two separate and opposed camps during the assault. Owing to this, the limitation of the cleric's influence is attested: his dominance is opened up to competition, as even his supposed dependants move beyond his range of influence, illustrating the finitude of his system. Making the laity administer the Pardoner's injuries ensures that he is utterly stripped of any prestige.

But even more important is the effect of this on the *Interlude's* hieratic satire. By specifying who batters the cleric, the poem creates a definite point of opposition to the priesthood. Its satire works to endorse a position as well as undermine that of the church. The poem is giving direct sanction to laymen, placing them in ascendance over the clergy. The laity become the more authoritative party in the poem, their position defined as truthful and proper, one that is fully entitled to upbraid and censure.

It should be pointed out that this privileging is not merely confined to the battle between the Pardoner, paramour and hostler. Throughout the poem the same bias can be detected. The *Interlude* repeatedly credits laymen with a high degree of power. By far the most commanding characters in the text are the Knight and the Host, both of whom are representatives of secular occupations. These figures are placed in more or less complete control of the other characters. The Knight dictates the order by which the pilgrims should enter 'atte church dorr', while Bailly silences the Miller and Pardoner's facetious comments at the shrine, ordering them to 'goth up and doth your offerynge' (136, 159). As Bowers and Brown state, each 'acts authoritatively' throughout the *Interlude*: together they function as 'the voice of order and harmony to which all members of the pilgrim-community give their immediate assent'.¹⁹² Conversely, the churchmen possess much less control. They apparently lack the same capacity to quell unruliness, even among their own ranks. After the visit to Becket's

¹⁹² Brown, 'Journey's End', pp.154-5; *Canterbury Tales: continuations*, p.3.

shrine, the Monk, Parson and Friar head off to drink 'spyces and eke wyne' together, 'in certeyn, they had no mynd on water/ To drynk at that tyme' (276-9). This is in spite of the fact that the Friar misbehaves throughout the *Interlude*, acting every bit as improperly as the Pardoner. At the cathedral he tries to wrestle the holy water 'sprynghill' from the presiding monk, 'so longed his holy conscience to se the Nonnes face', and desires to steal the Miller's hoard of cap-badges, surveying him 'with a doggish eye' (144, 181). Yet the two other churchmen ultimately prove complicit with him, treating him as a 'frende [...] met in fere' (277). The clergy makes no attempt to challenge or ostracise a contaminant within its offices. It is the lay characters in the *Interlude* who have the monopoly on discipline, who confront and punish wayward elements. The church is either unwilling or unable to exercise similar powers.

Even more significantly, the authority of lay figures does occasionally extend to the ecclesiastics in the poem. On two occasions the Knight is able to challenge the clerics in the company. He prevents the Friar from extorting a free meal, and refutes the Clerk's absurd claim that priests can sin with impunity, since it is 'right commendabil,/ To have verry knowlech of thinges reprovabil' (256-7). While the church cannot rid itself of corruption or flippancy, the laity are apparently capable of confronting such misconduct. The lay characters are firmly in command throughout the piece.

The attack on the Pardoner is an extension of this same logic, a product of the same attitudes. Like the Knight's rebuttal of the Friar and Clerk, the Pardoner's beating shows that the laity may chastise a deviant cleric, asserting their ultimate authority over such figures. The *Interlude's* use of violence thus has a highly constructive aspect, resting on the valorisation of a definite position. This comedic, non-didactic narrative implicitly accepts a conception which the more 'subversive' and 'antagonistic' alliterative satires are either reluctant or unable to formulate.¹⁹³

The *Interlude* is by no means alone in these ideas, as the same pattern is repeated in many of the later bours. Comparable processes are at work in *A mery Iest of Dane*

¹⁹³ Bowers, 'Piers Plowman and the Police', p.35.

Hew Munk of Leicestre, a piece which appears to date from the late fifteenth century.¹⁹⁴ This is an antimonastic version of the ‘wandering corpse’ topos found in several medieval literatures, with variants in Italian, French, Spanish and Arabic.¹⁹⁵ In the poem *Hew*, a ‘yung and lusty’ novice, bribes a tailor’s wife to sleep with him (6). She agrees to his request, but instructs her husband to interrupt their assignation and seize from *Hew* the ‘twenty nobles of good money’ promised her (36). All goes to plan until the tailor overzealously strikes ‘*Hew* upon the hed/ That he fel down stark dead’ (97-8). The monk’s body is then furtively conveyed back to his abbey and propped against a wall. It is at length seen by the abbot, who, vexed that *Hew* will not respond to his greetings, beats the carcass: ‘at that clap [...] was he the second time slain’ (157-8). Next, the body is carried to the tailor’s house, where it is mistaken for a ghost and struck down; it is put in a sack and exchanged for a resting thief’s swag; it is suspended from a rafter in a miller’s larder. Finally, the miller binds it to a horse and sets it galloping towards the monastery, where the abbot has it ‘cast to the earthe’ and ‘buried at the last’ (322, 325).

The ‘many strokes’ which *Hew*’s corpse sustains are highly analogous to the Pardoner’s wounds in the *Canterbury Interlude* (320). As in the *Interlude*, and for that matter *Mum* and *Crede*, *Hew*’s repeated thrashings are fully-fledged satiric mechanisms, combining festive and hieratic aspects. The hieratic satire functions much as it does in the *Interlude*. *Hew*’s wounds serve to mark and assess him, to inscribe him with his wrongdoing. For example, one of *Hew*’s attackers ‘kills’ him by hanging him in the miller’s pantry, stringing up his corpse among the sides of ‘good

¹⁹⁴ *Heere beginneth a mery lest of Dane Hew Munk of Leicestre, and how he was foure times slain and once hanged* (London: John Allde, n.d.) (STC 13257). Although *Hew*’s single surviving edition dates from the late sixteenth century, Melissa Furrow argues persuasively for its fifteenth-century provenance: ‘the raggedness of the metre and oddness of the rhyming suggests that a fifteenth-century version of the poem may have been modernized (ineptly) for publication in the sixteenth’: *Ten Comic Poems*, ed. by Melissa Furrow (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985), p.161. Subsequent references to *Dane Hew* appear in parentheses in the text.

