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Disciplining the Tongue:
Speech and Emotion in Later Middle English Poetry

By

Spencer Strub

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

and

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Maura Nolan, Chair
Professor Steven Justice
Professor David Hult

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Abstract

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Late medieval English writers confronted what they saw as a crisis of false display. Across genres, the relationship between the inner self and the outer world was depicted as one prone to deception and hypocrisy. Speech was the privileged site for this concern. For religious writers, the solution was stringent verbal and emotional honesty. Poets, by contrast, exploited this perceived disjunction for the purposes of their art. But both drew on a vocabulary that linked speech and emotion, first developed in fourteenth-century instruction on the "sins of the tongue." This lexicon included words like "scorn" and "shame" as well as those less recognizable today: "sclaundren," for example, meant "to induce shame," while "boistous" speech was honest, rude, and affectively harsh. As the first chapter of *Discplining the Tongue* shows, this vocabulary initially provided a devout reading public with a sense of belonging and a language for itself. "Boistous" texts fostered scorn, anger, and shame: emotions invariably identified with speech acts, each capable of binding a community of strangers together.

This lexicon proved portable, and subsequent chapters turn to its place in foundational works of English poetry. William Langland's *Piers Plowman* repeatedly invokes shame, but its shame does not create a sense of virtue or belonging, as contemporary religious writing would suggest. Instead, its scenes of misspeaking link shame with learning; as the poem repeats these scenes, the act of poetic making itself comes to seem a shameful but licit act of discovery. Chaucer makes mirth, comfort, and pleasure—words that elsewhere describe the act of prayer—the emotional norm that governs the telling of the *Canterbury Tales*: sacred pleasure becomes the pleasure of idle fiction. The fourth chapter turns from the lexis of medieval emotion to its physiology. In *Mum and the Sothsegger* and Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*, cautionary images that depict affect swelling and bursting out as intemperate speech become self-reflexive figures for poetic making. These reinvented metaphors suggest how elements of truth-telling satire and religious instruction become incorporated into poetic self-presentation.

Rather than offering a narrative of secularization, however, the project as a whole points to the common ground where literature and prescriptive religious writing meet. Antinomies of ethics and aesthetics resolve in a shared understanding of the speaking self, its inward feelings realized only in intersubjective exchange.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the product of many hands, many eyes, many conversations, and many acts of generosity and kindness. It may not be possible to adequately account for all the debts incurred in the years of research and writing, but it is still a pleasure to try.

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Introduction

> This commandment, that I command thee this day is not above thee, nor far off from thee: Nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say: Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it unto us, and we may hear and fulfill it in work? Nor is it beyond the sea: that thou mayst excuse thyself, and say: Which of us can cross the sea, and bring it unto us: that we may hear, and do that which is commanded? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it.
>
> Deuteronomy 30.11-14[1]

> For syth youre holy rewle forbydeth you all vayne and ydel wordes in all tymes and places, by the same yt forbyddeth you redynge of al vayne and ydel thynges. For redynge is a maner of spekeynge.
>
> Second Prologue to *The Mirror of Our Lady*[2]

Speech mediates relationships among and between people by projecting human thought into the world. Sometimes the mind weighs its words, fitting thoughts and feelings to imagined sound before giving them voice. Sometimes speech runs ahead of mind and the words seemingly arrive unbidden. In all cases, however, language is a learned endeavor; infants vocalize their needs and feelings instinctively, but they acquire language over time through imitative trial and error.[3] Indeed, along with words the child learns a repertoire of meaningful sounds – sighs, groans, sobs – that can express emotion and manipulate other people. These expostulations, both verbal and non-verbal, depend on the idea of a listener, someone who can translate sounds into thought, feeling, and action.

Those twin social acts of borrowing and imagination also yield a set of rules for speech. What words suit an audience or an occasion, what things must be said and what cannot be said, which tones of voice and facial expressions and hand gestures are necessary and which are impermissible – all these, too, are learned. They must be learned because personhood is in part often determined by an ability to speak according to the rules.[4] Like words themselves, these

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[1] I quote from the Douay-Rheims translation.

[2] From *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 3.12 (pp. 261-62).

[3] As Dante maintains, "infants acquire [the mother tongue] from those around them when they first begin to distinguish sounds." Dante Alighieri, *De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. and trans. Steven Botterill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), I.i.2-3.

[4] Dante also holds that, in speaking, one's identity is made recognizable and available for judgment, as in *Inferno* 10.25, itself ultimately based on Matthew 26:73: "et loquella tua manifestum te facit" [your speech made yourself obvious], Peter is told after his last denial of Christ. I owe this point to Gabriella I. Baika, *The Rose and Geryon: The Poetics of Fraud and*

rules sometimes reside somewhere above the threshold of conscious thought, sometimes below. The unconscious rules that guide speech mark our origins, our histories, and the communities to which we belong. They belong to the "invisible wall of affects" that Norbert Elias presents as one reflex of long processes of social change.[5] Such rules are given. They are not subject to the choice of individuals, but rather absorbed by cultural osmosis as the subject matures over time. Conscious rules for speech, on the other hand, must be rehearsed. They require our willed assent. They are potential sites of contention. They mark our sense of who we *should* be, the obligations and responsibilities that shape both our self-understanding and the communities we join or create. Rules are made explicit under certain conditions. They are taught to immature or newly arrived members of a community. They are spoken or written as a means of enforcing community discipline. They are also articulated so they can be challenged or changed. Explicit rules constantly traffic with implicit understanding.[6] A common substrate underlies them both: an idea of the speaking self that assigns meaning and ethical value to particular configurations of thought, feeling, and voice. That is to say, an ethics of speech discloses ideas about how speech works, what consequences it has, and its relationship to agency.[7]

This dissertation begins from the set of rules for speech articulated in Christian works of pastoral instruction written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England.[8] These rules seem conservative, combining as they do Biblical injunctions – mostly drawn from the Commandments, Christ's words in the Gospels, and the Pauline epistles – with the taxonomy of deviant speech practices known as the "sins of the tongue," inherited from thirteenth-century

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Violence in Jean de Meun and Dante (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 25n12.

[5] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, rev. ed., trans. Edmund Jephcott and ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblum, and Stephen Mennell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 60. For a medievalists' critique of Elias, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 821-45.

[6] Judith Butler clarifies that "a norm is not the same as a rule... norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle in social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to read, discernible most clearly and dramatically in the effects that they prove." See Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 41.

[7] On the idea that moral judgments and intuitions are "our mode of access to the world in which ontological claims are discernible," see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 8. Late antique and medieval ethical thought made self-scrutiny a necessary starting point for free moral choice; see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1986), 62-64, and Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1-3.

[8] The Christian tradition will be my focus here. Both Judaism and Islam have parallel traditions on the regulation of speech. On Judaism and *lashon ha-ra*, the evil tongue, see Charles Bernsen, "*Lashon Ha-Ra* (The Evil Tongue) and the Problem of Jewish Unity" (unpublished PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2011), 7-72 (on the Talmudic tradition). Islamic teaching on evil speech can be found in, for example, Qur'an, surah *An-Nur* 24:11-18 and surah *Al-Hujurat* 49:12.

penitential thought.[9] But as I have just suggested, such rules are remade in retelling. In their later fourteenth-century articulation, they are newly shot through with the language of emotion.

Specifically, the focus of this dissertation will be a set of terms, simultaneously denoting ways of speaking and emotional states, that fourteenth-century religious writing drew upon for instruction and polemic. For the most part, these words refer to what might now be called "negative emotions" and what might be understood as antisocial or disruptive speech, though "plesaunce" and mirth will also play a role. Inspired by Robert Kaster's account of Roman terms of self-attention, I will show how these words function, often simultaneously, as labels for inward states or modes of speech and as normative responses to specific social circumstances.[10] The states and acts these terms describe were morally appropriate only under certain conditions.[11] That is to say, Middle English writers could represent scorn, shame, and "sclaunder" – the act of bringing shame on another – as either the feelings of a sinner or the righteous response to sin. Crucially, however, these moral evaluations require a scene of encounter, whether real or imagined: one scorns another in an act of disputation; one becomes ashamed upon being rebuked; to sing a "myrie" song, one must act as though an audience is there to enjoy it. In religious writing, these scenarios are summoned up as ethical scripts, providing guidelines for everyday interaction with the world and with God. But these scenarios also inform the dialogic poetry of the late fourteenth century – Will's searching exchanges with authoritative personifications in *Piers Plowman*, for instance, or the tale-telling competition in the *Canterbury Tales* – which reproduce the same vocabulary to different ends. And, to return to the concern of the previous paragraphs, the speaking self that both types of text disclose is a vector of feelings. It deals out scorn and takes in shame; it is pierced by sweetness and sings mirth; it swells with grief and bursts with anger. These emotions are the precipitate of verbal exchanges with other people, located as much in speech between people as in a single individual's inward feelings and outward behavior.

I. Style and Feeling

This lexicon of speech and emotion was from the very beginning an *aesthetic* vocabulary, meant to connect verbal style with its felt effects. Fourteenth-century pastoralia did not invent these connections, of course. Beginning with Aristotle, rhetorical handbooks frankly discuss how to mimic emotional states in performance and produce emotion in an audience, often complementing such pragmatic direction with analyses of the phenomenology and even etiology

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[9] On the sins of the tongue, see Chapter One and Edwin Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio, *Les péchés de la langue: Discipline et éthique de la parole dans la culture médiévale*, trans. Philippe Baillet (Paris: Éditions di Cerf, 1991). The fourteenth-century phenomenon studied here was preceded by twelfth and especially thirteenth century French and Anglo-French pastoral writing; see Claire Waters, *Translating 'Clergie': Status, Education, and Salvation in Thirteenth-Century Vernacular Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[10] Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[11] On the hopeless contextual contingency of "negative emotion," see Kristján Kristjánsson, "On the Very Idea of 'Negative Emotions,'" *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 33 (2003): 351-364.

of emotion.[12] Nor are such connections necessarily limited to verbal expression. In the opening of Boethius's *De institutione musica*, a *locus classicus* for medieval discussions of art's affective power, different modes of music are said to calm the frenzied and rouse the lethargic because "the whole structure of our soul and body has been joined by means of a musical coalescence," which can be abstracted to shared mathematical principles of order.[13] But late medieval religious discourse on speech brought with it a vernacular language for style and its effects, embedded in social exchange, often illustrated by exempla and illustrative role-playing scenarios. Scorning and "myrie" words each imply a way of speaking – a tone of voice, a verbal register, a characteristic syntax and a stance to the listener.

The reference to aesthetics could be quite explicit, even in didactic writing, as the various uses of the word "boistous" attest. "Boistousness" is central to the self-conception of the writers in this dissertation and will recur in all four of the chapters that follow. Boistous things are coarse and rough to the touch, boistous people are rude and unsophisticated, and boistous speech is crude and harsh. (The word often appears as part of the doublet "rude and boistous.")[14] These meanings are hard to disentangle; each is widely attested as soon as the word came into circulation in the late fourteenth century. As Katie Walter has argued, the tactile qualities of the word "boistous" are essential to understanding its meaning in the period; because it denotes the *qualia* of touch and taste, it links the tongue as sensory organ with its role in speech. In the cases of Thomas Usk and Nicholas Trevisa, that connection activates longstanding metaphors for learning as tasting, ruminating, and digesting, helping to furnish a defense for the ethical value of vernacular coarseness.[15] In that sense, the word boistous already conflates ethics and aesthetics. But in the discourse on speech, boistousness serves a different end. Boistous speech is honest speech. Its truth inheres in its crudeness; its moral efficacy is evident in the offense it causes. Boistousness reveals otherwise obscured assumptions about styles of speech and the shape of the self. Two examples might help clarify this point.

In the first, probably written near the beginning of the period studied in this dissertation, an author directly addresses his intended reader – his mother. Dear mother, he says, "haue þou no wondur þouȝ I speke to þe boistres wordis." Christ spoke to *his* mother in "boistres wordis" and "he louede hire neuere lasse." But he does not stop with this Gospel defense. He goes on to point out that verbal delicacy has come to excuse sin. Many are so stupid that they care more about hearing the devil's name than about breaking the commandments. Hypocrites, they care more about words than about actions and thus "closen more faste þe deuel wiþinne hem." "Þerfore, my leue dere modur, loue þou wiþ Dauid to be undernome [*upbraided*]; despice as Crist dede flateringe wordes."[16]

I will return at length to this moment in the *Book to a Mother* in the next chapter, because it encapsulates the contentious and strident spirit of much late-fourteenth century Middle English

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[12] Chapter Four below will discuss this tradition further; see also Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[13] Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, ed. Claude V. Palisca and trans. Calvin M. Bower (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 7.
[14] See *MED*, s. v. "boistous"; *OED*, s. v. "boistous"; and a potential source in *AND*, "boistus," 1.
[15] Katie Walter, "Books and Bodies: Ethics, Exemplarity, and the 'Boistous' in Medieval English Writings," *New Medieval Literatures* 14 (2012): 95-125.
[16] *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. Adrian J. McCarthy (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 201-03.

pastoral writing. Here, it will suffice to briefly observe a few of the implications of the author's apology for boistousness. ("Boistres," an alternate spelling, anticipates the word's eventual fate as modern "boisterous.") First, it requires an apology – or at least the author wishes to make a point of his boistousness. Either way, "boistres wordis" were not necessarily natural or expected. They are a stylistic choice. Second, they suggest an emotional relationship to the listener, albeit one that may not be immediately apparent: "boistres wordis" are upsetting, but as the author's reference to Christ and his elaborately affectionate epithets for his "leue dere modur" together insist, they can be spoken in the spirit of love. Chastisement – being "undernome" – is an act of love. This relationship also involves an element of frank affective direction: chastisement should *be* loved and flattery should be despised. Finally, the rude honesty of "boistres wordis" is contrasted with the hypocrisy of more refined speech, which is equated with flattery. Hostility to hypocritical display and insistence on the proper disposition of the will are both preoccupations of late-medieval religious writing, and their connection to rules for speech are made vividly clear here. These texts insist less on *purity* or *cleanness* than on *honesty*, an alignment of inward self and outward expression so perfect as to make distinctions between speech and feeling otiose. As the *Book to a Mother* argues, the hypocrite has the devil inside and fine words outside. The devout speaker is boistous, honest, and good.[17]

The second instance comes from the *Book of Margery Kempe*, written at the end of the period studied here. Margery has been detained and questioned in York; a learned cleric has accused her of telling an awful tale about priests. The archbishop asks Margery to repeat the tale. She begins, explaining that it is only about *one* priest in "the maner of exampyl."[18] A traveling priest comes to rest in a meadow with a beautiful pear tree, "al floreschyd wyth flowerys and belschyd, and blomys ful delectabil to hys syght" (2983-84). A bear, "gret and boistows, hogely to beheldyn," suddenly appears (2984). He eats the flowers and then, "turnyng his tayl ende in the prestys presens, voydyd hem owt ageyn at the hymyr party" (2986-87). The priest, horrified, wanders in a state of "gret hevynes" until an old man moralizes what he has just seen:

> Preste, thu thiself art the pertre, sumdel florischyng and floweryng thorw thi servyse seyyng and the sacramentys ministryng, thow thu do undevowtly, for thu takyst ful lytyl heede how thu seyst thi mateynes and thi servyse, so it be blaberyd to an ende... Thu brekyst the comawndmentys of God thorw sweryng, lying, detraccyon, and bakbytyng, and swech other synnes usyng. Thus be thy mysgovernawns, lych onto the lothly ber, thu devowryst and destroist the flowerys and blomys of vertuows levyng to thyn endles dampnacyon. (2996-3007)

That is to say, the priest is the pear tree *and* the bear. He blooms in sacramental words, which he desecrates through the sins of the tongue – swearing, lying, detraction, and backbiting – wicked deeds that turn holy words to shit. The archbishop likes the tale. But a clerk who had previously interrogated Margery declares, "Ser, this tale smytyth me to the hert" (3010-11).

For good reason, this episode has long been important in Kempe criticism, much of it – following Lynn Staley – focusing on how both Kempe-author and Margery-actor navigate

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[17] On the "fear of formalism and hypocrisy" at the root of the pastoral tradition that Chapter One will discuss more fully, see Nicholas Watson, "Middle English Versions and Audiences of Edmund of Abingdon's *Speculum Religiosorum*," in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett* (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), 115-31 (131).

[18] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Lynn Staley (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 1996), ll. 2979-80. Subsequent references will be made in-text by line number.

restrictions on her speech.[19] And indeed, the entire scene revolves around a debate over the ethics of speech. In York, a clerk accuses Margery of preaching. She defends herself, saying she does not preach: "I use but comownycacyon and good wordys" (2976). The archbishop demands that she swear never to teach or challenge the people of his diocese. She refuses on grounds of principle: she will never cease to "undirnemyn" those that *do* swear oaths – using the same word for chastising as the author of the *Book to a Mother* (2965). The exemplum itself illustrates how a cleric's mode of living puts the lie to his words. Staley suggests that it is an occulted reference to the Wycliffite questioning of the Eucharist. But it also plays on Christ's message to the Pharisees in Mark 7, where he dismisses dietary law: what goes into a man cannot defile him, because it "goes into the belly, and goes out into the privy"; rather, a man is defiled by what comes out. It is no accident that the priest's named sins are sins of speech. Kempe is a reader of fourteenth-century pastoralia.[20] As in that corpus, speech remains a privileged problem, the medium through which hypocrisy is made manifest.

But the exemplum's force comes from its emotional effects. Kempe provides three models within the text. The priest within the exemplum is astonished, horrified, and depressed by the vision of the bear, for reasons that are so close to his very selfhood that they must be explained to him by someone else. The archbishop enjoys the story: he takes pleasure from it. And the interrogator-clerk is struck "to the hert" by it, affected by her "good wordys" to the very center of his feeling self. As Margery explains by means of another exemplum, that means he is guilty of the same sins. The moral truth of the story rests in its affective power. But that power is inseparable from aesthetic questions. At the heart of the story is the tree – its ostentatious beauty described in high style with a semi-alliterative hendiadys, "floreschyd wyth flowerys and belschyd, and blomys" – and the "boistows" bear who is presented as its opposite, marring its beauty and befouling the meadow. The moralization of the story rests on this opposition between beauty and ugliness. The efficacy of the exemplum, however, depends on the scatological shock the bear provides. The clerics' confrontation with their own sin is only made possible by seeing the bear turn his hind end. That attack on propriety demands a response. And so the bear's boistousness, ugly as it is, serves as a metonym for the frankly confrontational tone of the exemplum as a whole.[21] Like the *Book to a Mother*'s "boistres wordis," Margery's exemplum works by coordinating a particularly affectively-charged literary style, explicit moral instruction, and the exemplary emotional response on the part of its audience.

But the movement of "boistous" from the *Book to a Mother*'s self-descriptor to Kempe's metonymic bear also suggests how later writers carved imaginative freedoms out of this tradition of thought. The *Book*-author is writing a didactic work, and simply tells us how to feel. Kempe is up to something more subtle, letting vivid images and narrative event stand in for prescriptive

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[19] Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 5-9.

[20] For an account of Kempe's reading, see Rebecca Krug, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2017).

[21] I should add that "boistows" is a key term for the *Book of Margery Kempe*; most often, it describes her "sobbyngs" (as at 1856, 1930, 2853, 3478, 4373, and 4392), likewise confrontational, likewise eliciting both self-reflection and hostility from those around her. Cf. the coordination of expression and interiorization in Julie Orlemanski, "Margery's 'Noyse' and Distributed Expressivity," in *Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe*, ed. Irit Ruth Kleiman (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2015), 123-38.

direct address. The conceptual substrate shared by direct ethical instruction and literary imagination will be one subject of this dissertation; the transformations that literature makes on that shared ground will be the other. The poets that this dissertation studies – most centrally, William Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Hoccleve, and the anonymous author of *Mum and the Sothsegger* – wrote fictions, "idle tales" and feigning displays, of the sort that religious writers inveighed against. But with the model of the speaking self that they share with devotional writing, antinomies of ethics and aesthetics resolve. Conversely, the ethical dictates of religious instruction are themselves equated with a normative aesthetics: the honesty stringent religious writers prescribe is made manifest in their "boistous" mode of address. Rules for salvation become guidelines for entertainment and edification; a way of assessing the motives and consequences of everyday speech becomes a tool of verbal art, and vice versa.

The remainder of this introduction will try to situate the dissertation's argument in three larger paths of literary-critical and historical inquiry. The first is the critical debate over relationship between ethics and literature, a debate that often draws heavily on the power of literature – and the novel in particular – to affect and move its readers. The second is the history of medieval "affective piety," which tends to privilege affectively-charged prayer and contemplation over other forms of emotional experience in medieval Christianity. The third is the history of speech and the self in the Middle Ages – defined on the one hand by the central role played by auricular confession in histories of the self by Michel Foucault and others, on the other by the study of repressive norms and legislation. This dissertation does not fit neatly into any of these traditions, though it draws on each. So as I briefly map out the lay of the critical land, I will also try to mark where the chapters that follow will differ from what came before.

II. Ethics and Emotion in Literary Study

In the widely-cited introduction to *What is an Emotion?*, Cheshire Calhoun and Robert Solomon suggest that "the entire history of ethics" requires answering two interrelated questions: "How do we evaluate our emotions? and How do our emotions determine our ethical evaluations?"[22] Medieval Christian thought tended to emphasize the former question. According to the orthodox Augustinian tradition, almost all emotions require the assent of the will.[23] They are therefore open to ethical evaluation, as any list of the deadly sins would imply: what are pride, wrath, and envy if not evaluated emotions?

By contrast, in the past two decades of arguments for the "goodness" of literature, the latter question has risen to the fore. Dorothy Hale, reviewing the field, puts it simply: for the "new ethicists," "the ethical value of literature lies in the felt encounter with alterity that it brings to its reader."[24] This *felt* encounter generates ethical knowledge, "knowledge that is beyond reason, that is of the emotions, and that is so intuitive as to seem a bodily knowing."[25] Regardless

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[22] Cheshire Calhoun and Robert C. Solomon, "Introduction," in *What is an Emotion? Classic Readings in Philosophical Psychology*, ed. Calhoun and Solomon (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 33.

[23] Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, vol 4, trans. Philip Levine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), Book 14; and Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[24] Dorothy J. Hale, "Aesthetics and the New Ethics: Theorizing the Novel in the Twenty-First Century," *PMLA* 124 (2009): 896-905 (899).

[25] Hale, "Aesthetics and the New Ethics," 903.

of their political orientation, critics tend to take this literary knowledge – emotional, imaginative, extensive, but also unverifiable and unreproducible – as a necessary complement or substitute for quantitative social-scientific knowledge. The confidence of this statement varies, of course. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak holds out the ethical value of the literary register but insists on "the discontinuity between the ethical and the political."[26] Martha Nussbaum, on the other hand, insists that the novelistic imagination "– including its playfulness, including its eroticism – is the necessary basis for good government of a country of equal and free citizens."[27] What they share is a tentative sense of the redemptive possibility of emotional encounter, the fact that ethics might be better trained by the kind of affective extension reading literature apparently involves. The idea that literature is able to produce empathy – and with it, a more refined ethical sense – has been widely accepted in the popular press, thanks (a bit ironically) to empirical psychological studies that cautiously suggest as much.[28]

Liberal defenses of literary value from the 1990s, which explicitly present themselves as ripostes to antihumanism and high theory as well as the social sciences, often take as their central paradigm the scene of judgment. In Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just*, that scene unfolds in the apprehension of beauty as a script of error and adjustment: "hymn and palinode – conviction and consciousness of error," she writes, "reside inside most daily acts of encountering something beautiful."[29] She suggests that this encounter with beauty is "a model for the pliancy and lability of consciousness in education" – a point to which I will return in Chapter Two below, because conviction and consciousness of error is one of the central narrative sequences in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, albeit one grounded more often in intellectual or ethical claims than in aesthetic appreciation.[30] But Scarry also suggests that the perception of equality and symmetry in the judgment of beauty gives rise to a desire to remedy injustices in the social world; the analogy between sensory beauty and ethical goodness becomes pressing when one or the other is lacking, she argues. Martha Nussbaum, interested in the somewhat more concrete value of novelistic imagination in legal procedure (though she also imagines its need for a more broadly-constituted "public rationality"), repeatedly returns to the literal scene of courtroom judgment. As Nussbaum presents it, literature can call attention to the "line" or "barrier," the "division in society that marks some people as normal and good, others as shameful and evil."[31] Stereotypes recede; "habits of mind that lead toward social equality" take over.[32] The emphasis in these cases falls heavily on how emotion – honed, refined, guided by art – can make for better ethical evaluations.

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[26] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching," *diacritics* 32 (2002): 17-31 (29).
[27] Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 43.
[28] David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind," *Science* 342 (2013): 377-80. See also Suzanne Keen, "A Theory of Narrative Empathy," *Narrative* 14 (2006): 207-36.
[29] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 21.
[30] Scarry, *On Beauty*, 29.
[31] Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*, 98.
[32] Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*, 92.

The poetry and prose studied here suggests a different relationship between aesthetic experience, emotion, and ethics, one in which a discrete scene of judgment is less important than the ongoing shaping of attitudes and assumptions. For medievalists, the relationship between ethics and literature has a long and august tradition. Judson Allen showed that poetry was often subordinated to ethics in the commentary tradition, and poetry itself might be viewed as the working-out of ethical problems in lived experience.[33] More recently, Jessica Rosenfeld has reimagined post-Aristotelian medieval ethical discourse as a shared project of Latin philosophy and vernacular love literature, worrying the same terms in different registers.[34] But the connection between pastoral writing on speech and later Middle English poetry suggests, first, a shared vernacular basis for ethical and literary discourses, and second, the adoption of ethical terms *as* aesthetic ones. Rather than simply calling attention to Nussbaum's "line" across which fiction can imaginatively range, Middle English poets adopt and absorb the line and its rhetoric, its terminology and its binaries; the constituent parts of the line become elements not only of narrative and characterological development, but of formal self-description and orientation to the reader.[35] When prescriptive devotional writing and narrative poetry are viewed side by side, what I have been calling the "common substrate" beneath these discourses – an idea of a self, thinking and feeling and speaking in messily continuous ways, forming an interiority out of ongoing intersubjective encounter – becomes apparent. Calhoun and Solomon's questions are invariably intertwined in these works. This is not to say that the kind of encounter with alterity that the New Ethicists find in literature is impossible to find in these works, however. The horizons of possibility are in some ways predetermined, but as I will argue in the chapters below, the transformation of rules for speech into rules for poetry opens up possibilities for subversion and reimagining that cross over the line, pointing up the limits of the moralizing writers from whom poets borrow.

III. Emotion and Late Medieval Religion

The story this dissertation tells will unfold over a little more than a half-century, beginning in the 1370s and concluding in the 1420s. To understand that period, I will necessarily draw a wider frame of reference: late medieval English Christianity is a more Scriptural faith than is sometimes recognized by nonspecialists, its prescriptions often explicitly anchored in the Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount and their respective exegetical traditions. Late medieval English literary culture looks back to earlier generations of English, French, and Latin poetry, as is widely acknowledged. But the broader historical significance of these fifty years is not a question of sources and influences alone. Specifically, the relationship between speech and emotion I trace here offers an alternative to two comparatively *longue durée* narratives of intellectual and literary history. The first of those narratives places the tradition of affective piety at the center of the history of late medieval emotion. The second argues for the unique importance of confession as a speech practice in the formation of the self after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. These narratives are not *wrong*, but as the dominant accounts of a distinctively

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[33] Judson Boyce Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

[34] Jessica Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Love after Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[35] My approach draws inspiration from Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory*, who likewise shows how ethics and aesthetics were intimately intertwined in the period.

medieval emotional style and the genealogy of modern subject-formation respectively, they can occlude other medieval arrangements of self, speech, and emotion, including the story told here. I will address the former in this section, the latter in the next.

Affective piety is the mode of Christian devotion usually understood to arise in the later Middle Ages, in which religious belief and practice come to be identified with the intense – and carefully cultivated – emotional experiences of pity, compassion, grief, sorrow, and ecstatic joy. The chief source and object of these emotions was Christ in his humanity, complemented by Mary, a figure intimately tied in with the humanity of Christ. Affective piety was *felt*: it is characterized not only by heightened emotion but by bodily metaphors, contemplation of the body, even bodily experience. And as the immensely influential early work of Caroline Walker Bynum shows, these tropes of affective piety are associated with the "feminine," sometimes as metaphor, sometimes as a genuinely particular and gendered domain of religious experience.[36] Despite the immense importance of affective piety as a transformation in feeling across Latin Christianity, it arrived rather late to the history of emotions. In the opening pages of her 2010 study of medieval compassion, Sarah McNamer points out that the affective meditations at the heart of her book had been neglected by historians of emotion in part because of the "recurrent absorption of emotion by the rubric of religion": for literary and religious scholars, the affective qualities of doctrine or spirituality took precedence over accounts of emotion *per se*, while historians of emotion overlooked compassion because it was so thoroughly imbricated in the domain of religious experience.[37] McNamer's book helped remedy that omission, opening affective piety to the history of emotions, the overarching methodology with which McNamer identifies and to which this dissertation belongs.[38] Moreover, the seeming opposition between theologically-grounded affect and the intellectual project of the history of emotions that McNamer lamented has been challenged on multiple fronts, particularly by literary scholars.[39]

But affective piety is only one mode of devotion in late-medieval Christianity, and it coexisted with other forms that likewise placed special emphasis on emotion but remain neglected. Studies of affective piety tend to privilege contemplative and hagiographical writing. But the world of late medieval devotional writing – at least as it is instantiated in the body of writings sometimes collected under the rubric of "vernacular theology" – encompasses a wide range of other writings, enjoining different modes of devotion and practice.[40] My starting point

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[36] For the former, see the title essay in Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); for the latter, see *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[37] Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 5.

[38] See also the discussion of Margery Kempe in Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*, 248-87, or the nuanced discussion of Bonaventure's devotion in Robert Glenn Davis, *The Weight of Love: Affect, Ecstasy, and Union in the Theology of Bonaventure* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017). I discuss the dissertation's position in the history of emotions *vis-a-vis* affect theory in Chapter Two.

[39] See, for instance, Jennifer Garrison, *Challenging Communion: The Eucharist and Middle English Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2017), 6-9.

[40] Because this dissertation is more concerned with ethics, politics, and belonging than theology itself, I will more often use locutions like "works of religious instruction" and "pastoral writings"

will be the massive body of pastoral instruction that circulated alongside guides to contemplation and saints' lives. Undoubtedly less theologically and experientially ambitious than contemplative writing, these instructions were nonetheless the scene of intense contention in the period, a legacy of conflict reflected by turns in subtle shifts of emphasis and in passages of outright polemic.

The origins and history of this body of prescriptive ethical writing will be discussed in the first chapter. While it remains curiously marginal to discussions of both late medieval emotion and canonical fourteenth-century literature, scholars have long recognized its importance in the history of English religion.[41] Nicole Rice, for instance, has shown how moral instruction allows lay readers access to religious discipline while empowering them with new spiritual authority – a dialogic process essential to the process of public formation I describe in the following pages.[42] But in these texts, discipline and authority are invariably invested with emotional force. In these works, a dialogue between text and reader is supplemented by a charged disputation between a community of proper believers and their sinful neighbors, servants, lords, and priests; those communities are defined by lines of scorn and shame. In an important intervention, Fiona Somerset has suggested that at least one corpus of late medieval English pastoral instruction is deeply concerned with emotion: "rather than lacking in feeling and imagination," she observes, "lollard writings cannot stop talking about them – indeed, showing their readers how to feel differently, and how to imagine their world otherwise, is at least as important to them as telling their readers what they need to know and to do."[43] Somerset emphasizes the radical possibility in these prescriptive texts, the fact that they open a space for feeling differently and imagining otherwise. In the subsequent chapters, I will follow in Somerset's lead, attempting to show how late medieval pastoralia was indeed innovative and groundbreaking. But my focus will fall on how the new ways of feeling and imagination in prescriptive writing opened further possibilities for literary writers, sometimes reorienting feeling and imagination away from virtue and salvation and toward learning and pleasure.

IV. The Speaking Self

Affective devotion emphasized a felt identification with the suffering body of Christ; it is organized around the senses of touch and sight and the motion of bodily fluids like blood and tears. Auricular confession is by contrast organized around speech and intangible inwardness. Like affective piety, in the High Middle Ages private confession leaps out of the monastery and

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than the umbrella category of "vernacular theology," though I acknowledge the value of the category as it is articulated in 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): 822-64.

[41] See the foundational work of A. I. Doyle, "A survey of the origins and circulation of theological writings in English in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1954), and the work of Vincent Gillespie, e.g., "*Doctrina* and *Predicacio*: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals," *Leeds Studies in English*, New Ser., 11 (1980 for 1979), 36-50.

[42] Nicole E. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), and see Chapter One below.

[43] Fiona Somerset, *Feeling like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 7.

into lay experience, effected not by diffuse changes in the structure of devotion and emotion but by the institutional mandate of the Fourth Lateran Council and the diocesan councils that followed. Fourth Lateran involved a thoroughgoing change in pastoral practice in the church, some of which will be discussed at greater length in the first chapter below. But confession has enjoyed pride of place in histories of the modern subject, thanks in large part to Foucault, for whom the "millennial yoke of confession" produces subjects through the ritualized act of speaking itself.[44] In speaking the self to another, Foucault holds, one constitutes the truth of oneself in a power relationship with the confessor; the simple act of speaking that truth is meant to produce immediate spiritual effects, but more importantly for his analysis, it constitutes the self, its *thoughts* and *desires* as well as actions, as objects of knowledge, things that must be spoken. Confession is a robust, transhistorical "technology of the self," transformed over time (in Foucault's account) into the talking cure of psychoanalysis.

For medievalists, such an account seems inevitably reductive, and the monolith of confession has indeed been dismantled by careful historical study. Katherine Little, for instance, has taken Foucault head on, arguing that narrative self-definition on the one hand, and Wycliffite resistance to confession on the other, point to the "variability of discourses for speaking about and shaping the self and the possibility of choice and resistance" in late medieval religion.[45] For others, the story of the self in the Latin Middle Ages is instead a story of reading practices that produced new forms of interiority, accentuating and deepening the dynamics of inside and outside that the later Middle Ages inherited from Paul and Augustine.[46] These critiques and alternatives are well taken. While I will pay considerable attention to penitential practices in the subsequent chapters, confession itself will not play a central role; I will follow Little in seeing a more diverse range of possibilities at play in late medieval pastoralia in particular.

But Foucault's later work is useful in emphasizing the value of studying the more general relation between ethics, speech practice, and the aspects of self that we tend to treat as inward or personal – in the case of the texts I discuss, emotion. For Foucault, Christian ethics of speech produce selves, but in a negative key.[47] In discussing early Christianity, he suggests that "the revelation of the truth about oneself cannot be dissociated from the obligation to renounce oneself"; modern hermeneutics of the self emerge from a desire to substitute this negative impulse with a positive one, but draw on the same tools, especially the "continuous verbalization of the most imperceptible movements of the thought."[48] But for the texts I describe, verbalization

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[44] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 58-70 (61).

[45] Katherine Little, *Confession and Resistance: Defining the Self in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 12.

[46] See Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1-74.

[47] See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others II)*, ed. Frédéric Gros and trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2011), which suggests that "the severe gaze one must focus on oneself" required by Christian asceticism displaces the involvement of the self in public life (334), an account that tacitly builds on the anti-public "worldlessness" Hannah Arendt sees in early Christianity; e.g., Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), 50-58 or 73-78.

[48] Michel Foucault, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth," *Political Theory* 21 (1993): 198-227 (221). See further Daniel Boyarin and

is itself the subject of inquiry. In the austere self-presentation enjoined by pastoral writing for the devout reading public, the defining austerity is anchored not in sexuality or diet, but in speech itself.[49] How to speak is not the *sole* concern of most of these texts, of course, but it is the defining one, and as much as they intend to open the psyche for examination and regulation, they prioritize the outward public exercise of emotion in speech. That is to say, these rules for speech produce a different kind of subject than confession. As I will show in the chapters that follow, this attention to the public airing of feeling in speech also manifests in a different cultural guise, as an account of the pleasures of poetic fiction.

As should be clear by now, *Disciplining the Tongue* will focus on the ethical and psychological dynamics of a set of rules around speech. Though I will draw on historical records of the regulation of speech – in church, in court, and otherwise – when appropriate, I aim to illustrate a moment in intellectual and literary history rather than social history. As Sandy Bardsley has shown, the actual regulation of speech in late medieval England was frankly repressive: the punishment of disruptive speech invariably reinforced the power of local and national elites. Moreover, in much pastoral writing as in court records, disruptive speech was associated with women's voices; the prosecution of "scolding" and other deviant speech acts helped circumscribe women's public power.[50] To supplement the history of repression that these scholars have uncovered, this dissertation will recover understudied aspects of late medieval ethics around speech, the ways in which repressive rules disclose ideas about agency, responsibility, obligation, and belonging that are themselves subject to appropriation, transformation, and play.[51] (The gendered dynamics of speech will be addressed at length below.) As Susan Phillips has shown in her groundbreaking study of gossip, in both late medieval literature and religious writing, deviant speech can be an ambivalent quantity – counseled against, stereotyped, but ripe for appropriation and imitation. Idle talk was "both so problematic and so productive" as to exceed the categories – like repression, transgression, and subversion – to which we try to assign it.[52] Where Phillips illuminates the ambiguous powers of idle talk, *Disciplining the Tongue* shows how the rules themselves, repeated, reappropriated, remade, allow for new ways of speaking and feeling.

Elizabeth A. Castelli, "Introduction: Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, The Fourth Volume, or, A Field Left Fallow for Others to Till," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 357-74.

[49] I will draw on Foucault's account of *parrhesia*, frank speaking, at a number of points below; see, Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).

[50] Sandy Bardsley, *Venomous Tongues: Speech and Gender in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). See also the discussion of scolding in Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); for a more literary perspective, see M. C. Bodden, *Language as a Site of Revolt in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: Speaking as a Woman* (New York: Palgrave, 2011). An important predecessor to this work is Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

[51] See, for instance, the discussion of the multiple uses of the tongue in Carla Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance: Language Trouble in an Age of Eloquence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[52] Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: the Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2007), 6.

V. Plan of the Dissertation

The chapters that follow will trace the movement of a set of words – scorn, shame, "boistous," "myrie," "greef," "wo" – across a loose historical trajectory from the late fourteenth century to the early fifteenth. Though every chapter ranges widely, each is organized around an emotion tied to speech and its moralized function and meaning. At the center of the first is scorn and group belonging; the second, shame and self-knowledge; the third, mirth and literary pleasure; the fourth, anger, restraint, and vulnerability. Together, these chapters map the rise and decline of a pugnacious brand of Middle English pastoral writing alongside the emergence of new kinds of poetic self-presentation. As I will argue throughout, the two phenomena are entirely intertwined; moreover, together they reveal the deeper preoccupations and assumptions of late medieval English culture.

The first chapter, "The Public Sins of the Tongue," traces the emergence of the lexicon of speech and emotion in fourteenth-century English religious writing. The "sins of the tongue," a catalogue of deviant speech practices ranging from flattery to tale-telling to vain oath-swearing, were first articulated in the thirteenth century as diagnostic tools intended to help instruct priests and individual believers. In an innovative and polemical body of later fourteenth-century Middle English religious writing, addressed to what I will call the "devout reading public," the discourse on the sins of the tongue came to be buttressed with a new vocabulary that linked deviant and proper speech with affective states. This vocabulary helped set that devout public apart from its social world. *The Pore Caitif*, a popular devotional compilation at the center of this chapter, calls on its readers to "dispise" sophisms and meekly suffer when it is "sclaundrid" ("made to feel ashamed"). Readers learn to scorn the vain speech of the world, while the world mocks their honest speech, bringing on a Christ-like shame. The lexicon of emotion binds a public together by naming emotional experiences held in common, and it helps polemical religious writers describe their own writing: they speak "boistous wordis" to a public eager for blunt correction. I will suggest that these seemingly derivative guidebooks should be read as dynamic and original intellectual efforts; they make new meaning out of old teaching. They strive to cultivate new ways of speaking and feeling in their audience, an effort inseparable from the ethical precepts they relate. These ways of speaking and feeling, it should be said, are stringently pious, judgmental, polemical, and aggressive toward imagined and real antagonists – but they are not mere "context" for the literature discussed in the remainder of the dissertation.

The differences between literary writing and pastoral instruction, however, should not be understated. The second chapter, "Langland's Shame," turns to a poem with a very different emotional texture from the works discussed in the first. Unlike the *Pore Caitif* and other contentious religious works, which prod their readers to perfect their speech, *Piers Plowman* repeatedly presents scenes of misspeaking, in which the narrator and authorial stand-in Will speaks hastily and wrongly and is upbraided for his errors. In each of these scenes, Will becomes ashamed. The poem nevertheless endorses public misspeaking. The shame that proceeds from misspeaking becomes the necessary affective component of an ongoing process of learning. As Will puts it, "ther smyt no thyng so smerte, ne smelleth so foule / as shame" ("nothing strikes so smart, nor smells so foul, as shame"): the sensory prompts of smell and touch are the first steps of knowledge. Such creative shame lies at the center of Langland's lifelong project of revision, a set of successive revisions that appear hasty and partial, but are ultimately necessary steps in an ongoing process of learning in public. The poem suspends its reader in its shame, inviting criticism and continuation while frustrating simplification. The shame of misspeaking – and the

shame of miswriting – comes to be presented as an alternative to prescriptive learning. It is a mode of pedagogy foregrounding creative error and legitimating literary making.

The third chapter, "Chaucer's Rules for Speech," traces the affective claims Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* make on audiences both internal and external. The rules of the *Tales*, as Chaucer's Host defines them, prioritize mirth, comfort, and pleasure—terms that originate in descriptions of prayer and contemplative visions of heaven. But the Host's "myrie tales" are identified with dilatory and pleasure-giving fictions, what the discourse on the sins of the tongue would call idle speech. *The Canterbury Tales* nevertheless include a number of tales that advertise an aspiration for perfected speech. This chapter addresses three at length. *The Prioress's Tale* combines a rhetoric of childlike inarticulacy with a poetic style beautiful in its simplicity. But its play of song and silence produces emotional cues that point toward compassion and hate respectively. *The Manciple's Tale* rejects poetic art before delivering a potted lesson on the evils of the tongue. The tale should strike a note of fear, but its "boistous" speaker lards it with digressions and outbursts that openly contradict its message, rendering the fear it inculcates bathetic. Both tales aspire to a perfection of speech that proves incompatible with the emotions that speech excites. But the *Tales* end in the Parson's prose religious tract, a "myrie tale in prose" that prescribes penance. The Parson thus cleaves fictive mirth from "myrie" correction. The effect is to create a distinct space for fiction in the idle speech religious writers rejected, without rejecting the moral claims of conventional devotion.

Chapter Four, "Hard Truths," draws on both lexical and physiological approaches to emotion in two fifteenth-century works, the anonymous *Mum and the Sothsegger* and Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*. A longstanding mode of thought—attested in Homer and the Hebrew Bible and still present in everyday metaphors—understands emotions to begin as swellings of the chest that burst forth as rash speech. Medieval thinkers tended to disapprove of such eruptions of feeling and their attendant loss of rational control over the body. With images of hearts swelling and boils bursting, however, Hoccleve associates his own poetic making with just such a loss of control. His swelling emotion evokes uncomfortable associations with sin and mental illness, concerns central to the *Series*. He ultimately suggests the therapeutic necessity of such involuntary emotion. *Mum and the Sothsegger*, on the other hand, links truth-telling ("sothsegging") with lancing boils and venting anger. The truth hurts, the poem suggests: truth-telling speech bursts the boils on the speaker's heart and on the body politic, but also opens the truth-teller to persecution. In both works, the value of speech is grounded less in explicit content, and more in the speakers' vulnerability to their own feelings and to the reaction of their listeners.

Across these chapters, rules for speech and feeling prove generative for the "idle words" of poetic fiction. Rather than offering a narrative of secularization, the dissertation as a whole maps the ongoing engagement of medieval literature with prescriptive religious writing. Poets accounted for their own art using the same material as devotional writing, sometimes through direct appropriation, sometimes as an effect of the shared horizon of cultural assumptions that the following chapters will map. While religious writers named and mobilized the shared feelings of their readers, poets borrowed the same words to account for creativity and aesthetic experience. This common language reveals an image of a self extending outward in spoken words, speaking through feeling, feeling through speech.

Chapter One. The Public Sins of the Tongue

The story of medieval sin and its remedies is often told as a story about the self. Auricular confession and private penance produced self-scrutiny, a sense of inwardness, and the internalization of rules of thought and conduct. The devotional literatures created in this penitential culture likewise represent a deep inner self and encourage its investigation – *pace* the story of the self as told by early modernists.[1] But the past two decades of scholarship have also shown how devotional writing describes and addresses collectivities, whether they are particular localities, ecclesiastical units like the parish, or whole gender identities.[2] This chapter, on the sins of the tongue in later fourteenth-century Middle English devotional writing, will attempt to bridge the two approaches, showing how individualized instruction on how to speak and feel facilitated the emergence of new devout reading publics.

Previous work on the *peccata linguae*, or sins of the tongue – particularly the important *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity* by Edwin Craun, which remains the definitive study on the topic in English – have emphasized long thirteenth-century *summae* of the vices and virtues and their later English adaptations.[3] All pastoral writing on the sins of the tongue address questions of social context, but the singular in Craun's subtitle – "*Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker*" – is telling: the focus of those *summae* is in large part is on the single deviant speaker, not on the public world their speech disrupts or creates.[4] I pick up where Craun's study leaves off, examining the sins of the tongue in devotional writings composed in Middle English from the mid-fourteenth through the early fifteenth century.

My most important case example is the late fourteenth-century catechetical-devotional compilation the *Pore Caitif*, and it has been chosen for a number of reasons. First, it is ubiquitous in the manuscripts of late medieval devotional writing, from the late fourteenth through the fifteenth century. Second, though it is an intelligent and in some ways ambitious text, it is neither theologically innovative nor controversial, speaking directly to what I will simply call the devout

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[1] Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); and David Aers, "A Whisper in the Ears of the Early Modernists; Or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject,'" in *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. David Aers (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 177-202. For a revisionist early modern account, see Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[2] On localities, see Ralph Hanna III, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); on the parish, see Ellen K. Rentz, *Imagining the Parish in Late Medieval England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015). The literature on gender and devotional literature is vast; see, among others, Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), and Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[3] Edwin Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Carla Casagrande and Silvana Vecchio, *Les péchés de la langue: Discipline et éthique de la parole dans la culture médiévale*, trans. Philippe Baillet (Paris: Éditions di Cerf, 1991).

[4] The exception is Craun's chapter on *Piers Plowman*, on which see the following chapter.

reading public. Its engagement with the sins of the tongue can therefore be taken as something close to representative. Unlike the *summae*, the *Pore Caitif* and the other devotional works considered in this chapter do not include a separate and dedicated discussion of the sins of the tongue. Discussion of speech is nonetheless ubiquitous within them, nested in addresses to the reader, explications of the decalogue, and elsewhere. Throughout the writing of the latter half of the fourteenth century, regulation of speech is thoroughly incorporated into moral advice and critique. In other words, this later generation of religious writing – composed at the same time as the major vernacular poetry considered in the later chapters of this dissertation – carried the sins of the tongue out of the realm of simple instruction, freighting them with new social significance. Moreover, the sins of the tongue index an emergent devout reading public, often inclusive of but not identical to more narrowly-defined reformist, Wycliffite, and mixed-life believers. The conceptual vocabulary of the sins of the tongue helps create the characteristic style used to address this relatively broad public, and that language likewise helps articulate its contentious and polemical collective self-understanding.

I. The Psalmist's Tongues

When medieval writers discuss the sins of the tongue, they do so on an same axis of the individual's speaking body and the broader social world where that speech is heard and takes effect. Late medieval treatments of scriptural teaching on the tongue is indicative of this dual perspective.

In a number of illuminated psalters produced in England, Psalm 38 – the *canticum David* that opens the third of the eight standard liturgical divisions of the Psalms – is accompanied by an odd image: David, in full royal regalia, gestures to his mouth.[5] In some such illustrations, he addresses the gesture to Christ.[6] In the Luttrell Psalter, though, he stands alone inside the historiated "D" at the start of the psalm. Against the gold background and the stark white of David's skin, the viewer's eye is drawn not to a haloed Christ but to David's protruding tongue, painted in the same red as his crown and stockings.[7] The illustrator has chosen to emphasize one element of the psalm:

> I seyde: "I shal kepe my weyes, þat I trespas not in my tunge. I sette kepyng to my mouþ, whanne synful was aȝeins me." I wex doumb, and I am mekid, and I stillide fro godes, and my sorow is renewede. Mi herte hetide wiþinne me, and in my þenkyng shal brenne fier. I spake in my tunge: make to me knowen, Lord, myn ende. And þe noumbre of my dayes what is, þat I wite what wanteþ to me. (Ps. 38:2-5)[8]

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[5] On the divisions of the psalms, see Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 225. I will use Vulgate numbering throughout.

[6] See London, British Library MS Additional 52359, f. 249r, and MS Yates Thompson 14, f. 44r.

[7] London, British Library MS Additional 42130, f. 75v. The image can be viewed in the British Library's Digitised Manuscripts page, at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_42130.

[8] *Dixi, "Custodiam vias meas ut non delinquam in lingua mea. Posui ori meo custodiam cum consisteret peccator adversum me." Obmutui et humiliatus sum et silui a bonis, et dolor meus renovatus est. Concaluit cor meum intra me, et in meditatione, ea exardescet ignis. Locutus sum in lingua mea; notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum et numerum dierum meorum quis est, ut sciam quid desit mihi.* All passages from the Vulgate will be drawn from *The Vulgate Bible*, ed.

In what follows, the evanescence of human life is affirmed and the psalmist prays for deliverance, his tongue loosened by God: "Obmutui. et non aperui os meum quoniam tu fecisti" [I wexe doumbe, and I openede not my mouþ, for þou diddest] (Ps. 38:10). The psalm is built around a series of juxtapositions: the psalmist tries to restrain his tongue against the sinner, but the inward fire of meditation looses it; in two verses, he moves from dumb and humbled to speaking and hungry for knowledge. As Thomas Hill has shown, while the psalm proved challenging for medieval exegetes, it was generally understood as both a commendation of religious silence and an endorsement of righteous anger.[9] The Wycliffite revision of Rolle's psalter commentary treats it as a simple drama of self-restraint: "For oure tunge lyeþ weet, it is ay redy to slippe," the commentators affirm, "but festen it wiþ drede to offende God and lat it not louse but in his loouyng, and þou shalt neuere erre þerwiþ."[10] The natural inclination to sin imagined here becomes all the more reason for the believer to exercise control, to set a willed affective state – "drede to offende God" – against a body "ay redy to slippe." In this interpretation, David's protruding tongue in the Luttrell Psalter becomes an icon of obedience, a sinful organ duly restrained and given over to God.[11]

All the more surprising, then, that the next time a tongue appears in the Luttrell Psalter – in the illustration of Psalm 51, the final psalm in the daily office that 38 begins – it is being wrenched out. Specifically, inside the historiated Q, a young David – bareheaded and bare-cheeked, missing his royal regalia – uses pliers to pry out a man's tongue, painted in the same vivid red.[12] Again, the image presents a rather bold interpretation of the psalm:

Edgar Swift and Angela M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011-2013), and cited henceforth by chapter and verse. Translations of the Psalter drawn from *Two Revisions of Rolle's English Psalter Commentary and the Related Canticles*, vol. 2, EETS o.s. 341, ed. Anne Hudson (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2012), 427-29. Cf. the earlier *The Middle English Glossed Prose Psalter: edited from Cambridge, Magdalene College MS Pepys 2498*, ed. Robert Ray Black and Raymond St-Jacques, 2 vols (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012), 1.25-26. Unless otherwise noted, all other Biblical translations are supplied from the editions of the Later Version of the Wycliffite Bible by Forshall and Madden: *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments...*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1850).

[9] Thomas D. Hill, "'Dumb David': Silence and Zeal in Lady Church's Speech, *Piers Plowman* C.2.30-40," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 15 (2001): 203-11 (207-08).

[10] *Two Revisions*, 428. This is an old image. Behind it lies the injunction from James 3:2-5, compelling self-control through the bridling of the mouth. Thus, for instance, when the *Ancrene Wisse* commends such a bridling, it acknowledges, "ah þe tunge is slubbri for ha wadeð i wete, ant slit lihtliche forð from lut word into monie." See *A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, ed. Bella Millett, EETS o.s. 325 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31 (2.420-21). As with many discussions of sin, the question of intentionality becomes muddied here: the slipping tongue seems to mark the bodily "limit of intentionality in the speech act," on which see Judith Butler's gloss on Shoshana Felman in *Excitable Speech*, 10-11.

[11] The same sentiment is repeated throughout the Psalter; see, e.g., Psalm 140:3-4.

[12] BL MS Additional 42130, f. 97v.

> Þou louedest alle wordes of dounfallynge in a trecherous tunge. Forþi God shal destroye þee into þe ende; he shal outdrawe þee and outpasse þee of þi tabernacle, and þi roote fro þe londe of lyuyng men.[13] (Ps. 51:6-7)

For the Middle English commentators, the psalm's message is straightforward: "in þis psalme spekeþ þe Prophet aȝen malicyous bacbiteres," they write, cautioning that "þi shrewed malicious tung telleþ openly þe yuel wille of þin herte."[14] Unlike Psalm 51, body and intention are here aligned in sin. But in their reference to "malicyous bacbiteres," the glossators add a social dimension to their interpretation. This psalm is not about David's relationship with God, but about God's correction of disruptive, uncharitable, malicious speakers, those whose hateful speech against their neighbors discloses to the world "þe yuel wille" of their heart, and the fact of that open disclosure is essential: the trespassing tongue reveals the sinner's inward state to the surrounding public, even as it spews forth lies and slanders against others, tearing at the fabric of that public.

This gloss is anchored in conventional moral instruction on speech. The vocabulary of backbiting, for example, is drawn from vernacular translations of Latin pastoral manuals. But if these lines are about custody of the tongue, they also reveal the multiple stakes of speech in medieval thought. The gloss conflates the traditional Augustinian division of sins *cordis, oris, et operis* [of heart, mouth, and work]; both the psalm and its gloss, in turn, emphasize a broader social context for the deleterious effect of sinful speech. The malicious tongue has a public, and its correction is likewise public. The Luttrell illustrator seems to have understood the social implications of the glossator's interpretation of the psalm. As Michael Camille has pointed out, this historiated initial is unique in the iconography of the psalm, traditionally illustrated with a representative scene from the Hebrew Bible. In the Luttrell Psalter, however, common implements of work (the pincers also appear in an image of St. Eligius, patron saint of metalworkers) are turned to the task of disciplining the "trecherous tunge."[15] The familiar tools and the violence they act out are telling: the Luttrell initial, like the Middle English glosses, casts the psalm within the context of the everyday, in a pastoral discourse intended to guide and regulate quotidian speech – a discourse in which life and death hang on the intent, content, and context of spoken words. And in the Luttrell illustration we see two people, not one: an incipient social world at violent debate.[16]

The two Luttrell tongues, embracing a single day's reading in the liturgy, point to the ambivalent power ascribed to speech in late medieval English thought: David's tongue is an icon

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[13] *Dilexisti omnia verba praecipitationis, linguam dolosam. Propterea deus destruet te in finem; evellet te et emigrabit te de tabernaculo tuo et radicem tuam de terra viventium*. *Two Revisions,* 548. Note Douay-Rheims translates the first sentence as addressed to the *linguam dolosam*, but the earlier Middle English version likewise misses the accusative of exclamation and supplies a preposition instead: "Þou louede alle wordes of stumblynge þorouȝ tunge fykel." *Glossed Prose Psalter*, 1.33.

[14] *Two Revisions*, 547-48.

[15] Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 141-42.

[16] On the psalms in this culture (albeit not *these* psalms), see Annie Sutherland, "Psalms as Polemic: the English Bible Debate," in *Polemic: Language as Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Discourse*, ed. Almut Suerbaum, George Southcombe and Benjamin Thompson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 149-63.

of penance and even divine inspiration, while the tongue he wrenches out is an icon of destruction, used to voice "wordes of vnclennesse of filþe and of harlotrye, and to bere doun soiþfastnesse in gendrynge of enuye, and lettyng of concorde."[17] The images share a particular conjunction of the bodily – that vivid, shocking red tongue – the social, and the Scriptural. But the first image emphasizes the work of penance and the disclosures of confession; the second, the broad social impact of trespassing speech, and the violence of its correction. In this conjunction, and the two ways they address it, these images encapsulate the late medieval approaches to the wide range of verbal trespasses gathered under the rubric of the sins of the tongue.

II. The Long Career of the Sins of the Tongue

The sins of the tongue are a product of the thirteenth century. But the regulation of speech, and the ambivalence over its power, has a long history in Christianity. Speech is, on the one hand, repeatedly enjoined in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. God demands the constant teaching of the commandments at Deuteronomy 6:7; in Matthew 10, Christ commands the apostles to evangelize without self-consciousness. The world of speech in which that teaching and evangelizing takes place is for the most part a sinful one, though, as James 3:6 makes clear: "Lingua ignis est, universitas iniquitatis" [the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity], a line that recurs often in pastoral writings. But even that profane tongue of fire comes with a divine opposite in the Holy Spirit's gift of tongues on the apostles at Acts 2:3 ("apparuerunt illis dispertitae linguae tamquam ignis" [there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire]). The long excursus on tongues in 1 Corinthians 13-14 goes some way to rationalize and explain these ambivalences: in it, Paul emphasizes both the animating role of *caritas* in proper speech and lays out unambiguous restrictions on women's right to speak at 14:34, restrictions reiterated and made harsher in the pseudo-Pauline 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Though later writers invoke all of these New Testament injunctions, the Pauline contributions, with their insistence on the alignment of outward utterance and inward spirit and with their imposition of a gendered hierarchy of speech, prove particularly important in later writing.

The discourse on speech in particular works of religious instruction, however, reflects as much the ideologies and needs of its composers and audiences as it does this complicated scriptural heritage. Thus, for instance, early medieval monastic writers emphasized the virtues of silence, while the Alfredian *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care* – a short verse epilogue appended to a text that seems to have been disseminated from the court to bishops – speaks in metaphor: while some wrongly damn the waters that flow from the spring of divine inspiration:

> Sume hine lætað ofer landscare
> riðum torinnan; nis ðæt rædlic ðing,
> gif swa hlutor wæter, hlud and undiop,
> tofloweð æfter feldum oð hit to fenne werð.
> [Some let it run out through the land in small streams. That is not a wise thing, if such pure water flows out shallow and noisy over the fields, until it becomes a fen.][18]

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[17] *Two Revisions*, 548.

[18] In *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records vol. 6, ed. Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 111 ll. 18-21. Translation my own. I am grateful to Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe for the reference. For another approach, see Britt Mize, "The Mind-as-Container Motif in *Beowulf*, *Homiletic Fragment II*, and Alfred's *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 107 (2008), 25-56 (48-49).

In other words, to withhold teaching is to do wrong, but to speak trivially or too much is likewise a waste. This passage is likely the earliest English-language instruction on speech that could notionally reach a lay audience. The audience and form of later texts is radically different, but the themes introduced – that speech expresses some interiority with connection to the divine, and that its misuse or overuse (those small streams) compromises both speaker and hearers (the fields that become swampy with idle talk) – tend to recur.

All of the works addressed in this chapter should be understood, though, as distant echoes of the programs for religious education laid out the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. While some efforts at pastoral reform preceded it, Fourth Lateran's systematic focus on the religious education of both clergy and laity represented a genuine and widespread change in the culture of the church.[19] In England, the conclusions of Fourth Lateran were reiterated and extended by legislation produced at a series of diocesan councils.[20] The best-known product of these councils is Archbishop John Pecham's basic syllabus of religious knowledge for the laity, emerging from the relatively late Lambeth council of 1281.[21] A "post-hoc codification" of already-existing episcopal legislation, Pecham's syllabus (also known as *Ignorantia sacerdotum* from its incipit) was not unique, but was widely reproduced in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century books intended for religious education.[22] Though the syllabus does not undertake the work of instruction itself, it mandates vernacular teaching of the fourteen articles of the faith, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the seven virtues, and the seven sacraments. No one's ignorance was permissible "omnes ministri ecclesiae scire tenentur" [all ministers of the church are held to know] these basics of the faith.[23]

The sins of the tongue are among the products of this post-Lateran education drive. Their origins are on the continent rather than England: though verbal sin is discussed in twelfth-century French scholastic thought, their most influential treatment is in the thirteenth-century *Summa de virtutibus et vitiis* by the French Dominican Guillelmus Peraldus (Guillaume Peyraut).[24] Peraldus created the first systematic treatment of verbal sin, treating the sins of the tongue together

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[19] On pastoral writing in the interconciliar period between Third and Fourth Lateran, generally associated with Paris and incorporating scholastic models, see Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., "The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology," in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 30-43 (33).

[20] L. E. Boyle, "The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and Some Other Works of William of Pagula: The Alexander Prize Essay," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5 (1955): 81-110 (81).

[21] Boyle, "*Oculus Sacerdotis*," 81-2. See also H. Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 202-05.

[22] Vincent Gillespie, "*Doctrina* and *Predicacio*: The Design and Function of Some Pastoral Manuals," *Leeds Studies in English*, New Ser., 11 (1980 for 1979), 36-50 (37); see also G. H. Russell, "Vernacular Instruction of the Laity in the Later Middle Ages in England: Some Texts and Notes," *Journal of Religious History* 2.2 (1962): 98-119, which calls the syllabus "a disappointing document" (98).

[23] Quoted in Russell, "Vernacular Instruction," 99. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[24] On the twelfth-century thought, especially in Raoul Ardens' *Speculum universale*, see Casagrande and Vecchio, *Les péchés de la langue*, 39-63.

comprehensively as an eighth branch of the Seven Deadly Sins.[25] Peraldus lays out twenty-four sins of the tongue, from blasphemy to imprudent silence, and eight more general remedies.[26] As Craun has explained, Peraldus's system ultimately only leaves four proper and rational uses for the tongue: prayer, praise of God, the speaking of sacred words in preaching or teaching, and confession. His taxonomies create a binary of "the salvific and the deviant," in Craun's words, and pay no attention to the ordinary speech that neither damns nor saves.[27] Peraldus's *Summa* proved influential across Europe, and the work remained in currency at least through the fifteenth century. It circulated widely in England; as well as inspiring a number of Latin tracts, it was translated into Middle English.[28] Lorens d'Orléans's *Somme le roi* – written for a king, and frequently commissioned by both English and French aristocrats – also provides an analysis of the sins of the tongue derived from Peraldus.[29] The *Somme* was even more popular among both

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[25] There is no modern edition of Peraldus, although one is being prepared: see William Peraldus, *Summa de vitiis*, ed. Rodulphus Clutius (Lyon: 1668), as ed. in *The Peraldus Project*, eds. Kent Emery, Jr., Joe Goering, Richard Newhauser, and Siegfried Wenzel, http://www.unc.edu/~swenzel/peraldus.html.

[26] The twenty-four sins are blasphemy, murmur, defense of sin, perjury, lying, detraction (backbiting), flattery, cursing, insult or chiding, quarreling, mocking of the good, evil counsel, sowing of discord, hypocrisy, rumor, boasting, revelation of secrets, imprudent threats, imprudent promises, idle words, too much talk, dirty talk, scurrility, and imprudent silence. Full list at 377a. The eight remedies are: consideration of the danger in speech; consideration of the nobility and utility of the tongue; barring the doors of the mouth; speaking rarely; speaking little; speaking slowly; entrusting the tongue to God in prayer; and monastic silence (416b-417b). See http://www.unc.edu/~swenzel/Sins%20of%20the%20tongue%20trial.html, and Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 15-16. This list is translated (with a few additions) by Richard Rolle in the *Form of Living*; see *Richard Rolle: Prose and Verse, edited from MS Longleat 29 and related manuscripts*, ed. S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson, EETS o.s. 293 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), sins 11-12, remedies 13.

[27] *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 35-36. Peraldus presents fourteen reasons why custody of the tongue is important; among them, "quartum est hoc quod lingua est membrum valde nobile, et in quo multum indecens est omnis immunditia" [fourth is that the tongue is a very noble organ, and all filth is very indecent in it], in Tractatus IX, 372a. The assertion seems to depend on a theological tradition about speech as tool of reason (Peraldus's second reason), distinct from the less positive Scriptural images of the tongue discussed above or the vernacular paramonastic image of the "slubbri" tongue in the *Ancrene Wisse*.

[28] *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 14-17. The translation and remaking of thirteenth-century Latin manuals of instruction is by no means unique to Peraldus; on the diverse corpus of religious instruction written *vulgariter*, explicitly written for a double audience (both parish clergy and the literate laity), see Gillespie, "*Doctrina* and *Predicacio*," 38; Russell, "Vernacular Instruction," 100; Spencer, *English Preaching*, 203-04; and Vincent Gillespie, "Vernacular Books of Religion," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 317-344 (318).

[29] See *La Somme le Roi par Frère Laurent*, ed. Édith Brayer and Anne-Françoise Leurquin-Labie (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 2008), cap. 39, pp. 158-72. On Lorens's debt to Peraldus, see the brief observations in Casagrande and Vecchio, *Les péchés de la langue*, 110 and 114; noted in Craun, 17.

religious and lay readers in England, and it provided the kernel for some of the most important long works of English catechesis.[30] From a pastoral perspective, Peraldus' afterlife makes sense: if adultery and fornication were the chief topics of pastoral concern, gossip and slander were a close second; moreover, lying and the improper disclosure of secrets pose serious threats to the efficacy and value of confession, while tale-telling is a danger to preachers.[31] As Craun points out, however, by establishing a simple binary of salvific and deviant speech, Peraldus and his imitators seem to maintain that *all* believers should carry on evangelical work.[32] This implicit appeal to lay ministry became important in the fourteenth century.

For all of the power of the Peraldan tradition, the exposition of the sins of the tongue was never fixed or standardized. The *Somme* and its derivatives outline only ten sins of the tongue, for example, and they are not presented as an independent addition to the Seven Deadly Sins but as an adjunct to Gluttony.[33] The logic of the connection depends on the bodily coincidence of the sins. Immoderate eating and drinking leads to immoderate speech, because the mouth is a two-way street, as the author of the *Speculum vitae* makes clear:

> Here haf I shewed yhow, als I couthe,
> On þe ta syde þe synne of þe mouthe
> þat men þe synne of Glotony calles,

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[30] The works translated or derived from the *Somme*, taken together, constitute one of the largest surviving bodies of Middle English writing in manuscript. Of direct translations, *The Book of Vices and Virtues* is found in three complete manuscripts; *Ayenbite of Inwyt* and *Aventure and Grace* in one; at least eight other manuscripts contain partial translations or selections from these works, and twenty-two copies of Caxton's *Book Ryal* and its reprintings by de Worde and Pynson survive. Of derivations, the *Speculum vitae* is extant in at least forty-five manuscripts; *A Myrour to Lewde Men and Wymmen* in four; *Book for a Simple and Devout Woman* and *Disce Mori* in two each; *Jacob's Well* in one. That makes sixty-seven manuscripts in total, exclusive of the print copies, which would place an English *Somme le roi* in the top five most-attested works of Middle English writing. On those works, see Michael G. Sargent, "What Do the Numbers Mean? A Textual Critic's Observation on some Patterns of Middle English Manuscript Transmission," in *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (York: York Medieval Press, 2008), 205-44. My numbers come from Leo M. Carruthers, *La somme le roi et ses traductions anglaises: Étude Comparée* (Paris: Publications de A. M. A. E. S., 1986), with updated numbers from Hanna's edition of the *Speculum vitae*. Print figures come from Elaine E. Whitaker, "A Collaboration of Readers: Categorization of the Annotations in Copies of Caxton's *Royal Book*," *Text* 7 (1994): 233-242 (234). These texts are discussed in more detail below.

[31] On adultery and fornication, see Spencer, *English Preaching*, 204.

[32] Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 37. This position was, of course, not universally held, and though Peraldus lay behind much late medieval writing on the virtues and vices, he was also taken up in more controversial works; the *Summa* lies behind the treatment of the vices in Wyclif's *Trialogus*, for example. See *Wyclif: Trialogus*, trans. Stephen E. Lahey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33.

[33] See Craun, 17-18. The sins in the *Somme* are "oiseuses, vantance, losenge, detraccion, mençonges, parjuremenz, contenz, murmure, rebellion, blaspheme" [idle words, vaunting, flattery, detraction (backbiting), lies, perjury (i.e., swearing false oaths), striving or discord, murmur, rebellion, blasphemy]. *Somme le Roi*, 39.10 (p. 158).

þe whilke to þe throte mast falles.
Now wille I shewe and noght hyde
Þe synne opon þe tothir syde,
Þat synne of þe mouthe es called bi skille
And falles to þe tunge þat es ille.[34]

Gluttony on the one side falls to the throat, while speech on the other falls to the tongue, but both are sins of the mouth. That bodily emphasis partakes of a tradition independent of Peraldus attested in other thirteenth-century devotional works. The *Ancrene Wisse*, for example, discusses speech and custody of the mouth within the framework of the five senses, and again speech's origins in the mouth are paramount: "spekynge. and smacchinge [tasting]. beoþ in mouþ boþe," as the fourteenth-century Vernon text explains, "As siht is I.þe [in the] eiȝe."[35] The late fourteenth-century Middle English "Pistell of Seynt Jerome," a misattributed translation of a letter by the late antique heretic Pelagius, insists on the role of all the senses in combating verbal sin. "Hegge þine eres with thornes so þat þu here not schrewed tounges," the translation advises, quoting Ecclesiasticus 28, "& þerfor whan þu heres bakbityng turne a wey þin eres. make heuy chere, ansswere not with þi tonge, withholde þyn eigen fro hym."[36] Ears, eyes, tongues, and faces are all recruited to fight backbiting, a bodily response to a sin defined in Peraldus more by its social disruption than its physical effects.

The understanding of verbal sin therefore emerged from distinct and non-continuous frameworks, although long English pastoral works happily assimilated multiple frameworks into one heterogeneous text. The *Speculum vitae*, for example, not only discusses verbal sin as the obverse of gluttony, but also places individual sins under the rubric of the Seven Deadly Sins (3514-5266) and repeats them *in toto* in a subsequent section dedicated to the *peccata oris* (5641-5700). In spite of this heterogeneity of content, their emphasis is, in general, pragmatic and didactic, and the authorial voice is suited to the presumptively practical ends of direct instruction. They directly and confidently address their reader, laying out how they should be read and what spiritual utility will be found therein. They present themselves as something like technical manuals: in a memorable metaphor, Ralph Hanna has described them as spiritual IKEA instructions.[37] The shared goals and naked utility of catechetical writings means that many of them read quite similarly – but as Rita Copeland points out, "their cultural work is to be

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[34] *Speculum Vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna using materials assembled by Venetia Somerset, 2 vols., EETS o.s. 331-32 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2008), 13551-58. Henceforth cited by line number.

[35] See *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: The 'Vernon' Text, Edited from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng poet. a. I*, EETS o.s. 310, ed. Arne Zettersten and Bernhard Diensberg with an introduction by H. L. Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 25-39 (25). Cf. the much earlier phrasing in ms. sigla A: "Spellunge and smechunge beoð i muð baðe, as sihðe is i þe ehe." *Ancrene Wisse*, 27 (2.265).

[36] London, British Library Royal MS 18 A. X, 74v. On the readership of this text, see E. A. Jones, "The Heresiarch, the Virgin, the Recluse, the Vowess, the Priest: Some Medieval Audiences for Pelagius's Epistle to Demetrias," *Leeds Studies in English*, n. s. 31 (2000): 205-27.

[37] Ralph Hanna, "*Speculum Vitae* and the Form of *Piers Plowman*," in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 121-39 (127-28).

essentially the same, to present an unvarying and predictable catechetical programme" in the effort to create and maintain a Christian community.[38] The authors of these texts present themselves not as David the penitent, but David with pincers: they are teachers, instructors, correctors. Their influence should not be understated. The pioneering scholarly discussions of the sins of the tongue have shown how these long catechetical works were reflected in the landmarks of Ricardian literature.[39] The *Somme le roi* and its English versions cemented a vernacular vocabulary for Peraldus's Latin system of sins; though that vocabulary – "grucching" for *murmur* and backbiting for *detractio*, for example – predates Peraldus, only after the mid-fourteenth century is it used consistently and systematically.[40]

Despite this shared vocabulary, however, the treatment of the sins of the tongue changes with sudden efflorescence of shorter and more diverse devotional writing in the mid-to-late fourteenth century, as a part of broader shifts in the culture of religious vernacular writing. It is a familiar story, but one worth rehearsing again.[41] Burgeoning lay demand for participation in the religious life, or emulation of it, propelled the production of new devotional texts and the re-compilation and promulgation of others. Guidance in contemplation increasingly complemented catechesis, even in seemingly basic instructional works (about which, see below). More complex works mixed pastoral instruction, penitential self-examination, Scriptural translation, and anticlerical or reformist polemic.[42] Translations of continental devotional writing likewise contributed to this new culture of English religious writing. Long catechetical poems like *Handlyng Synne* and the *Speculum vitae* did not cease to be copied, and though prose largely replaced verse as the mode of instruction, the obsolescence of the tradition they represent has perhaps been overstated – *The Book of Vices and Virtues* dates to the 1380s; Robert Shottesbrook produced his one-off translation of the *Somme le roi, Aventure and Grace*, in 1451; and Caxton printed his own translation of the *Somme*, the *Royal Book*, in 1485.[43] But later fourteenth-century

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[38] Rita Copeland, writing in Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, "Classroom and Confession," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 376-406 (392).

[39] See Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, but also Joan Heiges Blythe, "Sins of the Tongue and Rhetorical Prudence in *Piers Plowman*," in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed. Richard G. Newhauser and John A. Alford (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 119-42; and Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: the Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2007).

[40] For early attestations, see OED, s. v. "grutch," 1, and "backbite," v., 1.

[41] For the best recent treatment of a laicized late medieval religious culture, see Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[42] The above is indebted to Vincent Gillespie, "Anonymous Devotional Writings," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 127-49 (129-30 especially) and Nicole E. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[43] On *Aventure and Grace*, see Edward Wilson, "Sir Robert Shottesbrook (1400-1471): Translator," *N&Q* 28.4 (Aug. 1981): 303-305, and Ralph Hanna III, "Sir Thomas Berkeley and his Patronage," *Speculum* 64.4 (Oct. 1989): 878-916 (905-06). Note, however, the way Shottesbrook presents his effort at translation in the closing colophon: "**T**his trete I clepe Aventure and grace by this resoun þer as I was not perfecte of the langage of frensch by symple

religious writing increasingly opted not to reproduce systematic listings of vices and virtues, turning to other devotional purposes instead.

In such works, verbal sin was not overlooked, but it ceased to be compartmentalized: the vocabulary developed by Peraldus and his French and English translators instead becomes distributed into discussions of the Commandments, of contemplative ascent, and social life. Even in most abstract or schematic works, the Peraldan segregation of verbal sin is largely avoided. The *Lectulus floridus*, a short late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century prose elaboration of a metaphor of the soul as bed for Christ, is a case in point. It recapitulates certain mainstays of catechesis – the sheet, oversheet, and coverlet are faith, hope, and charity, respectively; the curtain of the will runs on seven rings that are the seven works of mercy – and is careful to include verbal sin in its instruction: "þe silloure ouer þi bede schal be silens. þat is kepinge þi tounge so þat þou sclander no man ne þe name of god in ydelnes. and in gret oþes sweringe Kepe the fro bakbityng and foule wordes speikinge."[44] The "silloure," or canopy, clearly enjoys a position of prominence in this allegory of the soul, and it reproduces the standard vocabulary associated with the sins of the tongue.[45] But the silloure of silence is tied up with "twyne of persuerance," itself on hooks of "a siker purpos neuer to turne aȝene into synne."[46] In other words, the taxonomical approach has been replaced in this later work by an attitude at once more metaphorical and more holistic, a tool for devout imagination rather than diagnosis.[47]

The shift in approach in the later fourteenth century meant that discussion of the sins of the tongue, even while sharing the comparatively straightforward didactic and soteriological goals that largely guided the earlier works, came to serve other purposes as well. In some cases they came to inflect debates over lay participation in religious life, church governance, and liturgical practice. This is not to say that Pecham's syllabus ceased to be observed, but rather that it came to be invested with new energies, especially as devotional works for the laity became

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undirstondyng of the langage methowght it was vertues I Aventured to drawe it in to englisch ¶ and in many places ther I coude not englisch it grace of the holy goste yafe me englisch acordyng to the sentens wich come of grace / So þe ferste bygonne with aventure and so folowid grace / Wherefor I may well clepe it Aventure and grace." The effort as presented as a spiritual wager and a devotional act, rather than the action of an authoritative figure; see Oxford, Bodleian Library MS e Musaeo 23, f. 161r.

[44] A. I. Doyle, "'Lectulus noster floridus': An Allegory of the Penitent Soul," in *Literature and Religion*, 179-90 (188, ll. 60-64).

[45] *MED*, s. v. "celure," 1.

[46] "'Lectulus noster floridus,'" 188 ll. 64-68.

[47] The text's elaborate, piece-by-piece construction and allegoresis of the bed also reflects the rhetorical use of *picturae*, a practice longstanding in medieval sermons; see Mary J. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Rhetoric, Meditation, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). The sumptuousness of the bed of the soul implies a wealthy audience (and a comfort with wealth characteristic of fifteenth-century aristocratic or aspirational devotion): compare the poverty of Mary and Christ's bed, without "gaiȝe couerelites ne testres [headboards], curtynes, docers [ornamental cloths], quischines [cushions]," in the fourteenth-century *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. Adrian J. McCarthy (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 49, on which see below.

more clearly and explicitly anchored in vernacular translations of Scripture.[48] The following section will trace those new energies as they were realized in one subset of the syllabus, and one whose promulgation particularly called on the resources of the vernacular Bible: the teaching of the Ten Commandments. Because the Commandments lay out the lawful ways to live in society and are intended as a divine compact with a specific community, they were particularly important to the definition of a devout reading public.

III. Speech and Scorn in the *Pore Caitif*

If medieval thinkers took an ambivalent discourse on speech from the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Pauline epistles, the directives in the Second and Eighth Commandments are comparatively straightforward: God's name must not be taken in vain and no false witness may be given.[49] These straightforward directives came to serve as organizing rubrics for a broader and more diverse set of teachings, however. The expositions of the decalogue that introduced such complexity are not, of course, new to the late fourteenth century. The *Somme le roi* opens with a short exposition of the commandments, as do its Middle English translations; the mid-fourteenth-century *Lay Folks Catechism* presents them second, after the fourteen articles of the faith.[50] These expositions are comparatively brief. The connections with broader discourses on the vices and virtues are left unstated.

In the late-fourteenth century composite treatise known as the *Pore Caitif*, however, the discussion of the Commandments is considerably fuller.[51] As a work of religious instruction, the

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[48] Lay desire for Biblical materials is fitfully evident much earlier in the fourteenth century as well. Thus, for example, the Pepys *Riwle* not only rewrites its source so as to be address to an unenclosed and mixed-gender audience, it is formatted in a manuscript so as to appear like a commentary on scriptural *sententiae*. For its directions on speech, see *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Edited from Magdalene College, Cambridge MS. Pepys 2498*, EETS o.s. 274, ed. A. Zettersten (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1976), 25-38. On the milieu of its making, see Ralph Hanna, "English Biblical Texts before Lollardy and their Fate," in *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*, ed. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge, Suff: 2003), 141-53; and Hanna, *London Literature*, 148-221.

[49] All references to the Ten Commandments will follow the Augustinian numbering convention.

[50] See *Somme le Roi*, cap. 1, 99-105; *Book of Vices and Virtues*, 1-6; in the creatively rearranged *Speculum vitae*, they are framed by the exposition of the Pater Noster, at ll. 959-1376. For the *Lay Folks' Catechism*, see the Thoresby (T) version in *The Lay Folks' Catechism*, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth, EETS o.s. 118 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1901), version T, lines 168-268. The later, interpolated Lambeth version (L) massively expands the discussion to nearly five hundred lines, mostly of inserted commentary; see lines 485-982. On the limitations of this edition, see Anne Hudson, "A New Look at the Lay Folks' Catechism," *Viator* 16 (1985): 243-58.

[51] As is widely lamented, no published critical edition of the *Pore Caitif* exists. Unless otherwise noted, all citations from the *Pore Caitif* will be to "*The Pore Caitif*: Edited from MS Harley 2336 with Introduction and Notes," ed. Sister Mary Teresa Brady (unpublished PhD diss., Fordham University, 1954). Future references will be cited in-text by page number. The date of the *Pore Caitif* has not been definitively established, but probably falls in the last quarter of the fourteenth century; a concise summary of the debate and the evidence is available in Moira Fitzgibbons,

Pore Caitif is at once practical-minded and ambitious in scope: while it lacks the theological subtlety and experimentation that characterizes its more canonical late-fourteenth-century contemporaries, its standard fourteen tracts describe an arc from the catechetical basics of Crede, Commandments, and Pater Noster to higher-order contemplation partly cribbed from Rolle.[52] It runs from the basics to the heights of lay religious experience, that is, and therefore stands in a position of historical transition between earlier long catechetical works, from which it borrows extensively, and the more heterogeneous world of post-1380 lay devotion. Nicholas Watson has described the *Pore Caitif*'s project as that of "democratizing the spiritual life," based on a set of truths "oriented towards feeling and praxis, not speculation," and equally available to laity and clergy.[53] Fittingly, the *Pore Caitif* was very popular. It survives at least in part in fifty-six manuscripts, making it one of the blockbusters of fourteenth-century English writing.[54] As with the earlier works discussed above, some of that popularity can probably be attributed to its pretense to basic, objective, and technical catechetical instruction, a pretense that seems to have been fulfilled in reception.[55] The prologue promises, for instance, that:

> This tretis compilid of a pore caitif. & nedi of goostli help of al cristen peple: bi þe greet merci & help of god. shal teche symple men & wymmen of good will. þe riȝt weie to

"Women, Tales, and 'Talking Back' in *Pore Caitif* and *Dives and Pauper*," in *Middle English Religious Writing in Practice: Texts, Readers, and Transformations*, ed. Nicole Rice (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 181-214 (188-89).

[52] The exposition of the Commandments falls second in the standard order of tracts, excluding the Prologue. The standard order, as reproduced from the first of Sister Mary Teresa Brady's foundational articles, "The Pore Caitif: An Introductory Study," *Traditio* 10 (1954), 529-548 (532): Prolog; 1. The Crede; 2. The Heestis; 3. The Pater Noster; 4. Counceil of Crist; 5. Vertuous Pacience; 6. Of Temptacioun; 7. Chartre of Heuen; 8. Of Goostli Bateile (*aka* Hors or Armer of Heuen); 9. The Name of Ihesu; 10. The Loue of Ihesu; 11. Of Verri Meeknes; 12. The Effect of Wille; 13. Actiif Liif and Contemplacioun; 14. The Mirrour of Chastite. The *Pore Caitif* borrows from Rolle in at least eight of these tracts, all drawn from the final sequence of ten, described in the prologue as "summe short sentencis excitinge men to heuenli desiir" (2). This debt was first noted by Hope Emily Allen, but is most fully discussed in Brady's linked complex of articles: "Rolle's 'Form of Living' and 'The Pore Caitif,'" *Traditio* 36 (1980): 426-35; "The Seynt and his Boke: Rolle's *Emendatio vitae* and *The Pore Caitif*," *14th Century English Mystics Newsletter* 7.1 (1981): 20-31; and "Rolle and the Pattern of Tracts in 'The Pore Caitif,'" *Traditio* 39 (1983): 456-65.

[53] Nicholas Watson, "Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God," *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997): 85-124 (109).