¹⁹⁵ See Novella I.i, in Masuccio Salernitano, *The Novellino of Masuccio*, trans. by W.G. Waters, 2 vols. (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1845), I, pp.12-29; ‘*Du Prestre comporté: édition critique du fabliau*’, ed. by G. Bianciotto, in *Memini. Travaux et documents* 5 (2001), pp.131-204; Juan de Timoneda, *El patrañuelo*, ed. by Rafael Ferreres (Madrid: Castalia, D.L., 1979); ‘The Tale of the Hunchback’, in *Tales from the Thousand and One Nights*, trans. and ed. by N.J. Dawood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) pp.24-76. An exhaustive typological study of this tradition is given in Aurelio M. Espinosa, ‘Hispanic Versions of the Tale of the Corpse Many Times “Killed”’, *Journal of American Folklore* 49 (1936), pp.181-93. Compare also Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*, 4.1.155-85, in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. by David Bevington and Edmund Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.300-1.

bacon' (238). Given Hew's carnality, and the medieval association between meat-eating and 'the sexual urge', this is an entirely suitable venue for him.¹⁹⁶ The aptness of this 'execution' does not escape the characters in the poem: on seeing 'the false Munk [...] that hath been so Lecherous many a day' in her food store, the miller's wife reflects, 'some body hath quit his meed ful wel' (262-5). Injury in the *bourd* evidently has a hieratic, definitive purpose. In fact wounding also serves to ensure that Hew is entirely accessible to hieratic judgment, reducing him into an object for outside forces to interpret and position. Violence forces complete passivity on to him: this is demonstrated by his journey around Leicester, in which he may only submit to the manipulations of others.

The festive dimension of these injuries is no less powerful. Hew's own authority, what he calls 'my Preesthood' as he demands 'good game' from the tailor's wife, is shown to be partial rather than total when he is injured (81, 75). It is expressly stated that the attacks against Hew are intended to prove that his wishes are not sovereign. As the tailor states immediately before delivering his lethal 'stroke', the monk is beaten to show that 'thou shalt haue but little lust' (93-5). Hew's wounds assert that his power does not govern every element of the world: they declare that he is surrounded by other concerns and occupations, independent of his own designs. His injuries thus deflate his standing, proving that his authority has only a limited compass. As in the *Interlude*, the violence in this poem is part of a vigorous satiric process which has both festive and hieratic facets. Hew's beating 'quits his meed ful wel' and ensures that he will 'haue but little'.

However the most crucial respect in which *Dane Hew* resembles the *Interlude* is in the role it grants to laymen in the punishment of clerics. The laity play by far the major role in the monk's castigation. It is true that *Hew* is not quite as unilateral as the earlier *bourd*: it does retain some disciplinary role for ecclesiastics, as Hew's

¹⁹⁶ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p.223. On the notion that 'grete habundaunce of mete' stimulates concupiscence, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2.2.145; *Piers*, B.Pro.40-5; *Confessio Amantis*, VI.606-82; *The Parson's Tale*, X.825-7, 836-8. Interestingly, some texts claim that monks are particularly prone to being 'strekyn with [...] luste' in this way: see *Alphabet of Tales: an English fifteenth-century translation of the Alphabetum Narrationum*, ed. by Mary Macleod Banks, EETS o.s. 126, 127 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1904-5), p.238; *Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards*, p.25; Retha M. Warnicke, 'Sexual Heresy at the Court of Henry VIII', *The Historical Journal* 30 (1987), p.250.

aggressors include his own abbot. However, far from shifting power back towards the church, the appearance of the abbot adds extra support to the laity's ability to penalise churchmen. The inclusion of this character implicitly awards laymen equal standing with the church's own functionaries. The abbot is of course Hew's superior within the church, officially responsible for overseeing and correcting him. Nonetheless, there is very little difference between his behaviour and that of Hew's other assailants: the abbot and the tailor both administer the same treatment to Hew with much the same results, each giving him 'such a rap/ That he fel down at that clap' (157-8). By creating this parallel, the poem places laymen on the same footing as the church authorities. They come to hold exactly the same powers to chastise corrupt clerics. Even if it does not fully transfer power away from the church, *Dane Hew* patently shares the *Interlude's* belief in the authority of laymen over churchmen. Both texts depict secular powers who are fully able to assail churchmen.

These ideas are taken even further in *A mery geste of the frere and the boye*, an early sixteenth-century bourd which evidently enjoyed considerable popularity.¹⁹⁷ The object of the poem's anticlerical satire is the friar of the title. He is a typically corrupt figure, at one stage agreeing to thrash a woman's stepson, Jacke, while he is tending his father's livestock. However, Jacke has a means to defend himself: he possesses a magic flute which makes its listeners dance madly. With this he enchants the friar, and propels him into a thorn bush. The mendicant only escapes with severe lacerations: 'the breres scratched hym in the face/ And in many an other place/ That the blode brast oute' (243-6). While this episode combines the festive and hieratic mechanisms found in the other bourds, deflating and stigmatising the friar, it also adds a further important detail. The assault literally defrocks the cleric. The unworthy friar is stripped of his habit as he dances, as the brambles 'tare his clothes [...] his cope and his scapulary/ And all his other wede' (247-9). The poem permits Jacke to damage the friar's 'vesture', the principal symbol of his office.