[54] A. I. Doyle described the *Pore Caitif* as "the most successful" of the original English prose guides to devotion; see his discussion in "A survey of the origins and circulation of theological writings in English in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1954), 48-56. For the count of manuscripts, see most recently Kalpen Trivedi, "The 'Pore Caitif': *Lectio* through *Compilatio*, Some Manuscript Contexts," *Mediaevalia* 20 (2001): 129-52 (129). The number of surviving manuscripts compares with the ten works discussed in Sargent, "What Do the Numbers Mean?".

[55] See Gabriel Hill, "Pedagogy, Devotion, and Marginalia: Using the *Pore Caitif* in Fifteenth-Century England," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41 (2015): 188-207.

heuene / If þei wolen bisie hem to haue it in mynde & worche þeraftir: without multiplicacioun of manye bookis (1)

The positioning of the prologue is canny, suspending without entirely conflating a number of conventional distinctions. The compiler adopts the posture of the penitent, "a pore caitif. & nedi of goostli help of al cristen peple," but the treatise produced by that compiler is an unambiguously effective teacher. A specific method of reading is prescribed here, but it embraces both the catechist's insistence on works and the mental focus enjoined by guides to contemplative life. Naturally, then, a single compilation can stand in for the "multiplicacioun of manye bookis" – hence Watson's vision of a democratizing text, capable of compressing the contents of a library (or at least a large miscellany) into the space of a single prose treatise.

The *Pore Caitif*'s tract on the Commandments (or "Heestis") delivers on this promise, condensing aphorisms and glosses from "manye bookis" – with a marked bias toward the sometimes-unmarked (depending on manuscript) translation of Scripture – into fairly straightforward teaching. The tract, the longest in the *Pore Caitif*, is not a literary masterpiece: it is intensely reiterative and overlaps substantially with material in other English catechetical books.[56] It also shares considerable amounts of material with other Decalogue commentaries from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.[57] It was very widely disseminated, however, and instructions on proper speech and verbal sin are particularly ubiquitous within it.[58] While the discussion of the Second and Eighth Commandments are unsurprisingly the most intensely concerned with custody of the mouth, the inherited vocabulary associated with the sins of the tongue recurs throughout the tract. In the discussion of the Fifth Commandment, for

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[56] See Brady's introduction to the tract in "*Pore Caitif*," xci-xciv. Among its sources is "a greet doctour parisiens" – probably Peraldus. See "*Pore Caitif*," 220n69/6-7.

[57] Judith Jefferson has pointed out the considerable overlap between the *Pore Caitif* and other contemporary decalogue commentaries, but concludes that a common source in a "shared compendium" is more likely than a direct textual relationship. The interpolated versions are an exception, as they do have a direct textual relationship with some Wycliffite texts. See Judith Anne Jefferson, "An Edition of the Ten Commandments Commentary in BL Harley 2398 and the Related Version in Trinity College Dublin 245, York Minster XVI.L.12 and Harvard English 738 Together with Discussion of Related Commentaries" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1995), clxxx-xi.

[58] While my treatment of the *Pore Caitif* will be largely limited to its decalogue commentary, the discussion of speech in the *Pore Caitif* is not limited to that tract. The allegorical "Hors or Armer of Heuen," for example, follows the pattern of the *Lectulus floridus* but with the rather more exciting conceit of the body as horse and spirit as rider, explains that the saddle of mildness directs that the reader "kepe myldenesse in herte: & lete not out of þi mouþ neþir tunge. no wickid wordis" (141). This image seems more in keeping with the tradition of the *Ancrene Wisse* and Psalm 38; the commentary on the Ten Commandments is, as I discuss below, more socially-minded and contentious, in the vein of Psalm 51. Although I will refer to a number of distinct decalogue commentaries below, this chapter will not address their complex textual tradition. The fullest and most up-to-date treatment is in Jefferson, "Ten Commandments Commentary," updating Anthony Martin, "The Middle English Versions of *The Ten Commandments*, with Special Reference to Rylands English MS 85," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 64 (1981): 191-217. See also Fiona Somerset, *Feeling like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 81-98.

example, more space is given over to the explanation of "goostli manslauȝtir of mouþ" than to actual bodily murder (54).[59] Manslaughter of mouth is itself subdivided "in þre maners." "Þe ffirst is in liyng. for þe mouþ þat lieþ: sleeþ þe soule," the compiler explains, translating Wisdom 1:11.[60] Liars kill their own souls, that is. Flatterers, guilty of "fals flatering eþir preisyng in synne & wickidnes," wound themselves and others (55). Flattery "bi ony fals colouring: hiden oþir mennes goostli deeþ in her owne errour," failing a basic ethical requirement to others on account of "fals colouring" of pleasant speech (55). But flattery not only reflects a disjunction between speech and the real state of the world, but also between speech and the flatterer's inward state: "glosers & flaterers. þat beren hony in her mouþ bi smeþe wordis. & galle of deeþ in her herte bi priue hate" (55). Although the *Pore Caitif* does not link verbal sin and gluttony, the ossified gustatory metaphor of honeyed words and gall in the heart betrays an ongoing, if occulted, somatic connection between taste and speech.[61] The point, though, is that the pleasure of flattery does double damage, hiding both speaker's malice and auditor's flaws.

As is characteristic of the *Pore Caitif*'s teaching on speech, the discussion of manslaughter of mouth ultimately emphasizes the contextual and social damage of the sin. Flattery obscures a sinner's self-knowledge. Both flatterer and flattered have undisclosed secrets (the flattered's "goostli deeþ," the flatterer's "priue hate"), but the flatterer *knows* the flattered's secret; in failing to disclose it, the flatterer condemns him or herself.[62] The analysis of backbiting, meanwhile, moves from an ethical register to a social and legal one:

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[59] The idea of murder-by-mouth is by no means original to the *Pore Caitif*. The *Speculum vitae*, for example, holds that "Thurgh tunge also may be sone / Slaghter on twa maners done" (1073-74). But those two manners are "thurgh commaundement" and "thurgh suggestyoun"; that is, through the verbal incitement of bodily murder, rather than the forms of spiritual death outlined in detail in the *Pore Caitif*.

[60] "Custodite ergo vos a murmuratione quae nihil prodest et a detractione parcite linguae quoniam responsum obscurum in vacuum non ibit os autem quod mentitur occidit animam." [Therfore kepe ȝe ȝou fro grutchyng, that profitith no thing, and fro bacbityng spare ȝe the tunge; for a derk word schal not go in to veyn; forsothe the mouth that lieth, sleeth the soule.] The same clause is repeated verbatim in the *Pore Caitif*'s treatment of the Eighth Commandment (71). While I refer to the passage as the *Pore Caitif*'s translation, the compiler is probably working from the Early Version of the Wycliffite Bible; see M. Teresa Brady, "Lollard Sources of 'The Pore Caitif,'" *Traditio* 44 (1988): 389-418.

[61] "Smeþe," on the other hand, is a tactile metaphor still in use today: "What a smooth talker!" While the image of honey and gall is widely repeated, the *Pore Caitif*'s conflation of sinfully "smooth" and "sweet" speech is slightly more unusual. The image recurs in the prologue to the tract on the *Pater Noster*: "God reckiþ not of long tariyng. ne of smeþe wordis. eþir rymed in preier / ffor seynt gregore seiþ. veri preiyng is not to speke fair wordis with mouþ" (93). The image is shared by the *Book to a Mother*, where it comes in the midst of a characteristically thorough conceit aligning the process of sin with childrearing: "Sinful men ȝeuen souke whanne þei wiþ swete semynge, smeþe wordes steren a man to synne, oþer whanne he haþ do synne, fauereþ him þerinne wiþ fals fauour." See *Book to a Mother*, 133.

[62] See Edwin Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and Amanda Walling, "Friar Flatterer: Glossing and the Hermeneutics of Flattery in *Piers Plowman*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 21 (2007): 57-76.

> Þe secunde mansleyng is of bacbiting... þe bacbiter sleeþ first him silf: þoruȝ his owne wickidnesse. & malice of his herte / and also him þat heeriþ & consentiþ to his fals tellyng: & aftirward perauenture. makiþ it worse / Also he sleeþ him goostli. whom he bacbitiþ: in as moche as is in him / ffor he makiþ him lese his good loos & fame (54)

The speaker condemns himself on account of his "owne wickidnesse. & malice of his herte," but he also condemns the hearer who consents to his sin; moreover, he destroys his victim's good reputation ("loos") and fame. The wickedness of backbiting, the listener's consent, and the victim's loss of reputation (a situation with real legal consequences) are all forms of spiritual death.[63] In other words, the *Pore Caitif* explains one commandment – the text of which does not address speech whatsoever – such that it reflects upon a variety of verbal trespasses in terms drawn from the discourse on the sins of the tongue. The escalating body count in this excursus on murderous speech reflects an underlying sense of the contagion of sinful speech.[64] All of this discussion is anchored in Wisdom 1:11 – the *Pore Caitif* speaks very clearly to the desire for Englished scripture – but a full social world is implied by the elaboration of the verse.

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The Commandments that bear directly on speech, the Second and the Eighth, are discussed in terms of the speaker's relationship to God. Much of this is cast as violence against God. Some is literal and bodily, as in the familiar image of curses and oaths dismembering Christ. Other points are more nuanced, depending on the intention of the swearer: thus, in the text of the Eighth Commandment, the compiler cites Grosseteste as saying "þat he þat sweriþ fals bi god: makiþ god fals & no god" (69). The sense here that the misnaming of God bends into idolatry is reinforced throughout the tract. In the gloss to the Second Commandment, for example, the compiler translates and elaborates on Christ's directions against swearing in Matthew 5:33-37, explaining "þat it is ydolatrie" and "souereyn blasfemy" to swear by a created thing (38). The citation of this passage is common in late medieval verbal instruction, including other glosses on the Second Commandment.[65] But the compiler of the *Pore Caitif* adds a pragmatic alternative to oaths – one should earn trust by truth:

> for þe herte & þe mouþ. shulden acorde in speche: & not seie oon & þenke an oþir / þerfore crist doubliþ þis ȝhe. & þis nay: as þouȝ he wolde seie / If ȝe seien ȝhe in ȝoure

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[63] On rhetorics of consent, see Craun, *Ethics and Power*. Ongoing work by Fiona Somerset is focused on this question; see (for now) *Feeling like Saints* 39n31 and n32. On the legal repercussions of *fama* and *infamia*, see Edward Peters, "Wounded Names: The Medieval Doctrine of Infamy," in *Law in Mediaeval Life and Thought*, ed. Edward B. King and Susan J. Ridyard (Sewanee: The Press of the University of the South, 1990), 43-90, and F. R. P. Akehurst, "Name, Reputation, and Notoriety in French Customary Law," in *Fama: the Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 75-94.

[64] On verbal contagion, see 2 Timothy 2:16-17: "Profana autem et vaniloquia devita, multum enim proficiunt ad impietatem, et sermo eorum ut cancer serpit" [But eschewe thou vnhooli and veyn spechis, for whi tho profiten myche to vnfeithfulnesse, and the word of hem crepith as a canker]. See also Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 103-26, discussing paranoid listening (in this case, of a military that enforces the regime of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell") that "consistently closes the gap between the speaking of a desire and the desire that is being spoken" (124).

[65] See, e.g., *Book of Vices and Virtues*, 320.

> herte: seie ȝhe wiþ ȝoure mouþ. þese two acorde / and if ȝe seien nay in ȝoure herte; seie ȝe nay with ȝoure mouþ. & be ȝe trewe men. (41-42)[66]

Two very different kinds of Christian falsehood are conflated here. The warnings against idolatry, the substitution created for creator, are transformed into a warning against hypocrisy instead. The swearing of oaths is assimilated to flattery; the solution to both is to make sure heart and mouth accord. This is one way the compiler democratizes the religious life. The discussion of idolatry, a relatively complicated discourse about the proper approach to the divine, is made into a kind of commonsensical set of ethical directives.

This flexibility in approach – which bends the definition of a particular sin such that its remedy can be presented as a pragmatic universal – recurs throughout the tract's discussion of verbal sin. The *Pore Caitif*'s discussion of the First Commandment declares, for example, that "seynt austin seiþ. þat a deuout suer plesiþ more to god: þan ydil herier [worshiper] eþir preiser / fforwhi as he seiþ. trewe heriing [veneration] of herte: is folowing of werk / fforsoþe to worshipe. & not to folowe: is no þing ellis. but liyngli to flatere" (32). The same passage is repeated in the discussion of the Third Commandment. Each suggests that one can "flatere" in relations with God, and that flattery is not limited to language. Indeed, the conception of sinful language is repeatedly pushed to encompass action, as in the compiler's most capacious image of taking God's name in vain, at the opening of the discussion of the Second Commandment:

> whanne man is baptisid & takiþ cristendom: þanne is þe name of crist printid in his soule / which is boþe god & man. & name aboue alle names... but whanne man brekiþ þis couenannt: & bicomeþ þe feendis seruant doinge deedli synne: þanne he takiþ cristis name in veyn. (36)

While the ideas here are not necessarily original to the *Pore Caitif*, the compact succession of concepts are indicative of how verbal instruction is both expanded and distributed across the tract on the Commandments. Christ's name is *printed*, a textual metaphor linking parchment and soul; the breaking of the covenant is an action ("doinge"), which *becomes* swearing, a sin of the tongue.[67] The congruence of intention, utterance, and action – of *cordis*, *oris*, and *operis* – is of the utmost importance. Again, this tripartite attention is as old as Christian teaching on sin, and its application to the Second Commandment is by no means new to the *Pore Caitif*: Rolle's

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[66] "Trewe men" is reminiscent of Wycliffite discourse; see Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" in *Lollards and their Books* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), 165-80. See further below.

[67] The metaphor of Christ and soul as book here is consistent with, though considerably less well-developed than, similar structuring metaphors in the *Charters of Christ* (a "spin-off" of which is the "Chartre of Heuen," the seventh of the *Pore Caitif*'s tracts according to the standard order) or the *Book to a Mother*. On textual metaphors in the former, see Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), especially 47-90 (52). In the latter, see Nicholas Watson, "Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman: Devotion and Dissent in *Book to a Mother*," in *Medieval Women – Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000), 169-184 (176-78); Nicole Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline*, 65-67; and Elisabeth Dutton, "Christ the Codex: Compilation as Literary Device in *Book to a Mother*," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 35 (2004), 81-100. More generally, see Vincent Gillespie, "*Lukynge in haly bukes*: *Lectio* in Some Late Medieval Spiritual Miscellanies," *Analecta Cartusiana* 106 (1984): 1-27 (10-13).

English commentary on the Decalogue, for example, holds that "the nam of God es takyn in vayne one many maners, with herte and with mouthe, with werke."[68] But this listing offers Rolle the opportunity to subdivide the methods of breaking the commandment, whereas the *Pore Caitif*'s approach is resolutely synthetic, repeatedly suggesting any form of sin necessitates, or can be understood as, the others.

This way of approaching sin emphasizes the devout alignment of inward thought and outward self, but it also depends upon a historically specific understanding of the social world in which speech circulates. In the discussion of the Second Commandment, the compiler cautions against invoking God or the saints by means of an analogy. God and the saints are compelled to listen when we call them, so:

> biþenke þee wel. þat if þou clepidist a pore man: to bere witnesse of ech word þat þou spekist / in litil tyme he wolde haue indignacioun þerof: & seie þat þou scornedist him/ & moche more almyʒti god: þat forfendiþ such vein swering. & cleping to bere witnesse / ffor þe cause shulde be boþe trewe & riʒt needful (37)

It is admittedly an effective image: the oath-teller is the self-involved boy who cried wolf, needlessly imposing on an increasingly upset deity. The similitude of the poor man and almighty God is a curious one, however. It seems almost incomplete. The kenosis implied by it – the deep Christian image of God *as* a poor man – is ultimately resisted by the terms of the analogy, by the transitional words "*moche more almyʒti* god," which enforce an utter non-identity between God and man.[69] The analogy seems as though it is made for rhetorical effect alone. We are invited to imagine the power differential between the poor man and almighty God in order to punctuate the force of the latter's indignation. The compiler draws on a similar analogy only a few pages later to explain why excusing oath-swearing likewise incites God's ire:

> I preie þee. If þi seruaunt dide a þing þat þou haddist him forfendid: euer þe oftener þat he dide it: þe worse þou woldist be apaied. and more ʒit if he scornede þee þerto. & seide þat he dide so. for þi loue to haue þee in mynde / loke now bi þi silf hou þee þenkiþ. & nameli if þou were his lord eþir his kyng / þanne moche more wole god: þat is lord of alle (39-40)[70]

The *Pore Caitif* is certainly not averse to repetition, but rarely in such close proximity. Besides, this is not quite a repetition. The relationship implied in the two analogies is not the same: in the first, God takes the place of a poor man, the sinner a vain rich man; in the second, the sinner is a disloyal servant, God an angry lord. But the framing and terminology of the latter clearly recalls the former, both driving towards the rhetorical call to imagine how "moche more" God's anger is than human anger. Both analogies draw on a deep reservoir of New Testament imagery of lordship and servitude, but in both cases the exploration of servitude is limited: unlike Christ's parables or Julian of Norwich's parable of the lord and the servant, the *Pore Caitif*'s analogies ask "þou" the reader to identify only with the position of relative worldly power.[71] The

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[68] *Richard Rolle: Uncollected Prose and Verse with related Northern texts*, EETS o.s. 329, ed. Ralph Hanna (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16.

[69] On kenosis and Middle English devotional writing, see Watson, "Conceptions of the Word."

[70] Two examples: in London, British Library MS Harley 2336, Brady's base text, the former falls on fol. 24v, the latter 26v; in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 1286, the former falls on 46v, the latter 48r.

[71] For a different reading of similar images in the prologue to the Ten Commandments commentary in London, British Library MS Harley 2398, see Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, 89.

compiler's emphasis is not on the believer's servitude to God, but on the emotion that disrespect and disobedience both display: scorn.

Scorning, *derisio*, is itself among the sins of the tongue. The *Pore Caitif*'s tract on the Crede names it as such: "ech word þat edifieþ not þe heerer," it warns, "turneþ in to peril to þe speker," but the harder reckoning will be for "synful speche / as of bacbiting sclaundring scornyng fals accusying. liyng. swering : cursyng & lecherous speche" (13).[72] Scorning, like backbiting or grucching, is an ineluctably *social* sin of the tongue, about one's verbal relationship to other people. The definition given by the *Speculum vitae* makes this relationality clear: "Skornynge... es when a man mas hethynge / of othir men thurgh grete nycete" [scorning is when a man makes mockery of other men through great foolishness] (3735-37). The lived experience of social hierarchy lurks behind such definitions: if grucching or complaining is the verbal sin of the powerless, scorning is the verbal sin of the powerful.[73] The servant's scorn for his lord (and, by extension, the sinner's scorn for God) is all the more galling for it.

The *Pore Caitif*'s sense of the relationship to the divine in speech is therefore built around the understanding of earthly social relations. Once again, such social understanding is typical rather than exceptional of late medieval devotion. The compiler suggests the point himself in the introduction to the tract on the Commandments: the first three Commandments dictate a believer's relationship to God, the next seven "what þing man shal do to his euencristen: & what he shulde not do / & þese comaundementis ben so hard knyttid togidir: þat who so loueþ god fulli. he loueþ his euencristen / and so loueþ not hem: he loueþ not god" (25). Because the relation to God and relation to fellow-Christians is reciprocally "knyttid togidir" throughout the explication of the Commandments, the strict separation of personal and social, divine and earthly, contemplative life and active, never becomes fully possible. The sins of the tongue imply a world, and even a simple primer understands that.

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The world of the *Pore Caitif*'s tract on the Commandments is, rather surprisingly, defined by contention. The tract on the Crede, which in most manuscripts precedes the tract on the Commandments, is introduced in the general Prologue with a metaphor of elementary education. The Crede comes first for a believer in search of salvation, the compiler writes, just "as a child willynge to be a clerk. bigynneþ first þe ground. þat is his abice" [i.e., A.B.C.] (2). Unsurprisingly, the sentiment is not original to the *Pore Caitif*. The *Speculum vitae* underlines the importance of the Pater Noster, for example, by recalling that "when first a chylde es sette to

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A similar conflation of social and spiritual roles in Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* is discussed by Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15-18.

[72] Rolle also includes scorn among his list in the *Form of Living*; see *Rolle: Prose and Verse*, 11. Closer to milieu of the *Pore Caitif*, the *Chastising of God's Children* likewise includes scorn among the sufferings of Christ's children (drawing on the tradition of the mocking of Christ), but also among the first of its six categories of temptations, those "of bineþe, [that] comeþ of oure owne flesshe, whiche scorneþ us al day wiþ glosynge and flateryng, bicause we shulde folwe his lustis and desires." Scorn becomes the master category for *other* sins of the tongue, all describing the putative agency of the body with respect to the mind. See *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 114 and 116 respectively.

[73] See my discussion of grucching in Chapter 4.

boke, / þe Pater Noster he sal first lere" – thus justifying its own choice to structure its opening around the prayer (128-29). Regardless of its originality, the metaphor is fitting for the first three catechetical tracts of the *Pore Caitif*, which serve as the basic preparatory work for the more ambitious guides to contemplation that follow. It also suggests the treatise's role as a lay reader's school, an avenue to religious vocation outside the lifework of education and ordination. The same spirit would fit the tract on the Commandments, and indeed it opens by translating Christ's simple instructions in Matthew 19:17, "if þou wolt entre in to euerlasting liif: kepe þou þe comaundementis" (24), and goes on to insist on the necessity of loving God and neighbor.

But between the delivery of these simple injunctions, the prologue shifts into a strikingly contentious mode of address:

> kepe þes comaundementis / and dispise he alle sophyms & argumentis of false flaterers & eretikis: þat boþe in werk & in word. dispisen þese heestis / and with false feyned argumentis replien aȝen symple men. seiynge þat it is not needful: to be bisy aboute þe keping of hem. ȝhe & seien þat it is meedful. sum tyme to breke hem (24)

The derogation of sinners is common in catechesis, but this passage does not follow the usual pattern: these lines are not dismissing those in thrall to the devil, but are instead imagining a scene of disputation. Fittingly, that disputation is cast in terms shared with the discourse on the sins of the tongue: the "false feyned argumentis," used by "false flaterers & eretikis" to draw "symple men" away from the Commandments, will be recalled in the "fals tellyng" of the backbiters and the "fals flatering" that leads men to death. As with the later sins of the tongue, this disputation is affectively charged – the false flatterers and heretics' speech and actions despise the Commandments, and so believers should despise them. Despising is, I think, an even stronger affect than scorn: it is the affect in which one addresses an opponent in polemic, "an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat."[74] Like the rest of the *Pore Caitif*, this polemical moment in the preface is a specimen of late fourteenth-century vernacular scripturalism. Its repudiation of "sophyms & argumentis" and its vision of an anti-church disrupting real pastoral work draws on a complex of philosophical, intra-Christian, and especially anti-Jewish polemic left by the early Church.[75] The pseudo-

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[74] Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 111-19 (111). On this interview's relationship to publics and counterpublics (on which see below), see Michael Warner, "Styles of Intellectual Publics," in *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 125-58 (151-58). See also the discussion of Foucault's view of polemic in Sean Curran, "Feeling the Polemic of an Early Motet," in *Polemic*, 65-94. I conceptualize the distance between scorning and despising as analogous to the distance between contempt and disgust in Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 337-39. On scorn, see also Cole's important discussion of scorn and shame in Margery Kempe; see *Literature and Heresy*, 155-82.

[75] For a historical approach to New Testament anti-Jewish polemic within first-century Judaism and Hellenistic conventions of slander, see Luke T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108.3 (1989): 419-41. See especially 430-31 on accusations of sophistry in philosophical schools. On the functions of anti-Jewish polemic in medieval disputational culture, see Alex J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 172-221. On the legacy of early intra-Christian debate,

Pauline Letter to Titus in particular seems to lie behind this passage.[76] But the shift into polemic in *this* text, at *this* point, is rather baffling; the resources of Biblical polemic are drawn on by later writers for their own historical and ideological ends, and it seems rather unlikely that there were genuine "argumentis" against keeping the Commandments circulating in fourteenth-century England. What ends could this forceful prologue serve?

A natural answer is historical: the *Pore Caitif* came into being in an increasingly heated culture of vernacular religious polemic. Although it draws on earlier sources, it was probably compiled after the Blackfriars Council of 1382 but before the Constitutions of Arundel in 1409 – that is, during the golden age of Middle English religious controversialism. The polemical turn in the preface to the Commandments *does* resemble certain moments in Middle English religious controversy, though, as Kalpen Trivedi has pointed out.[77] Wyclif, emerging from a culture of academic debate, inveighed against sophistry, as did English controversial writing produced in his wake: the self-defense offered by simoniacs, for example, are a "foule sophym, a foul & a sotil deceyt of antecristis clerkis."[78] Anti-Jewish polemic is also turned against other Christians in anticlerical texts; one such polemicist writes, "sum men þynke þes popys ne þese prelatys ar nat part of holy chirche, but of synagoge."[79] Such writing sometimes occurs with the *Pore Caitif*. As with other Middle English devotional works, the *Pore Caitif* was supposedly interpolated with material later deemed Wycliffite, including a critique of image-worship in the discussion of the first commandment.[80] But the prologue to the Heestis is shared across versions, and whether "interpolated" or not, *Pore Caitif* is not for the most part a controversial text. It neither inveighs against Wycliffites nor is particularly critical of church practice in any specificity, attacking only the ethical failings of priests and prelates in general terms.[81] It belongs to a vast mainstream of

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see *inter alia* John Parker, *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), 1-42.

[76] Compare, e.g., Titus 1:10-11: "Sunt enim multi ei non subditi, vaniloqui et seductores, maxime qui de circumcisione sunt, quos oportet redargui, qui universas domos subvertunt, docentes quae non oportet turpis lucri gratia." [For ther ben many vnobedient, and veyn spekeris, and disseyueris, moost thei that ben of circumcisyoun, whiche it bihoueth to be repreued; whiche subuerten alle housis, techinge whiche thingis it bihoueth not, for the loue of foul wynnyng.] See also Titus 3:9-11. For anti-philosophy rhetoric, see also Colossians 2:8; more generally, compare 1 Timothy.

[77] Kalpen Trivedi, "'Trewe techyng and false heritikys': some 'Lollard' manuscripts of the *Pore Caitif*," in *In Strange Countries: Middle English Literature and its Afterlife, Essays in Memory of J. J. Anderson*, ed. David Matthews (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011), 132-58 (152).

[78] London, British Library Additional MS 37677, 104v. On Wyclif and sophistry, see Ian C. Levy, *John Wyclif: Scriptural Logic, Real Presence, and the Parameters of Orthodoxy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003), 102-05; on the parallels between Wyclif's writings on sophistry and the *Pore Caitif*, see Trivedi, "Some 'Lollard' manuscripts," 152.

[79] *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. Thomas Arnold (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-71), 3.116/26, qtd. in Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" 171.

[80] On the complicated relationship of the *Pore Caitif* to Wycliffism, see Brady, "Lollard Sources," and Trivedi, "Some 'Lollard' manuscripts."

[81] My point here may seem to be in direct opposition to Trivedi's argument in "Some 'Lollard' manuscripts." Trivedi suggests that the supposedly interpolated manuscripts, the surviving copies

late medieval devotional writing that cannot really be described as "orthodox" nor "heterodox," transmitted by book-makers and used by readers whose tastes cannot be described according to categories assigned backward from the paradigm of post-medieval denominational politics.[82] The *Pore Caitif* emphatically belongs to the "grey area," and even challenges the straightforward polarities implied by the concept.[83] Its "eretikis" do not necessarily have a specific historical referent, and its opposing "sophyms & argumentis" are ultimately rhetorical constructions.

What the preface does instead is solicit attention and participation. It addresses an impersonal reader, unknown to the compiler but in a community of shared values, a community in part created by the text of the *Pore Caitif* itself. It imagines that reader coming to the limits of that community – *determining* those limits, in fact, with the force of his or her despising. In this momentary shift into contention, the *Pore Caitif* projects one future for its circulation. In this moment, it imagines its public.

IV. Publics

What is a public for the *Pore Caitif*? Though the term is well worn in medieval studies, using it at all risks anachronism. Anne Middleton's foundational article on "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II" claims a new kind of poetry for the late fourteenth century – one that invents a new way of addressing the civic world, predicated on the idea of poetry as a mediating, harmonizing force, intended to inculcate a new kind of community-building secular piety.[84] But

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of which are earlier than the "orthodox" and "uninterpolated" ones, both circulated earlier than the orthodox copies and were produced in a coherent and centralized group production effort originating in a "proto-Lollard" or early Wycliffite circle. Whether or not this particular claim is true (I am more or less agnostic, although I think it is very helpful to remember that the "interpolated" version may precede the "orthodox"), Trivedi's ultimate point is, I think, that "proto-Lollard" textual production actually participates in "the realms of both orthodoxy and heterodoxy," categories that are themselves too credulously assigned on the basis of ecclesiastical legislation rather than the messy realities of late medieval belief (151). I will return to this problem of classification in section IV below.

[82] This point has been made repeatedly; Anne Hudson, about manuscripts of the *Pore Caitif*, pointed out that "it is easy for a modern critic to oversimplify – to demand doctrinal consistency where a medieval reader, Wycliffite or conventional, would have been less narrow-minded." Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 425. See more recently, and very convincingly, Mary Raschko, "Common Ground for Contrasting Ideologies: The Texts and Contexts of a Schort Reule of Lif," *Viator* 40.1 (2009): 387-410; and see section IV below.

[83] See Jill C. Havens, "Shading the Grey Area: Determining Heresy in Middle English Texts," in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 337-352. Raschko, "Common Ground," 388, and Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, 3, both argue that the concept of the "grey area" runs the risk of reinscribing strict polarities of belief. See also Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry, "Devotional Cosmopolitanism in Fifteenth-Century England," in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 363-80.

[84] Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53.1 (Jan., 1978): 94-114 (100).

the essay's key term is "common" and "commune," rather than public, and Middleton is careful to use "public" adjectivally rather than nominally: public describes a mode of relation rather than a group of people, a place of circulation, or a social entity. The sole exception comes at the very end of the essay:

> The social station of the major poets – commoners to a man – in relation to the traditional audience for literary recreation may have dictated the wisdom of a broader view that embraced both as a "public" for the first time and appealed to common experience rather than to abstract, and now largely non-functioning, chivalric literary ideals as grounds for accord.[85]

Middleton presents a few things as particularly salient in the creation of a public. The poets make the public because they address multiple classes at once, in the same style. This is a matter for historical investigation because it occurs in the later fourteenth century *for the first time*. The novelty of this public brings with a concomitant rejection of past styles. But even here, at this moment of creation, "public" stays in quotation marks.

There are no publics in Middle English. The nominal form belongs to modern English only.[86] But the Latin adjective *publicus* was certainly known and used throughout the Middle Ages, and the adjectival *publik*/*publique* is attested in both Middle English and Anglo-French – although as Middleton's essay attests, other words like *common* and *open* are much preferred in English before the fifteenth century.[87] Most widely attested is the verb *publishen* (*publier* in French). The antecedent to Modern English "publish," *publishen* means most simply to make something broadly known.[88] This is the sense expressed in Lewte's directions to Will in *Piers Plowman* B: "thyng þat is pryue, publice þow it neuere" (11.104).[89] (I will return to this passage in the next chapter.) But as Felicity Riddy has shown, the word can carry a broad spectrum of more particular meanings, flexibly referring to speech, writing, or actions.[90] Some of those meanings in literary writing will be discussed in subsequent chapters, but publishing plays an important role in religious writing as well, especially when referring to speech. In the Wycliffite Bible, for example, forms of *publishen* translate by turns the Vulgate's *praedicare* (more often translated as "prechen"), *vulgare*, *publicare*, and *traducere* – verbs that refer to preaching, publicizing, and showing openly.[91] These words denote what modern theorists tend to call

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[85] Middleton, "Public Poetry," 112-13.

[86] *OED*, s. v. "public," B.

[87] *MED*, s. v. "publik(e)"; *AND* s. v. "publik." "Common profit" is the standard Middle English translation of *res publica*, as pointed out by Middleton, "Public Poetry," 100. "Even-cristen" is another term that serves the same ends; I am grateful to Nicholas Watson for pointing this out.

[88] *OED*, s.v. "publish"; *MED*, s.v. "publicen."

[89] All quotations from the B-text of *Piers Plowman*, unless otherwise noted, are from *Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well: Piers Plowman: The B Version* (rev. ed.), ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone, 1988), cited parenthetically by passus and line number.

[90] Felicity Riddy, "'Publication' before Print: The Case of Julian of Norwich," in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*, ed. Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 29-49; see especially 39-43.

[91] For *praedicare*, see, e.g., Mark 1:45, of Jesus: "He ȝede out, and bigan to preche, and publische the word, so that now he myȝte not go opynli in to the citee, but be withoutforth in

publicity, an openness to all – a less particular sense, that is, than the invitation to action and participation that the *Pore Caitif* presents.

Verbs of speaking likewise structure modern Anglophone conceptions of the public, but the verbs are more explicitly marked as interactive, dialogic, or participatory. Take Habermas's first explicit definition of the bourgeois public sphere (*bürgerlich Öffentlichkeit*) in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the most influential account of modern publics:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason (*öffentliches Rässonement*). In our [German] usage this term (i.e., *Räsonnement*) unmistakably preserves the polemical nuances of both sides: simultaneously the invocation of reason and its disdainful disparagement as merely malcontent griping.[92]

Two speech-words are worth dwelling on here. The first is the noun "debate," which in Habermas's German is instead the infinitive of the verb *auseinandersetzen*, a word whose roots point to moving things in space (to put apart) but which has come to mean the careful and painstaking verbal work of making things understood.[93] English "debate," in verbal and nominal form (in either case, a fourteenth-century adoption from French), still carries its deep Romance-language associations with battle and strife.[94] Hence the tendency, when describing Habermas's public sphere in English, to append "rational" or one of its synonyms to the word "debate" – the absence of violence and the action of critical reason are in part what are supposed to distinguish the bourgeois public sphere from the mass around it, but English vocabulary makes that distinction hard to accomplish.[95] The second word is "griping," which translates *nörgelnden*

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desert placis" (70). For *traducere*, see Matthew 1:19, where Joseph's choice not to "puplische" Mary's supposed betrayal is opposed to his leaving her "priueli" (*occulte* in the Vulgate).

[92] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 27. Bracketed and parenthetical words original to Burger's translation.

[93] Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 86: "um sich mit dieser über die allgemeinen Regeln des Verkehrs... auseinanderzusetzen." See *Duden*, s. v. "auseinandersetzen."

[94] *OED*, s. v. "debate," v. and n. See also the "argument is war" metaphor, the first case in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[95] I am in part echoing critics of Habermas here. See, e.g., Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 41-44; Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80; and the summary in Warner, "Public and Private," in *Publics and Counterpublics*, 21-63. Note, however, that Habermas himself critiques the liberal Rawlsian conception of the "public exercise of reason" – see Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14.1 (2006): 1-25.

Vernünftelei [nagging hair-splitting] and calls to mind several of the sins of the tongue: grucching, for example, and chiding.[96]

The bourgeois public sphere is a historically specific phenomenon. It emerges out of commercial civil society and against the public forms of the early modern state, whose modes of publicness descend (in Habermas's telling) from medieval sovereignty; its historical survival was doomed by liberal class limits and succeeded by a mass politics in which state and public sphere are thoroughly interpenetrated. But Habermas's ideas have nevertheless proven important for medieval studies. In some cases, this influence is tacit rather than explicit: Riddy argues in her article that "'publication' is short for public conversation," pointing away from the simple broadcasting that *vulgare* or *publicare* might imply to *conversation* and thus dialogue and exchange instead – in other words, forms of open speech characteristic of the bourgeois public sphere.[97] But for Habermas, the medieval public was not a zone of dialogue or exchange, but instead should be described as the "representative public" (*repräsentative Öffentlichkeit*). The "*publicness* (or *publicity*) of representation was not constituted as a social realm, that is, as a public sphere," he argues, "rather, it was something like a status attribute."[98]

Other medievalists have therefore directly adapted or challenged Habermas's thesis. David Lawton, in a linked series of essays, has defined late medieval "public interiorities" as paradoxical written and spoken spaces, defined by a first-person voice but open to many, which intersected with various public spheres in the world.[99] Other scholars have found that a variety of forms of public association and representation emerged in late fourteenth-century England, some limited to particular moments or localities, but others with a genuine impact on national politics.[100] John Watts has found that in late medieval England, a limited number of speaking political agents were set against a broad and deep public, representative of multiple classes and with highly divergent interests. The intersection of these groups helped to define the communitarian language of late medieval English politics, which itself constituted a genuine ideological constraint on the exercise of state power; the representative publicness of late medieval sovereignty was therefore an emergent challenge to a kind of pre-existing public

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[96] And if *nörgeln* calls to mind a class- and gender-charged discourse on verbal sin, *Vernünftelei* calls to mind sophistry. See *Duden*, s. v. "nörgeln" and "vernünfteln."

[97] "'Publication' before Print," 43. As will become clear, I largely agree with Riddy's definition. But a medieval reader would have understood it differently: Middle English "conversacioun" refers to a way of life, and thus, for example, the *Book to a Mother*'s claim that Christ's "conuersacioun is to alle þat wollen be saued þe beste remedie and þe beste rule and þe beste mirour þat mai be to ouercome synne" is about exemplarity, not exchange. *MED*, s. v. "conversacioun," 1; *Book to a Mother*, 31.

[98] Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 7.

[99] David Lawton, "Voice After Arundel," in *After Arundel: Religious writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 133-51; "Voice and Public Interiorities: Chaucer, Orpheus, Machaut," in *Answerable Style*, 284-306; "Public Interiorities," in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. Marion Turner (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2013), 93-107.

[100] See, among others, Andrew Galloway, "Communities, Crowd-Theory, and Mob-Theory in Late-Fourteenth Century English History Writing and Poetry," in *Presenting the Past, Volume 3: Mobs: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry*, ed. Nancy van Deusen and Leonard Michael Koff (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 141-64.

sphere.[101] Maura Nolan has in turn examined Lydgate's navigation of these "conflicting historical imperatives," exploiting poetic form in a way that "both shatters and asserts" Habermas's representative publicness.[102] I will return to the question of sovereign publicness in later chapters, but the salient point for this chapter is that the singularity of the Enlightenment bourgeois public sphere breaks down under historical scrutiny. Medieval public spheres do not belong in a teleological understanding of modernity, but that does not mean they did not *exist*.[103]

So real public spheres, after a fashion, were brought together in thirteenth-century marketplaces and were addressed by fourteenth-century bills, among other things.[104] Though the secular nature of the public sphere is important for Habermas's image of modernity, the broad audience of the *Pore Caitif* could be seen as an incipient public sphere. Lay *and* religious, its scale is difficult to fully reconstruct now but was almost certainly large; it was neither directly controlled by the Church nor the state; it had the persistent potentiality for "debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of" – if not exchange and labor – then education, devotion, and governance. While devotional miscellanies were often compiled for specific patrons and religious houses, the *Pore Caitif* and works like it circulated widely, and were written with this wide circulation in mind.

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[101] John Watts, "The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics," in *The Fifteenth Century IV: Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Linda Clark and Christine Carpenter (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2004), 159-180. See also I. M. W. Harvey, "Was There a Popular Politics in Fifteenth-Century England?" in *The McFarlane Legacy: Studies in Late Medieval Politics and Society*, ed. R. H. Britnell and A. J. Pollard (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 155-74; G. R. Harriss, "Dimensions of Politics," in *The McFarlane Legacy*, 1-20; Simon Walker, "Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV," *Past & Present* 166 (Feb., 2000): 31-65.

[102] Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially 1-32 (7).

[103] See James Masschaele, "The Public Space of the Marketplace in Medieval England," *Speculum* 77 (2002): 383-421 (419-20): "The type of public sphere created in the marketplaces of medieval England did not lead directly to the advent of modernity, nor did it play a meaningful role in the formation of modern political traditions. But that does not mean that medieval England lacked a public sphere, or that its public sphere was socially insignificant, or that its public sphere was irrelevant to the power relations of its own day." This imperative, to find "des espaces publics occasionnels, des occasions de déploiment d'espace public, des moments, des virtualités, des promesses non abouties," underlies a recent response to Habermas by French medievalists; see Patrick Boucheron and Nicholas Offenstadt, "Introduction générale: une histoire de l'échange politique au Moyen Âge," in *L'espace public au Moyen Âge: Débats autour de Jürgen Habermas*, ed. Patrick Boucheron and Nicholas Offenstadt (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), 1-21 (14).

[104] On markets, see Masschaele, "Public Space of the Marketplace"; on broadsides, see Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 28-29; on bill-casting, see Wendy Scase, "'Strange and Wonderful Bills': Bill-Casting and Political Discourse in Late Medieval England," *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 225-47. See also D. L. d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15-30.

As should be clear, this public can only be known in its textual rather than spatial existence, not as a public sphere but as a public *readership* – the devout reading public – as it is rhetorically called into being by things like the prologue to the "Heestis."[105] Here I think Michael Warner's nuanced response to Habermas is useful. For Warner, a public should be understood axiomatically as an interactive, participatory "relation among strangers," usually distinct by virtue of that participation from more general and hierarchal categories like class, denomination, nation, and so on.[106] Public discourse is personal, insofar as its hearers take it to be addressed to themselves, and impersonal, insofar as they know it is also addressed to unknown others.[107] Publics are created by the attention of their constituents, and so public discourse asserts a claim to attention; put another way, public discourse circulates, it thematizes its circulation, and it "must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate," both discursively and through "the pragmatics of its speech genres, idioms, stylistic markers, address, temporality, mise-en-scène, citational field, interlocutory protocols, lexicon, and so on" – through style broadly interpreted, in other words.[108] That characterization is itself an act of world-making, a calling of a public into being. The virtue of Warner's definition is that it does not imagine a singular public sphere, but plural publics and counterpublics (themselves defined by an awareness of their oppositional and/or subordinate relationship to a dominant public). That plurality allows for a more flexible theorization than Habermas's model, a particular benefit for understanding a heterogeneous medieval social world that are partly inassimilable to teleological histories of political or economic development. While Warner does not consider this possibility with regards to religion, his formula also allows for the appearance of local publics independent from existing hierarchies or roles.