The symbolism of this is unmistakable. In effect Jacke is ejecting the friar from his

¹⁹⁷ *Here begynneth a mery geste of the frere and the boye* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, n.d.) (STC 14522). On the wide circulation of the story, which seems to have originated in England, see Johannes Bolte and Jirí Polívka, *Anmerkungen zu den Kinder und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912-1932), II (1913), pp.491-503; G.W. Wolhuis, *Het drama in de Middeleeuwen*, (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1929), pp.195-201. Subsequent references to *The frere and the boye* appear in parentheses in the text.

order: as *Friar Daw's Reply* (c.1400) declares, for mendicants 'the levyng of oure clothis [...] bitokeneth/ forsakyng of oure reule'.¹⁹⁸ The poem even states that the friar is no longer regarded as a cleric after Jacke has stripped him. Once 'the frere out of the busshe wente', everyone he encounters 'were fayne awaye to flee/ They wende he had ben wode' (264, 274-6). To all intents and purposes the mendicant has been prised from his office. He is certainly unable to exercise his powers, as all witnesses take him for an itinerant lunatic rather than a priest. In this work the laity's powers to chastise the clergy assume their strongest possible form: laymen are virtually equipped with the ability to expel dishonest churchmen from the church.

Yet this apparent radicalism sits uneasily with the essential conservatism of the bourds. It remains true that these poems are devoid of any real antagonism, that their general timbre is as innately 'pacific' as the other products of the 'Chaucer cult'.¹⁹⁹ As Melissa Furrow states, their tone may range from 'self-righteousness [...] to raucousness', but at all times they remain impeccably 'orthodox'.²⁰⁰ Even the anticlerical violence of these texts, although ostensibly vigorous and uncompromising, is subject to several checks. The conventions of the poems do much to absorb the full force of their aggression. A key example of this is the exaggerated and fanciful nature of the poems. The bourds invariably contain details that separate them from actuality. *The frere and the boye*, for instance, discloses its lack of realism by granting its protagonist magic powers. Much the same purpose is served by Hew's absurd post-mortem wandering, and the *Interlude's* use of characters whose fictiveness is already established. With these features the poems are demonstrating what Claude Rawson terms 'hyperbolic fantastication'. Their outlandishness contains 'a built-in assumption that the reader will discount a good deal, providing its own ironic guard'.²⁰¹ By concentrating on unlikely and impossible events, the bourds renounce all contact with a reality beyond the text. This in turn signals a lack of any didactic or instructive intent: they cannot be advocating genuine attacks on priests, because nothing they describe is practically achievable. Their excess detaches them from lived reality, which in turn neutralises their apparent subversion. The bourds'

¹⁹⁸ *The Reply of Friar Daw Topias*, in *Political Poems and Songs [...] from the accession of Edward III*, II (1861), p.68.

¹⁹⁹ Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', p.780.

²⁰⁰ Furrow, 'Middle English Fabliaux', pp.15, 13.

²⁰¹ Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment, 1660-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.5.

tendency towards the chimerical exposes a resolutely apolitical attitude.

This conservatism becomes even more obvious when it is remembered that even Thomas More composed a bourd, the *Mery gest how a sergeaunt wolde lerne to be a frere* (c.1496).²⁰² This is faintly antifraternial, and more than a match for the savagery of *Dane Hew* and the *Interlude*. Its narrative culminates with the vicious beating of a 'fenyeit freir': 'They layde his mace/ Aboute his face that he was wode for payne/ The frere frappe/ Gate many a swappe tyll he was full nyghe slayne' (342-5).²⁰³ If even More, who allegedly wished 'that all my Bookes were burned, & my labour lost [...] vpon condition that Heresies were suppressed', could comfortably produce such a text, then this confirms that the hostility of the bourds is merely an empty convention.²⁰⁴ The aggression of the poems is simply part of their framework, more playful than genuinely radical. Brown's comment on the *Interlude* accurately summarises the genre as a whole: 'beneath the surface excitement there is a deep-rooted conservative, orthodox element'.²⁰⁵

Nonetheless, even once this lack of confrontation has been acknowledged, it is still difficult to overlook a substantial repositioning of power in the bourds. Throughout these pieces responsibility for administering discipline is entrusted to secular characters, to the extent that they effectively become the custodians of the church. In a full inversion of the established hegemony, ecclesiastics are forced to look to the laity for reparation. The church is unable to police its own members, whereas laymen are only too happy to do so. This is even true of More's *Gest*, in which a merchant and his wife propel an impostor from the offices of the church with 'many a Jolle/ Aboute the nolle' (388-9). Scase's 'fracture between "clergie" and the clergy', between authority and the priesthood, has reached its fullest span here: in the bourds

²⁰² Thomas More, *A mery gest how a sergaunte wolde lerne to be a frere*, in *The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed. by W. E. Campbell and others, 2 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1931), I, pp.327-332. Subsequent references appear in parentheses in the text.

²⁰³ See A.G. Rigg, 'William Dunbar: The "Fenyeit Freir"', *Review of English Studies* 14 (1963), pp.269-73. The term 'friar frappe' was evidently a favourite of More's: in his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532), Martin Luther and Katharina von Bora are branded 'Friar Frappe and Kit Cate his mate', while Tyndale himself is said to 'playe the knavishe foole' more readily than 'any scoffyng frere Frappe preaching upon a stoole'. See Thomas More, *The Workes* (London: Iohn Cawood, Iohn Waly and Richard Tottell, 1557), pp.780, 358 (STC 18076).

²⁰⁴ William Roper, *The mirrour of vertue in worldly greatnes. Or The life of Syr Thomas More Knight, sometime Lo. Chancellour of England* (Paris: The English College Press, 1626), p.77 (STC 21316).

²⁰⁵ Brown, 'Journey's End', p.166.

the laity exceed clerics in the power they command.²⁰⁶ Such assumptions cause these poems to go beyond even the heterodoxy of the alliterative pieces. In spite of *Mum and Crede*'s explicit invocation of 'secular authority against the claims of the contemporary church', and their attachment to a position which maintains that 'Goddis law stondip in seculeres, as lordis and comunes', the bourds are able to produce a satire which plays host to a more dramatic shift of power between church and laity.²⁰⁷ This in turn leads to a more effective, more fully rounded strain of satire against the church.