Like Habermas, Warner believes that publics are more or less a phenomenon of print culture and modernity, but I do not think this objection need detain a medievalist long.[109] Warner's public has a clear antecedent in Anne Middleton's study of *Piers Plowman*'s circulation, which defines "public" in more or less the same way (and very differently from the public that she imagines coming into being "for the first time" in "Public Poetry").[110] The sense

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[105] For a similar reading of late medieval English devotional publics, and a similar caveat that the imagined readership may not have been the readership achieved, see Mary Raschko, "A Humble Guise: The Role of Prologues in the Wycliffite *Glossed Gospels*," *YLS* 31 (2017): 131-61 (134).
[106] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," in *Publics and Counterpublics*, 65-124 (74). All of what follows draws broadly on this essay.
[107] *Ibid*., 76.
[108] *Ibid*., 114.
[109] Cf. similar debates over Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), which lies behind much of my thinking in this chapter. Steven Mullaney has pointed to an affective public sphere like the one I discuss here, defined in his case by the stage rather than print, in *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 144-73.
[110] "The public is the readership imagined and posited by the composer as a necessary postulate in the historical process of bringing the work into being, for a certain effect within certain perceived historical conditions. It is inferred from a number of formal as well as rhetorical characteristics of the text." Middleton, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*," in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1982), 101-23 (102). The differences between these

of a public as a "multigeneric lifeworld organized not just by a relational axis of utterance and response but by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization" seems an apt description for late medieval manuscript culture and modes of reading, in which an anonymous copier or reader might rewrite, excerpt, or annotate a work according to their own idiosyncratic understanding of its meaning, or collocate a piece of public polemic and a work of notionally personal religious instruction, as will be discussed in the next section.[111] This is not to ignore the differences between Warner's publics and medieval textual publics, in which participation is radically limited – not only by exigencies of wealth and education, but also by more local obstacles like exemplar poverty – and in which timeframes are substantially extended: few medieval publics are as punctual as Warner's modern publics. These caveats aside, the concept remains useful for understanding late medieval English writing.

In what remains of this chapter, I will turn to the role the sins of the tongue played in negotiating and imagining public circulation in devotional writing. As I suggested above, the sins of the tongue are encoded in our modern conceptions of the public; the Habermasian public sphere is in part defined against them – lies, rumors, and backbiting are considered to be destructive to its normative rational debate, while the whole enterprise could be described as verbal trespass by its antagonists in the royalist state. Medieval writers likewise drew on verbal sin to think through norms of public address. As should already be clear, the *Pore Caitif*'s treatment of the sins of the tongue are particularly bent toward social concerns: speech matters insofar as it affects a broader community. But in a period in which, as Riddy points out, "the boundary between writing and talking is frequently blurred," it seems inevitable that rules for negotiating a *social world* in speech come to inflect how texts imagine their circulatory world.[112]

V. Making Publics with the Sins of the Tongue

That world of circulation is not always described in positive terms. The Middle English translation of Aelred of Rielvaux's *De institutione inclusarum*, cited by Riddy, inveighs against the loose tongues that emanate from an anchorite:

> an olde womman fedynge hir with tales, or elles a new iangeler and teller of tidynges of that monke, or of that clerke, or of widowes dissolucion, or of maidens wantownes, of the whiche arisith lawghyng, scornynge and vnclene thoughtes slepynge or wakynge, so that atte last the recluse is fulfilled with lust an likynge, bakbitynge, sclaundre and hatrede and the tother with mete and drinke[113]

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definitions should not be ignored. Most importantly, Warner's public *also* exists in the world in the same way that Middleton's "audience" – the "circulatory fate" of a given text, and in some ways the antithesis of her imagined "public" – does (see "Publics and Counterpublics," 92).

[111] "Publics and Counterpublics," 91.

[112] Riddy, "'Publication' before Print," 102. See more broadly Joyce Coleman*, Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[113] From the Middle English translation of Aelred of Rielvaux's *De institutione inclusarum* in Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley MS 423, quoted in Felicity Riddy, "Women talking about the things of God: a late medieval sub-culture," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 104-27 (113). On *De institutione inclusarum* and Bodley 423, see Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, 41-55.

It is useful to be reminded that the discourse on verbal sin, in addition to providing ethical guidelines and meeting lay desires for participation in religious life, could often be repressive, rhetorically violent, and misogynistic. This antifeminist passage has a forceful prohibitory power; compared to the clipped cadences of the *Pore Caitif*, the sentence is a furious crescendo. The piling-up underlines the fundamental point that sin begets sin, a familiar truism. But gossip in particular is a gateway vice precisely because of its social nature, calling others' sins up into conversation while it seeds new sins in speakers and hearers. This is a paranoid vision dependent on the same sense of contagion as the *Pore Caitif*'s representation of backbiting. Unlike usual accounts of the sins of the tavern, where gluttony gives way to verbal sin, this account *begins* with the metaphorical "fedynge hir with tales" and ends with literal "mete and drinke," but the concatenation of vices is still clear. Riddy reads this account against the grain, seeing in it a world of women's speech that is only fitfully represented in medieval writing.[114] Her reading is correct – that *is* the world placed under erasure here – but the terms of the note itself are also revealing. To achieve his ends, the writer is forced to assemble a broad catalogue of social positions: a monk, a clerk, a widow, maidens. The only way to attack the verbal sins of an anchorite, withdrawn from the world, is to represent the circulation – the contagion – of sinful speech, with the sinner right at the center, assembling an incipient public around her.[115]

So writing on the sins of the tongue could forbid the emergence of publics. This too has a long legacy, and not only in contexts of repressive gender or class hierarchy: as Hannah Arendt has argued, monastic rules were designed to forbid or moderate the disruptive potential of an emergent "public realm within the orders themselves."[116] But in some devotional writings, writing on verbal sin could also serve as an index of the work's circulation, as a mapping or projection of its public. This function is distinct from conventional addresses to readers in late medieval religious writing, which routinely identify their notional audience in colophons, prefaces, or early chapters. That standard apparatus of audience merits a digression. Such acts of naming can sometimes be adduced to the exigencies of patronage: the colophons for the French *Somme le roi* advertise its royal patron, while Robert of Gretham's Anglo-Norman *Miroir*, a

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[114] Riddy, "Women Talking," 113. Karma Lochrie, pushing the point further, has called gossip a version of "insurrectionary discourse." Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 57. Compare Bartlett's reading, that "for Aelred, masculine speech and silence represent the ascetic norm"; *Male Authors, Female Readers*, 47.

[115] Warner suggests that gossip – which delimits a certain social group in its circulation, while its content defines the norms of that group – fails to rise to level of public discourse only for its lack of stranger-relations; see Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 78, drawing on Max Gluckman, "Gossip and Scandal," *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963): 307-16, and Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985). The deixis in this passage – "that monke," etc – underlines Warner's point. See, however, Luise White, "Between Gluckman and Foucault: Historicizing Rumour and Gossip," *Social Dynamics* 20 (1994): 75-92 (79), which identifies multiple types of gossip, including "gossip about people we don't know," which "not only binds gossipers together in an imagined community of shared values, but binds gossipers to states and sanctions."

[116] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]), 54.

written sermon cycle, presents itself to a notionally specific reader.[117] Rolle's *Form of Living* and his commentary on the Psalter were by all accounts genuinely produced for the anchoress Margaret Kirkeby, their shape determined by her desires as reader and spiritual advisee.[118] But for the most part these addresses in prefaces and colophons are consistent with the careful consideration of effect and purpose in lay-directed religious writing. The confessional formula *quis*, *quid*, *ubi*, *cum quo*, *quotiens*, *cur*, *quomodo*, *quando* [who, what, where, with whom, how often, why, in what way, when], grounded in classical rhetorical theory, also informed the *performance* of catechesis, as Copeland has argued.[119] As part of this rhetorical fashioning, many works adopt either a posture of universal preaching or of one-to-one teaching.[120] The *Speculum vitae*, for example, falls into the first camp, addressing the entirety of the English-speaking laity: it is in English so as to be accessible to "ilk man... þat is borne in Ingelande" (67-68). The English translation of Gretham's *Miroir* addresses the same audience, while the *Pore Caitif* – compiled decades later – is addressed to all "symple men & wymmen" (1).[121] In the second camp, the posture of individual address can be made rather pliable: Hilton's *Mixed Life* is addressed "Dere broþir in Crist" – except in two manuscripts, where the brother becomes a sister.[122] Even a genuinely personal text can invite universal application. By all indications, the *Book to a Mother* was indeed written for the author's mother and is laced throughout with personal references, but the *Book*'s opening carefully universalizes its intimacy by translating Matthew 12:48: "To knowe þe bettere my purpos in þis boke, wite ȝe wel þat I desire euerych man and womman and child to be my moder."[123]

The convergence of the intimate and the universal is an old topos in Christianity, and these kinds of prefatory addresses depend on it to deliver spiritual guidance that appears at once personalized and efficacious for all Christian believers.[124] But sometimes those addresses are

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[117] It also presents itself for copying and dissemination, on which see below and Hanna, *London Literature*, 183 and 186.

[118] On the relationship between Rolle and Margaret Kirkeby, see Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 246-55.

[119] Curry Woods and Copeland, "Classroom and Confession," 393. See also Judith Shaw, "Influence of Canonical and Episcopal Reform on Popular Books of Instruction," in *Popular Literature*, 44-60 (57). Such addresses also perform a kind of Althusserian interpellation of the reading subject, as argued by Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, 18-20.

[120] On preaching (*predicatio*) and one-to-one teaching (*collatio* or *monitio*) in Latin catechesis, see Gillespie, "*Doctrina* and *Predicacio*."

[121] *The Middle English 'Mirror': Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan and Margaret Connolly (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 3-5. See also Hanna, *London Literature*, 148-221.

[122] *Walter Hilton's 'Mixed Life' Edited from Lambeth Palace MS 472*, ed. S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1986), 1/1.

[123] *Book to a Mother*, 1.

[124] On the conflict between a conception of the church as intimate (and pro-family and patriarchal) and public (and anti-family and comparatively egalitarian) in early Christianity, see Dale B. Martin, "Familiar Idolatry and the Christian Case against Marriage," in *Authorizing Marriage? Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions*, ed. Mark D. Jordan (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17-40. On the intimate public sphere in contemporary American life, see Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to*

more fragmented. *The Cloud of Unknowing* is written for what could be a broad category – true followers of Christ, seeking the contemplative life – but it explicitly and repeatedly forbids another, "fleschely janglers, opyn preisers and blamers of hemself or of any other, tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers of tales, and alle maner of pinchers."[125] It forbids those whose tongues trespass, in other words. In a work whose style is refreshingly conversational, casual, and welcoming, and which takes pains to revise and clarify itself, this forbidding declaration comes as something of a surprise. The effect is at once to encourage and delimit circulation. The free-flowing speech of the "janglers," "tithing tellers, rouners and tutilers" (largely synonymous categories, all subsumable under the heading of modern "gossip")[126] must be differentiated from the carefully-cultivated language of the *Cloud* itself, in which words must be taken "not bodily, bot goostly," because in "mysconcevyng" of words (the case examples are *in* and *up*) "hangeth moche errour and moche disseite in hem that purposen hem to be goostly worchers."[127] The effect is to identify a normative audience for the work. That audience is not universal, nor is it defined by language, nation, or institutional role, but is brought together by the reading of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and the exclusion of deviant speakers.

In other cases, the explicitly named audience is entirely a fiction, but a fiction that nevertheless points to an intended public. A supposed Wycliffite commentary on the Ten Commandments, for example, holds that "prestis shulden teche þes comaundementis of God, and puplishe hem at her myȝt to þe comoun puple, for þis is þe moost worship þat we don here to God and þo moost profijt þat we don to his Chirche, but y drede me bat we ben bailies of errour."[128] The ethical imperative here is fairly clear: priests are supposed to publish the Commandments to "þe comoun puple." The audience seems to be "we" priests, if the pronouns are to be trusted. As the author describes it, their publishing depends on a hierarchical and predefined relationship with their audience. The speaker is defined by a specific institutional role – a priest who teaches – as opposed the undifferentiated "comoun puple," who seemingly receive these commandments passively. But the author's worried declaration, "y drede me bat we ben bailies of errour," fragments this straightforward representative publicness. "Bailies" (bailiffs) were the public face of the late medieval state, charged with delivering the public pronouncements of kings and lords.[129] They likewise filled a specific institutional role and spoke according to a hierarchical and predefined relationship. But the rhetorical conflation of roles secular and sacred and the replacement of a king with personified error undermine this entire exercise of publicness. By adding "y drede me," in other words, the author *performs* a very

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Washington City (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 1-24 and following. But see also Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, 86-114, on the communal nature of the "discourse of familiarity" in Middle English devotional writing for women.

[125] *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Patrick J. Gallacher (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 1997), 22 ("Prolog"). A very similar injunction is repeated near the end of the work as well, at chapter 74.

[126] See *MED*, s. v. "jangler(e)," "rouner(e)" and "tuteler(e)."

[127] *Cloud of Unknowing*, 78.

[128] Jefferson, "Ten Commandments Commentary," 6-7; I quote the text from B, but HTY is largely identical. This passage falls on f. 2r in Cambridge, MA, Houghton MS Eng 738 (the only manuscript of this commentary that I have consulted), following an initial. A reader would encounter it almost immediately upon opening the book.

[129] On bailiffs, see Masschaele, "Public Space of the Marketplace," 396 and 413.

different kind of publicness, opening the first-person plural "we priests" to the criticism of a broad secondary audience. The meaning of the entire passage rests in this concessive.

Unlike the *Cloud of Unknowing*, this commentary does not explicitly reference the sins of the tongue. But the late medieval publics that the Wycliffite commentary addresses are in part discursive creations, and the style with which they are addressed is consistently described in terms that emerge from the discourse on the sins of the tongue. The Middle English *Mirror*, an early fourteenth-century written sermon cycle precocious in its address to English readers, offers a pugnacious apology for its style as it tells its audience how to read:

> Ne ȝeueþ no kepe to þe letter ne to þe speche, bot vnderstondeþ wel þe reson. God ne ȝeueþ no kepe to þe faire speche, ac to þe spirite he ȝeueþ kepe. Better is for to sei þe soþe boustouslich þan for to say fals þurtȝh queyntise; for al þat acordeþ wiþ soþnesse, al is wel said before God.[130]

As Ralph Hanna has shown, this passage (fairly closely translated from its source) comes in a sequence that repeatedly positions the *Mirror* against other texts and types of writing.[131] This explanation follows an attack on deceitful romance-writing, a standard gesture of fourteenth-century English and French religious writing, so the "queyntise" refers in part to the decorate language of fiction. But it also is a simple negative definition against which the author's style can stand; ornate, beautiful and deceptive "queyntise" is gratuitous when the matter is "soþnesse."[132] A language politics is also implicit here: "boustous" English is used because it is what the readers will understand, and "ech man schal ben vndernomen & aresoned eftter þe language þat he ha lerd."[133] The sense of a bodily, "boustous" mother tongue is customary in medieval writers' apologies for English, but the *efficacy* of that tongue is what is emphasized here.[134] As Hanna points out, the bluntness and forcefulness of writing "boustouslich" accords with a penitential program of assailment toward correction. The *Mirror* is relatively early for Middle English religious prose, West Midlands texts aside (it probably dates from the first half of the fourteenth century, its source from the mid-thirteenth), but it anticipates the anticlerical and lay-devotional concerns of later writing.[135] It is unsparing in its criticism of clergy, and it actively

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[130] *Middle English 'Mirror,'* 5.
[131] This and what follows are indebted to Hanna, *London Literature*, 180-87.
[132] See *MED*, s. v. "queyntise."
[133] *Middle English 'Mirror,'* 5.
[134] On the carnal vernacular, see Nicholas Watson, "The Politics of Middle English Writing," in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 331-52 (340); on "boistousness" and embodied knowledge, especially vis-a-vis the tongue, see the Introduction and Katie Walter, "Books and Bodies: Ethics, Exemplarity, and the 'Boistous' in Medieval English Writings," *New Medieval Literatures* 14 (2012): 95-125. In works interested in cultivating a different public, being "boistous" is not a virtue but a fault. Thus Walter Hilton's identification of the early stages of "conversioun": "A man in the biginnynge is rude and boistous and fleiscli, but yif he have the more grace, and cannot thenke gostli thoughtis in meditacioun, for his soule is not yit clensid from olde synne." See *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2000), 701-03; cf. the opening of the *Cloud of Unknowing*.
[135] See Hanna, "English Biblical Texts before Lollardy," 143-45.

encourages its readers to disseminate its contents textually and read it out orally.[136] The rejection of verbal ornament is part and parcel of the work's relationship with its readership, a relationship that aspires for universality but actually aims for a more particular demographic: lay readers interested in a certain penitential form of both personal and social self-reform.

This line of argumentation has a funny way of recurring during the fourteenth century, as the subsequent chapters will show. Near the end of the *Book to a Mother*, a later but still pre-Wycliffite work, the writer delivers an apology for his style that stretches across several folia. I touched upon this passage in the Introduction, but it is worth quoting at length:

> Þerfore modir, lerne and holde his hestis, and þou shalt haue his blessinges and fle alle þes cursinges. And my dere modir, haue þou no wondur þouȝ I speke to þe boistres wordis. For whanne Crist spak to his modir boistres wordis, he louede hire neuere lasse... God wot whi I speke þus, and þou shalt wite heraftur. For mony ben so grete folis þat þei chargen more to here þe deuel nempned þan to breken Godus hestus; and so, serue him, hauinge him to here maister to here lord; and ȝut þei wollen blesse hem and stonde up at þei wolden abide wiþ Crist and fyȝte aȝeines his enemyes. But þei closen more faste þe deuel wiþinne hem, for þei bidden God spede hem while þei dispisen his hestis. ... Þerfore, my leue dere modur, loue þou wiþ Dauid to be undernome; despice as Crist dede flateringe wordes.[137]

Although there is no direct source-relationship, the conceptual elements of the address in the *Mirror* recur: "boistres" language is a vehicle for penitential correction, helping the penitent "to be undernome" (that is, chastised or rebuked, a technical sense of a multivalent term), while other forms of speech belong to those who are over-delicate about crude language "while þei dispisen [God's] hestis" in action.[138] (The enemies of the *Book to a Mother* look a lot like the despisers singled out at the start of the *Pore Caitif*'s tract on the Heestis.) Like the *Mirror*, that is, the defense of an efficacious but blunt style depends on a sinful opposite. And as in the *Mirror*, that style is linked to language; earlier in the *Book to a Mother*, the author famously dismisses the unique authority of Latin: "Latin is a langage, as Walsch and Englisch," he writes, "But þouȝ a man kunne speke muche Walsch, he is neuer þe grettur clerk but he kepe Godis hestis; so þei, bi þe same skile, þouȝ þei kunne speke muche Latin, but þei liue wel, þei ben neuere þe gretter clerkes."[139] In other words, language is contingent (one can "teche a pie or a iay to speke Latyn") and living is meaningful. [140] As Watson points out, this stance is consistent with the *Book*'s radical participatory appeal, undermining a particular sort of overweening clerical authority while raising the authority of author and lay reader: "far more concerned to nurture his intimacy with his mother through righteous anger than to inculcate traditional feminine virtues of silence and abjection," he writes, "the *Book's* author does not use the sort of language rules for women generally used to preach holiness to readers."[141]

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[136] Hanna, *London Literature*, 183-87.
[137] *Book to a Mother*, 201-03.
[138] See *MED*, s. v. "undernimen," 8 and 9.
[139] *Book to a Mother*, 79-80.
[140] Ibid., 80.
[141] Watson, "Fashioning the Puritan Gentrywoman," 182. Note Nancy Bradley Warren's argument, however, that despite the seeming openness of the text's instructions, "the *Book* in fact creates a gendered religious identity for women," particularly critical of women's dress and material goods. See *Spiritual Economies: Female Monasticism in Later Medieval England*

Language rules nevertheless still apply in the *Book to a Mother*, but they are more often directed against erring clerics than laid out for the reader's instruction. The argument that Latinity does not make a clerk follows a discussion of the "grete clerkes'" sinful speech. Many men and women, the author explains, are shameless and dreadless, ignoring God's commandments, going so far as to "prechen and crien here synnes, orrible oþes, lecherous wordis, pompe and pruyde and alle maner of synnes as Sodom and Gomor" (78). But against these sinners, another group has emerged:

> Now men ben more aschamed, more dredful to serue God in mekenes, pouert and chastite, holdinge his hestis, dispisinge grete oþes as God techiþ, and to seie "ȝe" and "Nay" and "Soþlich," fleinge here companyes, for suche on þei clepen on of þe "Soþeleches." And þis maner of doinge I knowe among grete clerkes i holde of folis. But bifore God... þei ben none clerkes. (79)

This little sketch is interesting for a few reasons. It paints a particularly unflattering picture of certain university-educated "grete clerkes" whose "maner of doinge" the author explains in rather twisted syntax.[142] Rather than "dispisinge grete oþes as God techiþ," they mock those *who do* say only yes, no, and truly, as Christ commands at Matthew 5:33-37 (and as the *Pore Caitif* commands in its discussion of the Second Commandment). These sinful clerks call those people who properly keep their tongue "soþeleches" after their strongest oath, "soþlich" [truly]. Watson translates the sense of "soþeleche" as "milksop," but the actual meaning is a bit slippier.[143] The word is clearly intended to be derogatory, but since its only surviving occurrence is here, its specific cultural resonances are hard to reconstruct. Unlike its cousins "lollard" or "Puritan," the term never gained greater currency as praise or pejorative – it seems like the product of mean cliquishness rather than broad cultural struggle, and it certainly never entered a vocabulary of repression or self-identification.[144] But the kernel of such a possibility is there: like lollard or Puritan, "soþeleche" is a communal identity (the author only uses it in the plural) ready for elevation *or* stigmatization, depending on who is doing the naming. This community hangs on a mode of speech, taught by a discourse on the sins of the tongue that elaborates upon Old and New Testament directives. The confrontational but blunt English of the *Book to a Mother* and the *Mirror* – texts that share a public, even if composed decades apart – is the characteristic style with which to address this community.

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 77-92 (81). See also Nicole Rice, "Devotional Literature and Lay Spiritual Authority: *Imitatio Clerici* in *Book to a Mother*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.2 (2005): 187-216, which convincingly argues that the author of the *Book to a Mother* carefully preserves clerical privilege even as it empowers its lay reader: the representations of his "mother as teacher and even preacher work to assimilate her practice to the biblical example of Christ's evangelism, without dismantling the author's own authority or giving up disputed ground to the mendicants" (204).

[142] See Rice, "*Imitatio Clerici*," 199. Compare the anxiety about the lack of lay latinity in earlier writing described by Katharine Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public, 1150-1400* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[143] Watson, "Fashioning the Puritan Gentrywoman," 174. See *MED*, s. v. sotheleche. "Soþlich" and "soþli" (in their various forms) are of course ubiquitous, especially in religious writing.

[144] On lollards, see Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 25-74.

The self-conscious straight talk and the spite against vain speakers (whether romance-readers or "grete clerkes") are ways that each of these texts characterize their circulatory world, to borrow Warner's terms. The *Pore Caitif*'s prologue to Heestis borrows the same repertoire in order to project itself to the same audience. A public is made by these texts.[145] The *Book to a Mother* and the *Pore Caitif* addressed a proper public, diverse in class and interest: judging by both the intrinsic evidence of style and self-presentation addressed above, and the diverse surviving manuscripts of the *Pore Caitif* especially, this public consisted of laypeople of several ranks, members of the secular clergy, and members of the religious orders.[146] While they do not concur on points of doctrine, certain orientations seem characteristic of the communities that were addressed by these texts, and that purchased or assembled or inherited the devotional miscellanies that transmitted them. The public addressed by the *Pore Caitif* and comparable basic devotional writings wanted some access to scripture in English, and more broadly to religious education. They believed in some degree of lay participation in religion. They were pious, rather austere, and critical, in other words. They were critical of what they perceived to be corruption and sympathetic to anticlerical and antifraternal complaints.[147] This group of strangers in a community of certain shared values is the product of the world-making of works like the *Pore Caitif* – a concept that seems difficult to imagine for inelegant didactic compilations, but nonetheless applies. Because they did not necessarily endorse specific reforms, naming them as "reformists" is somewhat inapt, inviting as it does confusion with the specific case of Wycliffites on the one hand and the distinct phenomenon of largely clerical "orthodox reform" on the other. Watson names the addressee of the *Book to a Mother* as a "puritan," which is closer. I will call it simply the devout reading public.

One point is worth emphasizing again, however: this devout reading public existed both before and alongside the categories of heresy and orthodoxy, which were created by official juridical processes.[148] This public cannot be narrowly identified as Wycliffite or lollard.[149] As in the particular case of Peraldus, who was central to both orthodox pastoral care and Wyclif's own writings, the deep cultural resources of the sins of the tongue did not belong to any particular partisan group; they fall, for instance, on both sides of the Oxford translation debate – a debate

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[145] The trace of remembered humiliation in the *Book*'s account of the soþeleches against the great clerks – which emphasizes being isolated or mocked for your piety, and especially being given a name that you did not choose (an important primal scene for modern theories of subjection, but one that also taps into one of the deep images of Christian humiliation, the repeated ironic naming of Christ as "King of the Jews" as he is mocked and executed in Matthew 27) – suggests that the *Book* understands itself to circulate in what Warner calls a counterpublic. That particular sense of subordination is missing from the *Pore Caitif*, however.

[146] I draw here in part on Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline*.

[147] On the absorption of antifraternal satire into lay anticlericalism, see Wendy Scase, *'Piers Plowman' and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[148] See Cole, *Literature and Heresy*.

[149] Cf. the claim in Somerset, *Feeling like Saints*, that lollard pastoral writing – "often not all that different from the mainstream works that they adapt or respond to" – tends to be written out of the history of the movement on account of its lack of controversial materials (7). This argument is convincing but distinct from my account here, and I think ultimately does not conflict with it.

that itself should not be viewed as Wycliffites arguing with orthodox priests.[150] Rather, texts like the *Book to a Mother* or the uninterpolated *Pore Caitif* sit at the "points of intersection" that Mary Raschko identifies as common to multiple late-medieval English religious outlooks.[151] The polemical contentiousness that defines their style and invites the participation of their public is not usually intended to establish or argue strict points of doctrine. Instead, it helps define a group of like-minded strangers against certain open sinners: venal prelates, for example, and vain speakers. Despising malfeasant clerics is not a way of establishing the limits of a sect, but is a way of orienting yourself to the world: the fact that these critiques are articulated within the inherited conceptual framework of the sins of the tongue suggests that their orientation is more ethical than doctrinal.[152] These modes of address and self-definition were of course amenable to adoption by genuinely heterodox believers, and vernacular Wycliffism draws heavily from this tradition. But one need not be a Wycliffite to hold "grete clerkes... folis," nor to identify those fool clerks' speech according to the sins of the tongue.

Conclusion

I have argued that, during the fourteenth century, the sins of the tongue were appropriated and reimagined by writers interested not only in catechetical instruction, but in speaking to a particular religious public. The rhetoric of verbal sin policed the limits of this public with a polemical vein absent in some earlier works and taken up more fully in more aggressively heterodox works. But it also came to inflect these works' self-presentation. They characterize competing discourses, religious and especially secular, as vain speech, idle tales, lies, flattery. They also characterize their own mode of speaking as rude, disruptive, frank – discourteous but not sinful, grounded in scripture, and shorn of academic obfuscation or courtly refinement. In the *Pore Caitif*, the most widely-copied instance of the new devotional literature, this contentious self-presentation emerges out of verbal sins' representation according to a social imaginary, in which trespasses against God are figured as the mistreatment of servants or disobedience to lords. The publicness of the *Pore Caitif*, that is, is continuous with its ideas about speech as a whole: the devout reading public not only speaks in a certain way, but *thinks* of speech in a certain way, too.

Piers Plowman is another creative response to the earlier generation of English catechesis, addressing the same public and perhaps filling the same needs as the works studied in this chapter. Moreover, it involves the same oscillation between devotion, self-scrutiny, and a social imaginary. What it does with the sins of the tongue – and how the poem understands itself in relation to its public – will be the subject of the next chapter.

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[150] On the translation debate, see Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6-36 (15-16 especially).
[151] Raschko, "Common Ground," 389.
[152] A similar point is made by Watson, "Fashioning the Puritan Gentry-Woman," 184.

Chapter Two. Langland's Shame

Shal neuere chalangynge ne chidynge chaste a man so soone
As shal shame, and shenden hym, and shape hym to amende.

Piers Plowman B. 11.425-26[1]

In contrast to all other affects, shame is an experience of the self by the self.

Silvan Tomkins[2]

In Chapter One, I argued that a devout reading public came into being the late fourteenth century. The fact of this public is no surprise: the efflorescence of English writing after 1350 – characterized by a vast number of new and translated works in verse and prose, an uptick in book production itself, and an even greater early-fifteenth-century increase in reading and bookmaking – is a well-worn cliché in English literary history. The centrality of religious texts and devout readers in that efflorescence is well known, but some of the particular mechanisms involved have been overlooked. Specifically, this public is named and characterized in the forms of address and self-description adopted by the religious writing intended for it. These works raided a discourse on proper and improper speech developed in thirteenth-century pastoral manuals, the so-called sins of the tongue, for terms with which to describe themselves and anathematize rivals. The sins of the tongue helped make this public apprehensible to its participants by articulating the norms according to which it spoke, by giving it a vocabulary in which its collective identity and collective antipathies could be conceptualized, and by articulating affective orientations that allowed this public to *feel* distinct from the institutions and communities around it.[3]

This chapter will emphasize the last of these three roles, because while *Piers Plowman* shares a vocabulary and a set of concerns with the radical pastoral writings for the devout reading public, its emotional texture is markedly different. Those pastoral writings call forward a reciprocal pair of emotions already implicit in the earliest expositions of the sins of the tongue: scorn and shame. On the one hand, they mobilize scorn (and its even stronger synonym, despising) against sinful speakers, who lack their stringency and rectitude. On the other hand,

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[1] All citations of *Piers Plowman* are unless otherwise noted from the Athlone editions of Kane, Kane and Donaldson, and Russell and Kane, respectively, and will be cited parenthetically.

[2] *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, ed. by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 136.

[3] Though I do not rigorously distinguish the terms "affect" and "emotion" in this chapter, I prefer the former, following Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 2: "The term [affect] provides a means of referring to the entire range of states that are bounded on one side by pure sensation and on the other by thoughts that have no visible or tangible impact on our bodies. Affects are immediate modes of sensual responsiveness to the world characterized by an accompanying imaginative dimension." Disciplining the affects, as willed responses to immediate, pre-cognitive "first movements," is an important issue in what follows; on first movements, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 39 and 46-47.

they imagine that the devout share a common experience of shame – that is, of *being scorned* by foul-mouthed clerics and idle speakers. This exchange of scorn, which comes in wicked and goes out righteous, delimits the devout reading public. The style of the texts that make this public – assertively humble in their plain vernacular "busteousness" and shot through with contentious, denunciatory energy – partakes of the same exchange of scorn. But *Piers Plowman* is up to something else altogether. Will, the poem's dreamer, point of focalization, and sometimes authorial stand-in, is both agent and object of scorn. The poem does not draw clear lines of righteousness and sinfulness in these exchanges. Instead, the emotion that matters most is shame. This chapter is about the connection Langland makes between shame and speech, particularly in these affectively-charged responses to Will's speaking and misspeaking. As I will argue, the shame depicted in *Piers Plowman* is neither polemical, as in the texts for the devout reading public, nor straightforwardly prohibitory as in earlier catechetical writing, which was intended for general instruction in the articles of the faith. Langland's shame is pedagogical, an affective way of knowing that ultimately justifies misspeaking in public. The experience of speech and shame is not given over to a single clear moralization, but is suspended for examination.

In what follows, I begin by identifying the three forms of shame described in late medieval devotional writing: one individual and inward-looking, brought onto sinners by their sin; the second shared, a shame of disrepute brought on by the sin of others in positions of responsibility; the third likewise shared, brought onto the innocent through persecution. The second and third types of shame are public affects: they allow the shamed person to imagine him- or herself to belong to a broad, heterogeneous community of believers. From this study of the three dimensions of late medieval shame, I then turn to Will's repeated experiences of scorn and shame in Passus 11 of the B-text. Will repeatedly speaks publicly and is scorned in turn for his speech, by Scripture, Reason, and Ymaginatif; in each case, Will responds to scorn with shame. That reiterating experience underlines the partialness of Will's knowledge without entirely castigating it or shutting down his process of learning. Passus 11 is a lesson in shame that should frame our reading of what follows, part of which I discuss in the subsequent section: specifically, the figure of Hawkyn, who apes the stance of those who address the devout reading public while simultaneously indulging in a panoply of verbal sins. Will's shame and Hawkyn's shame are counterbalanced by the poem's repeated defenses of critical speech, however. So Langland's shame, rather than shutting down speech altogether, articulates a way of being public that – though carefully distinguished from the strident public-making of radical contemporary religious writings, and also distinct from the prophetic *vox clamantis in deserto* – defends the usefulness of saying the wrong thing on the way to getting things right. In the conclusion, I will take up what this might mean for the elusive figure of Langland the author.

I. *Piers Plowman* and the Sins of the Tongue

Piers Plowman's shame emerges from a long tradition of pastoral writing, a tradition of spiritual care and instruction that the poem both courts and rejects. *Piers Plowman*'s differences from pastoralia is more often noticed than their similarities. The poem avoids open addresses to the reader of the sort discussed in the last chapter, for example, addresses in which even the most sophisticated writers interpellate a readership and present their text as the realization of spiritual or practical desires integral to that interpellation. Though one part of Langland's subject is the exhaustion of pastoral and intellectual discourses, his poem never openly claims to be an efficacious alternative to them. The clarity of pastoral writing, with its ingenious structural devices and numbered hierarchies, is replaced by doubt, discontinuity, rupture, and revision.

But the poem also contains swathes of pastoral instruction, as in Holy Church's sermon to Will in the first passus or Piers's directions to Truth in the sixth. Those moments when the poem leans toward catechesis, as in those speeches or the pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins – a sequence indebted both to the tradition of the *Somme le roi* and to the vivid church art that was written pastoralia's spectacular visual double – tend to be the most heavily-annotated and rubricated in manuscript.[4] The poem shared an audience with the readers of practical religious instruction.[5] A number of surviving manuscripts, especially those copied in the fourteenth century, transmit both *Piers* and catechetical works, while the poem's earliest ownership records are found in the wills of minor clerics.[6]

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[4] A point made by Nicholas Watson, "The Ignorance of the Laity: Twelve Tracts on Bible Translation," in *Truth and Tales: Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2015), 187-205 (190). Benson and Blanchfield record a total of 1792 annotations in B.5 in 15 B-version manuscripts; the next most frequently-annotated passus is 15, with 1225 annotations. The names of the sins tend to be boxed or rubricated by scribes and readers; the same goes for the names of Anima. See C. David Benson and Lynne S. Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts of Piers Plowman: The B-version* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 316-17. On church painting, see C. David Benson, *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 185-89. Benson compares Langland's Deadly Sins to the mural of both the Deadly Sins and Corporal Works of Mercy in Trotton, Sussex, which shows the visual conventions to which *Piers* refers and upon which it elaborates: hollow-cheeked and swollen-bodied Envy, Coveitise in threadbare coat, Glutton draining a tankard.

[5] A. I. Doyle found that the poem's transmission most closely resembled that "of the *South English Legendary*, the *Prick of Conscience* and the *Speculum Vitae*, lengthy religious poems of apparently wide circulation in more than one region," and in some instances, the same scribes copied these works and *Piers*. See "Remarks on Surviving Manuscripts of Piers Plowman," in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell*, eds. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), 35-48 (47). Not all readers treated the poem exclusively as a useful text; on those readers, see Strub, "The Idle Readers of *Piers Plowman* in Print," *New Medieval Literatures* 17 (2017): 201-36.

[6] Versions of *Piers Plowman* share three manuscripts with the *Prick of Conscience*: Oxford, Bodleian Eng. Poet. a. 1 (the Vernon manuscript, which also contains the *Speculum vitae* and a library of other devotional and catechetical works); San Marino, Huntington Library HM 128; London, Society of Antiquaries 687. List thanks to A. S. G. Edwards, "Two *Piers Plowman* Manuscripts at Helmingham Hall," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 11.4 (1999): 421-26, at 422. It occurs once with *The Lay Folk's Mass Book* and once with *Handlyng Synne*. See further Anne Middleton, Middleton, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*," in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1982), 101-23 (106). On the wills, see Robert A. Wood, "A Fourteenth-Century London Owner of *Piers Plowman*," *Medium Aevum* 53.1 (1984): 83-90. In the first, a York canon deeds the poem alongside the *Pars ocula*, the first section of the *Ocula sacerdotis*, a Latin pastoral manual. In the other, a London rector deeds the poem to a laywoman, Agnes Eggesfeld. The deed to Eggesfeld inverts the normal pattern seen in testamentary evidence – laypeople more often donated books to religious institutions; see Gillespie, "Vernacular Books of Religion," 319.

All of this is to say that *Piers Plowman* has an unsettled relationship with the catechetical writing that precedes it. Catechesis is supposed to answer the questions about knowledge, ethical living, and salvation that the poem poses. Its failure to do so sufficiently is both a motivation for the poem and, in part, the matter of its plot.[7] As the poem goes on, its successive negations carry out, as Nicholas Watson has argued, a "ruthless dismantling of the hopes, claims, and intellectual assumptions of much thirteenth-century pastoral thought."[8] Though the shape of its dismantling is radically different from their responses, *Piers Plowman* shares this dissatisfied and unsettled relationship with the radical texts discussed in the last chapter, which reproduce thirteenth-century pastoral commonplaces while at the same time inveighing against the clerical hierarchies that such pastoral commonplaces were meant to prop up.

One might expect, then, that the sins of the tongue might be repurposed in the same way, too. Stephan Batman, reading the poem in the sixteenth century, wrote that "This Booke is clepped: Sayewell, / Doowell. Doo Better & Doo Best" – adding a fourth term to the poem's triad of dowel, dobet, and dobest, the elements of a moral life that animate Langland's poem.[9] The addition is not without good cause: the language of the sins of the tongue is present throughout *Piers Plowman*. As Joan Heiges Blythe has pointed out, the first words in Latin in all three versions of the poem are on sinful speech, "*Qui loquitur turpiloquium* is luciferes hyne" (B.Prol.39).[10] Langland attributes this attack on *turpiloquium* (dirty talk) to Paul, where the

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[7] See Anne Middleton, "Narration and the Invention of Experience: Episodic Form in *Piers Plowman*," in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1982): 91-122; see also Steven Justice, "Genres of *Piers Plowman*," *Viator* 19 (1988): 291-306.

[8] Nicholas Watson, "*Piers Plowman*, Pastoral Theology, and Spiritual Perfectionism: Hawkyn's Cloak and Patience's *Pater Noster*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 21 (2007): 83-118 (93-94). See also Ralph Hanna, "*Speculum Vitae* and the Form of *Piers Plowman*," in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 121-39 (129). On failure and negation, see *inter alia* D. Vance Smith, "Negative Langland," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 23 (2009): 33-59.

[9] Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 171, title page; quoted in Simon Horobin, "Stephan Batman and his Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman,*" *Review of English Studies* 62 (2010): 358-72 (360). Compare the early modern reader of New Haven, Beinecke Library Id L26 550c, who creates a primer of the poem's sententious Latin in the blank space opposite the first page of the Prologue, emphasizing simple verbal instruction: "Qui simulat verbis nec corde est fidus amicus: C[*a*]ton... Parum lauda: vitupera parcius... Philosophus esses si tacuisses... Sunt homines nequam bene de virtute loquentes... Quod scimus loquimur: quod vidimus, testamur" [Who simulates with his words and is not a faithful friend in his heart... Praise little: criticize less... You would be a philosopher if you kept quiet... They are worthless men speaking well of virtue... What we know, we speak: what we see, we testify]. This page is discussed in Lawrence Warner, *The Myth of Piers Plowman: Constructing a Medieval Literary Archive* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 69; Warner reproduces an image on page 70.

[10] Also at A.Prol.39; with some changes, C.Prol.40. *Qui loquitur turpiloquium* derives either from Eph. 5:4 or Col. 3.8, perhaps via a patristic source; see Alford, *A Guide to the Quotations*, 33. See Blythe, "Sins of the Tongue and Rhetorical Prudence in *Piers Plowman*," in *Literature and Religion in the Later Middle Ages: Philological Studies in Honor of Siegfried Wenzel*, ed.

quotation originates, but the pastoral tradition sits between the poem and Paul; *turpiloquium* is among the sins of the tongue in Peraldus's influential thirteenth-century *Summa de vitiis*, for instance.[11] Sinful speech recurs throughout *Piers Plowman*: flatterers flatter, Liar lies, and Meed defends sin; the Seven Deadly Sins recount their *own* sinful speaking in terms identifiable from the pastoral tradition; Hawkyn's coat is moled with lecherous and jocular talk; lies, flattery, chattering, and idle tales do their part to destroy the Barn of Unity. In Blythe's reading, Langland's sustained engagement with the Peraldan sins of the tongue – she cites instances from every passus – should be read as a process of education in which the poet himself learns to use "his own sin-prone tongue" to "expose and berate the verbal degeneracy of others and teach God's story and human responsibility."[12]

The poem's exposure of "verbal degeneracy" should not be read simply as a type of catechetical forbidding, but Blythe's account captures an important element of the poem's texture. *Piers Plowman* B, which is my focus in this chapter, shares satirical targets with the texts discussed in the preceding chapter: in the apocalyptic final episode (shared with C), Pride gathers a host that includes "oon Spek-yuel-bihynde" (19.340) and aims to defeat Conscience with "colours and queyntise" (19.351) – that is, with the same tools of rhetoric that the *Book to a Mother* and its ilk forcefully repudiate. "Hende speche," courteous or tricky speech, opens the doors of the Barn of Unity for the Antichrist-friar Sire *Penetrans Domos*, bringing about its downfall (20.348 and 354). And like those texts, an opposition is sometimes established between holy speakers and their vain-speaking opponents: thus, the gift of tongues in Pentecost is a weapon against "false prophetes fele, flatereris and gloseris" (19.221) those radically *unlike* the preachers, priests, and law-prentices who loyally "lyue by labour of tonge" (19.231-32). But compared to pastoral writings, which give over either dedicated sections to the sins of the tongue, or elaborate upon the sins of tongue at length within discussions of the Commandments or elsewhere, *Piers Plowman*'s discussion of verbal sin seems comparatively fitful and intermittent. Craun is thus more circumspect than Blythe: though he concludes that pastoral discourse on deviant speech retains "authority or rhetorical force" whenever it is invoked, it does "not shape, even dominate, a whole narrative... or a discrete narrative unit."[13]

Craun is right that no single unit is given over to the sins of the tongue, although they recur densely in some extended sequences, as in the confession of the sins or in Hawkyn's speech in B. But the effects of sinful speech also predominate in the poem's interstices: the waking interludes between visions, the pauses between speeches when a skeptical response or a cutting dismissal is briefly voiced. These interstitial sequences help establish what Nicolette Zeeman has called the poem's pattern of "failure, rebuke, renewal," the fundamental pattern of the B-text's narrative between the disappearance of Piers in Passus 7 and the appearance of

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Richard G. Newhauser and John A. Alford (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 119-42 (124).

[11] See Edwin Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159-60.

[12] Blythe, "Sins of the Tongue," 124. On *Piers Plowman* and speech, see also Noelle Phillips, "Seeing Red: Reading Rubrication in Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201's *Piers Plowman*," *Chaucer Review* 47 (2013): 439-64.

[13] *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 185.

Anima in Passus 15.[14] In these moments, Will's "own sin-prone tongue" takes center stage: as Craun has noted elsewhere, the dreamer's "own eagerness to reprove others raises ethical questions and sparks passionate responses."[15] Viewed as a whole, those "passionate responses," which call the affective experience of correction to the fore, make it hard to sustain Blythe's reading of the poem's project as one that unequivocally exposes and berates. *Piers Plowman* – a literary text, though it does not name or necessarily understand itself as such – does not share the goals or methods of pastoralia, texts that present themselves as unambiguously spiritually useful. Unlike the radical writing for the devout reading public, which imagines that its readers participate in a right-speaking community responsible for the correction of others, a reader of *Piers Plowman* more often experiences these interstitial sins of the tongue through the perspective of the *sinner* than through that of the corrector. Will speaks, is scorned, and feels shame; the experience of this process is integral to the experience of *Piers Plowman*.

II. Individual, Communal, and Clerical Shame

Before understanding the shape of Will's shame, though, it is useful to have a sense of how his particular shame is articulated within the variety of ways late medieval English people talked about shame. This "cultural psychology" of shame, to lift a term and approach from Robert Kaster's study of Roman emotion, is recognizably different from that of the modern English "shame" – a point that will not keep me from borrowing the insights of modern affect theorists, but which asks for care in doing so.[16] Following Barbara Rosenwein, Andrew Cole, and Anne McTaggart, my aim here is to articulate a historicized sense of shame to which Langland responded, which requires understanding its role as a communal and political affect and the actual denotative meanings that attached to it: shame was not inarticulate.[17] Moreover, in late medieval religious writing, the experience of shame sits at the intersection of a complex of other

[14] Nicolette Zeeman, *Piers Plowman and the Medieval Discourse of Desire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[15] Edwin Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57. My argument in this chapter slightly diverges from Craun's, which reads Will's exchange with Lewte as an endorsement of properly governed public reproof of communal sin: see *Ethics and Power*, 57-84.

[16] Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[17] Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, 155-82; Anne McTaggart, *Shame and Guilt in Chaucer* (New York: Palgrave, 2012); Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities* (on Christian sin and virtue and emotion, see 81-91 particularly). See also Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community*; and, in the case of English medieval shame, Valerie Allen, "Waxing Red: Shame and the Body, Shame and the Soul," in *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Lisa Perfetti (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 191-210 (198); and Mary C. Flannery, "The Concept of Shame in Late-Medieval English Literature," *Literature Compass* 9.2 (2012): 166-82. Underlying this culturalist approach to emotion is Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling," in *Culture Theory*, ed. Richard A. Schweder and Robert A. LeVine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 137-57, which presents a theory of "emotion schooled by public cultural discourse" (141).

affective states and acts, each of which reflects a way of using and relating to spoken language.[18] If "shame" is central, a constellation of other terms gathers around it: the verbs of shaming – "sclaundren," "scornen," "lakken" – and the verbs of endurance that counter them – "suffren," most importantly – produce and inflect the sense of shame.

Among the most careful medieval analysts of the affects were devotional writers, writing not only penitential texts but also guides to contemplation and the mixed life, whose taxonomies of affect routinely linked bodies, thoughts, the dynamics of interactions between people, and the broader social arrangements that structure them.[19] Unlike chivalric writing, devotional writing collapses the routinely rehearsed anthropological distinction between shame and guilt: guilt and the action of conscience are integrated into analyses of shame.[20] So rather than importing a modern terminological distinction between guilt and shame onto these texts, it is more accurate to discuss the different ways *shame itself* signified in the devotional writing of the period. There are three ways of talking about shame and shamelessness in Middle English devotional writings. The first is broadly Augustinian and inward-looking, tied to the cognizance of sin. The second is a collective shame brought on by the sins of others; the chief example is the shame brought onto believers by the misdeeds of clerics. The third – anchored in the Gospels, presented as a kind of *imitatio Christi*, and often attached to speech acts – is the righteous shame of the persecuted innocent, which can likewise apply to a broad community. These categories are heuristics, and their meaning differs depending on the author: they can converge, and they signify very differently depending on whether they are meant apply to oneself or to others. Despite these caveats, a broad division between singular shame and communal shame obtains throughout the period, providing – like the *Pore Caitif*'s scorn and despising – a way for believers to understand their affects and their speech in relationship to the divine and to others.

The first kind of shame, which arises from the awareness of sin, is necessary but unpleasant. Augustine's account of shame in the *City of God* famously stresses the *pudenda*, which are shameful not precisely for their sexual function but because the *affectio* of lust, not the will, has complete control over them.[21] But Adam and Eve's *pudor* after eating from the tree also serves as a tool of self-assessment: shame "fecit adtentos reddiditque confusos" [made them attentive and rendered them disturbed].[22] Knowledge and feeling – attention and confusion – are mingled in the experience of shame. As Steven Justice has put it, describing Latin precedents to

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[18] On the passions in language, see Giorgio Agamben, "Vocation and Voice," trans. Jeff Fort, *Qui Parle* 10 (1997): 89-100.

[19] For a nuanced approach to the history of emotion in devotional texts, see Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). On the Christian reinvention of classical emotion, see Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 32-56.

[20] On chivalric writings, see *inter alia* David F. Hult, "Lancelot's Shame," *Romance Philology* 42.1 (1981): 30-50; Stephanie Trigg, "'Shamed be...': Historicizing Shame in Medieval and Early Modern Courtly Ritual," *Exemplaria* 19.1 (2007): 67-89; Flannery, "Concept of Shame."

[21] See *City of God* 14.19. I quote from Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Philip Levine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966). Translations have been slightly altered.

[22] *City of God*, 14.17 (pp. 356-57).

Augustine's account of shame, "shame is experienced as passion but functions as knowledge."[23] The shame of sin is therefore sometimes useful, because it makes sinners attentive to their sin. Augustine writes, for instance: "audeo dicere superbis esse utile cadere in aliquod apertum manifestumque peccatum unde sibi displiceant qui iam sibi placendo ceciderant" [I dare say that it is useful for the proud to fall in some open and manifest sin with which they might become displeased with themselves after they had already fallen by being pleased with themselves].[24] The knowledge imparted by shame punctures pride, in other words, bringing with it a lucid self-assessment. Augustine's *pudor* is continuous with pre-Christian Roman *pudor*, an emotion that, in Kaster's analysis, is tied up with an individual's sense of his or her own value.[25]

Medieval writers took up this Augustinian version of shame, particularly in contemplative texts. Richard of St. Victor's *Benjamin Minor* (*Book of the Twelve Patriarchs*), for instance, places shame as the last of the inner virtues birthed from the will, followed in its model of sequential spiritual self-ordering by the children of Reason, discretion and contemplation. As the Middle English translation of Richard's text explains, "For-þi þat men oft-tymes fallen greuously in þoo same synnes þat þei moste hate, þerfore after hateredyn of synne springiþ ordeynde schame in a mans soule."[26] The role of shame here is slightly different from, say, Adam and Eve's newly shameful awareness of their genitals: "ordeynde schame" (ordered or governed shame) proceeds from sin as a companion to the hatred of that sin.[27] Such shame serves a specific role in the process of perfection or contemplative ascent: it follows the commitment to hate and avoid sin and is, when exercised in moderation, *necessary* for the process to continue. Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* presents an analogous danger for those "in the bigynnynge of here conversioun or soone aftir" who move too swiftly into contemplation:

> thei bi undiscrecion, ofte sithes overtravailen hire wittes and breken here bodili myght, and so thei fallen into fantasies and singulere conceites, or into open errours, and letten the grace that God gyveth hem bi sich vanytees. The cause of al this is a prevei pride and presumpcion of hemself, as whanne thei han felid a litil grace thei wenen that it is so mykil, passand othere, that thei fallen in veynglorie and so thei leesen it. Yif thei wisten

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[23] Steven Justice, "Shameless: Augustine, After Augustine, and Way after Augustine," *JMEMS* 44.1 (2014): 17-43 (28). On emotions as knowledge, see also Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 1-31, and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 19-88.

[24] *City of God*, 14.13 (pp. 342-43).

[25] Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community*, 28-65. Compare also, however, the linked discussion of *paenitentia* at 66-83.

[26] "A Tretyse of þe Stodye of Wysdome þat Men Clepen Beniamyn," in *Deonise hid Diuinite*, EETS os. 231, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (London: Oxford University Press, 1955, repr. 1958), 36.

[27] On this sense of "ordeyned," see *MED*, s. v. "ordeinen," 1. The term derives from Richard of St. Victor's particular use of *ordinatus*, which reflects a theology of measure and equilibrium, on which see Richard of St. Victor, *Les douze patriaches ou Beniamin minor*, ed. and trans. Jean Châtillon and Monique Duchet-Suchaux (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1997), 108n2, and Fernand Guimet, "*Caritas ordinata* et *amor discretus* dans la théologie trinitaire de Richard de Saint-Victor," *Revue du Moyen Âge Latin* 4 (1948): 225-36. That the English term is shared with divine ordination is no accident; natural order and divine will were understood to be linked.

> how litil it were that thei feelen in regard of that God geveth or mai geven thei schulde be aschamed for to speke ought therof, but if it were in grete nede.[28]

In other words, pride can lead the beginner in the contemplative life to overextend their abilities, giving rise to "veynglorie." The awareness of the puniness of their own proper spiritual gifts in relation to the vastness of God's gifts as a whole should make them "aschamed for to speke ought therof" – implying that a proper spiritual novice's overstepping will be checked precisely by shame, which lets them see their own limited worth in a universal schema. As with the picture of dread that emerges from Paul Megna's work, shame is a *useful* affect for understanding one's own position relative to the divine.[29] Though this first kind of shame was not attached exclusively to speech acts, it nevertheless could help a believer regulate his or her own speech. The early stages of contemplation often had to do with cleansing one's speech, and the "open errours" of Hilton's vainglorious novice are characteristic of a certain kind of self-aggrandizing speech that was sharply prohibited by pastoral writers. But this shame also had a universal reflex in contrition: Chaucer's *Parson's Tale* identifies the first cause of contrition to be the remembrance of sin, not in the form of "no delit by no wey, but greet shame and sorwe."[30] This first type of shame thus makes confessional and penitential texts effective: it is the *shame of recognizing your own errors*. This shame emerges from your relationship with yourself.

The second late-medieval devotional understanding is a collective affect: the shame of disrepute, brought on by the sins of others. This shame belongs first and foremost, though not exclusively, to anticlerical polemic: thus, for instance, this discussion of the various sins of priests from the *Book for a Simple and Devout Woman:*

> Þat oþer þat mycheleþ [increases] hure synne þen is disclaunder and scornynge of alle þat hym knoweþ. For Seynt Jerom by clerkes seiþ: 'Oþur þei buþ more honeste þen oþer or elles þei buþ in scorne and repref of alle oþere.' But welawey, so God for hem pleyneþ þorw þe prophete bi suche þer he saiþ: *Factus sum in derisum omni populo*. – 'Þorw ȝow,' saiþ Oure Lorde, 'I am in scorne and repref to alle folke.'[31]

Sinful priests are guilty of scorn and "disclaunder" toward all those they know. The syntactical ambiguity of these lines is, I think, intentional; the priests sin by scorning and slandering, but the fact of their sinning itself scorns and disgraces their fellow-clerics and the laypeople under their pastoral care. The point is cemented in the following line. In a polemical turn typical of anticlerical lay writing for this public, these sinful clerics put God "in scorne and repref to alle folke." The author's quotation and translation of Lamentations 3:14, a verse read as typological anticipation of the mocking of Christ and the Passion, suggests the stakes of such scorn: like swearing, often said to tear the body of Christ, the clergy's sinful living reenacts the humiliation

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[28] Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2000), 735-51.

[29] See Paul Megna, "Dread, Love, and the Bodies of *Piers Plowman* A.10, B.9, and C.10," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 29 (2015): 61-88; and "Better Living through Dread: Medieval Ascetics, Modern Philosophers, and the Long History of Existential Anxiety," *PMLA* 130.5 (2015): 1285-1301.

[30] *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), X.174.

[31] *Book for a Simple and Devout Woman: A Late Middle English Adaptation of Peraldus's "Summa de vitiis et virtutibus" and Friar Laurent's "Somme le roi,"* ed. F. N. M. Diekstra (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), ll. 5220-25.

of Christ.[32] This kind of verbal sin – committed by those the *Book to a Mother* calls "schameles and dredeles," who "prechen and crien here synnes, orrible oþes, lecherous wordis, pompe and pruyde and alle maner of synnes" – shames those who *do not* partake of it, among whom the readers of the *Book to a Mother* and *Book for a Simple and Devout Woman* should be counted.[33] Shame is produced by *another's* sin, not one's own. Rather than directing an inward gaze, this shame looks outward, inviting communitarian distinctions between the shameful and the scornful. Shame therefore becomes another of the community-building affects linked to ways of speaking (like scorn and despising) invoked by texts for the devout reading public. In the simplest sense, this second shame emerges from how you understand others in relationship to yourself. Like the first shame, it involves a secondary psychological effect: if the first shame motivates self-improvement or correction, the second brings about a sense of belonging. And as in any kind of communitarianism, with that sense of belonging comes a countervailing, negative identification of those who do not belong: the scorners, the indifferent, the sinful, who *ought to* but do not feel the sting of the first, inward mode of shame.

The third mode of shame is stronger still, though it is often continuous with the second. It too is a collective affect, but rather than being brought on by other's sins, it is actively created by the scorn of others and is thus worth cultivating as a marker of righteousness or humility before God. The cultivation of abjection has a long tradition in Christianity, but this particular kind of shame finds itself more concretely attached to speech acts than to bodies proper, the normal locus of Christian abjection.[34] Thus, for instance, the *Pore Caitif*'s tract "On Mekenes" suggests of the properly meek Christian:

> whanne he is dispisid & falsli chalengid & sclaundrid ... his mouþ be shitt fro vnmeke answer / ffor who þat is entrid verili in to goddis loue. it greueþ him not : what sclaundre shame eþir reprof . þat he suffriþ for þe loue of his lord / but he coueitiþ & is glad . þat he were worþi to suffre peyne for cristis loue (165)

Shame is a mark of worthiness, something to be both suffered and sought out. In Chapter One, I discussed the role of scorn in the *Pore Caitif*'s tract "On the Heestis," in which readers are asked to imagine two experiences of scorning. In the first, they are asked to imagine the indignation of a poor man who must bear witness to one's idle vows; push him enough, and he would "seie þat þou scornedist him." In the second, a disobedient servant ignores the reader's prohibitions and excuses himself by saying he does it for love – how much would he have "scornede þee þerto"! In both of these scenarios, scorn is the affect of power misused or unearned, a powerful man's needless exercise of authority or a servant's disdain for his master. In "On Mekenes," however, *receiving* "sclaunder" and "reprof" and *being* "dispisid & falsli chalengid" – in other words, receiving a suite of verbal and emotional abuse related to scorn – are the conditions of possibility for an exercise of Christian virtue. A meek Christian does not speak back, nor does it grieve him

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[32] On this tradition, see Ronald L. Martinez, "Mourning Laura in the *Canzoniere*: Lessons from Lamentations," *MLN* 118.1 (2003): 1-45 (3-4).

[33] *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. Adrian J. McCarthy (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 78.

[34] See *City of God* 14.13 (pp. 338-39). On early Christian abjection, see Virginia Burrus, *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). For a different approach to the relationship between abjection and speech in Christianity, see Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 113-132.

to suffer "sclaundre shame eþir reprof"; he covets it, and is glad to suffer for Christ's love. The same sense of shame, though not named as such, is clearly implicit in the *Book to a Mother*'s description of the "soþeleches," mocked by clerics who find their devout speech too uptight.

This shame is very different from the pedagogical and inward-looking affect described by Augustine and Hilton. But it is equally august, anchored not in Roman self-attention but in two exemplary Scriptural forms: first, the mocking of Christ, a profound image of shameful innocence that provided an exemplar for imitation; and second, Christ's repeated warnings to his apostles that they will be bound together by the experience of scorn. The compiler of the *Pore Caitif* likely drew directly on these connections: forms of "sclaundren" in particular are regularly used to translate the Vulgate's *scandalizo* in Middle English writing.[35] Unlike modern English "slander" or "scandalize," both Latin and Middle English verbs can be associated with temptation (as in Matthew 18:9), but the primary sense is nevertheless related to speech and belongs in the remit of the sins of the tongue.[36] Like the second type of shame, the third is not individuating but instead communal. Because this shame is described and elicited by texts, and because it depends on speech acts carried out by other Christians but transcends specific markers of class and geography, it should be understood as a public affect: to feel this shame is simultaneously to feel belonging *not* to universal Christendom but to a public of proper believers, stitched together by the vernacular writers of the late fourteenth century.[37]

As I noted above, the lines between the three types of late medieval Christian shame and their effects – individuating or community-forming, negative-but-necessary or Christlike – can be blurry. One can mix them, as in the *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, which advises its readers to "suffre gladliche dispites and euyl wordis" with the awareness that such evil words "comeþ of unstabilnes of herte and of wikkid sturing of þe flesche ... for þei knowe wel it is ful hard a man to ouercome himself."[38] In other words, the *Contemplations* asks that you submit to the third sort of shame (the shame of persecution in the form of "evil words") in the hope that your persecutor comes to feel the first (the inward recognition that their words come from the wicked stirrings of the flesh). Moreover, while radical texts for the devout reading public like the *Book to a Mother* project themselves out into a shamed public – shamed by venal priests, scorned by the shameless, and brought together by humiliating labels like "soþeleche" – their "busteous" style is explicitly intended to spark self-criticism and self-awareness. The three modes become inextricable. To feel shame at your own sins marks your devotion and it prepares you to weather the scorn of the shameless. These texts suggest that out of the radically individuating experience of shame, the excruciating consciousness of oneself, comes the awareness that you belong to a shameful public. Eve Sedgwick has described "the double movement shame makes: toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality" – shame *qua* shame, that is, as an affect that is at once fixated on the self and entirely social and

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[35] On the compiler's use of the Middle English Bible, see M. Teresa Brady, "Lollard Sources of 'The Pore Caitif,'" *Traditio* 44 (1988): 389-418.

[36] *MED*, s.v. "sclaundren." Note, however, that "sclaunder" can also denote shame itself, on which see Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, 162-64. On temptation's relationship to emotion, see Rosenwein, 46-47.

[37] On this public, see Chapter One; on belonging to particular publics, see Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 65-124.

[38] *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, EETS o.s. 303, ed. Margaret Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Y.90-104.

performative.[39] The difference is that these late medieval writers worked within a rich and explicit imaginary of shame. They had the language not only to describe (and prescribe) the experience of shame, but to control its relationality, give shame an event and a community, both intimately tied up with speaking and misspeaking.

III. Public Speech, Scorn, and Shame

Passus 11 of the B-text of *Piers Plowman*, and the third vision that encloses it, are usually understood as an exploration of distinct ways of knowing. According to this line of thinking, the third vision's dreams and disputations engage and then exhaust a rational intellectual mode, opening the way for the more vividly experiential poetry of passūs 17-20.[40] But if epistemological questions are the deep narrative engine of the poem, the narrative surface is a rich record of scorn and shame.[41] The *story* of the poem repeatedly reiterates the pastoral scene of correction and the individuating and community-building affects it produces. But the point of that repetition is not to unequivocally endorse the act of correction, but to show its limits. Ultimately, shame corrects better than speech, but the poem cannot arrive at that conclusion by fiat, but only through narrative experimentation.

Passus 11 concludes, in fact, with a lesson in shame: its cause, its effects, and its purpose are all described – for Will and the reader – by Ymaginatif, a figure whose appearance seems to be precipitated by Will's misspeaking. The lesson represents the culmination of a series of errors. The passus begins with Scripture's scorn, a response to Will's anti-intellectualism. Will's woe at her scorn gives way to an inner dream in which he falls into a sinful and ultimately isolating and humiliating pursuit of Fortune. Will surfaces from this headlong fall with a question about the propriety of critical public speech; this conversation deepens Will's anxiety about his soul but buttresses his confidence in his voice. That too proves illusory: after a vision of man's disordered role in the otherwise ordered realm of Kynde, he chastises Reason, who in turn rebukes Will for his intemperate criticism, which again induces woe. The passus ends with Ymaginatif's gloss on Reason's rebuke, which must necessarily speak not only to this last moment of shame but to those that precede it and, as I will argue in the next section, those that follow it.

Given the unfolding inward motion of the *vita* passūs in *Piers Plowman* B, the usual understanding of Will's shame places it firmly in the first mode of shame described above, as a type of self-illuminating and self-correcting emotion.[42] Joseph Wittig's influential account suggests a parallel between Will's "Inward Journey" and Augustine's affective and intellectual

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[39] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 37.

[40] The earliest statement of this view is in Sr. Mary Clemente Davlin, "*Kynde Knowyng* as a Major Theme in *Piers Plowman* B," *RES* ns 22.85 (1971): 1-19. See also James Simpson, "From Reason to Affective Knowledge: Modes of Thought and Poetic Form in *Piers Plowman*," *Medium ævum* 55 (1986): 1-23. For a revision of this approach, see Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 179-206. For a different take on affect in the same passūs, see Louise Bishop, "Dame Study and Women's Literacy," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 12 (1998): 97-115.

[41] Any attention to the narrative surface of *Piers Plowman* is indebted to Middleton, "Narration and the Invention of Experience."

[42] See, among others, Ernest N. Kaulbach, *Imaginative Prophecy in the B-Text of 'Piers Plowman'* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993).

quest in the *Confessions*, a quest that turns on "his confrontation with the perversity of his own will, and his subsequent humble shame."[43] Middleton, elaborating upon Wittig, has described the conversation with Ymaginatif and what precedes it as "the enabling access of shame that marks Will's transit from the inner vision back to the pedagogical sequence of the third vision": a moment of disruption, marking a change in focus, but still one fundamentally self-directed.[44] But his shame and the acts that give rise to it actually fall somewhere between inward-directed shame and the two modes of public-making shame. Will scorns and is scorned; his rebukes unfold in a kind of public space, and his shame at once invites and frustrates a broader, communal kind of identification. As has been widely recognized, these scenes seem to place a limit on public speech. But the repetitive narrative experimentation in the passus – the way that Will's experience repeats with small differences in a series of discrete narrative units, defined on one side by a new allegorical figure's dramatic entrance into conversation and on the other by the abrupt end of that conversation – complicates those limits. These scenes present public misspeaking and the shame that follows as a necessary process of learning.

As the scenes repeat, they revisit the same emotional and intellectual problems, accreting associations as the poem goes along. In the section that follows, I will therefore discuss these scenes in order and in rather careful detail. Readers more interested in the broad conclusions of Passus 11 rather than its particular exchanges may wish to skip ahead to Section IV.

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In *Piers Plowman*, as in pastoralia, scorn and shame are inextricable. Scripture's scorn supplies the first line of Passus 11. It is answered by Will's shame:

> Thanne Scripture scorned me and a skile tolde,
> And lakked me in latyn and liȝt by me sette,
> And seide '*Multi multa sciunt et seipsos nesciunt*.'
> Tho wepte I for wo and wraþe of hir speche
> And in a wynkynge worþ til I weex aslepe. (11.1-5)

As Wittig points out, Scripture's simple rebuke, "*Multi multa sciunt et seipsos nesciunt*" [many know much and do not know themselves], echoes the opening of the pseudo-Bernadine *Meditationes*.[45] It anchors what follows in the Bernadine tradition of divine ascent via self-examination. Scripture's scorn makes such a movement possible. It is ultimately an affective element of a pedagogical relationship: it is accompanied by "lakk[ing] in latyn," criticism in the language of learning, and is glossed by "a skile," a reason or argument – a term native to vernacular intellectual writings, including pastoralia.[46] As with Hilton and Richard of St. Victor, that is, "wo" for sin must precede any such meditation.

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[43] Joseph S. Wittig, "*Piers Plowman* B. Passus IX – XII: Elements in the Design of the Inward Journey," *Traditio* 28 (1972): 211-80 (247).

[44] Anne Middleton, "*Piers Plowman,* the Monsters, and the Critics," in *The Morton W. Bloomfield Lectures, 1989–2005*, ed. Daniel Donoghue, James Simpson, and Nicholas Watson (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), 94-115 (106). Middleton presents Will's shame as continuous with readerly and critical embarrassment at the poem's anomalies and novelties, however.

[45] Joseph S. Wittig, "*Piers Plowman* B," 214; Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, Cognition*.

[46] *MED*, s.v. "skil," 4 and 5; *OED*, s.v. "skill," 3. "Skil" recurs repeatedly as a term of argumentation (in phrases like "bi þe same skile," "For many skiles") in the *Book to a Mother* (see, e.g., p. 79), for example. It is omnipresent in the *Book for a Simple and Devout Woman*:

But what provokes Scripture's rebuke, and indeed what remains in contention throughout Passus 11, is Will's reckless speech.[47] Specifically, at the end of Passus 10, Will speaks recklessly about speaking recklessly:

> And yet haue I forgete ferþer of fyue wittes techyng
> That Clergie of cristes mouþ comended was it neuere,
> For he seide to Seint Peter and to swiche as he louede,
> "*Dum steteritis ante Reges & presides nolite cogitare:*
> Thouȝ ye come bifore kynges and clerkes of þe lawe
> Beþ noȝt afered of þat folk, for I shal ȝyue yow tonge,
> Konnyng and clergie to conclude hem alle." (B.10.448-53)[48]

Will is speaking here to Clergie and Scripture, attacking the value of clerical learning before the two figures in the poem who most embody it. His point is that grace, the gift of tongues, obviates earthly learning and hollows out sublunary distinctions. To make this point, he quotes either from liturgy – the Matins of the Nativity of an Apostle – or from the commentaries that draw on it, but the lines clearly recall Christ's speech to his disciples recorded in Matthew 10 and Mark 13.[49] The poem pares off the end of this liturgical quote, but it survives partly translated into Will's English. The line is a command for radical disregard of verbal prudence, which the original liturgy adopts unchanged from Matthew 10:19: "*Nolite cogitare*," both command, "*quomodo aut quid loquamini. Dabitur enim vobis in illa hora quid loquamini*" [do not consider how or what to say. For what to say will be given to you in that hour].[50] In the exegetical tradition, these lines are usually taken to refer to licensed preachers.[51] But Will cites the verse in order to undo hierarchical lay-clerical lines. The divine gift of tongues takes precedence over rank, allowing the apostles to "conclude hem alle." Will's translation of the line is not entirely faithful here. First, it swaps clerks of the law for the Latin *praeses*, ruler, extending the evangelical scene from royal courts to law-courts and inevitably the "clerkes" of church and university. Second, in lieu of the action of thought, *cogitare*, Will suggests that Christ told the apostles to avoid certain *emotional* states: "afered" in Kane-Donaldson or "abasshed" in all the extant manuscripts. To be abashed is not unlike being ashamed (although the Middle English can also denote fear). The word can mean simply to bow one's head; to be abashed is often to be

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see, e.g., the explanation of the harms of gluttony: "For many skiles is þis wlatsom [disgusting] and euel, and on many maneres hit harmeþ boþe lif and soule" (ll. 5772-3). Unlike terms borrowed from Latin, it can be found in almost all genres and periods of Middle English writing.

[47] See also Blythe, "Sins of the Tongue," 130-31.

[48] Lines 10.452-53 are textually disturbed; in lieu of K-D's emendation, which I've reproduced above, the manuscripts read: "Beþ noȝt abasshed for I shal be in youre mouþes / And ȝyue yow wit and wille and konnyng to conclude / Hem alle þat ayeins yow of cristendom disputen." The utter failure of alliteration here recommends the K-D changes, but as their words are not attested in the manuscripts themselves, I will note the manuscript wording when relevant going forward.

[49] On the liturgical source, see Alford, *Quotations*, 70.

[50] *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesiae Sarum*, ed. Francis Procter and Christopher Wordsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1879), 2:366.

[51] See, e.g., Remigius of Auxerre, *PL* 131.482D; or Raoul Ardens, who reads the verse as in fact advocating a kind of rhetorical contextualism: the Holy Spirit serves the apostles with "non solum scientiam, sed etiam ut ea loco et tempore uti sciant" [not knowledge alone, but also the knowledge of how to make use of that time and place], *PL* 155.1943C.

dumbstruck, to lack for words – a somatic response familiar from any modern account (or experience) of shame.[52] Will endorses public disputation – "conclude" here means something close to modern "confute" – and suggests that Christ tells us not to be abashed to do it.[53] Such an endorsement of public contention is reminiscent of radical texts like the *Book to a Mother*, and the universality of its message likewise recalls the perfection of speech. As Scripture will eventually point out, however, the shamelessness of Will's public speech does not fit: those texts imagine a public bound together by the cultivation of scorn and shame, a public in which Will's free heedlessness does not belong.

In Will's telling, the evangelical gift of tongues is a hedge against insufficiency – what might otherwise shame a speaker into silence. Fiona Somerset, discussing these lines as they evolve from A to C, has pointed out that the deferral to God's grace "admits of no ordinary, everyday solution" – the laity "must be supernaturally endowed with a scholar's disputational skills – more, surely, than the minimum learning required for salvation – so that they will be able to refute incorrect information."[54] Will's speech at the end of Passus 10 is precisely intended to show how grace allows lay knowledge to transcend any limits to their education. He argues that two basic forms of knowledge are necessary: pastoral education on the one hand, sense knowledge, "fyue wittes techyng," on the other. With those two basics in place, he argues that the operation of grace can allow a believer to overleap the knowledge acquired through the linked privilege and hard work of formal education – the categories for which Clergie stands. This stance, pushed to a more extreme stance, undermines the soteriological necessity of works. In the famous conclusion to this speech, clerks curse the time that they ever learned more than their Creed, while shepherds and plowmen:

> Percen wiþ a Paternoster þe paleys of heuene
> And passen Purgatorie penauncelees at hir hennes partyng
> Into þe parfit blisse of Paradis for hir pure bileue
> That inparfitly here knewe and ek lyuede. (10.468-71)

The effect is to empower a certain sort of idealized lay Christian, one educated in the most basic rudiments of the faith but nothing else – the recipient of catechesis rather than the one who administers it, and one who can then proceed "penauncelees" to Paradise.

Scripture's scorn responds directly to this misplaced sense of sufficiency. When she "liȝt by me sette," as Will puts it, she dismisses his standing as a speaker; when she snidely declares,

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[52] MED, s.v. "abaishen," 1 and 3. On the "fallen face," see Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 36.

[53] *MED*, s.v. "concluden," 2; see also *OED*, s.v. "conclude," 4a. The manuscript reading of the imagined antagonists, "hem alle þat ayeins yow of cristendom disputen," reinforces the point. To dispute, to conclude, and to confute are closely related: Trevisa, for instance, translates one of the activities of Saint Silvester, given by Higden as "Judæos disputando confutavit" (he confuted the Jews by disputing), as "he overcome þe Iewes in disputacioun," a line that replaces the academic "concluden" with the simpler "overcome," as is consistent with Trevisa's style. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, 9 vols., Rolls Series Series 41 (London: Longman, 1865-86), 5.118-19.

[54] Fiona Somerset, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35. This demand that all believers dispute like scholars is not necessarily inconceivable, however. Compare the perfection of speech desired by Peraldus and those that follow him: the "laicization" of late medieval religion sought as much or more to distribute the *demands* of clerical life as it did the privileges.

"'*Multi multa sciunt et seipsos nesciunt*,'" she points precisely to Will's "penauncelees" ignorance of self. It is hard not to read a deeper shame behind the "wo" with which Will responds to Scripture: the vision of the plowmen who pierce the palace of heaven with a paternoster is of course the passage with which most manuscripts of the A-text end, voiced not diegetically by Will but seemingly in the voice of the poem itself.[55] Scorn and shame thus motivate the project of revision. One would think, following the first mode of shame described above, that this rebuke would immediately open up the sort of self-knowledge Scripture demands, for both Will and the poem's readers. And indeed an inward transition follows: as Stephanie Trigg has suggested about a parallel sequence in C, Will's weeping for "wo" in response to Scripture's scorn "signal[s] a rather violent transition into a visionary state."[56] As with the poem's "irruptions of 'loose talk,'" which Middleton argues never "sustain a narrative subject-position, but ... change the conversation," scorn marks the ending of an episode, woe a transition to another that promises to illuminate what came before.[57] And indeed, Will's loose talk and its reciprocal scorn ends with his ravishment into another visionary state. But that state ends with the same shame.

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Specifically, the same sense of insufficiency and incompletion inflects Reason's rebuke to Will, which falls some four hundred lines after Scripture's rebuke. Dreaming within a dream, Will has a vision of the ordered reproduction of nature, his mind's eye guided by Kynde. Humans are the lone exception to the rule: "Reson rewarded and ruled alle beestes," Will realizes to his dismay, "saue man and his make" (11.370-71). And so he "rebukede Reson" (11.373) for this oversight. Why, he asks, does Reason not attend to "man and his make" to keep them from sin? For such impertinence, Will earns a rebuke in turn. With aphoristic simplicity, Reason commends "suffraunce" to Will, with Christ's "suffraunce" as a model:

> And Reson arated me and seide, 'recche þee neuere
> Why I suffre or noȝt suffre; þiself hast noȝt to doone.
> Amende þow, if þow myȝt, for my tyme is to abide.
> Suffraunce is a souerayn vertue, and a swift vengeaunce.
> Who suffreþ moore þan god?' quod he; 'no gome, as I leeue.' (11.376-80)

The lesson here is simple enough: stop your meddling into my business ("recche *þee* neuere," it does not concern you), and look to fix yourself, if you can. But "suffraunce" is one of the poem's crucial terms, and like all such terms in *Piers Plowman*, it admits of no single definition but instead gathers meanings and glosses around it, accumulating oppositions and lending conceptual shape to whole episodes of the poem. In Middle English, to suffer is to suffer physically and spiritually, to endure, to accept, to forbear (from vengeance, for example), to allow, and at its most basic simply to experience; each of these definitions is operative at different points of the

[55] "Suche lewid iottis / Percen wiþ a paternoster þe paleis of heuene / Wiþoute penaunce at here partyng, into þe heiȝe blisse" (A.11.311-13). On the evolution of these lines across revisions, which are both locally altered and spoken by Rechelesnesse in C, see David F. Johnson, "'Persen with a Pater-Noster Paradys oþer Hevene': *Piers Plowman* C.11.296-98a," *YLS* 5 (1991): 77-89.
[56] Stephanie Trigg, "Langland's Tears: Poetry, Emotion, and Mouvance," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 26 (2012): 27-48 (37).
[57] Anne Middleton, "Loose Talk from Langland to Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 35 (2013): 29-46 (41).

poem.[58] "Suffraunce" is *also* one of the affective states with which one should experience the second and third modes of shame – the way to deal with someone else's verbal trespass, as in the *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*'s advice to "suffre gladliche dispites." Reason's explication of suffraunce outlines the same lesson in three languages:

> 'Holy writ,' quod þat wye, 'wisseþ men to suffre:
> *Propter deum subiecti estote omni creature*.
> Frenche men and fre men affaiteþ þus hire children:
> *Bele vertue est suffrance; mal dire est petite vengeance*.
> *Bien dire et bien suffrir fait lui suffrable a bien venir*.
> Forþi I rede,' quod reson, 'þow rule þi tonge bettre,
> And er þow lakke my life loke þyn be to preise.' (11.382-88)[59]

This macaronic courtesy lesson draws on both Scriptural teaching and, unusually for Langland, French elementary education: Reason's trilingual lesson suggests the universality of his message and its applicability across the discourses of church and court. *Propter deum suiecti estote omni creature*, Reason says, quoting 1 Peter 2:13: "be subject to all creatures for God's sake," a message of submission repeatedly tested in the middle passūs. "Frenche men and fre men" teach in turn that suffraunce is a fair virtue, to speak ill is little vengeance, and to speak well and suffer well will yield better results. In his call for public disputation, Will quotes Christ's promise to "ȝyue yow tonge" with which to speak; Reason's lesson in Christian humility and secular *gentilesse* comes down to a forceful injunction that recalls and qualifies that promise: "rule þi tonge bettre."[60]

This familiar lesson on the sinful tongue highlights the same sort of insufficiency that Scripture scorned. "Er þow lakke my life loke þyn be to preise" is not so different in spirit from *Multi multa sciunt et seipsos nesciunt*. Scripture's scorn is echoed by Reason's courtesy lesson, which borrows the words with which French and free men "affaiteþ" their *children* – not, it should be said, a generous message to Will. "Affaiten" means to teach a child, but also to govern and to shape them: a courteous shaping that Will (and the will) is repeatedly shown to lack, his formation still unfinished.[61] The same sense of juvenile folly is present even in the first rebuke Will receives for his errant speech, Holy Church's in Passus 1:

> 'Thow doted daffe!' quod she, 'dulle are þi wittes.
> To litel latyn þow lerned, leode, in þi youþe:
> *Heu michi quia sterilem duxi vitam Iuuenilem*.' (1.140-41a)

Heu michi quia sterilem duxi vitam Iuuenilem: woe is me, because I led a useless life in my youth. Noah Guynn, following Agamben, has located incompletion at the root of shame, from

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[58] *MED*, s.v. "sufferen." "Suffraunce" is often translated as patience; I have not done so, in order to avoid confusion with Langland's Patience. For forms of Middle English "suffren" broadly equivalent to modern "to suffer" in *Piers Plowman* B, see (for instance) 11.259 or 18.206; "to endure," 15.270; "to accept," 19.291; "to forbear," 6.144; "to allow," 6.80, 10.108, or 15.412; "to experience," perhaps 4.20 or 10.111.

[59] 11.383-93 are only attested in RF of B-manuscripts; I follow Kane-Donaldson and the *Piers Plowman Electronic Archive* in treating these lines as authorial, lost in copying, rather than a later interpolation.

[60] Langland's French lines are also translated by Chaucer's Franklin: "pacience is an heigh vertue" (V.773).

[61] *MED*, s.v. "afaiten."

"the perception that at the heart of historical or subjective truth lies the almost unbearable truth of the truth's incompletion."[62] Will lacks such metaphysical certainty, but in the case of Reason's rebuke, Will responds appropriately to *his own* incompletion by registering his shame:

> Tho cauȝte I colour anoon and comsed to ben ashamed
> And awaked þerwiþ; wo was me þanne
> That I in metels ne myȝte moore haue yknowen. (11.405-07)

Langland, a more careful poet of narrative action than is usually acknowledged, has very clearly enumerated the sequence of events here. Reason has just ended his rebuke with another line from the *Distichs*: *Nemo sine crimine uiuit* [nobody lives without fault] (11.404); Will then blushes, is ashamed, wakes, and then feels woe, each movement of this complex response mapped by some kind of temporal marker ("anoon," "comsed," "þerwiþ," "þanne"). The blush comes first, an involuntary and somatic first movement of emotion, involuntary but culturally-created: the blush is a way in which things learned through teaching and ritual are acted out through the body.[63] Then shame, and then the woe, which is the consciousness of shame's source: Will is ashamed of his intellectual incompleteness, the inadequacy of his knowledge, that he "ne myȝte moore haue yknowen" while dreaming. This state of Will's inadequacy, of his half-formed mind, is the same registered by Scripture's scorn and by Reason's courtesy lesson. His shame arises from the unbearable truth that *he has not yet* apprehended the truth, that his hasty speech is idle and vain.

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If Will is learning, why does the same scene essentially repeat itself? One answer might have to do with the poem's tendency to worry a theme over an extended passage of narration. Emily Steiner has suggested that Passus 11 is defined by the tension between suffraunce and lakking, between charitable acceptance and uncharitable criticism – between, that is, the patient communal endurance that the *Pore Caitif* suggests a meek Christian "coueitiþ" and the outward-going scorn that texts like it solicit and encourage.[64] The passus oscillates between these poles. Within a hundred lines of Scripture's rebuke, for instance, Will is again speaking publically and forcefully: having fallen into the dream of a lifelong pursuit of *Concupiscencia carnis* and Coueitise of eiȝes, Will demands that friar-confessors allow him to be buried in the parish church. The reception of this demand is less than enthusiastic: "for I seide þus to freres, a fool þei me helden, / and loued me þe lasse for my lele speche" (11.68-69). Will's doubts over his "lele [loyal or lawful] speche" occasions the appearance of lawfulness itself, the personification Lewte, who laughs and then looks hard on Will for his frowning.[65] Why, he asks, do you frown? "If I dorste," Will responds with frustration, "amonges men þis metels auowe!" (11.86).