All of this raises the central question of why these ludic pieces should possess such a strongly militant undercurrent. The bourds' combative disposition seems utterly out of place in such a generally benign and mischievous tradition. The structure of the poems seems designed to suppress, rather than facilitate, violent confrontation. Yet nonetheless some part of these texts does enable them to decrease the standing of the church, and stage a markedly violent satire on its personnel. The question is what exactly permits this.

One explanation may lie with Chaucer, the ultimate model for the authors of the bourds. Chaucer was active during the vague pre-*Constitutiones* era in which 'there were many questions on which it was possible to write [...] without commitment', before Wycliffism's exact features had been defined and hereticated.²⁰⁸ Geoffrey Shepherd, David Jeffrey and Anne Hudson each detect several overlaps between Chaucer and Wyclif, citing their mutual interest in predestination, their 'commitment to vernacular language and translation' and, of course, their common anticlericalism.²⁰⁹ Evidently similar parallels were seen by the examiners of one John Baron of Amersham, who in 1464 submitted his ownership of the *Canterbury Tales* as proof of heresy.²¹⁰ Roger Loomis has even argued that in several respects Chaucer

²⁰⁶ Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, p.40.

²⁰⁷ Barr, *Signes and Sothe*, p.168; *English Wycliffite Sermons*, III, p.100.

²⁰⁸ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p.390.

²⁰⁹ Geoffrey T. Shepherd, 'Religion and Philosophy in Chaucer', in *Geoffrey Chaucer: writers and their background*, ed. by Derek Brewer (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1974), pp.262-89; David Jeffrey, 'Chaucer and Wyclif: Biblical hermeneutic and literary theory in the XIVth century', in *Chaucer and the Scriptural Tradition*, ed. by David Jeffrey (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1984), pp.109-42; Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, pp.390-4. See also E.P. Kuhl, 'Chaucer and the Church', *Modern Language Notes* 40 (1925), pp.321-338.

²¹⁰ Hudson, *Lollards and their Books*, p.142.

seems to pass 'beyond Wyclif's questioning of the authority of the papacy', as radically 'sceptical ideas crop up again and again in his poems'.²¹¹ Chaucer's canon may be considered as a sort of Trojan horse, smuggling into the fifteenth century the fertile anticlericalism of the 1380s and 90s. Chaucer may prove the hidden link between the bourds and the Lollard satires.

But it is fairer to emphasise the inconsistencies rather than continuations between Lollard satire and the bourds. The attitude which underlies the bourds' satire is really the inverse of that which informed fourteenth-century anticlericalism, in which popular Wycliffism flourished. Whereas fourteenth-century opposition to the church 'fed, and was fed by, increasing lay interest in the spiritual life', the bourds' satire reflects something closer to a total indifference towards religious affairs.²¹² There is a recognisable tendency in the bourds to eliminate any religious content from their attacks. The poems certainly do not claim any spiritual endorsement for their position. *The frere and the boye* comes closest to this, by granting supernatural powers to its hero. But even here all mention of the sacred is set aside: the poem does not draw on the obvious divine connotations of Jacke's music, describing it in fairly mundane terms as 'true musyke' (99).²¹³ The substance of the poems' complaints also lacks any religious dimension. There is certainly nothing in the bourds to compare with *Crede's* discussion of the Eucharist, *Mum's* analysis of tithing, or even *Piers'* examination of 'Charite the chief, chaumbre for God hymselfe' (B.XIV.100).²¹⁴ The clerics in the poems are not criticised in relation to any specific doctrines or points of faith.

An even more concerted rejection of religion is at work in the bourds' very portrayals of the clergy. Throughout the texts the clerical figures are heavily desacralised, barely acting as churchmen at all. Neither Hew nor Jacke's friar carry out any of the

²¹¹ Roger Loomis, 'Was Chaucer a Free Thinker?', in *Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor Albert Croll Baugh*, ed. by M. Leach and others (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), p.21.

²¹² Rex, *Lollards*, p.10.

²¹³ On music as a symbol of celestial power in medieval literature, see John B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp.110-66; Michael Masi, 'The Christian Music of *Sir Orfeo*', *Classical Folia* 28 (1974), pp.3-20; Penelope B. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: conventions of madness in Middle English literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp.158-207.

²¹⁴ *Crede* 817-27; *Mum* 666-73.

practices associated with their professions: they do not keep the canonical hours, perform 'lectio divina', preach or administer extreme unction. The texts make no mention of such issues. Even the specific orders of these characters are not recorded. The Pardoner in the *Interlude* similarly lacks any ministerial functions. As Bowers observes, 'nowhere is there the slightest reference to the Pardoner as a self-enriching purveyor of indulgences and exploiter of sham relics'.²¹⁵ The clergy do not function as instructors in spiritual affairs, or intercessors in divine worship, or followers of the contemplative life: such matters apparently have no place in these poems. The bourds wholly lack any ecclesiological or sacramental material, a feature which sharply distinguishes them from other works of satire on the clergy.

This eschewal of all religious factors is the key to the bourds' vigorously anticlerical position. The disappearance of all theological themes from the poems robs their ecclesiastic characters of their peculiar identity. With no religious functions to fulfil or duties to perform, Hew, the friar and the Pardoner become laymen in all but name. There is nothing to set them apart from the public beyond the church, no special powers, rituals or practices which distinguish them from the rest of humanity. In effect, the bourds relegate them to the same status as the laity.