Will's desire to *auowe*, to avow, occasions one of the poem's intermittent defenses of public speech. The vast majority of the attestations in the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* for "avouer," the immediate source of Will's word, come from petitions, court proceedings, parliamentary and royal records, and legal documents; in those contexts, the word undoubtedly

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[62] Noah Guynn, "Historicizing Shame, Shaming History: Origination and Negativity in the *Eneas*," *L'Ésprit Créateur*, 39.4 (1999): 112-27 (116).

[63] Compare Trigg's discussion of tears, "Langland's Tears," 33-34; and Bishop, "Dame Study," 109-11.

[64] Steiner, *Reading Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 108-12.

[65] The association between Lewte and the law was first noted by P. M. Kean, "Love, Law, and *Lewte* in *Piers Plowman*," *RES* n.s. 15.59 (1964): 241-61. Lewte's various meanings are unpacked very efficiently in Craun, *Ethics and Power*, 71. See also *MED*, s.v. "lel," 1, 3.

carries the veridictional force of legal utterance.[66] In Middle English, the word tends to refer more broadly to any vow of the truthfulness of a statement, but it retains the sense of a binding oath made publicly.[67] What Will wishes he dared to do, in other words, is affirm the truth of his dream before others: he wishes to speak a dubious truth publically. Lewte's response to Will endorses such public speech, with a caveat:

> "Ȝis, by Peter and by Poul!" quod he and took hem boþe to witnesse:
> *Non oderis fratres secrete in corde tuo set publice argue illos*...
> "It is *licitum* for lewed men to legge þe soþe
> If hem likeþ and lest; ech a lawe it graunteþ,
> Excepte persons and preestes and prelates of holy chirche.
> It falleþ noȝt for þat folk no tales to telle
> Thouȝ þe tale were trewe, and it touched synne.
> Þyng þat al þe world woot, wherfore sholdestow spare
> To reden it in Retorik to arate dedly synne?
> Ac be þow neueremoore þe firste þe defaute to blame;
> Thouȝ þow se yuel seye it noȝt first; be sory it nere amended.
> Thyng þat is pryue, publice þow it neuere;
> Neiþe for loue looue it noȝt ne lakke it for enuye:
> *Parum lauda; vitupera parcius.*" (11.96-104)

The rules Lewte lays out here are fairly straightforward. Quoting Leviticus, he commends public reproof in lieu of private seething. It is *licitum* – licit, a snatch of Latinity borrowed from canon law – for lay people to allege the truth.[68] Parsons, priests, and prelates may not mark out an individual's sin for public correction, but lay people seem to be subject to less exacting rules.[69] In their case, public knowledge is fair game for "to reden it in Retorik": the "þyng þat al þe world woot" can be spoken about, read aloud, interpreted, represented in narrative, retold as counsel, and taught in poetry.[70] Will just should avoid being the first to point out such sin:

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[66] *AND*, s.v. "avouer [2]." The modern French *avouer* and its substantive, *l'aveu*, are also important as a negative term to Foucault's lectures on the modes of veridiction, the ways of truth-telling by which subjects constitute themselves and are recognized as speaking the truth. *Avouer* always carries a whiff of the medieval for Foucault: the words precisely mark the post-Lateran IV culture of religious education that he views as essential for the creation of the modern subject (see Chapter One). In his later lectures, Foucault differentiates "the discourse of truth in which the truth about the subject can be told," and "the discourse of truth in which the subject is likely and able to speak about himself, which may be, for example, avowal, confession, or examination of conscience." Confession constitutes the subject as object of knowledge, but does not allow for "the truth about the subject" to be told. Foucault, *The Courage of Truth (The Government of Self and Others II)*, ed. Frédéric Gros and trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2011), 3.

[67] *MED*, s.v. "avouen" (2), 1 and 2.

[68] *MED*, s.v. "leggen" (1), another word with strong legal connotations.

[69] I am grateful to Steven Justice for clarifying my reading of this line.

[70] This line certainly refers primarily to speech, but "reden" is polyvalent and "Retorik" already denotes both spoken and written style when Langland writes B. On the valences of "reden," see *MED*, s.v. "reden," 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8. On "Retorik," see *MED*, s.v. "rethorik(e," 1 and 2.

"thyng þat is pryue, publice þow it neuere." He does not provide any guidelines for private correction; in that case, "be sory it nere amended" and be done.

Lewte places two limits on speech here. The first insists on matching content to audience in a way that Will's loose-cannon apostolic speech omits: what speech publicizes, whether in avowal or disputation, must already be public; anything "pryue" should remain so. The dynamics of publicity and privacy in this command have broad repercussions: Lewte's command compares to Gower's horror at supplantation in the *Confessio amantis*, a sin that "makth comun of propreté / With sleihte and with soubtilité."[71] The second limit requires a connection between inward intent and its manifestation in speech. "Neiþe for loue looue it noȝt ne lakke it for enuye," Lewte says: that is, one should not criticize ("lakke") out of envy, nor praise ("looue") out of affection. Lewte's attention to both inner intent and outer social knowledge is something of a reversion to a pastoral mean, recapitulating the usual conditions for speech outlined in vernacular catechesis. But it also represents a powerful endorsement of public speech. Craun has recently argued that this passage should be read through the pastoral practice and regulation of fraternal correction; Lewte's legalism, he suggests, is in fact a reformist recasting of fraternal correction, empowering lay criticism of authoritative institutions and figures.[72]

But as soon as the poem licenses some forms of public lakking, Will rebukes Reason. By the end of Passus 11, the pendulum has swung back to the limits on speech. But the reformist drive that Craun finds in Lewte's endorsement of lakking is already tempered by its debts to pastoral writing. Steiner points out that the problem with critical speech, especially in Will's outbursts, is "that it proceeds from the individual speaker, and therefore from a position of pride or self-interest – it inevitably reflects back on the one speaking, on his moral and social status."[73] Speech is always already social, as catechetical writing acknowledges, and to disregard its context would obscure its meaning and effect; likewise, speech always represents some inward intention, registering the trace of its speaker's interiority. In other words, Lewte reminds Will that speaking critically reflects as much on the speaker as on the one guilty of the "defaute" – the same message as "*Multi multa sciunt et seipsos nesciunt*," albeit with a different emphasis. Passus 11 oscillates less between lakking and sufferance than between scorn, harsh speech aimed at others, and shame, the harsh gaze directed inward. Every step into public involves a concomitant step back into the self.

IV. Shame and Correction

Or so the passus concludes, in a final lesson on shame that moves beyond the suffraunce-lakking dyad. After Reason's rebuke, Will lifts his downcast eyes and sees a figure – Ymaginatif, as yet unnamed – looking at him, as Lewte looked at him earlier in the passus. This figure goes on to explain what has just happened:

> "What is dowel?" quod þat wiȝt; "ywis, sire," I seide,
> "To se muche and suffre moore, certes, is dowel."
> "Haddestow suffred," he seide, "slepynge þo þow were,
> Thow sholdest haue knowen þat clergie kan & conceyued moore þoruȝ Reson,

[71] John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, 2nd ed, vol. 2, ed. Russell Peck and trans. Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2013), 2.2377-78.
[72] Craun, *Ethics and Power*, 69-79.
[73] Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 166.

For Reson wolde haue reherced þee riȝt as Clergie seide;
Ac for þyn entremetynge here artow forsake:
Philosophus esses si tacuisses." (11.412-17a)

Their interaction begins with a kind of parody of Will's repeated inquiries: "what is dowel," is of course, the question Will poses again and again throughout the *vita*.[74] But the question in Ymaginatif's mouth becomes a rhetorical one designed to elicit a set answer, rather than a genuine inquiry, and again it recalls the education of a child: "What do we say when we ask for something?" "We say please!" Ymaginatif is following a pedagogical script, that is, and what follows is as stern a lesson in right-speaking as Reason's or Scripture's. "For þyn entremetynge here artow forsake," Ymaginatif says: for your interference here, you are forsaken.[75] The pedagogical fiction is emphasized by the quotation from the *Consolation of Philosophy*, *Philosophus esses si tacuisses* [you would have been a philosopher had you kept quiet], linking Will's intemperate speech to Boethius's. The reference not only commends silence, it reaffirms the model of learning – dependent on misspeaking, shame, and realization – established by the early books of the *Consolation* and reiterated intermittently between Passus 1 and Passus 15 of the B-text.[76] Ymaginatif underlines the point with the example of Adam, who had paradise "at wille" in silence and lost it all, apparently, through speech – an unconventional rewriting of Genesis that brings the Fall into line with the preoccupations of *Piers Plowman* and the pastoral writing that precedes it. As he explains:

"Adam, whiles he spak noȝt, hadde paradis at wille,
Ac whan he mamelede about mete, and entremetede to knowe
The wisedom and þe wit of god, he was put fram blisse.
And riȝt so ferde Reson bi þee; þow wiþ rude speche
Lakkedest and losedest þyng þat longed noȝt to doone;
Tho hadde he litel likyng for to lere þe moore.
Pryde now and presumpcion, parauenture, wol þee appele
That Clergie þi compaignye kepeþ noȝt to suwe." (11.417-24)

This whole passage from Ymaginatif draws on conceptual connections common to pastoral instruction on speech. The link between "mete" and improper speech and the sense that "rude speche" betokens "pryde" and "presumpcion," for example, both reflect traditional connections

[74] This line is seriously textually disturbed and has been considerably emended by Kane and Donaldson, but in most manuscript readings, Ymaginatif is at least posing a question similar in sense if not wording.

[75] As Middleton and Hanna have pointed out, "entremetten" here points forward to both Ymaginatif's accusation that Will meddles (i.e., intrudes *and* intermixes) with makings and Will's defense of the action as an interposition (i.e., an intermixing) of joy among cares. See Anne Middleton, "Narration and the Invention of Experience," 110-11; Ralph Hanna III, "'Meddling with Makings' and Will's Work," in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission: Essays in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 85-94 (88); and *MED*, s.v. *entermeten*, 1.

[76] Holy Church is immediately reminiscent of Boethius's Philosophy – a point made by Justice, "Genres of *Piers Plowman*," 295 – and her exchanges set a pattern that Scripture and Reason (among others) pick up.

between disorderly speech and the sins of gluttony and pride.[77] Of course, these same conceptual connections are also activated in the *defense* of contentious but virtuous devout speech, as I argued in the previous chapter. Robert of Gretham's *Mirror* and its Middle English translation (an important pioneer among texts addressed to the devout reading public) anticipate Ymaginatif's terms when defending their respective language choices:

> Latin ne wil Y sette non þerin, for it semeþ as it wer a pride for to spek Latyn to lewed folke, & he entermetteþ hem of a fole mester þat telleþ to hem Latin. For ich man schal ben vndernomen & aresoned eftter þe language þat he haþ lerd.[78]

Even if this defense of the vernacular serves different purposes from Ymaginatif's rebuke, it points to a common conceptual vocabulary (and perhaps a more specific London idiom) for devout pastoral correction.[79] In the *Mirror*, pastoral correction spoken in the wrong manner and with the wrong intentions runs the risk of pride. The same words are used to describe similar dangers in *Piers Plowman*: Trajan cautions Will "lakke no lif ooþer þouȝ he moore latyn knowe, / ne vndernyme noȝt foule," commending a certain affective stance ("noȝt foule," not bitterly) in correction, while in Passus 12, Ymaginatif will remember when Will "aresonedest Reson, a rebukynge as it were" (12.218).[80] So if these passūs set into narrative motion the experience of reproof, they also reiterate longstanding warnings against the "fole mester" (the foolish enterprise) of its malpractice, as Craun has noted.[81]

But that is not all they do. In place of verbal rebuke, Ymaginatif suggests allowing the operations of shame to take effect. As he explains: "shal neuere chalangynge ne chidynge chaste a man so soone / as shal shame, and shenden hym, and shape hym to amende." (11.425-26) "Chalangynge" and "chidynge," the verbal acts of reproof that Will and public-minded pastoralia both undertake, are less effective than shame. Shame can chasten, "shenden" – a word often used in apposition with "to shame," and one that suggests destruction as well as shaming – "and shape hym to amende": shame breaks and remakes.[82] In this account, the communal and public tasks of correction are sidelined in favor of the seemingly inward experience of shame. Ymaginatif provides an appropriately vivid exemplum to underline the point:

> "For lat a dronken daffe in a dyk falle,
> Lat hym ligge, loke noȝt on hym til hym liste aryse.
> For þouȝ Reson rebuked hym þanne reccheþ hym neuere;
> Of clergie ne of his counseil he counteþ noȝt a risshe.
> To blame or to bete hym þanne it were but pure synne.

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[77] On this connection, see Chapter One and Edwin Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 17. See also, among others, *Speculum Vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna using materials assembled by Venetia Somerset, 2 vols., EETS o.s. 331-32 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2008), 13485-586.

[78] *The Middle English 'Mirror': Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan and Margaret Connolly (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 5. These lines very closely follow the French; see page 4, lines 79-88.

[79] On the London connection, see Hanna, *London Literature*; on these lines specifically, see 182, and, more generally, 148-304.

[80] On Trajan's warning, see Craun, *Ethics and Power*, 80.

[81] Craun, *Ethics and Power*, 69-84.

[82] See *MED*, s.v. "shenden," 3.

Ac whan nede nymeþ hym vp for nede lest he sterue,
And shame shrapeþ hise cloþes and his shynes wassheþ,
Thanne woot þe dronken wye wherfore he is to blame." (11.427-34)

In its context, the exemplum does double duty: Will is explicitly told not "to blame or to bete" a fallen sinner, but the echo of Holy Church's "doted daffe" in Ymaginatif's "dronken daffe" is no accident – he is equally legible, that is, as the drunk in the ditch whose unruliness has led him astray. The basic arc of the exemplum's narrative – a sinner falls in a ditch – elaborates on Matthew 15:14, *caecus autem si caeco ducatum praestet, ambo in foveam cadunt* [if a blynd man lede a blynd man, bothe fallen doun in to the diche].[83] When Langland cites the passage elsewhere in the B text, as he does in Clergie's voice at 10.281a and in Ymaginatif's at 12.185, its message is pointed: the clergy should be morally and intellectually unassailable, or otherwise they lead the laity into the ditch.[84] Julian of Norwich's allegory of the lord and servant transforms the parable, turning it into perhaps the most luminous and exciting stretch of Middle English vernacular theology, a conflation of the Fall, Incarnation, and Redemption that emphasizes a loving, empathizing, and suffering godhead.[85] But in Ymaginatif's exemplum, the fall into the ditch is neither occasioned by an inept priesthood nor redeemed by a loving God: the "dronken daffe" is *meant* to lie alone, broken and remade by the action of his own shame, which claws at his clothes like a rat and washes his shins like wastewater.[86] The correction of such an abased sinner from without would be a sin for the corrector. Like Will's other rebukers, that is, Ymaginatif prescribes self-knowledge, but the form that knowledge takes is shame itself. The inward shame that arises from the cognizance of sin – rendered as the *sensory awareness* of bodily abasement – is the only thing sufficient to tell "þe dronken wye wherfore he is to blame."

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[83] This compressed parable comes in the midst of Christ's elevation of proper speech over dietary law: in response to complaints about the disciples' indifference to the tradition of washing before eating, Christ declares that "that thing that entrith in to the mouth, defoulith not a man; but that thing that cometh out of the mouth, defoulith a man" (Matthew 15:11). The lesson scandalizes the Pharisees: the disciples declare that "the Farisees ben sclaundrid," as the Middle English Bible puts it in Matthew 15:12. The parable is Christ's response to the Pharisees' sense of shame on his behalf.

[84] The passage is discussed in Nick Gray, "Langland's Quotations from the Penitential Tradition," *Modern Philology* 84.1 (Aug., 1986): 53-60 (57). Langland was not unique among fourteenth-century writers in adapting Matthew 15:14 for anticlerical critique; an echo is also present in Trevisa's Lord's rebuke to his Clerk's suggestion that Latin obviates the need for English translation in the short *Dialogus inter dominum et clericum*: "Þis reson ys worþy to be plonged yn a plod [a puddle] and leyd in pouþer of lewednes and of schame." See Ronald Waldron, "Trevisa's Original Prefaces on Translation: A Critical Edition," in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Edward D. Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988), 285-99 (lines 93-94).

[85] *A Revelation of Love*, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 273-289.

[86] There is an analogue in Glutton's confession in passus 5: having consumed to excess, Glutton staggers home, "ac whan he drouȝ to þe dore þanne dymmed his eiȝen; / He þrumbled on þe þresshfold and þrew to þe erþe" (5.349-50). His shame only comes *after* rebukes from his wife and Repentaunce, however, and even that shame is fleeting.

It is appropriate that Ymaginatif calls shame into relief as both a felt experience and a force for self-knowledge. Ymaginatif is a figure who mediates between the intellect and the basic sensory prompts of the *sensus communis*.[87] Moreover, medieval accounts of perception often take emotions like shame to be grounded in the senses, part of a bodily way of knowing sometimes aligned with and sometimes independent of knowledge itself.[88] Bonaventure's meditative system, for instance, begins in "the bodily senses" [*sensus carnis*] and places delight, *oblectatio*, as the medial stage between apprehension and judgment: affect falls between basic perception and reasoning, in other words.[89] In *Deonise hid Diuinite*, affect and knowing are separate faculties: "two miȝtes ben in a mans soule, ȝouen of þe Fader of heuen, of whom alle good comiþ, þe tone is reson, þe toþer is affeccioun or wille. Þorow reson we knowe, & þorow affeccioun we fele or loue." "Sensualite," sensory perception, "is seruant vnto affeccioun" rather than reason.[90] But as a mediating and transitional force, Ymaginatif is clearly capable of bringing both powers to play. For Aquinas, emotion and sensory perception belong to the same power, the sensitive appetite, but unlike sensations, which are passive, emotions are active.[91] The imagination is particularly capable of describing that action, the connection between sense and affect – "shame shrapeþ hise cloþes and his shynes wassheþ" – and knowledge – "thanne woot þe dronken wye wherfore he is to blame."

But Ymaginatif's vision of shame is also a solitary one, especially when compared to the account of shame in contemporary texts. By forbidding the linguistic and thus social action of chastisement and prioritizing the self-awareness brought on by the senses, his account forecloses the possibility of a shamed public. The common affects of scorn and shame that describe publics in religious writing have been, by virtue of the inward vision's method of personification allegory, repeatedly rendered individual and particular: Scripture's scorn, rather than believers' scorn; Will's shame, rather than that of the soþeleches. Here, we return to the Augustinian model of shame: shame is self-awareness; shame is a lesson. Will understands the message. His response to Ymaginatif is spoken in the voice of the student, agreeing to the general principle and applying it to particulars:

'Ye siggen sooþ,' quod I, 'ich haue yseyen it ofte.
Ther smyt no þyng so smerte, ne smelleþ so foule

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[87] Alastair J. Minnis, "Langland's Ymaginatif and Late-Medieval Theories of Imagination," *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981): 71-103; and Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition*.
[88] See Maura Nolan, "Medieval Sensation and Modern Aesthetics," *minnesota review* 80 (2013), 145-58 (148): "Sensation, then, is not only the medium for human experience; it is also the medium through which human beings know God and know the world." Cf. Karnes, *Imagination*, 187.
[89] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, ed. and trans. Philotheus Boehner (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1956), 1.10 and 2.2-8 respectively.
[90] "Beniamyn," in *Deonise hid Diuinite*, 12-13. See also Minnis, "Langland's Ymaginatif," 75.
[91] Aquinas' treatise on the emotions takes up *Summa Theologiae* 1a2æ. 22-30; see specifically 1a2æ. 22, 3. Though emotions are products of the body-soul hybrid, they are fundamentally bodily and common to animals and humans. Pleasure, not an emotion but related, is a movement which "arises from some sense-perception." *ST* 1a2æ.31, 1. This discussion and the terminology used is indebted to Peter King, "Emotions," in *The Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209-226. Cf. Floyd, "Aquinas on the Emotions."

As shame: þere he sheweþ hym, hym shonyeþ euery man.
Why ye wisse me þus,' quod I, 'was for I rebuked Reson.' (11.435-38)

Again, the somatic and sensory qualities of shame are called to the fore. Shame smarts and shame stinks. Where it appears, every man avoids. Moreover, Will gets the specific point of this cascade of descriptions of the bodily experience of shame: it is a lesson about his own misspeaking. His rebuke should properly be rendered needless by the pedagogy of shame itself; on the other hand, the shame that Will experienced *having been rebuked* has now been explicated, its pedagogical value made clear for Will and the reader.

The lesson succeeds, in other words, but why spend so long talking about shame? As with the repeated rebukes Will receives in Passus 11, this long gloss on Will's affect seems otiose. But the lesson should not be read in isolation: just as Scripture's rebuke follows Will's apostolic outburst, this lesson in shame quietly responds to and enriches the license Lewte provides. Lewte emphasizes that public correction is lawful. Ymaginatif – speaking in terms that link affect and knowledge, and avoiding the terminology of the law – articulates the limits of public correction, the ways in which inward shame can correct better than public speech. And here I think the repetition is integral to the experience of the poem. Despite the near-universal agreement on both the fragmentary and dialectical aspects of Langland's poetry, there remains a tendency in criticism to search for the "right" lesson in his poetry, for the thread of theology that Langland unequivocally endorses. But in this coordination of public criticism, misspeaking, and shame, Langland instead suspends resolution: each of these lessons accretes rather than completes, playing out an experiment in speech and self-realization that unfolds at the intersection of private judgment and public exposure. Shame is a kind of inevitability in these conditions, in which the extension of one's voice in public is both thoroughly authorized and immediately shameful. Will's reiterating shame therefore sits outside both of the models I discussed above, the inward and the communal: though it looks more like the former than the latter, the drive to correction is always overcome by a drive to speak that the poem never unequivocally condemns. The repeated gambit of misspeaking and shame, which suspends Will and readers in a problem, distinguishes *Piers Plowman* from its pastoral antecedents. Teaching texts and rabble-rousing public-making texts both resolve contradictions, aiming to overcome the kind of errors born of provisionality and incompletion that dog Will. *Piers Plowman* is interested not only in the perfection of language and the correction of sin, though it *is* interested in those projects, albeit as much in their limits and failures as in their accomplishment. For Langland, it is important to spend time down in the ditch, where shame can be felt and properly understood.

V. Hawkyn's Shame

With the figure of Hawkyn, the B text of *Piers Plowman* revisits the coordination of public speech and shame. Hawkyn is a limit case: while Will's heedless speech is checked by shame, Hawkyn's speech gives rise to *too much* shame, to a shame-unto-despair that ceases to be productive and becomes dangerous. Hawkyn appears in the wake of the tense dinner with the Doctor of Divinity, in which Will's impulse to denounce is both restrained and acted out – another potted lesson in the limits and powers of public reproof. (Will's defense of his makings, which precedes this scene, will be discussed in the conclusion below.) That meal and its commensal drama ends with one of the poem's periodic vows of pilgrimage: Conscience and Patience set forth together with the "vitailles" of "sobretee and symple speche and sooþfast

bileue" (13.217).[92] As they set forth, a minstrel appears – Hawkyn, who even in his first blush of self-identification, fills many roles:

> "I am a Mynstrall," quod þat man, "my name is *Actiua vita*.
> Al ydel ich hatie for of Actif is my name.
> A wafrer, wol ye wite, and serue manye lordes,
> Ac fewe robes I fonge or furrede gownes.
> Couþe I lye and do men lauȝe, þanne lacchen I sholde
> Ouþer mantel or moneie amonges lordes Mynstrals.
> Ac for I kan neiþer taboure ne trompe ne telle no gestes,
> Farten ne fiþelen at festes ne harpen,
> Iape ne Iogele ne gentilliche pipe,
> Ne neiþer saille ne sautrie ne synge wiþ þe gyterne,
> I haue no goode giftes of þise grete lordes
> For no breed þat I brynge forþ, saue a benyson on þe sonday
> Whan þe preest preieþ þe peple hir Paternoster to bidde
> For Piers þe Plowman and þat hym profit waiten." (13.224-37)

Hawkyn is unusual among the personae of *Piers Plowman*, one of the figures that entirely straddles (along with Piers Plowman himself) what Jill Mann has called the poem's "constant oscillation between the metaphorical world and the real world."[93] Unlike, say, Anima, whose names map a series of aspects of the soul, Hawkyn fills roles both material and spiritual, in such a number as to approach incoherence. He is a waferer, a figure for the active life, a feeder of workers, an enemy of idleness like Ymaginatif, whose own self-naming a passus earlier – "'I am ymaginatif,' quod he; 'ydel was I neuere'" (12.1) – is nearly quoted here.

But Hawkyn's identity depends upon his role as a public speaker. He is a minstrel first – but even as he identifies himself as a minstrel, he distances himself from their activities and rewards. He receives no gifts from lords because he can "neiþer taboure ne trompe ne telle no gestes, / Farten ne fiþelen at festes ne harpen, / Iape ne Iogele ne gentilliche pipe": that is, as Craun points out in his discussion of this passage, Hawkyn can perform none of the idle and disruptive professional entertainments that pastoral texts inveigh against.[94] If he knew how to lie, he says, he would "lacchen" (snatch, catch, obtain) rewards at court, but of course he cannot; he has chosen what seems to be a sounder path.[95] His exhaustive catalogue of what he *cannot* do dismisses a whole world of deviant speech – denounced in similar terms by Study at 10.27-60 – which in turn excludes him from the entire gift economy of court entertainment. What he offers

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[92] The opposition between the nourishment of scriptural words and the rich food eaten by the Doctor of Divinity (as well as other links between indulgent or sinful speech and cooking and eating) is discussed by Jill Mann, "Eating and Drinking in Piers Plowman," *Essays and Studies*, n. s. 32 (1979), 26-43 (37-39). On gluttony, verbal sin, and the ambivalence of the mouth, see note 77 above.

[93] Mann, "Langland and Allegory," in *The Morton W. Bloomfield Lectures, 1989-2005*, ed. by Daniel Donoghue, James Simpson, and Nicholas Watson (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010), 20-41 (27). On the difficulty of Hawkyn, see especially John Alford, "Haukyn's Coat: Some Observations on *Piers Plowman* B. XIV. 22-7," *Medium Aevum* 43 (1974): 133-38.

[94] Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 175.

[95] MED, s.v. "lacchen," v.1.

instead is the transparently eucharistic gift of the wafer, brought forth on Sunday and offered to "alle trewe trauaillours and tiliers of þe erþe" (13.239).[96] To sell the wafers, he must speak – he must "hawk" them – but he insists on the sobriety of that speech.[97]

Hawkyn, in short, sounds a little like the narrative voice of *Piers Plowman* itself. He attacks the misspending of wealth, the wasting of mental energy, and commends the basic sacramental and pastoral responsibilities of the parish church. He shares the poem's complicated relationship to popular entertainment, simultaneously claiming, derogating, and sublimating the forms of minstrelsy. This stance hardly originates with Langland, however. Hawkyn's emphasis on virtue, on pastoral work, and the hostility to frivolous entertainment recapitulates a gambit common to the prefatory matter in an earlier generation of vernacular pastoralia. Ralph Hanna has traced a topos in which such serious religious writing repudiates romance, insisting upon the moral superiority of religious instruction to secular entertainment, and suggesting that the former can be substituted for the latter.[98] The *Speculum vitae*, for instance, opens by warning its readers that it "wil make na vayne carpynge / of dedes of armes ne of amours, / als dose mystraylles and iestours."[99] Instead, the poet promises "to carp of mast nedefull thynge," insisting that "alle þat heres me right / þe benysoun of God mot lyght."[100] The prologue of the Middle English translation of Robert of Gretham's *Miroir*, one of the more radical texts that helped pioneer modes of addressing the devout reading public, similarly inveighs against romances, "for hii ne be nouȝt drawen out of holi writ, bot ich man þat makeþ hem enformeþ hem efter þe wil of hiis hert and þenkeþ þat it is soþe."[101] The pious refusal to "enform," to put form to, stories that emerge from one's own will is echoed in Hawkyn's refusal to "lye and do men lauȝe."[102]

As Nicholas Watson has recently pointed out, this particular gambit received its fullest elaboration in a text probably composed well after *Piers Plowman* B, Tract XII of the Cambridge Tracts on Biblical translation, a dialogue of a wise man and a fool.[103] The fool is desirous to hear "a mery tale of Giy of Wariwyk, Beufiȝ of Hamton, eiþer of Sire Lebewȝ, Robyn Hod" and asks that we "lyue as our faders deden, and þanne good inouȝ, for þei weren wel iloued of cherers, wrestlers, bokeler-pleieris, of daunceris and syngeris."[104] That tract – which probably alludes to

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[96] Steiner points out the eucharistic quality of the wafers in *Reading Piers Plowman*, 146.
[97] On Hawkyn as hawker, see Nicholas Watson, "Spiritual Perfectionism," 83-118 (109).
[98] Ralph Hanna III, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 149.
[99] *Speculum vitae*, I.36-38.
[100] *Speculum vitae*, I.50 and I.33-34.
[101] *Mirror*, 1.
[102] The secular obverse of this prefatory derogation of romance can be found in *Wynnere and Wastoure*'s opening sally against "a childe appon chere, withouwtten chyn-wedys, / that never wroghte thurgh witt thies wordes togedire, / fro he can jangle als a jaye and japes telle, / he schall be levede and lovede and lett of a while / wele more than the man that made it hymselven." The difference between these two approaches is precisely the issue of originality: *Wynnere and Wastoure* insists upon it, the sacred texts reject it. See *Wynnere and Wastoure and Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. Warren Ginsberg (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), 26-28.
[103] Watson, "Ignorance of the Laity," 200-02.
[104] "Cambridge Tract XII," in *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible: The Texts of the Medieval Debate,* ed. Mary Dove (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), 130-142 (ll. 162-63 and 187-89).

both *Piers Plowman* and the *Canterbury Tales* – is remarkable for how it sets *in dialogue* the more or less secular pleasure-seeker and the devout perfecter of language.[105] The Fool asks if we cannot sometimes be merry, but must always be sorrowful. And as Watson puts it, the Wise Man imagines – *contra* the Fool's desires – a broader world "delighting in the sins of the tongue."[106] The Wise Man's opening jeremiad is characteristic of the rules for speech laid out in texts for the devout reading public:

> *Non occides*; þis is þe fifþe heste of almyȝti God comaundynge ech resonable criature þat noon schulde slee oþer, neiþer bodili ne goostly, but boþe þese slauȝtris ben ful comoun and ryue amonge hem þat ben clepid cristyne, and speciali goostly slauȝtur, þat leest heede is takun of and moost were to be sorowed for. For late a man come nowadays amonge þe peple, be þei olde or ȝonge, he schal rit soone heere talis of pride, glotony and lecherie and of alle manere synnes... But alas, ȝif a symple man nowadays louynge þis leche Crist and his lawe wolde schewe to synners þe medicinable wordis of God, to void þese ydel spechis, anoon þei dispisen hym and haten hym and seyn he is an heritik and a lollere.[107]

Though this tract reflects a later and more charged climate of ecclesiological polemic, its rhetorical gestures align with slightly earlier texts like the *Pore Caitif* and the *Book to a Mother*: what seems like a gloss on a basic piece of catechetical instruction becomes a tool for characterizing a world of idle speakers, against which is set the devout speakers who eschew oaths, follow the commandments, and are shamed (or, in this case, despised) for their piety.[108] The same public affects are in play, that is, as in earlier texts, and the same perfection of language commended: like the *Pore Caitif*, the author of Cambridge Tract XII holds "þat alle wordis þat alle men speken ben veyn and ydel but if þei turnen to þe goostli profiȝt of þe speker or of þe heerer."[109]

Hawkyn's self-definition depends on a similar distinction between modes of speech: he eschews vain entertainments and the rewards they earn in pursuit of holiness. But this posture is almost immediately shaken in the bravura ekphrastic allegory of his coat, a vision that doubles as a catalogue of sins worth quoting at length:

> I took greet kepe, by crist and Conscience boþe,
> Of haukyn þe Actif man and how he was ycloþed.
> He hadde a cote of cristendom as holy kirke bileueþ.
> Ac it was moled in many places wiþ manye sondry plottes,
> Of pride here a plot, and þere a plot of vnbuxom speche,

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[105] Dove identifies a potential allusion to the General Prologue's portrait of the Summoner in ll. 88-89, and the tract almost certainly quotes *Piers Plowman* at ll. 284-85 and the Pardoner's Prologue at l. 286. See Dove, *Earliest Advocates*, 211-13; and Watson, "Ignorance of the Laity," 200-05.

[106] Watson, "Ignorance of the Laity," 200.

[107] Cambridge Tract XII, 130, ll. 1-6 and 25-28.

[108] On accusations of Lollardy, see Chapter Four.

[109] The Cambridge Tract ascribes the line to Jerome, the *Pore Caitif* to Isidore (though Jerome is credited for a very similar line, quoted immediately thereafter). See *Pore Caitif*, 13. As Craun points out, this line of thinking is articulated in Peraldus as well; see *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 37. Matthew 12:36 is the origin of all such sentiment; the quotation is probably drawn from Jerome's reading of the passage as reproduced in the *Catena aurea*.

Of scornyng and of scoffyng and of vnskilful berynge...
Willyng þat alle men wende he were þat he is noȝt,
Forwhy he bosteþ and braggeþ wiþ manye bolde oþes;
And inobedient to ben vndernome of any lif lyuynge;
And so singuler by hymself as to siȝte of þe peple
Was noon swich as hymself, ne noon so pope holy;
Yhabited as an heremyte, an ordre by hymselue,
Religion saunȝ rule and resonable obedience;
Lakkynge lettrede men and lewed men boþe;
In likynge of lele lif and a liere in soule. (13.271-89)

The catalogue goes on some forty lines without break, the mingled ekphrasis and confession a hundred more beyond that. Hawkyn's coat, a record of his experience, discloses what his pious declaration would not: he is a sinner, marked by the traces of a life in the world. As has been widely noted, there are uncomfortable resonances with Will, likewise "yhabited as an heremyte" in "religion saunȝ rule and resonable obedience" and likewise inclined to "lakkynge lettrede men and lewed men boþe."[110] But Hawkyn goes rather further than Will. His sins are the sins of the tongue, well beyond the ken of the suffraunce-lakking dyad: sins of "vnbuxom speche," of "scornyng" (*derisio*), of boasting and bragging "wiþ manye bolde oþes." (Hawkyn's boasting is repeatedly emphasized in the catalogue.) The front of his coat discloses only the public sins of oath-telling, flattery, and vaunting ("al he wolde þat men wiste of werkes and wordes / which myȝte plese þe peple and presien hymselue" [13.311-12]); the back, the more covert and violent sins of backbiting and lying:

It was bidropped wiþ wraþe and wikkede wille,
Wiþ enuye and yuel speche entisynge to fighte,
Lyinge and lakkynge and leue tonge to chide;
Al þat he wiste wikked by any wight tellen it,
And blame men bihynde hir back and bidden hem meschaunce;
And þat he wiste by wille to watte tellen it,
And þat by watte he wiste wille wiste it after,
And made of frendes foes þoruȝ a fals tonge. (13.320-27)

Hawkyn's "fals tonge" is the central emphasis of all that follows. The sins that mole Hawkyn's coat are sometimes described as the seven deadly sins, which is only partly correct: the sins of the body are rerouted through speech, too. Hawkyn's lechery, described in vivid bodily detail, is retold later as "murye tales" – "how þat lecchours louye laughen and Iapen," the narrator describes, "and of hir harlotrye and horedom in hir elde tellen" (13.351-53). In a passage present in only two manuscripts, Gluttony is also presented as verbal sin first and foremost: "Glotoun wiþ grete oþes his garnement hadde soiled / and foule beflobered it, as wiþ fals speche" (13.399-400). Though Hawkyn sins comprehensively, all of his sin return to his false tongue, which renders his other words and works vain and idle. He is fundamentally guilty of the kind of hypocritical verbal self-presentation that pastoral texts inveigh against, operating in the "likynge of lele lif" – in the appearance of a lawful life – while living as "a liere in soule." As the *Pore*

[110] See, among others, Morton Bloomfield: "Hawkin is in some way the double of Will himself, the sinner on the road to salvation, the worldly man 'unholy of works.'" *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1961), 26-27.

Caitif says, quoting Augustine, "to worshipe. & not to folowe: is no þing ellis. but liyngli to flatere" (32).

None of these hundred-odd lines on sin are particularly new. The ekphrasis on Hawkyn's coat looks like any number of contemporaneous pastoral texts that deal with the sins of the tongue – strikingly so, in fact, in a way that recalls the confession of the seven deadly sins but little else in *Piers Plowman*. Like many strident fourteenth-century texts, Hawkyn's first few hundred lines present a binary between devout speech and destructive speech. The innovation is to collapse the binary into a single person.[111] Hawkyn presents himself as the holy alternative to court entertainments, dealing in the spiritual and material betterment of the world, but is revealed in quick order to be a tale-teller, a flatterer, and a backbiter. Like the Wise Man of Cambridge Tract XII, Hawkyn endeavors to disseminate "þe medicinable wordis of God": he declares that he wishes to search out a literate clerk to write out a bill so "þat his blessynge and his bulles bocches [boils] myȝte destruye" (13.248-49), because he has found that "his pardoun / miȝte lechen a man" (13.253).[112] But when the stains on his coat are discovered, Hawkyn admits that when he suffers setbacks, melancholy and anger afflict him until he comes to "despise / lechecraft of oure lord and leue on a wicche" (13.336-37). The hard work of the holy minstrel, the lay preacher who seems to inhabit the office of spiritual advisor and pastoral worker, is undone by despising. According to texts like the *Pore Caitif* or *Book to a Mother*, the devout must endure persecution from others who despise of the word of God and are thus immerse in the world. Hawkyn's impossible aspiration to fulfill the perfection those texts advocate leads to a different kind of despising: one that arises from sin, is directed both at holiness and at himself, and culminates in despair.[113]

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The innovation of this approach, with its sudden and precipitous toppling of the pious minstrel, seems lost by the end of the passus. As it goes on, Hawkyn becomes little more than a vivid exemplum against sin: the stains on his coat are anatomized, he confesses the sins of his daily life, and the passus ends with a long admonition addressed in the second person to "ye lordes and ladies and legates of holy chirche / that fedeþ foole sages, flatereris and lieris" (13.421-22). A poetic "I" appears to match this second person addressee – always an indication that *Piers Plowman* is shifting into a homiletic mode, a point redoubled by these lines' tendency to mark its moralizing with verbs of thought, feeling, and speech.[114] As Craun has shown, the lesson that the end of the passus draws – that laughter can lead to wanhope (despair) and spiritual death – is familiar from catechetical writing. In these lines, the poem moreover seems to follow the familiar

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[111] Compare also Sleuthe, whose Robin Hood stories and "ydel tales" displace holy texts (both the fundamental lay prayer, the Pater Noster, and "rymes" directed toward Christ and Mary) and holy thoughts ("Goddes peyne and his passion pure selde þenke I on"). See 5.394-404.

[112] On words bursting boils, see Chapter Four.

[113] John Alford takes Hawkyn's "singularity" to be his fundamental flaw, his status as "an order by hymselue," and this singularity distinguishes him from figures like the author of the *Book to a Mother*, who (though tartly anticlerical) maintains a licit priestly status. Nevertheless, Hawkyn's singularity looks at first blush to be a form of perfectionism analogous to that voiced by the texts for the devout reading public. See Alford, "The Scriptural Self," in *The Bible in the Middle Ages: Its Influence on Literature and Art*, ed. Bernard S. Levy (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1992), 1-21.

[114] In the first person: "I drede me soore" (13.425); "me þynkeþ" (438); "I rede yow riche" (441); in the second, the warning to "beþ war" (420).

binary of salvific and sinful speech. To stand in for earthly minstrelsy, represented by "*turpiloquio*, a lay of sorwe, and luciferis fiþele" (13.456), the passus ends by proposing three virtuous minstrels: a poor man "for a fool sage" (13.443); a learned man to teach of Christ's sufferings "and fiþele þee wiþoute flaterynge of good friday þe geste" (13.446); and a blind man or bedridden woman to support and show your merit. After the long accounting of his sins and the invocation of these genuinely holy minstrels, Hawkyn – who seemed so dangerously close to the voice of the poem when he irrupted into it – is supplanted, turned from subject to object of holy speech.