This has important effects on the satire of the poems. Because the bourds are able to consider clerics in the same light as laymen, as basically inseparable from the greater mass of society, they can be governed by the same expectations which apply to the laity. Although the bourds do not uphold a religious code, this does not prevent them from being underpinned by strict beliefs and standards of another kind. There is a coherent set of values at work in the poems. This closely resembles the popular 'morality' outlined by Carlo Ginzburg in his seminal study of Italian anticlericalism. Much like the 'precepts' Ginzburg identifies, the bourds place great emphasis on 'duties to one's neighbour'. They 'deal exclusively with human relationships, with man's capacity to be unjust towards his fellow man', allocating such issues far greater importance than any 'dogmatic or confessional considerations'.²¹⁶ These ideas can be seen most clearly in the bourds' system of punishment. The characters in the poems

²¹⁵ *Canterbury Tales: continuations*, p.57.

²¹⁶ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: the cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller*, trans. by John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp.39, 51.

are invariably chastised for seeking to disturb existent familial bonds or 'sexual allegiances'.²¹⁷ The Pardoner is punished for interfering with the Kit-Paramour union in the *Interlude*, while his counterpart in *Dane Hew* is punished for disrupting the tailor's marriage. The friar in *The frere and the boye* similarly attempts to disturb Jacke's relationship with his father, assisting the boy's stepmother in her campaign against him. The bourds above all else demand respect for established social ties, penalising anyone who does not display this.

It must be noted that this code, as Ginzburg stresses throughout his work, is entirely secular in character and in origin. Two features indicate this with particular clarity. Firstly, these ethics pertain more to laymen than ecclesiastics. They concentrate primarily on parental and sexual relationships. Priests, by virtue of their celibacy and their membership of closed communities, have no participation in such kinships. This set of demands and priorities applies strictly to the lives and experiences of the laity. Secondly, the relationships this code endorses seem to be based more in convention than any higher doctrine. Kit and the Paramour's relationship in the *Interlude* is in fact entirely devoid of any formal sanctification, being unashamedly extramarital: nevertheless the Pardoner is castigated for his attempt to overturn their union. The bourds are championing standards which are secular both in their function and their foundation. It is for transgressing a basically demotic code that the objects of their satire are punished. The poems do not only grant power to the laity, but endorse the values associated with them.

Therefore, what the bourds have done is opened up clerics to appraisal by a lay behavioural code. The disappearance of any specifically clerical behaviour from the poems has allowed this. Since there is nothing to divide the clerics from laymen, they can be evaluated according to the same standards. Because there is no great difference between church and laity, the poems are able to judge churchmen against these informal, socially-minded dictates.

The bourds have thus achieved a shift in the very terms with which vernacular satire is conducted. They substitute their unofficial, secular ethics for any religious dogma.

²¹⁷ Furrow, 'Middle English Fabliaux', p.13.

This is the main point to draw from these texts, as such a shift is the root of their characteristically vicious anticlericalism. It is the factor which makes their muscular satire possible. By basing their satire on firmly secular criteria, the bourds avoid the pitfall to which Wycliffite satire is prone. Judging churchmen according to such issues as the efficacy of their pastoral work or their dedication to the apostolic life obviously enshrines these aspects of their behaviour. They become exalted models against which other activity is to be gauged. Such a technique cannot support a total, unlimited challenge to the clergy, as it automatically upholds some element of the church even as it seeks to denigrate others. The bourds, however, steer clear of this danger. The criteria they use in their judgments do not implicitly uphold any aspect of the church. These texts are not bound to echo any of the church's concepts, since their code is foreign to the clergy. No ecclesiastic standards interfere with their anticlericalism because all such issues are barred from the texts. The position held by the bourds is thus capable of launching a fully corrosive attack on its target, since it is entirely free of the church's own ideals.

It is entirely probable that Arundel's *Constitutiones* were a decisive factor in shaping this distinctive form of anticlericalism. Clearly the lack of detailed critique in the bourds and their refusal to discuss doctrinal matters can be related to this legislation. Arundel specifically prohibits discussing 'the Catholic faith [...] or any form of theological matter' outside of the clergy, and forbids commenting on the 'faults' of priests amongst laymen.²¹⁸ But the *Constitutiones* may also be responsible for the distinctive mentality of the bourds, not only obstructing and limiting their satire but helping to create their devastating antireligious stance. The fact that the bourds prove so consistently and virulently secular may well be an effect of Arundel's statutes. It should be recalled that the *Constitutiones* did not merely seek to suppress Lollardy by prosecuting its confirmed adherents, but sought to eradicate the underlying conditions which allowed heresy to proliferate. Arundel took aim at 'the laity's too eager pursuit of knowledge', curbing laypeople's access to religious ideas, and their power to discuss and transmit them.²¹⁹ As Watson has shown, these measures stemmed orthodox devotion as effectively as they undermined heterodoxy: in Hudson's phrase,

²¹⁸ 'Fide catholica [...] aut materia aliqua theologica': *Consiliae Magnae Britanniae*, III, p.316.

²¹⁹ Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change', p.828.

‘the baby of secular improvement went out with the bathwater of heresy’.²²⁰ In effect, the *Constitutiones* succeeded in creating renewed distance between clergy and laity.

The satire of the bourds shows this exact circumstance. The poems’ preference for an informal behavioural code over specific tenets or creeds implies that the church is a trifling presence for their authors. They depict a world in which the priesthood is barely necessary, more an interference or a nuisance than an institution serving a definite and indispensable end. The clergy is certainly not looked to as an arbiter of correct behaviour, but is in itself subject to secular values and expectations: priests are tolerated as long as they honour these standards, and chastised when they transgress them. In short, the bourds’ outlook is markedly independent of the clergy, one in which the dominant code is secular, and in which the church has little authority. The ‘identification of the church with the whole of organised society’ which ‘distinguishes the Middle Ages’ has utterly disappeared from these poems.²²¹ There is every likelihood that this attitude is a product of the *Constitutiones*, since with these statutes the church effectively marginalised itself. It erected a barrier between itself and the laity, moving its ‘articulis [...] conclusiones, propositiones’ out of their hands.²²² The bourds show the ironic fruits of Arundel’s strictures, containing an outlook which holds a high degree of autonomy from the church.