The sequence that follows strives to correct Hawkyn's sins – to clean his coat, that is, an effort that distinguishes Hawkyn from the man cast into the outer darkness in the parable of the Wedding Feast, the parable that Lynn Staley has persuasively shown lies behind Hawkyn.[115] Though Hawkyn complains that his entanglement in the world continually soils his coat, Conscience prescribes penance as remedy: contrition will "clawe þi cote of alle kynnes filþe," it will be washed in confession, and finally dried in satisfaction (14.17). With the sacrament of penance complete, Conscience promises, "no Mynstrall be moore worþ amonge pouere and riche / than Haukyn wil þe wafrer, which is *Actiua vita*" (14.27-28). Conscience speaks in the voice of pastoral care: penance washes away sin.[116] But Patience is tougher, commending poverty and indifference to bodily care. In response to Hawkyn's incredulity, Patience pulls from his bag "vitailles of grete vertues" (14.37) – presumably, as Vincent Gillespie points out, the same vitailles he packed in Passus 13: "sobretee and symple speche and sooþfast bileue."[117] Such a set of messages seem appropriate for Hawkyn, "symple speche" most of all, but Patience presents them as transformed into a single comprehensive message: *fiat voluntas tua*, a message drawn from the Pater Noster that itself commends patience in the catechetical tradition.[118] In Nicholas Watson's revisionist reading, which I follow here, Patience universalizes a mandate of spiritual perfectionism. As with the radical division of speech between sinful and devout, Patience presents the path of holy poverty as the only legitimate option, foreclosing any believer's ability to live in the world.[119] In a poem that repeatedly imagines what it is like to live, work, age, and starve, Patience's elaboration upon *fiat voluntas tua* comes to seem a little too perfect: do not dread death, he says, "but deye as god likeþ... for if þow lyue after his loore, þe shorter lif þe bettre" (14.58-60).[120]

Hawkyn's confrontation with Patience – the confrontation of the active sinner with the perfectionist – lacks the explicit scorn and scoffing that Will encounters, but strikes even deeper. Watson pithily identifies his dilemma: "he hears more and more of how he, in his constant, sinful labours, is but Patience's shadow, giving shape by opposition to Patience's purity, which thus by

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[115] Lynn Staley, "The Man in Foul Clothes and a Late Fourteenth-Century Conversation about Sin," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 24 (2002): 1-47 (25-28).
[116] See Watson, "Spiritual Perfectionism," 112.
[117] Vincent Gillespie, "Thy Will be Done: *Piers Plowman* and the *Paternoster*," in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts*, 95-117 (110).
[118] Gillespie, "Thy Will be Done," 111.
[119] Watson, "Spiritual Perfectionism," 107-08.
[120] On the discourse of poverty on which Patience draws, see among others Wendy Scase, *'Piers Plowman' and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 64 and following.

definition excludes him, even as its keen ethical glance identifies him as the constant sinner he is."[121] And as in the earlier passūs, correction is followed by weeping and the end of a scene:

> "Allas," quod Haukyn þe Actif man þo, "þat after my cristendom
> I ne hadde be deed and doluen for dowelis sake!
> So hard it is," quod haukyn, "to lyue and to do synne.
> Synne seweþ vs euere," quod he and sory gan wexe,
> And wepte water wiþ hise eighen and weyled þe tyme
> That euere he dide dede þat deere god displesed;
> Swouned and sobbed and siked ful ofte
> That euere he hadde lond ouþer lordshipe lasse oþer moore,
> Or maistrie ouer any man mo þan of hymselue.
> "I were noȝt worþi, woot god," quod haukyn, "to werien any cloþes,
> Ne neiþer sherte ne shoon, saue for shame one
> To couere my careyne," quod he, and cride mercy faste
> And wepte and wailede, and þerwiþ I awakede. (13.323-35)

Like Will, Hawkyn weeps water with his eyes, but the somatic response betokens a more desperate state of mind: not the sense of incompletion or misapprehension, but the desire to have been "deed and doluen for dowelis sake." Gillespie interprets Hawkyn's sorrow as the first stage of his reformation, but the image seems more pessimistic than that.[122] As Emily Rebekah Huber has argued, Hawkyn's sorrow here is not true contrition, the hatred of sin, but self-hate.[123] The *desire* for shame expressed in his final, anguished cry – "I were noȝt worþi... to werien any cloþes, / ne neiþer sherte ne shoon, saue for shame one" – shucks off the coat of Christendom in favor of shame alone, a sort of naked abjection that exceeds even the vision of the drunk in the ditch.[124] In the exemplum, "shame shrapeþ hise cloþes," bringing self-awareness with it; in Hawkyn's despair, shame stands in lieu of clothes, bringing with it not awareness of sin but a sense of utter worthlessness. This is not "ordeynde schame," not a shame that lights up flaws in service of correction, but shame as a reflex of despair – a hopeless shame. It is the wrong lesson to take, but not necessarily a surprising one in the wake of commands to "deye as god likeþ."

Hawkyn's shame therefore represents a radical extension of the Augustinian mode of shame, beyond the limits of spiritual utility and to the point of despair. Hawkyn's claim to perfection of speech, so immediately and comprehensively deflated, ends in a shame that not only does not bind him to others, but also lacks the legible path forward to "shape hym to amende," as Ymaginatif's exemplum promises. Shame is the terminus, not the transition.[125] In part, this sequence can be read as a riposte to the kind of anticlerical extension of the ministry with which some pastoral writings flirted. As Staley points out, Hawkyn's despair arises in part

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[121] Watson, "Spiritual Perfectionism," 112.
[122] Gillespie, "Thy Will be Done."
[123] Emily Rebekah Huber, "Langland's Confessional Dissonance: Wanhope in *Piers Plowman* B," *YLS* 27 (2013): 79-101 (97-98).
[124] Cf. Britton J. Harwood, *'Piers Plowman' and the Problem of Belief* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 102.
[125] Compare, however, Watson's comparatively positive reading: "Hawkyn's desperate tears... do not announce conversion or even contrition, but self-knowledge and need. By-products of an enforced process of exposure, an experience of self-realization that is the opposite of the release of self in confession." "Spiritual Perfectionism," 115.

from the absence of a sacramental clergy to assist him.[126] Both his claims to a lay ministry in the active life and Patience's universal *vita contemplativa* seem to close out the traditional ministerial roles of the clergy. One cannot help but see a tacit criticism of certain forms of anticlericalism here: both vaunting "religion saunȝ rule" and Patience's extremism seem to fail as viable options. Now, Langland's own anticlericalism is often intensely pointed, and I am reluctant to assert that Langland prescribes any sort of ecclesiology. Rather, it seems as though Hawkyn helps articulate the limits to certain claims of perfection: his own sins vitiate the posture of pure speech that notionally characterizes the devout reading public, while Patience's prescriptions demonstrate the limits of a perfectionist vein of Franciscan thought. The lessons to be taken from these two passūs even present challenges within the narrative. Will, after seeing this all play out, awakes and wanders in a folly. His wits return only when "oon wiþouten tonge and teeþ" appears, offering him a descriptive and open-ended guide to the spiritual life rather than a normative and perfectionist one (15.13). Passūs 13 and 14 represent a kind of dead end: the perfection of speech and the perfection of voluntary poverty end in hypocrisy and despair. Will's muddle, his scorn and his shame, ultimately provide a sounder path forward.

Conclusion: Langland's Shame

The reiterating cycles of misspeaking and correction in *Piers Plowman* prevent the formation of public affects. Unlike the shame of the *Book to a Mother*'s soþeleches or the meek Christian in the *Pore Caitif*, Will's shame is particular and transitory, a necessary element of his education but *not* the grounds for the formation of a public. But Will's shame is nevertheless social, not only an emotion of self-attention but an emotion created in interaction with others and which opens the possibility of identification. The crucial difference between Will's shame and that in the devotional literatures around *Piers Plowman* that Will's shame comes and goes, as does his scorn and the scorn he receives. The affects do not delineate fixed positions, but arise in conversation and performance. Will's shame belongs to what Sedgwick calls "shame creativity":

> [Shame] generates and legitimates the place of identity – the question of identity – at the origin of the impulse to the performative, but does so without giving that identity space the standing of an essence. It constitutes it as to-be-constituted, which is also to say, as already there for the (necessary, productive) misconstrual and misrecognition.[127]

What ashames Will, again and again, is the sense of his incompleteness – ethical, spiritual, and intellectual. Will's shame is the shame of the "to-be-constituted," produced by *his own* misrecognition of himself. But this sense of provisionality is also what makes him effective as the focalizing point of the poem's narrative. Unlike pastoralia both conservative and radical, which deal out certainties from a position of unassailable knowing, we as readers are embedded in the experience of a sinner-penitent-striver.[128]

This shame creativity helps to both produce and explain what Middleton diagnoses as the "critical embarrassment" that inevitably emerges from *Piers Plowman*'s disruptions, digressions,

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[126] Staley, "Man in Foul Clothes."

[127] *Touching Feeling*, 63-64.

[128] My thinking is in part indebted to Nicholas Watson, "The Lost First Draft of *The Book of Margery Kempe*" (presentation, Harvard Medieval English Colloquium, Cambridge, MA, April 28, 2016). See also Jessica Rosenfeld, "Envy and Exemplarity in *The Book of Margery Kempe*," *Exemplaria* 26 (2014): 105-21.

and its general resistance "to broad formal and generic accounts."[129] Will's shame emerges from his attempts to offer broad accounts: he finds a kernel of truth and generalizes, and it is only upon being reproved that he realizes the limits of his knowledge. (In the C text, that role is more clearly assigned to Rechelesnesse.) Moreover, the fact that the longest sustained exploration and defense of shame comes in Passus 11, where the B-revision enters new narrative territory, seems to me no accident. A comparative approach is useful.[130] The scribal continuations to A reflect an early version of the critical embarrassment with the poem's incompletion, modeling ways of completing A that reflect the radically *difficilior* narrative choice made by Langland. The three distinct continuations each reflect the distinct response of a member of Langland's community of readers – the literary audience that the text actually achieved in its circulation – and each thus marks a way of understanding Langland's poem as a public document radically distinct from Langland's own style of publicity. The Westminster continuator, for instance, remixes authorial lines to rewrite the end of the poem as its beginning:

> And when I was wytterly awakyd I wrote all thys dreame
> And theys mervellys þat i met on mawlverne hyllys
> In a seysoun of sommer as I softe nappyd
> For þe people after ther power wold persen after dowell
> That þe tresure moost tryed and tryacle at neede
> Now god gravnt vs grace to make a good ende
> And bryng vs to þe blysse as he bowghte vs on þe Roode[131]

This continuation offers up an ending familiar from other dream visions: the dream ends, Will awakes, he writes what he has seen, and with the poem thus completed, the author recedes with a prayer for grace.

John But's well-known continuation in turn buries Will, turning a spiritual autobiography into an odd kind of hagiography:

> Wille þurgh inwit wiste wel þe soþe
> That þis speche was spedelich and sped him wel fast
> And wrouȝthe þat here is wryten and oþer werkes boþe
> Of peres þe plowman and mechel puple also.
> And whan þis werk was wrouȝt, ere wille myȝte aspie,
> Deþ delt him a dent and drof him to þe erþe
> And is closed vnder clom, crist haue his soule.

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[129] Middleton, "*Piers Plowman*, the Monsters, and the Critics," 109.

[130] My approach here is informed by David Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First 'Roman de la Rose'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Sylvia Huot, *'The Romance of the Rose' and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See also, more recently, Megan L. Cook, "'Here taketh the makere of this book his leve': The *Retraction* and Chaucer's Works in Tudor England," *Studies in Philology* 113 (2016): 32-54.

[131] George Kane, "The Text," in *Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Alford, 175-200 (182). On this passage, see Anne Middleton, "Making a Good End: John But as a Reader of *Piers Plowman*," in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. Edward Donald Kennedy, Ronald Waldron, and Joseph S. Wittig (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1988), 243-66 (245-46); and D. Vance Smith, *The Book of the Incipit: Beginnings in the Fourteenth Century* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 52-54.

And so bad Iohan but busily wel ofte
When he saw þes sawes busyly alegged
By Iames and by Ierom, by Iop and by oþere,
And for he medleþ of makyng he made þis ende.[132]

This continuation is well known; as Middleton has shown, it represents a perceptive effort to bring the poem to an end, reflecting "a way to stabilize and unify the moral truth of the text that [But] knew circulated in the world in more than one form."[133] Will's dreamwork and Langland's lifework are brought to an end in a state of incompletion ("whan þis werk was wrouȝt, ere wille myȝte aspie, / Deþ delt him a dent") but moral stability. John But is called into the narrative to make the end, following Will's prayerful model "busily."

Finally, Herun, the scribe of Harley 3954, a fifteenth-century copy remarkable for its idiosyncrasies – it is the only B/A splice of the poem, shifting perhaps so as to omit Piers's tearing of the pardon in Passus 8; it is also the only manuscript with English rubrics – ends with an address to the reader, arguing for the spiritual efficacy of *Piers Plowman*:

He þat redyth þis book & ryth haue it in mende.
Preyit for pers þe plowmans soule.
With a pater noster to þe paleys of heuene.
With outyn grete penans at hys partyng to comyn to blys.
Explicit tractio de perys plowman. qd. herun.[134]

Each of these continuations reflect very different responses to the embarrassment of A's ragged end. But each maps a relationship between author, speaker, and reader that suggests the efficacy of the text that it concludes: Westminster's Will awakes to record "þe tresure moost tryed and tryacle at neede"; But's Will knows in his final days that "þis speche was spedelich and sped him wel fast" to write it; Herun asks the reader that "ryth haue [*Piers Plowman*] in mende" to pray for Piers Plowman to ascend to heaven. Each conclusion represents its own reversion to catechetical convention, but more than that, it represents an attempt to equate the poem with spiritual emendation, to make of it an effective text.

The authorial continuation looks very different. It does not complete a thought; it does not bury Will, ask for prayers, or narrate its own writing. Instead, when B continues A, it offers the extended lesson in shame discussed above. And that lesson in shame itself introduces the famous self-reflexive episode that opens Passus 12. In that episode, Ymaginatif upbraids Will, declaring to him "þou medlest þee wiþ makynges" when he could dedicate himself to prayer (12.16). Will furnishes an awkward defense for his makings, quoting the *Distichs of Cato*: when he makes, he follows Cato's advice to his son, "*Interpone tuis interdum gaudia curis*" [interpose joys among your cares sometimes] (12.22a). Poetry is a means of deferral, a way of filling time pleasurably, and it reflects the state of intellectual insufficiency so emphatically harped upon by Holy Church, Scripture, Reason, and Ymaginatif. If he knew dowel, dobet, and dobest, Will says, he would commit himself to a life of prayer, like Patience or Piers Plowman.

This response is inadequate; it is shameful, in fact, an admission of ignorance. But that shame is generative. Will's poetic meddling – an otiose activity of creation repeatedly compared to loose or idle speech – is inextricable from the realization of his own ignorance. There is a long critical history that cautions against misreading Will as autobiographical stand-in for Langland as

[132] A.12.99-109.
[133] Middleton, "Making a Good End," 262.
[134] London, British Library Harley MS 3954, 123v.

author, but it is hard not to read the shame of B Passus 11 – which emerges retrospectively from what had been the conclusion of A – as integral to the poem's continuation.[135] The A text ended unfinished, with hasty speech and misplaced lakking, and so the project of revision is tied up with the emotion of shame. Will's response to Ymaginatif's challenge sets up the poem's continuation, which is muddled, its immediate value hard to perceive, but which nevertheless opens up new knowledge. To return to Sedgwick's phrase, Will's *shame creativity* – a shame that is knowledge-giving but not inarticulate, shame that opens new possibilities rather than translating into despair, like Hawkyn, or ossifying into a static way of being, like the pastoralia – is essential to this project. His misspeaking and his shame thematize the earlier version's inadequacy; they provide an impetus for its continuation; and they map the new poem's relationship with its readers, a public that can understand the project of poetic making as both shameful and legitimate.

[135] George Kane, *The Autobiographical Fallacy in Chaucer and Langland Studies* (London: H. K. Lewis for University College London, 1965).

Chapter Three. Chaucer's Rules for Speech

> England was known for many years all over Europe as "Merrie England." Whatever the virtues of the English people and their particular characteristics, I don't think that they themselves today would claim to be particularly merry.
>
> C. L. R. James[1]

> May we who are burdened with conclusions, or even convictions, be suffered to entertain a suspicion? A suspicion that in the secret matter of happiness (not prosperity, or efficiency, or even equality, but happiness) men do not merely progress indefinitely, but rather pass a flashing moment of maturity; pass it, for instance, when they drink just too much good wine at the Tabard and fall under the table, or progress beyond Canterbury and fall into the sea. ... This flame of the highest happiness flashed for a moment in the mirror of the genius of Chaucer; like the noonday sun upon a naked sword.
>
> G. K. Chesterton[2]

A centuries-old tradition of popular imagination holds Chaucer to be the poet of Merry England, in whose poetry shame is banished in favor of rude medieval embodiment, jollity, and good cheer.[3] That this view is mistaken hardly need be said again: several generations of demystifying scholarship have more or less cleansed the last traces of nostalgic ideological fiction from Chaucer criticism. But the image of Chaucer as a jolly fellow is not without foundation. *The Canterbury Tales* describe people, situations, and tales as "myrie" or "mery" some sixty-four times. ("Shame" occurs just as often.) To call something merry is to apply a seemingly colorless positive label: in its Middle English usage, it encompasses a wide range of broadly positive meanings, from "jovial from drink" to "sweet-smelling."[4] So it is perhaps unsurprising that the term recurs so much more often than Chaucer's parallel but more technical noun for literary pleasure, "solaas" (forms of which occur twenty-two times). Indeed, mirth is the concept that Chaucer uses to define the affective disposition of storytelling more broadly, beginning with the Host's speech in the General Prologue and ending with the Parson's claim to tell a "myrie tale" as the pilgrimage concludes.[5]

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[1] C. L. R. James, "West Indian Personality," *Caribbean Quarterly* 35.4 (1989): 11-13 (11).
[2] G. K. Chesterton, *Chaucer* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932), 187-88.
[3] This tradition is described by Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and a concise summary and corrective is in Marion Turner, *Chaucerian Conflict: Languages of Antagonism in Late Fourteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2-5.
[4] *MED*, s. v. "miri(e)," 1a and 6.
[5] On descriptions of the merry fellowship, see for instance I.764, I.782 and VIII.586; on merry tale-telling, I.857, II.1186, VII.1924, and VII.2817; for solicitations or descriptions of merry tales by the Host, see IV.9, IV.15, VI.316, VII.3449, VII.7056, and VIII.597.

My preceding chapters have been concerned with a series of negative affects that appear in religious writing: scorn, shame, and despair or wanhope.[6] These affects describe causally linked ways of being in the world, starting with scorn. The proper penitential response to scorn is shame. Shame in excess can give way to despair. The sinner conceals her despair with sinful scorn, thereby directing her inward hopelessness outward. In the texts I have examined so far, this system of affects appears along the spectrum of proper and improper speech acts, ranging from coarse jokes to vain oaths to righteous correction. All of these types of speech can be found in the *Canterbury Tales*, and indeed, Chaucer readily depicts the negative affects of scorn, shame, and despair that I have been describing.[7] But, as this chapter will argue, Chaucer does not depend on those negative affects in a structural or systematic way in *The Canterbury Tales*. Instead, he relies on a lexicon that emphasizes positive affects: mirth most of all, but also comfort, sweetness, "solas," and "plesaunce." These terms are integral to the fiction of *The Canterbury Tales*, providing a set of internal rules for speech and feeling distinct from those in the rhetorical or pastoral traditions. As should already be clear, the set of words I am interested in here has points of contact with the most familiar lexical oppositions in the *Tales* – fruit and chaff, "solas" and "sentence," text and "glose" – but operates differently from them, foregrounding speech and emotion rather than value or meaning.[8]

In what follows, I will emphasize two facts about this lexicon of speech and emotion. First, it is pliable: *The Canterbury Tales* revisits the same words and tropes repeatedly, often verbatim. Each repetition of a particular word – "myrie" or "plesaunce" – or a tale-teller's verbal stance – "I wol nat glose" – thus recalls the semantic associations of previous iterations, even as it is modified by the particular context in which it is deployed. Second, though these words and tropes are given their own local meanings in the *Tales*, they do not necessarily originate with Chaucer. Instead, *The Canterbury Tales* appropriates them from fourteenth-century religious, political, and ethical discourses. Anne Middleton has argued that Chaucer's "new men" "kidnap" terms "that traditionally support cultic values... into idealizing fictions of their own that shift the traditional uses for these terms and cultic objects."[9] This chapter will approach the same process of appropriation and transformation from a slightly different angle, focusing in particular on the terms that describe acts of speech and tale-telling. The terms of good cheer that Chaucer uses to describe speech and song – including the adjective "myrie," but also the nouns "plesaunce" and "swetnesse," among others – are particularly important as self-reflexive terms of art, tied up with the evaluations of tales and their tellers. Like the terms Middleton isolates, however, they are shifted as they recur in the *Tales*, accruing new meanings as they generate and describe new tales. Like "sclaunder" and "boistousness" in religious writing or "scorn" and "shame" in *Piers Plowman*, "myrie" and its companions admit of multiple definitions: "plesaunce" can be

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[6] On negative affects, see Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), and Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[7] All three are depicted by turns in *The Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale*, for instance. On shame, see Anne McTaggart, *Shame and Guilt in Chaucer* (New York: Palgrave, 2012).

[8] The exception is "earnest" and "game," which will be dealt with obliquely below and at more length in a future revision.

[9] Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men' and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Literature and Society*, ed. Edward W. Said (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 15-56 (16).

dangerous, sweetness misleading, and mirth comes in many forms. These terms of art should not be entirely separated from a broader normative vocabulary for speech and the feelings it excites. As Chaucer uses them, these terms refract the discourse of the sins of the tongue. Chaucerian mirth depends on a form of verbal trespass, in which the act of rebuke or correction is often turned to generative comic ends. But Chaucer's response to pastoral rules is not simply defiance or subversion. In *The Canterbury Tales*, "myrie" tales are set alongside affective states that foster devout speech or register the devout responses to sinful speech, like sobriety, shame, and sorrow. Such responses often point out the limits of good cheer, or turn mirth to new, devotional ends.

This chapter will address the places in *The Canterbury Tales* where mirth is put under pressure – those places where their relationship with the spectrum of negative speech acts and affects discussed in the preceding chapters becomes clear, and where *The Canterbury Tales* deploys both deviant and devout speech for the purposes of its own fictional project. I will begin by addressing the systems that Chaucer establishes in the *Tales* for evaluating speech, before moving on to address two important case examples for perfected speech and its limitations: the Prioress and the Manciple. Both, I argue, demonstrate how *The Canterbury Tales* appropriates the stylistic and affective resources of devotional writing for its own "myrie" fictional ends.

I. Good and Bad Speech in *The Canterbury Tales*

The Canterbury Tales establishes multiple systems for the evaluation of speech. Though the frame of *The Canterbury Tales* generally runs roughshod over the inherited prohibitions of pastoral instruction, there are nevertheless moments where Chaucer suggests that they continue to apply. Most importantly, Chaucer retrospectively applies such rules to whole of the collection in the *Retraction*'s joint *apologia* and confession, which asks:

> hem alle that herkne this litel tretys or rede, that if ther be any thyng in it that liketh hem, that therof they thanken oure Lord Jhesu Crist... and if there be any thyng that displese hem, I preye hem also that they arrette it to the defaute of myn unkonnynge and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyd bettre if I hadde had konnynge. For oure book seith, "Al that is writen is writen for oure doctrine," and that is myn entente. (X.1081-82)[10]

The retracting Chaucer goes on to meekly pray for forgiveness, bewail his guilts, and thank Christ for his good compositions. Together, the enumeration of guilts and thanks makes a resume of his works, neatly divided into two categories: the "translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees" on the one hand, and the "bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun" (along with the *Boece*) on the other. What *Piers Plowman* stages across the agonistic, self-correcting lifework of three or more revisions, Chaucer seems to achieve at one fell swoop, casting out all his errors in one act of renunciation, presented with a doctrinally correct prayer for "grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun" (X.1089).

It is not so simple as all that, of course. While the *Retraction* is sometimes read as the true voice of a penitent Chaucer breaking through the pilgrimage frame, completing a movement from fiction to history, or vanity to truth, it also performs the role of a scribal colophon that brings the collection to a useful end.[11] Moreover, the *Retraction* fits a longstanding literary

[10] All citations of Chaucer, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Citations will be made in-text by fragment and line number henceforth.

[11] Stephen Partridge, "'The Makere of This Boke': Chaucer's Retraction and the Author as Scribe and Compiler," in *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*,

tradition.[12] But in conforming to these textual conventions, the *Retraction* depends upon a language of speech and hearing that both points back to the *Tales* it revokes, and outward to a broader discourse on speech and its consequences. It affirms a good intent while apologizing for the material that might "displese" a listener, because Chaucer "wolde ful fayn have seyd" – not written – "bettre." The *Retraction* thus disclaims "the tales of Caunterbury, thilke that sownen into synne" (X.1085). The choice of words is telling: "sownen" (literally "to sound") calls up a repertoire of meanings related to speech and hearing.[13] And the ambition to perfect speech – to drive from it all falsehood, idleness, and things that could "sownen into synne" – provides the *Retraction* with its categories: the "translacions and enditynges of worldly vanitees" on the one hand, and the "bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun" on the other. To return to a well-known instance cited in the previous chapter, the *Speculum vitae* opens by warning its readers that it "wil make na vayne carpynge / of dedes of armes ne of amours," instead promising "to carp of mast nedefull thynge," so that "alle þat heres me right / þe benysoun of God mot lyght."[14] Chaucer, in proper lay-penitential mode, promises no such help for his readers: he only asks that the "þe benysoun of God" light upon himself. Just as the *Speculum vitae* divides "vayne carpynge" from "nedefull" speech, so Chaucer divides devout utterances from sinful. Behind the *Retraction*'s self-accounting lies Christ's promise "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36), a promise widely reproduced in pastoral writing on the sins of the tongue.[15] Chaucer's *Retraction* takes account of those idle words at a single stroke, in what Megan Cook calls "a double gesture of identification and disavowal."[16]

But elsewhere in the *Canterbury Tales*, the "soun" of misspeaking points to a radically different ethics of authorship, as in the Miller's Prologue:

"Now herkneth," quod the Millere, "alle and some!

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ed. Stephen Partridge and Erik Kwakkel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 106-53. On Thomas Gascoigne's account of Chaucer's deathbed confession, see Douglas Wurtele, "The Penitence of Geoffrey Chaucer," *Viator* 11 (1980): 335-59 (confession reproduced at 358-59).

[12] On the tradition, see Olive Sayce, "Chaucer's 'Retractions': The Conclusion of *The Canterbury Tales* and its Place in Literary Tradition," *Medium Ævum* 40 (1971): 230-48; and Anita Obermeier, "Chaucer's Retraction," in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, Volume II, ed. Robert M. Correale, Mary Hamel, and Derek Brewer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 775-808. It is also similar to the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, as noted by Lee W. Patterson, "The *Parson's Tale* and the Quitting of the *Canterbury Tales*," *Traditio* 34 (1978): 331-80 (370); and Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), 293.

[13] *MED*, s. v. "sounen," 1, 3-7.

[14] *Speculum Vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna using materials assembled by Venetia Somerset, 2 vols., EETS o.s. 331-32 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2008), I.36-37; I.50; and I.33-34.

[15] See Chapter Two, as well as Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: the Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2007), 7.

[16] Megan L. Cook, "'Here taketh the makere of this book his leve': The *Retraction* and Chaucer's Works in Tudor England," *Studies in Philology* 113 (2016): 32-54 (33). There are ways that this system of identification and disavowal is anticipated by the system set up by the Chaucer-narrator in Miller's *Prologue*, on which see below.

But first I make a protestacioun
That I am dronke; I knowe it by my soun.
And therfore if that I mysspeke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye." (I. 3136-40)

Like a narrator of romance or the Knight who preceded him, Miller demands the attention of his auditors. At the same time, he requests leniency from his listeners: his *sound* reveals that he is drunk, so if he happens to "mysspeke or seye," blame the ale. As Craun has shown, pastoral discourse on the sins of the tongue is not explicitly invoked until the Manciple and Parson's respective tales.[17] But in this speech near the beginning of the *Tales*, the Miller promise to misspeak, and offers up a twist on the old pastoral connection between gluttony, drunkenness, and the sins of the tongue. As in the *Retraction*, sound helps point the way to judgment – a point already suggested at the moment the Miller irrupts into the narrative "in Pilates voys" (I.3124), and a point to which multiple tale-tellers return.[18]

The Miller's misspeaking is generative. His drunken debasement of the *Knight's Tale* provokes the *Reeve's Tale*, setting the pattern for the collection's competitive "quiting." Speech that "sownen into synne" is an important element of Chaucer's poetic. In *The House of Fame*, "fals and soth compouned" (2108) emerge from the House of Rumor together as "oo tydynge" (2109), a compound that often proves productive for Chaucer: as Susan Phillips has shown, for instance, Chaucer treats the unstable and multiplicative nature of gossip as a figure for his own poetic making.[19] A sinful spoken voice can provide an opportunity for what Jill Mann calls an "imaginative retrieval" beyond the limits of history and literary authority.[20] Such imaginative retrievals bring with them a code of truth and fidelity that Chaucer offers in lieu of the *Retraction*'s polarities and the pastoral tradition that lies behind them. In the *General Prologue*, Chaucer takes on the role of impartial recorder, asking for leeway for his plain speech, because:

Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;

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[17] Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 188.

[18] On the connection, see Chapter One and Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 17. Connections between gluttonous eating, speech, and the "soun" of flatulence are made repeatedly in *The Canterbury Tales*: see the distribution of "soun... and eke the stynk" in *The Summoner's Tale* (III.2273-74), or the Pardoner's apostrophe against the belly – "At either end of thee foul is the soun" (VI.536) – and his later complaint about the "soun" of a drunken voice (VI.553). On the relationship between voice, noise, and meaning in this moment in the text, see Katherine Zieman, "Chaucer's *Voys*," *Representations* 60 (1997): 70-91.

[19] Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: The Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2007), 65-117.

[20] Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 13-14. On the limits of characterological study of voice rather than style, per the dramatic approach to *The Canterbury Tales*, see C. David Benson, *Chaucer's Drama of Style: Poetic Variety and Contrast in the Canterbury Tales* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1988).

He moot as wel seye o word as another.
Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede. (I.731-42)

The relationship between speech and speaker in this *apologia* is very unlike Chaucer's *Retraction*. The normative force in this passage, produced by the dense cluster of auxiliary verbs like "moot" and "may," rests not on pleasing the audience with devout speech, but in honest reportage. But like the *Retraction*, this apology borrows tropes from religious writing. The promise of fidelity to the word recalls defenses of literal approaches to Scripture: compare, for instance, Robert of Gretham's *Mirror*'s antipathy to romances, which are "nouȝt drawen out of holi writ, bot ich man þat makeþ hem enformeþ hem efter þe wil of hiis hert": to tell a "tale untrewe, / or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe" is precisely to "enform" a story according to one's own will, rather than one's fidelity to a truthful source.[21]

The *Retraction* and the *General Prologue*'s apologia share a debt to pastoral critiques of romance writing. The salient point here is not, however, Chaucer's supposed distaste for romance. Rather, what is interesting is the fundamental difference between the two authorial interventions, despite their common debts to fourteenth-century religious writing. In the *General Prologue*, Chaucer does not pledge fidelity to "holi writ," as Robert of Gretham does. Though according to the *General Prologue*, the Parson catches his words "out of the Gospel," Chaucer obviously does not (I.498). Instead, his fictionalized pilgrim-narrator pledges fidelity to the stories his fictional pilgrims tell. His apology for obscenity sets a truth-telling stance in a fictional frame, a characteristic wink to his readers indifferent to the categories that the *Retraction* retrospectively imposes. The Chaucer-narrator makes the same apology for the Miller's drunken tale: "he nolde his wordes for no man forbere, / but tolde his cherles tale in his manere" (I.3168-69). To omit the tale would "falsen som of my mateere" (I.3175).[22] In this instance, the moral responsibility is famously displaced onto the reader:

And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere,
Turne over the leef and chese another tale;
For he shal fynde ynowe, grete and smale,
Of storial thyng that toucheth gentillesse,
And eek moralitee and hoolynesse.
Blameth nat me if that ye chese amys. (I.3176-81)

This apology near the outset of the *Tales* shares in the same categories – "moralitee and hoolynesse," for instance – as the *Retraction*. But the the sense of ethical agency is entirely different. In the *Retraction*, Chaucer asks for grace "to biwayle [his] giltes," namely his worldly writings. Here, his duty is to the matter of the tales, and so he warns his listeners: "Blameth nat

[21] *The Middle English 'Mirror': Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan and Margaret Connolly (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 1. On the role of ideal forms, divine shaping, and the form of the soul in Middle English "enformacioun" and Latin *informatio*, see James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's 'Anticlaudianus' and John Gower's 'Confessio amantis'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-10 and following.

[22] On the valences of "matere," see Taylor Cowdery, "Hoccleve's Poetics of Matter," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 38 (2016): 133-164.

me if that ye chese amys." *The Canterbury Tales* thus begin with a Chaucer-narrator dodging responsibility and end with a Chaucer-penitent bewailing his guilts; each professes distinct ethical obligations to matter and audience, though they depend on a common conceptual vocabulary derived from religious texts.

A third ethos – seemingly indifferent to that vocabulary, its ethics anchored instead in "myrie" play – rules in the space between these two authorial apologies. (Individual tale-tellers respectively recall or anticipate the apologies, however; the ways in which they do so will be discussed below.) One of the trajectories sometimes seen in Chaucer's career is the depersonalization of his poetry: the transformation of maker into poet, in Chaucer's own terms.[23] In Paul Strohm's telling, for instance, this transformation is achieved by a transformation of the audience from the particular coterie to an anonymous literary public – a feat achieved by *The Canterbury Tales*' gradual effacement of frame-breaking addresses to the reader like those discussed above, which creates a rich but fully self-contained internal audience in their stead.[24] It is appropriate, then, that the fellowship is governed by a distinct set of rules for speech, seemingly autonomously created by Chaucer's characters, that emphasizes the affective qualities of pleasure and mirth. Those rules are not articulated by the Chaucer-narrator nor deferred to a reader's judgment, but are presented as the collective inclination of the "myrie" company crystallized by the Host's vows, as in his opening speech in the *General Prologue*:

> "Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.
> And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,
> To doon yow ese, and it shal cost noght.
> Ye goon to Caunterbury – God yow speede,
> The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!
> And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,
> Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;
> For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon
> To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;
> And therfore wol I maken yow disport,
> As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort." (I.766-76)

In this invocation, the Host promises "ese" and "confort" as a kind of ordered extension of natural speech. That is to say, the Host's description of a natural inclination "as ye goon by the weye... to talen and to pleye" isolates the central conceit of the *Tales* as a whole: the collection is not a single structure or narrative, but an unfolding, many-authored flow of talk.[25] But like the Chaucer-narrator's promise of honest reportage, the Host's invocation winks at the fictional quality of that conceit, hedged as it is in the verbs of raw creation "shapen" and "maken."[26] These verbs reserve a place for artifice in this conversation – unlike the undifferentiated tidings that come from the House of Rumor, for instance – even as artifice is subordinated to the overarching category of "pleye." As Maura Nolan has pointed out of lines like these, the

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[23] See, e.g., Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men,'" 25, which suggests that Chaucer's "enditing" mediates between present ephemeral courtly maker and absent "petrified" historical poet.
[24] Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 47-83.
[25] See especially Anne Middleton, "Loose Talk from Langland to Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 35 (2013): 29-46 (44-46).
[26] See MED, s. v. "shapen" and "maken."

extrareferential artifice keeps the Host's code from attaining the status of an ethic, becoming a poetic instead.[27]

While the Host goes on several lines later to introduce the categories of solaas and sentence, I would like to linger for a moment on the affective and verbal qualities of play that he introduces here. As Jill Mann has pointed out, *The Canterbury Tales* is defined by play in its serious moments as well as its light ones, and "it is in such play that new possibilities can be glimpsed and made available for lived experience."[28] The conditions of play in *The Canterbury Tales* are created by the regime of mirth enforced by the Host. The Host is himself figured as a force of merriness: he is introduced as "right a myrie man," as after supper "pleyen he bigan, / and spak of myrthe" (I.757-59). He thinks on mirth, vows to do mirth, and demands an oath of merriness: "Now, by my fader soule that is deed, / But ye be myrie, I wole yeve yow myn heed!" (I.781-82). That oath demands silence: the company must cease their old way of speaking before they assent to the Host's oath, at which point they can begin speaking under the new rules he brings about. Otherwise, however, silence and mirth are incompatible. "Confort ne myrthe is noon," the Host says, "to ride by the weye doumb as a stoon." Silence is unpleasant, or so the Host holds; tales, told merrily, produce comfort and mirth. As *The Canterbury Tales* goes on, these connections are reinforced and expanded. Anger, for example, is incompatible with tale-telling, at least when it is not sublimated into competitive "quiting." The Pardoner and Cook both become so "wroth" they cannot speak; these situations delay the ongoing competition, and must be remedied by the intervention of third parties who restore collective good cheer.[29] These situations are anticipated by the Host's earlier command to the Cook to "be nat wroth for game" (I.4354), or his reminder to the Friar that "in compaignye we wol have no debaat" (III.1288) – apothegms that define the rules of the company and encourage tale-telling in the proper key.[30] The Host's mirth is the conceit by which the tales continue to be told; it provides a norm to which even the Parson nominally accedes.

II. Chaucerian Mirth and Devotional Mirth

The Parson's promise of a "myrie" tale is perhaps the best-known in the collection. After the Host's many solicitations of mirth, the Parson gets the last word on "myrie" tales:

> Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest,
> Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?
> For which I seye, if that yow list to heere
> Moralitee and vertuous mateere,
> And thanne that ye wole yeve me audience,
> I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,
> Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.
> But trusteth wel, I am a Southren man;
> I kan nat geeste 'rum, ram, ruf' by lettre,

[27] Maura Nolan, "'Acquiteth yow now': Textual Contradiction and Legal Discourse in the Man of Law's Introduction," in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England,* ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), 137-53.

[28] Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), x.

[29] At III.956-59 and IX.46-49.

[30] On the violence of Middle English "debat," see Chapter One.

Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre;
And therfore, if yow list – I wol nat glose –
I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose
To knytte up al this feeste and make an ende. (X.37-47)

The Parson's promise to "telle a myrie tale in prose" is, on first impression, surprising. *The Parson's Tale* is a penitential tract, its immediate goal the sharp pang of contrition rather than pleasure. Moreover, to reject verse in all its forms, to cast aside entertainment, would seem to make merry tales impossible. Responses to Chaucer in religious writing suggest as much: it is "a mery tale" of romance verse that the Fool in the Cambridge Tracts' "Dialogue of a Wise Man and a Fool" wants to hear.[31] That Dialogue alludes elsewhere to *The Canterbury Tales*, and it seems no accident that author chose to label the entertaining "draf" that the Parson rejects as a "mery tale."[32] The Fool echoes the Host, and his "mery tale" anticipates sixteenth-century Protestants, who used "Canterbury tale" as a byword for the idle fictions that bad readers preferred to edifying material like the Bible and religious tracts.[33] Tale-telling is often counted among the sins of the tongue, since idle entertainments lead believers away from Godly material.

The Parson nevertheless promises a "myrie tale in prose." His promise simultaneous accedes to the rules set up by the Host and redefines them. Critics have shown how the term "myrie" is more apposite than it might appear to be at first: Lois Ebin has argued that the word comes to denote sententiousness instead of entertainment as the *Canterbury Tales* develops – the *Melibee* is also a "murye tale" as the Chaucer-pilgrim presents it (VII.963) – while Arvind Thomas has shown in turn that *The Parson's Tale is*, in fact, calculated to entertain while it teaches.[34] But aside from the rhetorical performance of the *Tale* itself, it bears observing that penance and mirth are not mutually exclusive. So Langland's Ymaginatif points out, quoting Psalm 22 to a defensive Will:

"*Virga tua & baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt.*
Alþouȝ þow strike me wiþ þi staf, wiþ stikke or wiþ yerde,
It is but murþe as for me to amende my soule." (12.13a-15)[35]

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[31] "Cambridge Tract XII," in *The Earliest Advocates of the English Bible: The Texts of the Medieval Debate,* ed. Mary Dove (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2010), 130-142 (ll. 162-63), and see Chapter Two for the broader tradition to which this gesture belongs.

[32] See Dove's discussion and Nicholas Watson, "The Ignorance of the Laity: Twelve Tracts on Bible Translation," in *Truth and Tales: Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2015), 187-205.

[33] On the senses of "Canterbury tale" in the sixteenth century, see Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 192-95. In so doing, of course, they echoed pre-Reformation catechesis; see Chapter Two.

[34] See Lois Ebin, "Chaucer, Lydgate, and the 'Myrie Tale,'" *The Chaucer Review* 13.4 (1979): 316-336; Arvind Thomas, "What's *Myrie* about the Prose of the *Parson's Tale*?" *The Chaucer Review* 46.4 (2012): 419-38. On the Host's seemingly inappropriate response to the Melibee, described in the Ellesmere manuscript as "the murye wordes of the Hoost to the Monk," see Christopher Cannon, "Proverbs and the wisdom of literature: *The Proverbs of Alfred* and Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*," *Textual Practice* 24:3 (2010): 407-434 (423-24).

[35] All citations of *Piers Plowman* are from the Athlone editions of Kane, Kane and Donaldson, and Russell and Kane, respectively, and will be cited parenthetically henceforth.

Though "contricioun sholde be wonder sorweful and angwissous," as the Parson puts it, the ends of penance and self-emendation are ultimately joyful (X.303). The Parson's "myrie" is *not* the Host's "myrie." He offers "plesaunce," but only under the condition that it is "leeful." As Edwin Craun has pointed out, the Parson speaks in his Prologue "as a priest about the speech appropriate for a priest"; his rejection of fables, his refusal to entertain in verse, his rhetoric of wheat and draff all align with rules for clerical speech, particularly as they were extended and universalized in perfectionist fourteenth-century pastoral discourse.[36]

The Parson's redefinition of "myrie tale" in fact returns Chaucer's mirth to a broader religious tradition from which it is appropriated. Late medieval mirth is not exclusively the realm of secular pleasure. The terms the Host installs at the center of the tale-telling competition – mirth, comfort, solaas – also appear widely in Middle English religious writing, as in the *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, where prayer is "counfort and solas to þi good angel, turment and peyne to þe deuil, acceptable seruice to God," while God's kingdom is described as "ioye and counfort" (one manuscript replaces "counfort" with "myrthe").[37] Song, sweetness, joy, and mirth are linked in the Psalter and thus in the liturgical and contemplative traditions.[38] Mirth in itself is particularly associated with prayer and praise, with both the joyous David before the Ark and the penitent David's turn to prayer at Psalm 50:17, a central verse in late medieval liturgy: "Domine labia mea aperies et os meum adnuntiabit laudem tuam" ["Lord, opene thou my lippis and my mouth schall telle thi preysyng"].[39] Devotional texts drew on these associations, bending them to their own doctrinal emphases, as when *The Book to a Mother* names itself in a moment of rich self-description: "Þis bok is þe harpe and þe sauterry of ten strynges þat Dauid biddeþ us synge inne to oure Lord God."[40] That harp, played right, makes "þe soun of oure good lyuinge... and þis were a likinge song, to God and to his angelis murgure [*merrier*] þan alle þe murþe þat euere was or mai be in þis world."[41] Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* depends on the same set of associations, but Hilton – whose aim is contemplation, rather than *The Book to a Mother*'s stringently devout good living – prefers to emphasize the act of prayer,

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[36] Edwin Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 188. For a parallel example of such perfectionist discourse, drawn from Wycliffite writing, see the entry for "Fabulacion" in *The Middle English Translation of the Rosarium Theologie: A Selection ed. from Cbr., Gonville and Caius Coll. MS 354/581*, ed. Christina von Nolcken (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1979), xx: "Fabulacion or tale tellyng is to be exschewed... Fablez of seculer nedez or occupacions ow not to be reherced in þe borde of a clerke but þe wordez of holy redyng." The first, scriptural paragraph of the definition draws heavily on 1 Timothy, to which the Parson also alludes (X.32-33).