In terms of the bourds’ place in the general progression of English satire on the church, at first glance they appear to have broken utterly with the earlier texts. Their position is a full reversal of the movement which enabled Scase’s new anticlericalism. Rather than bearing witness to the lay ‘usurpation of the spiritual power of the clergy’, the bourds subsume the clergy into the laity.²²³ Instead of seizing clerical knowledge or powers in the name of the laity, these texts force lay conditions on to the priesthood. Their satire thus deviates from the course of earlier anticlerical texts, veering off in an entirely new direction.

But there is an extent to which the bourds do realise an incipient tendency in English

²²⁰ Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, p.431.

²²¹ R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1970), pp.15-6.

²²² *Consiliae Magnae Britanniae*, III, p.317.

²²³ Scase, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism*, p.46.

anticlericalism, a tendency identifiable in *Wynnere* or in *Piers*, or even *On Simonie*. They represent lay subjectivity at its most developed and self-confident. For the bourds laymen are completely developed cultural agents. In the poems secular society does not have to look to the church for its meanings and ideals. Just as the church and its dictates become at best supplementary and at worst negligible in the bourds, so the laity is shown to be capable of formulating its own systems and decrees. Rather than positing the church as a presence which gives shape to all sectors of life, leading 'the lowest through the intermediate to the highest' as Boniface VIII's *Unam sanctum* theorises, the bourds insist that laymen are able to arrange themselves.²²⁴ They are an entirely self-determining group. The freedom with which the bourds scourge churchmen is an index of this. Just as laymen become the subjects of their own system of values, so they are turned into the undisputed implementers of attacks on the clergy.

Reviewing the development of vernacular anticlericalism, and its changing portrayal of mutilation, confirms that these ideas are the logical culmination of the tradition, in spite of its shifts and discontinuities. In fact wounding provides a clear lens through which these exact changes can be glimpsed: the very powers in dispute are translated by the poems into dynamics affecting the body. The mutation of injury in vernacular satire keeps pace with the laity's growth in self-awareness. As notions of legitimacy and subjection change and strengthen, so do the implications of violence.

The lack of a firm position from which to criticise the clergy in early satire is attested by *Wynnere*. To be sure, *Wynnere* does show the beginnings of a consolidated secular subjectivity. It makes manifest a lay willingness to produce valuations, and even contains a means of deflating the clergy which separates them from religious criteria, emphasising their materiality. But this is not pursued to its fullest extent. This shortfall is shown by *Wynnere*'s stringent isolation of the church from corporeality, and consequently from attack. Its refusal to injure clerics accompanies a vague anticlerical satire that lacks any firm judgments or condemnations. Langland's work marks the beginning of a shift away from this stance, although it possesses problems of its own. *Piers* uses injury as an emblem of clerical corruption, which entails that it

²²⁴ Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctum*, in *The Pre-Reformation Period*, ed. by James Harvey Robinson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1897), p.20.

cannot employ mutilation in its own satire. Yet there is a perceptible degree of competition surrounding the body in the poem. Equating clerical power with violence, with a ubiquitous action available to all, suggests that such power could be eventually drawn away from the church. This is not yet an attempt to seize such powers, but an awareness that they can be seized, the moment of visibility which as Foucault states 'undermines and exposes' cultural organisation, 'renders it fragile'.²²⁵ *Piers* at least shows a lay desire for authority, even if it cannot fully grasp this itself.

The next step is taken by the Wycliffite texts *Crede* and *Mum*. Injury is first employed as a satiric mechanism against the church in these pieces. The power to damage bodies passes out of the clergy's hands, as churchmen are specifically made woundable. The texts are able to use injury to support their satire, inscribing and deflating the bodies of their targets with violence. What enables this is the Lollard belief that the church's powers rightly belong to all 'good christen people'.²²⁶ The idea that the laity have an authority which equals that of the church allows these texts to act much like the churchmen in *Piers*. However, there remain certain limits on satirical disfigurement and on lay subjectivity alike. The ability to injure is not granted to any specific faction. The criticisms of the texts are still conducted within the church's own framework, not from a platform of the laity's own devising. This renders their satire rather incomplete: it is unable to place any party in direct power over the church, and perform acts of judgment against it, since all judgment implies some degree of affinity with the church. In short, the Lollard texts can recognise the clergy as objects, although they cannot fully posit the laity as subjects.

The bourds provide the conclusion to this progression. They do not merely allow clerics to be disfigured for satirical ends, but grant the power to wound to a specific group of agents. These later poems are able to use the wound to champion a particular outlook, their satire being part of a general secular bias. They present wounding as an entirely justifiable way to treat priests, to ensure that they respect secular values, which are allowed full dominance. The bourds' endorsement of a faction outside the church moves mutilation completely outside the hands of the priesthood: they are

²²⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), I: *The Will to Knowledge*, p.101.

²²⁶ Simon Fysche, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars* (Antwerp: J. Grapheus, n.d.), f.1v (STC 10883).

subject to injury just as they are subject to lay dictates. In the bourds, the clergy have lost subjectivity as both wounders and as the dictators of proper conduct. They have become full objects for satire, open to wounding and appraisal from a position which possesses greater authority than their own.

In terms of Middle English satire as a whole, anticlericalism is a highly revealing tradition. It throws particularly strong light on the structural forms that vernacular satire could assume. Anticlericalism differs from satire composed against women in several important respects. Chief among these is the interplay between the hieratic and festive elements. In antisacerdotal texts, this varies considerably from the interaction found in antifeminist satire. Throughout misogynous literature, the two tendencies are more or less in direct conflict with one another. Their presence creates a grand contradiction, as the festive aspect undermines and cancels the systems enforced by the more hieratic elements. In anticlerical satire, on the other hand, this tension becomes slightly more relaxed. Satire against priests, at least in its later forms, is capable of coordinating its two currents towards the same basic end. It is able to combine the festive and hieratic aspects to articulate a single idea. The festive collapse of precedence actively supports the hieratic promotion of values and ideals in these texts.

What makes this possible is the fact that the values supported by the hieratic element are those of the laity. This social group by definition lacks ideological authority: in Foucault's phrase, laymen stand outside 'those who are charged with saying what counts as true'.²²⁷ One of the effects of the festive tendency is to make authority ubiquitous. By focusing on conflict rather than deference, reducing all authoritative systems into positions in a contest, it assigns equal legitimacy to all factions. By cancelling privilege, it grants each group the ability to attack every other. In the context of the church's hegemony over the laity, this becomes an active promotion of the lower estate's subjectivity. The removal of the conventional hierarchy sanctions the lesser group's confrontation of the higher, lending support to the public outside the church. As a result of this, both the festive and hieratic tendencies adopt the same general direction. Both currents work to subject churchmen to lay standards, a

²²⁷ Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, trans. and ed. by Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p.131.

subordination which is manifested by their vulnerability to wounding.

Anticlerical satire thus demonstrates that the festive and hieratic elements have the potential to reinforce one another. They are not necessarily antithetical or inimical. The nature of their relationship, rather than being fixed and inadaptably, is dictated by the object against which they are deployed. While it remains true that their processes are opposed, they can in certain circumstances be steered along a single route, and made to work towards the same end.

Reopening Old Wounds: Summary and Conclusion

If there is but one world, it embraces a multiplicity of contrasting aspects; if there are many worlds, the collection of them all is one.¹

This study has sought to explain why medieval satire should make such extensive use of injury, why it should attempt 'to flay, to cut, to burn, to blister' its targets.² It has been found that the association between satire and injury is by no means cosmetic or coincidental: rather, injury is firmly entrenched in the medieval understanding of satire.

The main reason for this is the common ambivalence of satire and injury. The Middle Ages regarded satire as a divided form. This emerges clearly from medieval glosses and commentaries on Horace, Juvenal and Persius. Scholiasts attempted to claim the Roman poets as moralists, whose 'type of attack has the function of making the hearer retreat from vice'.³ However, they were also aware that satire could not quite fit this remit. They found that classical satire resisted definition in purely didactic terms, as less constructive strands were also apparent in the mode. This problem led commentary to split satire into two separate currents. It came to classify some aspects as desirable and dismiss others as harmful, attempting 'to repress or domesticate the shaggy, obscene, and transgressive' aspects of the mode.⁴ Satire thus became host to two distinct possibilities. Alongside its potential to issue clear moral directives, a more irreverent and unstable tendency also presented itself. Since exegesis understood the more deflationary current as a direct threat to its counterpart, as a 'poison' or a 'fault', this division was amplified into outright contention.⁵

¹ Nelson Goodman, 'Words, Works, Worlds', in *Starmaking: realism, anti-realism and irrationalism*, ed. by Peter J. McCormick (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), p.61.

² Mary Claire Randolph, 'The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satire: its possible relationships and implications', *Studies in Philology* 38 (1941), p.125.

³ 'Hoc modo reprehendenda [...] hac utilitate ut auditorum retrahat a viciis': Guillaume de Conches, *Glosae in Iuvenalem*, ed. by Bradford Wilson, *Textes philosophiques du Moyen Age* 18 (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1980), p.89.

⁴ Dustin Griffin, *Satire: a critical reintroduction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), p.6.

⁵ See Alexander of Neckam, 'A List of Text-Books from the Close of the Twelfth Century', ed. by Charles H. Haskins, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* XX (1909), p.91; Matthew of Vendome, *Ars Versificatoria: the art of the versemaker*, trans. by Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1981), p.103.

From the exegesis of classical authors, this sense of antagonism was pushed forward into vernacular poetry. By referring to festivity and homily, in the belief that such practices corresponded to ancient satire, the scholiasts guided vernacular satirists towards these two discourses. Their allusions to preaching and popular ritual directed medieval writers to imitate 'turmentours that comen from clerkes plei' or 'prestes [...] whiche are sette to the gouernaunce of the parishenus'.⁶ Since one of these models was designed to pinpoint the 'synnes þat ilke a man and woman awe for to knawe to flee', while the other involved 'jeering parody and ridicule', this drew the same basic tension into Middle English poetry.⁷ The same clash between sober condemnation and slanderous mockery made its way into vernacular satire. But more importantly, linking satire with these two discourses gave satire's implicit division a definite means of asserting itself. Both of these practices equipped English satire with a set of devices. The sermon provided a collection of firmly judgmental strategies: it led satire to condemn its objects by categorising them, defining them in the terms of a single, privileged system. Festive ritual, on the other hand, brought into satire a more derisive form of attack. It gave satire the ability to assert that no worldview can ever be anything but a fragment of the world it claims to envelop, no more valuable than any other fragment. Under its influence, satire worked to undermine any set of values or categories, questioning their totality and sovereignty.

Owing to the involvement of these two discourses, the split created by exegesis was turned into active conflict. This stemmed from the fact that each set of tactics relied on the conditions that its opponent undermined. The strategies derived from homily used an ideal system to attack a reality that had fallen short of it, while the techniques drawn from festivity used the expansiveness of reality to explode the definitions of an ideal system. Both moved in opposing directions. Consequently English satire became the site of a struggle, a contest between two different methods of attack.

⁶ *Of Simonie*, 285, in *The Political Songs of England from the Reign of John to that of Edward II*, ed. by Thomas Wright (London: J.B. Nichol and Son, 1839), p.336; *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. by Edward H. Weatherly, EETS o.s. 200 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p.2.

⁷ John Gaytryge, 'Sermon', in *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, ed. by George G. Perry, EETS o.s. 15 (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p.12; Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play and Game: English festive culture in the medieval and Early Modern period* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), p.85.

It is at this point that wounding was drawn into medieval satire. Injury occupied an important place in the devotional and festive spheres of the Middle Ages. The two discourses used representations of injury in a number of ways. Wounding served as a basis of sporting competitions, as a record of sins, and as a token of Christ's Passion. Each of these uses necessarily loaded the wound with particular resonances. But more importantly, wounding was also instrumental in the types of mockery that the festive and hieratic spheres performed. In religious culture, it was used to stigmatise an object, branding it with its specific offence. In festivity it asserted vulnerability, the fact that there were forces outside an object's perimeters which may rival its agency: this in turn diminished the supremacy of that object, highlighting the limits of its scope. Injury was not only a key part of these discourses, but a central manoeuvre in the types of ridicule they cultivated. It could impose value on to an object and dissolve its status. When vernacular satire drew on these discourses in order to mock and condemn, disfigurement became the main weapon in its armoury.

This accounts for the depiction of wounding in medieval vernacular satire. It is not only a significant feature of the two discourses that fed into satire, but is a key device in the forms of attack that these discourses made available. Injury permits either of satire's potentialities to be put into action, and directs them against a particular object. Of course, this versatility also has a secondary effect. It makes the wound highly unstable. The fact that injury spans either of satire's tendencies, and is charged with meaning by each of them, means that it brings both into play at once. When injury is used to perform one type of mockery, the other is also implied. Therefore, mutilation brings satire's internal schism to the surface. The wound becomes a point at which satire's two tendencies overlap. From a critical point of view, this has important ramifications. It means that injury in satirical texts must be read as a stress-point, situated on the rift between satire's two main processes. In effect, the motif highlights the discrepancies of the mode, exposing its attempts to balance two opposed intentions. It is a lens for viewing the conflicts embedded in medieval satire.

This is by no means all that injury can convey. Violence in satire also discloses further pieces of information. The two models for satire are not simply structural principles which serve to impress a particular shape on to the texts. Each one is also a platform for other discourses. It is a means of manipulating and interpreting other

forms of language, of drawing them into its own framework. Homily performs this in a way that can best be described as monist. It draws on other discourses to appraise them, to subject them to its own standards, which it regards as indisputable and sacrosanct. Conversely, festivity leans more towards pluralism: it treats each discourse it cites as a set of standards in its own right. Yet both must draw on other language-forms if their performance is to be effective. The mechanisms that each make available to satire are particularly dependent on this borrowing. Festive reduction can only work by alluding to multiple sets of values and ideals, in order to relativise each. Along similar lines, the authority of homiletic discourse relies on the subordination of other types of language to its judgments. Homily and festivity must act as metadiscourses in order to operate successfully.

Accordingly, when satire imitates these types of mockery, it must also draw on other language-forms and practices. Owing to this, satire's use of injury becomes a complex engagement with the various strands of medieval culture. The presence of festive and hieratic materials means that satirical texts are deeply rooted in the historical circumstances that surround them. Each piece of medieval satire does not only lay bare the fractures and tensions in its own form: it also highlights larger discontinuities in medieval culture itself.

This point is made abundantly clear by the two traditions of Middle English satire that have been studied here. Firstly, violence in antifeminist satire is the seat of profound ambivalence. Although on the one hand wife-beating does impose patriarchal authority, it is by no means rigidly bound to this aim. Other discourses and other value-systems encroach upon the act, investing it with further, less constructive meanings. This means that when it is employed in antifeminist texts, it manages to undermine authority as much as assert it. Satire's breadth of reference creates this complexity. The fact that it includes multiple discourses and ideals entails that several conceptions of femininity will exist in the texts, and each will interfere with the others. This point is also revealed by anticlerical satire. Although this literature does achieve a balance between the two strands at work in satire, its portrayal of injury remains divided. It is inhabited by two different attitudes towards the priesthood: one derived from earlier satiric topoi, the other implicit in its own, lay position. This is the reason why anticlerical violence proves so changeable. Satire is forced to navigate

between two competing notions of its target, attempting to accommodate its own emergent values to the frameworks it has inherited. Again, it is the structure of satire which brings these circumstances into focus. Satire draws such rifts to the surface, in its deliberate citation of numerous sets of concerns.

To sum up, this thesis has sought to develop a more refined model of medieval English satire by re-theorising one of its most recurrent motifs. It has looked closely at the functions surrounding injury, a symbol which not only recurs throughout satirical texts, but is bound up with the very practice of satire. The results of this inquiry show that satire is a powerful tool for examining the breaks and ruptures in medieval culture. Even in some small way, these findings dispute the persistent view that the Middle Ages was homogenous and 'pyramidal', subject to a single 'universal' order, which cemented 'stability, security, conformity'.⁸ Medieval satire directly challenges such notions. Its use of injury shows that several pressures and currents existed in medieval culture, rather than a single 'stable, coherent, and collective [...] world-picture'.⁹ Satire's own inconsistencies serve to highlight the fractures within medieval English society: the mode's various strands gravitate towards disparate sets of values, and play these conceptions against one another. In short, Middle English satire demonstrates that the medieval period, no less than any other, 'has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power rather than relations of meaning [...] of struggles, of strategies and tactics'.¹⁰

⁸ Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p.178; Peter Hall, *Cities in Civilization: culture, innovation and urban order* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), p.108; A.L. Rowse, *The Elizabethan Renaissance: the life of the society* (London: Cardinal, 1974), p.15.

⁹ Louis A. Montrose, 'Professing The Renaissance: the poetics and politics of culture', in *The New Historicism*, ed. by H. A. Veeger (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p.20.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, trans. and ed. by Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p.114.

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