[37] *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, EETS o.s. 303, ed. Margaret Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), V.17-19 and Z.71, and notes to Z.63.

[38] On the psalter, joy, and song in Rolle, see the discussion in Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 243-44. On sweetness, see below.

[39] On this psalm and its liturgical uses, see Annie Sutherland, *English Psalms in the Middle Ages, 1300-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 6.

[40] *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. Adrian J. McCarthy (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 27.16-17.

[41] *Book to a Mother*, 28.9-13.

adapting Ephesians 5:18-19 to describe the degree of contemplation in which "the Pater Noster or the Ave Maria or ympnys or psalmes or other devoute seyynges of Holi Chirche aren turnyd as it were into gostli mirthe and swete songe."[42] Despite their different intents, the two texts share a sense of spiritual mirth, a complex of pleasant song and pleased listening that is emphatically immaterial.

Chaucer's "mirth," "confort," and "solaas" might therefore be counted among his "kidnapped" terms, lifted from religious discourse and made into terms of art that work within Chaucer's fiction and as descriptions of it. Of course, like many of the key terms of English vernacular religious writing, these words could carry secular meanings as well; Hilton's need to specify that his mirth is "*gostli*" and *The Book to a Mother*'s comparative evaluation of earthly and heavenly mirth suggests that the earthly meanings would come first to mind, then as now.[43] But the collocation of terms does suggest a conscious borrowing from religious discourse. Moreover, Chaucer seems to consciously flirt with the ambivalence of his terms. The wrong kinds of mirth were subject to complaint and polemic: an early fifteenth century exposition of the Ave Maria sets old-fashioned "þouȝt on myrþe in heuene" in prayer and song against the modern Christmas "pagyn of þe deuyl," in which a man can go "syngynge songis of lecherie, of batailis and of lesyngis, & crie as a wood man & dispise goddis maieste & swere bi herte, bonys, & alle membris of crist," and yet "is holden most merie mon." According to this tract, such mirth – described in the same terms as denunciations of the sins of the tongue in catechetical writing – despises Christ, "& bi þis doynge þe fend bryngeþ in iolite of body & myrþe ... & newe fyndynge vp of synne, in-stede of holynesse & gostly ioie & herynge of god."[44] Sinful speech as legitimized by ritual play, in other words, leads one to be esteemed "merry," but that mirth is itself sinful. Chaucerian mirth falls rather unequivocally on the wrong side of that divide.

This is not to say that Chaucer's mirth lacks a coherent system of value, however. The rules of the tale-telling competition supplant other late-medieval prescriptive systems for speech, feeling, and self-presentation. Individual tale-tellers reproduce elements of the rhetorical, courtesy, and pastoral traditions, but each is incorporated within the tale-telling system and

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[42] *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2000), I.134-36. Hilton adds music to mirth elsewhere, as in his retelling of the Parable of the Lost Coin: "Makith mirthe with me and melodie, for I have founden the dragme that I had lost," Hilton's woman says; "makith mirth... and melodie" is an expansion of the Vulgate "congratulamini" (I.1390-91).

[43] See *MED*, s. v. "solas"; s. v. "comfort"; s. v. "mirth(e)."

[44] Usually known as the "Wycliffite exposition on the Ave Maria," IPMEP 276; printed in *The English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted*, EETS os 74, ed. F. D. Matthew (London: Trübner, 1880), 203-08 (206). This text is interpolated into three copies of the *Pore Caitif*: London, British Library Harley 2322; Oxford, Bodleian Library Additional B.66; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 938. On this text and its affiliations, see Ralph Hanna III, "The Origins and Production of Westminster School Ms. 3," *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988): 197-218 (208-09); and Fiona Somerset, *Feeling like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wyclif* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 321-24. On this commentary more broadly, see Matti Peikola, "'And After All, Myn Aue-Marie Almost To The Ende': *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* and Lollard Expositions of the *Ave Maria*," *English Studies* 81.4 (2000): 273-292. The description of playing as "liynge and sweringe" is closely echoed in the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*; see *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*, ed. Anne Hudson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 101/149-68.

subordinated to it. The intrinsic rules of the competition prioritize a continuous process of tale-telling. They are established by sworn oaths, maintained by the Host's profane encouragement, and lubricated by ale. The value of speech is notionally judged by a single earthly figure, the Host, though in the course of events judgment is distributed to the company more broadly, as both a collective and as delighted or offended individuals. The reward is a meal. In the ethical system of the Canterbury company, to speak devoutly is neither the norm nor a shared aspiration – it is, in fact, open to mockery. The Host shuts up Reeve's sermonizing on "avauntyng, liyng, anger, coveitise" (I.3884); when the Parson piously asks of the Host, "What eyleth the man, so synfully to swere?" (II.1171), the Host first teases him and the Shipman then forbids him speak, offering his "joly body" (II.1185) in place of the "Lollere" Parson's "predicacioun" (1176-77).[45] The standard is "myrie" speech – speech that gives pleasure on earth, not "myrþe in heuene." When the Host solicits a tale from the Clerk, he puts this standard clearly:

> "Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey!
> For what man that is entred in a pley,
> He nedes moot unto the pley assente.
> But precheth nat, as freres doon in Lente,
> To make us for oure olde synnes wepe,
> Ne that thy tale make us nat to slepe.
> Telle us some murie thyng of aventures." (IV.6-15)

The Host asks for precisely the opposite of what a catechetical writer usually promises: he wants a "myrie" plot-driven tale, incapable of provoking contrition or self-examination – something closer, that is, to romance, or to "songis of lecherie, of batailis and of lesyngis," than to "moralitee." So the rules of collective "pley" demand. The distance between this system and the tradition of the sins of the tongue need hardly be pointed out. Matthew 12:36 stays far offstage.

Not every tale follows the Host's rules: there is ample matter to justify the Chaucer-narrator's opening promise of morality, devotion, and gentility, and few would think the *Clerk's Tale* a "murie thyng of aventures." Sometimes, the Host's jocular demands are played for laughs. But when his "myrie" system is abruptly abrogated by the *Parson's Tale* and *Retraction*, there is a genuine shift in style. As an adaptation of Peraldus, *The Parson's Tale* reproduces traditional teaching on the sins of the tongue (X.579-652), even supplementing its source with certain extended passages.[46] As Lee Patterson argues, the Parson's concluding statement in the tale-telling competition amounts to a "rejection of all personal speaking that does not confront, in the sacramental language of penance, the sinfulness of the human condition" – articulating, that is, an alternative vision of speech much closer to that of the devout reading public than that of the

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[45] The fond and hostile notes of *Man of Law*'s "lollard" endlink is discussed by Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 75-79; the power dynamics in the scene are discussed in Derrick G. Pitard, "Sowing Difficulty: *The Parson's Tale*, Vernacular Commentary, and the Nature of Chaucerian Dissent," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 26 (2004): 299-330 (302). The frankly embodied mode of story-telling throughout the *Tales*, among tellers regardless of gender, is another difference from the tradition of the sins of the tongue, which usually invokes the speaking body in order to suggest the tongue's fleshly inclination to sin. On the "joly body" and the Bradshaw shift, see R. Allen Shoaf, *Chaucer's Body: The Anxiety of Circulation in the "Canterbury Tales"* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2001), 18, and see the discussion of the clergeon below.

[46] See Patterson, "*Parson's Tale*," 360-61.

Host.[47] This final swerve toward explicit religiosity is rarely presented today as a "capitulation to orthodoxy" or a betrayal of art, and Charles Owen's suggestion that it was intended as an independent treatise on penance has never gained traction in scholarship.[48] Instead, it is read as a culmination-by-transformation of the Canterbury pilgrimage, in which the embodied, socially particular, and personal aspects of the tale-telling competition are rendered spiritual and universal.[49]

The succession of these distinct ethical systems for speech does not only yield transcendence, however. Both systems are available to the tale-tellers and characters within their tales. The progressive movement of the *Tales* depends on the Host's rule of mirth, and the Parson's devout speech allows its comic, transcendent ending. Individual tales suggest the limitations of both systems. In the following sections, I will focus on two: *The Prioress's Tale* and *The Manciple's Tale*. Both articulate an aspiration for perfect speech at odds with the broader rule of mirth; in their respective prologues and tales, both pleasure and the aspiration to perfection become problems. In the case of the Prioress, perfected speech takes the form of praise-song, a relationship to the divine ultimately characterized by a pure upwelling of positive affect. In the case of the Manciple, perfected speech is silence – a repressive impulse and a coarsening of pastoral discourse. Together, these tales show Chaucer placing the ethical and affective systems of *The Canterbury Tales* under pressure, exploring the limits of devout speech and its "myrie" alternative.

III. The Clergeon's Merry Song

The Prioress's Tale is defined by its stark manipulation of emotion, an affective power defined on the one hand by a vicious and unreflective antisemitism and on the other by a treacly cultivation of innocence. This double power is suggested at the outset by the tale's narrowing of focus in its first two stanzas: it moves toward a Jewry "hateful to Crist and to his compaignye" (VII.492) and a pitiable "litel scole of Cristen folk" on the other (VII.495).[50] The story that follows is a Marian miracle with a vicious edge, a version of a story that circulated widely in the period. A little clergeon learns the *Alma redemptoris mater*, a liturgical antiphon in praise of Mary. He is martyred by those Jews for his performance, and his corpse thrown in a privy until

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[47] Patterson, "*Parson's Tale*," 379.

[48] On capitulation, see the retrospective summary of scholarship in Siegfried Wenzel, "The Parson's Tale in Current Literary Studies," in *Closure in "The Canterbury Tales": The Role of The Parson's Tale*, ed. David Raybin and Linda Tarte Holley (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2000), 45-76; and Charles A. Owen Jr., "What the Manuscripts Tell Us About the Parson's Tale," *Medium Ævum* 63 (1994): 239-49.

[49] Thus Patterson, "*Parson's Tale*," 380; Thomas H. Bestul, "Chaucer's Parson's Tale and the Late-Medieval Tradition of Religious Meditation," *Speculum* 64 (1989): 600-619 (618); and, with an emphasis on "mediocrist" incorporation and renunciation of sin, Nicholas Watson, "Chaucer's Public Christianity," *Religion & Literature* 37 (2005): 99-114.

[50] See the history of criticism in *The Prioress's Tale*, ed. Beverly Boyd, Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer 2.20 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 28-60. Wordsworth, for instance, described the poem's "fierce bigotry" that nevertheless "forms a fine background for her tender-hearted sympathies with the Mother and Child" (29), while Donaldson described the poem as a "strange mixture of delicacy and horror, so that it is capable of producing two entirely different impacts" (45).

he is eventually discovered by his mother. The Jews are murdered in a swiftly-narrated official pogrom, while the clergeon is miraculously suspended in a state of singing undeath. A magical grain is lifted from his tongue to the wonder of an assembled crowd of Christian ecclesiasts.

The tale's balance of pity and unreflective hate is understandably upsetting for modern readers. It is hard to discuss *The Prioress's Tale* without confronting the universal critical unease it has created.[51] There have been a number of attempts, particularly in mid-century criticism, to read the poem as an ironic comment on the Prioress; the goal seems to be to distance the poem's sentimentality and vituperative antisemitism from the figure of Chaucer as author, offering a way to rehabilitate a medieval author for modern audiences.[52] More recent scholarship has rightly observed that the Prioress's antisemitism is not straightforwardly a negative example, but is part of medieval Christianity's self-understanding and therefore "shapes the contours of the entire Canterbury project," to quote Lisa Lampert.[53] In what follows, I will show how these two affective forces – which present an affectively uncomplicated and innocent Christian song against the tale's monstrously emotional but silenced Jews – are consistent with the Host's mandate for "myrie" *secular* entertainment as well.

Though the ironic reading is now generally accepted as a bad faith defense of Chaucer's sensibilities, it begins from a broadly correct sense that the Prioress and her tale make a strange fit with the Canterbury project. Derek Pearsall's sensitive treatment of the tale dismisses the ironic reading, but he nevertheless suggests that the tale is "a genuine exploration of a mode of thought and feeling perhaps alien to Chaucer himself":

> Specifically, it is an exploration of that kind of piety that takes its roots in the appeal to feeling – love of mother for child, of child for mother or Virgin-mother, of child for child-Jesus – rather than in intellectual argument or moral certainty. It is not religion, but religiousness, or religiosity, the activity of human affection or emotional attachment under the sanction of religion.[54]

The suggestion that such a mode of thought was "alien to Chaucer himself" is, as Pearsall's "perhaps" admits, impossible to know or defend. But in Pearsall's telling, the poem's "appeal to feeling," its evocation of "the activity of human affection or emotional attachment," depends in some degree on the evacuation of the explicit discursive content that one would expect in a religious text *or* a Chaucerian poem: it lacks "intellectual argument or moral certainty," the kinds of denotative meaning that can be expressed in language, and instead depends on a kind of multimodal distribution of feeling.

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[51] The tale also tends to invite intelligent metacritical commentary. See especially Louise O. Fradenburg, "Criticism, Anti-Semitism, and the Prioress's Tale," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989): 69-115; and, at a different critical juncture, Shannon Gayk, "'To wondre upon this thyng': Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 22 (2010): 138-56.

[52] See the Variorum on the history of criticism. For a perceptive take on the Prioress's excess, threatening to critics, see H. Marshall Leicester, Jr., *The Disenchanted Self: Representing the Subject in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 212.

[53] Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 58-100 (100). See also Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book: English Antisemitisms, 1350-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 55-103.

[54] Pearsall, *Canterbury Tales*, 251.

Pearsall's sense of the tale's affective appeal, beneath and beyond the propositional content that belongs to language, is grounded in the Prioress's description of herself as a speaker.[55] The Host solicits a tale from the Prioress with elaborately fine language, "as curteisly as it had been a mayde" (VII.446), in so doing achieving an abrupt about-face from the coarseness of *The Shipman's Tale* and his own enthusiastic response. The Prioress responds in equally elaborate language, albeit in a different register:

> O Lord, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous
> Is in this large world ysprad – quod she –
> For noght oonly thy laude precious
> Parfourned is by men of dignitee,
> But by the mouth of children thy bountee
> Parfourned is, for on the brest soukynge
> Somtyme shewen they thyn heriynge.
>
> Wherfore in laude, as I best kan or may,
> Of thee and of the white lylye flour
> Which that the bar, and is a mayde alway,
> To telle a storie I wol do my labour;
> Nat that I may encressen hir honour,
> For she hirself is honour and the roote
> Of bountee, next hir Sone, and soules boote. (VII.453-66)

The Prioress prefaces her tale with prayer. Specifically, her first stanza quotes Psalm 8:2-3, its more proximate source probably the Matins of Our Lady, which begins with Psalm 50:17, the verse of praise discussed above.[56] The Prologue is a work of praise, of "laude" and "heriynge," and it thus introduces the first discordantly pious note in the collection. This prologue is devout speech – addressed to God, its matter and intent set on "devocioun" (to return to the categories of the *Retraction*), and thus a swerve away from the "myrie" tales that precede it.

Prayer requires a different tale-telling stance as well. The Prioress strikes two notes in her Prologue: the universal nature of Christ and Mary's praise, and her own personal insufficiency in expressing that praise. As the first stanza puts it, God's name is "ysprad" across the world, his praise "parfourned" by both "the mouth of children" and – in a leveling gesture that Chaucer adds to his source – by "men of dignitee."[57] The "storie" the Prioress sets out to tell is added to this universe of praise, with the caveat that this "labour" cannot "encressen hir honour": it is gratuitous praise, honor added to honor, insufficient in the face of the divine. The point is reinforced at the end of the Prologue, when the Prioress concludes with a declaration of her own childish inadequacy: "as a child of twelf month oold, or lesse, / that kan unnethes any word expresse, / right so fare I" (VII.484-86). The tale she tells belongs to the same category as the praise performed by children sucking on the breast. The stance that the Prioress adopts with this

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[55] Richard H. Osberg has argued, however, that the Prioress is vitiated as a speaker in part because her tale adopts the style of late medieval devotional prose written by men for women; see Osberg, "A Voice for the Prioress: The Context of English Devotional Prose," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 18 (1996): 25-54.

[56] See the discussion in the Variorum *Prioress's Tale*, ed. Boyd, 4-8.

[57] The addition is noted by Sumner Ferris, "Chaucer at Lincoln (1387): The *Prioress's Tale* as a Political Poem," *Chaucer Review* 15.4 (1981): 295-321 (295-96).

simile is that of the inarticulate innocent, with only the barest shred of language – a stance that cuts multiple ways: it expresses the speaker's radical humility, but also her innocence; it suggests the insufficiency of language itself to carry out the task she has chosen, but also suggests that the tale carries a pure affective power beyond words.[58] Fradenburg sees this stance as a kind of handing-off of tale-telling responsibility: "praise is itself," she writes, "a linguistic surrendering of the interior to belief, an attempt at guiltless or 'innocent' speech, at having in one's mouth only the words of the Lord, no filth, no rival creation, no presumptuous attempt to disembody the human by and through voice."[59] The force of praise extends to the tale itself, which, as Fradenburg points out, is "established as itself a miracle" by this invocation, its affecting events, and the hushed response to it by the company: "whan seyd was al this miracle, every man / as sobre was that wonder was to se" (VII.691-92).[60] No "murie thyng of aventures" this, clearly. It seems to be precisely the kind of speech a prioress should speak, "sowning" toward devotion and avoiding the perils of vaunting, backbiting, chiding, gossip, and worldliness that the discourse of the sins of the tongue warns the consecrated religious against. *The Prioress's Tale* begins in prayer, proceeds to narrate a martyrdom and a miracle, and ends in sober silence, with no jangling or laughter or grucching rises up to meet it and keep the tale-telling in motion – that is, "til that oure Hooste japen tho bigan" (VII.693).[61] The uniformity of the company's response is a marker of power, a tool intrinsic to the fiction of *The Canterbury Tales* with which Chaucer can suggest the weightiness of *The Prioress's Tale*.

The second line of the Prioress's invocation, however, suggests the limits to her devout exception. The careful designation "quod she" is sometimes offered as evidence for the ironic reading of the tale, as though the reminder of a speaking character necessarily distances author and reader from her words. This is probably not the case, but the intervention of the narrator's voice is a reminder of the artifice of the tale, the fact that it is emanating from a character participating in a tale-telling contest.[62] Andrew Cole points out that the standalone version of the poem in London, British Library MS Harley 1704 – a devotional anthology that retitles the work *Alma redemptoris mater*, per the song within it – omits the line altogether, with the result that "the poem expresses a devotional subjectivity consistent with the other works in the manuscript."[63] But the *Tale*'s connections with its surrounding tales are not limited to the

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[58] See Helen Cooper, *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales* (London: Duckworth, 1983), 165; and Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference*, 81: "the Prioress presents a model of Christian piety that is specifically unlettered and unlearned, associated with children in a time before speech itself."

[59] Louise O. (Aranye) Fradenburg, "Criticism, Anti-Semitism, and the Prioress's Tale," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989): 69-115 (91). Note, however, that Fradenburg rightly emphasizes the embodied nature of this praise – one point of convergence with the topoi of the tale-telling competition; on more such points of convergence, see below.

[60] Fradenburg, "Criticism, Anti-Semitism," 94.

[61] My reading of the Prioress as offering a form of idealized speech is prefaced by Katherine Zieman, *Singing the New Song: Literacy and Liturgy in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 186-98.

[62] For an argument that "quod she" marks the gendered interruption of male speech reminding us of a female speaker, see Judith Ferster, "'Your Praise is Performed by Men and Children': Language and Gender in the Prioress's Prologue and Tale," *Exemplaria* 2 (1990): 149-68.

[63] Andrew Cole, "Chaucer the Religious Writer: A Hypothesis about the Pre-*Canterbury Tales*,"

Prologue's "quod she." As Anthony Bale notes, *The Prioress's Tale*'s "layering of performance, rhetoric, fiction, and conflicts of authority" reflects similar layering in the surrounding tales.[64] They suggest a greater complexity to tale and speaker than the Prioress's posture of prayer admits. Given that – as Lee Patterson argues – "childishness is central conceptually and ideologically" to *The Prioress's Tale*, it is perhaps unsurprising that this half-obscured complexity begins with the little clergeon's song.[65]

Before I proceed, a brief caveat: in what follows, I have opted for the most part not to discuss the clergeon's song in its *musical* aspect, but instead as a category of perfected speech.[66] Given that late medieval debates over religious song and forms of devotion often involved the lexicon of the sins of the tongue, it seems appropriate to do so. Song was a privileged and unique form of speech, but was evaluated according to the same codes as a speech act: thus the division in the "Wycliffite Exposition on the *Ave Maria*," for example, between the women that used to "synge honeste songis of cristis incarnacion, passion, resurexion & ascension, & the ioies of oure ladi" and the present-day men who go "syngynge songis of lecherie, of batailis and of lesyngis, & crie as a wood man & dispise goddis maieste & swere bi herte, bonys & alle membris of crist."[67] The songs of lechery are equivalent to the vain swearing that tears Christ's flesh (and as texts like the *Pore Caitif* remind their readers, violates the Fourth and Eighth Commandments). It is a sin of the tongue. Both are opposed to "honeste songis" on Christian topics – the kind of songs the clergeon sings, and a form of Godly speech allowed by people like Peraldus.[68]

The clergeon's song appears, on the face of things, as a figure for the Prioress's aspirations, an icon of purified praise.[69] Like the performance by children "on the brest soukynge" in the Prologue, it is innocent of the specificities of language: the clergeon is drawn to the antiphon *Alma redemptoris mater* by its music, not its words.[70] In a scene of strangely frustrated sociability, he learns by eavesdropping on others, committing the song to memory "by

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Oxford Handbook to Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), 12. On Harley 1704, see also Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 92.

[64] Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 82. On the independent circulation of *The Prioress's Tale*, see more broadly Heather Blurton and Hannah Johnson, "Reading the Prioress's Tale in the Fifteenth Century: Lydgate, Hoccleve, and Marian Devotion," *The Chaucer Review* 50 (2015): 134-58.

[65] Lee Patterson, "'The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption': Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001): 507-60 (514).

[66] On the music of the tale, see Andrew Albin, "The *Prioress's Tale*, Sonorous and Silent," *The Chaucer Review* 48 (2013): 91-112; and Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[67] "Wycliffite Exposition on the *Ave Maria*," 206.

[68] As Craun points out, Peraldus says the tongue is "deputata ad orandum. et ad deum laudandum" [assigned to pray and to praise God], along with two other duties; Peraldus qtd. in *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 33.

[69] See e.g. Patterson, "'Living Witnesses'" 508, who observes that "the tale establishes the clergeon's song as a model of linguistic innocence, a privileged speech that the Prioress seeks to imitate" (508).

[70] See Bruce Holsinger, "Pedagogy, Violence, and the Subject of Music: Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* and the Ideologies of 'Song,'" *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997): 157-92.

rote" (VII.522). When he asks his older "felawe" to explain the song "in his langage," the older boy demurs (VII.526): he is a student in song school, not grammar school, and knows only that the song "was maked of our blisful Lady free, / hire to salue, and eek hire for to preye / to been oure helpe and socour whan we deye" (VII.532-33). The song is thus in a sense gestural, intended to "salue" and "preye" rather than advancing a specific *statement* of praise. As Katherine Zieman argues, "by making her clergeon ignorant of Latin grammar, the Prioress removes him from the world of linguistic exchange."[71] The point here is not, I think, the lack of Latinity *per se* as it is the clergeon's insulation from the world of language: unlike the Canterbury company – adults knit together by such linguistic exchanges, characterized by their *knowingness* or their ability to read occulted insult and subterfuge – the clergeon enjoys a bare desire to praise, unimpeded by knowledge.

The immediate force of the Prioress's description is to emphasize his song as contentless quality, a purely affective gesture. We are reminded that he learns "by rote," and the focus of narration falls on the fact and feeling of his verbal performance rather than its content:

> His felawe taughte hym homward prively,
> Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote,
> And thanne he song it wel and boldely,
> Fro word to word, acordynge with the note.
> Twies a day it passed thurgh his throte,
> To scoleward and homward whan he wente;
> On Cristes mooder set was his entente. (VII.544-50)

The clergeon is an instrument of publicity, broadcasting the song he learned "prively." His performance is a bodily manifestation of praise: elsewhere in *The Canterbury Tales*, "entente" carries a proper ethical weight, speaking the will, good or evil, behind speech and actions; in this case, the "entente" is given over to simple and singular Marian devotion. Of course, in that bodily manifestation of a devotional "entente," there is a premonition of his martyrdom. The text dwells on his permeable throat: the *Alma redemptoris mater* "passed thurgh his throte" like the knife that will slit it. The prayer is answered, that is, by his murder, when the city's Jews – described at the outset as "hateful to Crist and to his compaignye," offended by his singing – pull him out of his public devotion into "a privee place" (VII.568), "kitte his throte" (VII.571), and toss him in a privy. This total inversion is, of course, part of the *point* of the miracle: the boy's particular virtue and his method of martyrdom are mutually constitutive, and so they must mirror one another.[72] Even the privy, which is found in Chaucer's analogues and has seen quite a bit of intelligent criticism, has an antecedent in Christ's elevation of proper speech over Jewish dietary law in Matthew 15:16-17.[73] There Christ declares "that thing that entrith in to the mouth, defoulith not a man; but that thing that cometh out of the mouth, defoulith a man" (Matthew 15:11), explaining to the disciples on behalf of the scandalized Pharisees that "whatsoever entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the privy[,] but the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man" (Matthew

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[71] Zieman, *Singing the New Song*, 191.
[72] See also Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 79, on the Vernon version of the story.
[73] On the privy, see especially Kathy Lavezzo, "The Minster and the Privy: Rereading the Prioress's Tale," *PMLA* 126 (2011), 363-82. See also Susan Signe Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 73-88.

15:17-18). In casting perfected speech into excrement and showing it to be unblemished by the experience, the clergeon's miraculous continual song in the cesspit echoes Christ's parable.

As Lisa Lampert has shown in her work on *The Prioress's Tale*, "it is in relation to Jews and Judaism that Christians continually negotiate what it means to be Christian."[74] The tale's antisemitism is integral to its conception of Christianity. The normative Christian experience is characterized by mirth, reverence, and is expressed in songs of devotion whose music is committed to the soul "by rote" – as in the clergeon's routine ritualistic, exuberant and public broadcasting of his joyful song of praise. The Jews are not simply identified as "yvel," but are identified with a set of undesirable affective inclinations and relationships to language. A comparison of hearts suggests in part how the poem's "fierce bigotry" works. "The serpent Sathanas... hath in Jues herte his waspes nest," the Prioress declares (VII.559); the clergeon's mother instead has "moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed," and in the case of the clergeon, "the swetnesse" of the Virgin "his herte perced so" (VII.). Pitee and sweetness – a sensation associated with both pleasant aesthetic experience and the taste of God, as Mary Carruthers and Rachel Fulton have shown – are set against a wasp's nest: in place of a noble abstraction, the Jewish heart has a grotesque material specificity.[75] But the Jews are also characterized by secrecy, anger, shame, and *linguistic understanding*, as in the broader context for that image of the heart:

> Oure firste foo, the serpent Sathanas,
> That hath in Jues herte his waspes nest
> Up swal, and seide, "O Hebrayk peple, allas!
> Is this to yow a thyng that is honest,
> That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest
> In youre despit, and synge of swich sentence,
> Which is agayn youre lawes reverence?" (VI.558-4)

Satan tells the Jews that the boy, by walking "as hym lest" and singing "of swich sentence" against their law, spites them. Satan solicits the murder by appealing to rules for speech: he asks whether the boy's twice-daily recital is "honest," *given that the content of what he sings* is "agayn youre lawes reverence." Associating Jewish law and Satan is an old tendency in medieval Christian antisemitism, but Satan's borrowing from the methods of contemporary writing on the sins of the tongue is interesting. Rather than sinners who place God in their "despit" by sinning, or bad priests who put believers in their "despit" by their incompetence and evil living, Satan suggests the boy's daily walk and the "sentence" of his song place the Jews in "despit." The difference between *The Prioress's Tale* and the texts discussed in the first two chapters should be clear: in this style of devotional writing, the negative affects that suggest both communal belonging and a complex interiority – which polemical Christian texts exploit to powerful

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[74] Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference*, 100.

[75] On the negative embodiment of Jews in "The Prioress's Tale," see Lavezzo, "The Privy." On sweetness, see Mary Carruthers, "Sweetness," *Speculum* 81 (2006): 999-1013 and Rachel Fulton, "'Taste and see that the Lord is sweet' (Ps 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West," *The Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 169-204. Sweetness, however, also describes flattery in Chaucer as in the broader culture. On the latter, see Chapter One; on the former, see Prudence's aphorisms to Melibee, VII.1181 and 1183.

public-building ends, as I discussed in the first chapter – belong to the Jews, not the Christians.[76] It is an affective approach to Christian devotion that is, though fundamentally defined by hate, radically different from that in the texts for the devout reading public. These Christians are merry, and that good cheer takes precedence over the intellectual understanding that most pastoral texts value. In *The Prioress's Tale*, Jews can understand "sentence" and can understand that it violates their law. The model Christian is innocent of rational or legalistic understanding.

This cheery innocence is often described as an effect of genre. But not all such Marian miracles require this innocence. Other versions of the miracle story imagine the boy singing the anti-heretical *Gaude Maria virgo* or the anti-Jewish *Erubescat Judaeus infelix*; in those stories, an explicitly anti-Jewish line is emphasized: "Erubescat Iudaeus infelix, qui dicit Christum ex Ioseph semine esse natum" [let the unhappy Jew blush, who says that Christ was born of Joseph's seed].[77] (In others, the boy is simply reading the *Ave Maria*.) In these stories, the boy becomes the agent of an explicitly polemical Christianity, wielding language as a weapon. His words "sclaundren." In these stories, the boy's song – which is hate speech – does disputational work in the world.[78] The clergeon, on the other hand, is figured as a kind of devotional automaton, his "entente" focused on Mary and the narrative focus on the peristaltic movement of song through his body. As has been widely remarked, this lack of verbal agency heightens the pathos of the tale. It also further dehumanizes its excremental, secreted, and silenced Jews; rather than responding to an explicit challenge, they commit a motiveless crime and in so doing further sacralize the clergeon's song.[79] There is not a complex investigation of Christian identity happening here, nor a dialogue with – even a coherent polemic against – Jewish belief. The tale depends on stark polarities of the sacred, which themselves depend on polarities of emotion (joy versus anger), sensation (sweetness versus excrement), and speech (an innocent, ignorant, and miraculous force of *voice* versus a fallen, knowing, and voiceless comprehension).

As I noted above, under sustained attention, the pretension to innocence in *The Prioress's Tale* starts breaking down. Critics have pointed to the tale's place in its fragment, between *The Shipman's Tale* and *Sir Thopas*, as evidence of its status as one in a series of experimental half-failures.[80] This reading could be extended to the form of the tale itself, as well as the model of speech to which it notionally aspires, because the clergeon's song is defined by the broader topoi around speech and performance in *The Canterbury Tales*. The Prioress says:

> As I have seyd, thurghout the Juerie
> This litel child, as he cam to and fro,
> Ful murily than wolde he synge and crie
> *O Alma redemptoris* everemo.

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[76] See Fradenburg, "Criticism, Anti-Semitism," on these dynamics: "Interior crisis, the threat of intimate violence, of dissolution – which becomes the threat of self-extension, of flooding out into the world (expressed through the clergeon's exposure in the Jewry, his loud and provocative singing) – is given to the Jew through Satan" (104).

[77] Variorum *Prioress's Tale*, ed. Boyd, 15-17; and Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 68-75.

[78] On anti-Jewish polemic and public disputational culture in medieval Christianity, see Alex J. Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation: Pedagogy, Practice, and Performance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 172-221.

[79] See Lavezzo, "The Minster and the Privy," 373-74.

[80] For instance, Cooper, *Structure of the Canterbury Tales*, 165-68; Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 82.

The swetnesse his herte perced so
Of Cristes mooder that, to hire to preye,
He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye. (VII.550-57)

The sweetness of Marian devotion is here, of course, but the stanza begins with another narratorial intervention, a line-filling reminder of the tale's artifice: "As I have seyd." With this reminder of the Prioress's presence, the resonances of this passage seem all the more marked. The clergeon sings "ful murily" as he goes to and from home; "he kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye." Merry song delivered continuously as one travels "by the weye" is, of course, consistent with the Host's rules for speech. Like the Canterbury company, whom the Host addresses, saying, "as ye goon by the weye, / ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye," the clergeon says his *Ave* "as he goth by the weye" (VII.508) and "kan nat stynte of syngyng" the *Alma redemptoris* "by the weye." As Nicolette Zeeman has argued, the clergeon shows himself to be "very pleased with his art indeed" – contrary to the aspiration to purified speech of outward-directed praise, the performer's narcissism is ultimately inescapable, returning in the manner and occasion of his song.[81] My point here is not that the clergeon's song "sownen into synne," but rather that the verbal performance of and within the *Prioress's Tale* ultimately consents to the rules of the tale-telling game. As the line-filling interventions continually remind us, *The Prioress's Tale is* told by a Canterbury pilgrim. Though it professes a devout style, it cannot help but represent its most privileged form of verbal expression, the clergeon's praise song, as a merry dilatory affair, another tale told for good cheer.[82]

The Prioress's Tale is a pleasing fiction about Christianity. The tale participates in *The Canterbury Tales*, and therefore its "entente" is to fulfill the Host's call for entertainment. Its intensely mannered style and emotional texture proceed from this "entente." As I noted above, the poem's choice of the *Alma redemptoris* means the clergeon's polemical agency is downplayed. Moreover, *The Prioress's Tale* does not engage in *intra-Christian* polemic (except in the aside: "this abbot, which that was an hooly man / as monkes been – or elles oght be" [VII.642-43]), as even some of the most luridly antisemitic medieval Christian writing does. It does not demand penitential self-examination. These facts do not, I think, reflect censorship or self-censorship on Chaucer's part; such terms are not quite appropriate for the historical situation. Chaucer is not only navigating within a tradition, he is navigating within the contemporary vernacular genres available to him, which included devotional texts. But he does not address a specific devout lay audience by means of a communitarian emotional appeal; that communitarianism extends on the one hand to all Christians, and on the other to the immediate diegetic audience. After all, *The Canterbury Tales* address themselves. Per Michael Warner, public discourse "must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate" by both explicit and stylistic means.[83] *The Canterbury Tales* describes a broad English reading public in its miscellaneous experiments in style, but, as I noted above, it also creates a fiction of such public

[81] Zeeman, "The Gender of Song in Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 (2007): 141-82.
[82] Though there is not space to consider it here, such interventions are also common in post-Chaucerian devotional poetry, in which a Hoccleve or Lydgate poet-figure can be omnipresent; such interventions mark, I think, the *literary* ambitions of those poems, predicated but not dependent on the model set down by Chaucer.
[83] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 114.

address within it.[84] The ethical and emotional polarities in *The Prioress's Tale* thus become an experiment in entertainment, in meeting the terms of the tale-telling competition. He does not satirize or ironize devotion, but puts it under the rule of fiction: that is to say, he experiments in it for the aim of pleasure. The clergeon's perfected, contentless praise, the Prioress's childlike devotion, and – most disturbingly, though something that I do not think Chaucer would have found disquieting – the "fierce bigotry" of the tale's black-and-white antisemitism all serve the ends of entertainment. As Helen Cooper observes, the tale proceeds as "*fiction* – pious fiction in this instance, no doubt, but just as fabular in terms of narrative action."[85] Its status as "myrie" fiction is evident in the affective quality of the company's reception of the tale: their immediate "sobre" response is genuine but fleeting. Once the tale is told, its affective response registered, the competition moves on to another "tale of myrthe" (VII.706).

IV. Silence, Anger, and *The Manciple's Tale*

The Manciple's Tale revisits the dynamics of *The Prioress's Tale* in a different key.[86] The Manciple tells the only Ovidian transformation story in *The Canterbury Tales* – the etiological explanation for the crow's blackness and lack of song, attributed to Phoebus Apollo's mournful rage – but it has surprising resonances with the Prioress's Marian miracle. In it, a "myrie" speaker again suffers violence exercised by those who hear him; greater violence is again visited on a silenced but narratively central figure; and the tale again identifies itself with an ethical perfection of speech. *The Manciple's Tale*, however, draws not on the multiplicative sweetness of praise-song, but on the pastoral rhetoric of the sins of the tongue: the object of the Manciple's ire is the "rakel tonge," and he prescribes silence and caution as its correctives.

As Craun has shown, the tale is the only *Canterbury Tale* other than the Parson's to explicitly draw from the tradition of the sins of the tongue.[87] The potted conduct lesson at the end of the poem is where those instructions are most densely dealt out. But the Prologue introduces the tale in a welter of profane speech and its correction. In it, the Host, with his usual vulgar oaths, tries to hand tale-telling responsibility to the Cook. (*The Manciple's Prologue*, by some lights seriously textually disturbed, seems to have forgotten the truncated *Cook's Tale*.)[88] The

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[84] On the codicological grounds of late medieval English literature's public address, see the Ralph Hanna III, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 37-51. On the internal audience of the *Canterbury Tales*, see my comments above, drawing on Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, and R. D. Perry, "Chaucer's French Tradition" (unpublished PhD dissertation, UC Berkeley, 2016).

[85] Cooper, *Structure of the Canterbury Tales*, 168. Emphasis original.

[86] As does *The Second Nun's Tale*, the usual comparandum with *The Prioress's Tale*, which I do not have space to address here; see Zieman, *Singing the New Song*, 181-209.

[87] Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 201-12. The broad discourse of verbal sin does turn up in other places, as in the Reeve's reproof to the Miller: "Stynt thy clappe! ... It is a synne and eek a greet folye / To apeyren any man, or hym defame" (I.3144-48).

[88] For a concise summary of arguments up to the mid-1980s over the *Manciple's Tale* place in the collection as a whole, see *The Manciple's Tale*, ed. Donald C. Baker, Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer 2.10 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 38-43. Baker does not believe that the tale and its prologue are particularly textually problematic.

Cook, drunk and unsteady in his saddle, begs off. The Manciple gallantly intercedes and offers to "excuse" the Cook of his tale (IX.29). But he rather less gallantly explains why:

> "For, in good feith, thy visage is ful pale,
> Thyne eyen daswen eek, as that me thynketh,
> And, wel I woot, thy breeth ful soure stynketh:
> That sheweth wel thou art nat wel disposed.
> Of me, certeyn, thou shalt nat been yglosed.
> See how he ganeth, lo, this dronken wight,
> As though he wolde swolwe us anonright.
> Hoold cloos thy mouth, man, by thy fader kyn!
> The devel of helle sette his foot therin!
> Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle." (IX.30-39)

Each line is a new step in an escalating insult, shot through with echoes of pastoral discourse: the Manciple promises that he will not flatter the Cook ("thou shalt nat been yglosed") before he describes his stinking mouth as the Devil's footprint. "Hoold cloos thy mouth, man," he demands, advice that *The Manciple's Tale* goes on to reiterate for a broader audience.[89] When the Cook, enraged but inarticulate in his drunkenness, topples from his horse, the pilgrims lift the drunk out of the ditch. There is an echo of Langland in here: in the pointed exemplum in the B text of *Piers Plowman* that I discussed in the previous chapter, Ymaginatif cautions Will to let a sleeping drunk lie. To beat him or blame him is pure sin, Ymaginatif says, so pass by and let his own shame roust him from the ditch.[90] *Contra* Ymaginatif, the Canterbury company rousts the drunk from the ditch and, rather than letting the Cook's shame operate on its own, the Manciple berates him. Though the Host hands over tale-telling duties to the Manciple, conceding that "drynke hath dominacioun" over the Cook and therefore "he lewedly wolde telle his tale" (IX.57-59), he cautions him: "in feith thou art to nyce / thus openly repreve hym of his vice" (IX.69-70). In other words, open reproof is a step too far; hold *your* tongue, the Host says, even when you smell "the devel of helle" in a drunk man's mouth, because that drunk might get you back once he sobers up.[91] The Manciple cheerily agrees with the Host, hands the Cook a gourd of wine, and goes on to tell a scabrous and cynical tale against loose tongues.

So *The Manciple's Tale* begins in shame and anger. The course of the plot and the multiple narratorial interventions that follow do little to lift this initial impression. The crow – whose bold speech precedes Phoebus's murder of his wife and punishment of the crow – is one

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[89] His rhetoric of contagion is itself familiar from discourse on speech: "Thy cursed breeth infecte wole us alle" recalls 2 Timothy 16-17: "Profana autem et vaniloquia devita, multum enim proficiunt ad impietatem, et sermo eorum ut cancer serpit" [But eschewe thou vnhooli and veyn spechis, for whi tho profiten myche to vnfeithfulnesse, and the word of hem crepith as a canker], on which see Chapter One.

[90] On Chaucer reading Langland, see Frank Grady, "Chaucer Reading Langland: *The House of Fame*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 18 (1996), 3-23; D. Vance Smith, "Chaucer as an English Writer," in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 87-121; Anne Middleton, "Commentary on an Unacknowledged Text: Chaucer's Debt to Langland," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 24 (2010): 113-37, and "Loose Talk."

[91] On open reproof, see Edwin D. Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

of the tale's figures for creative mirth, alongside Phoebus himself, who sings and plays "on every mynstralcie" (IX.113). The crow speaks and sings:

> Whit was this crowe as is a snow-whit swan,
> And countrefete the speche of every man
> He koude, whan he sholde telle a tale.
> Therwith in al this world no nyghtyngale
> Ne koude, by an hondred thousand deel,
> Syngen so wonder myrily and weel. (IX.133-38)

This description presents the crow as the figure for the poet, singing "myrily" and counterfeiting the speech men "whan he sholde telle a tale." The crow is often seen to stand in for the court poet, an association fostered by the subordinate position the Manciple plays in his everyday life, but of course this description speaks to the Canterbury pilgrims as well, who "countrefete the speche" of others in their tales and answer the imperative to be merry.[92] When the crow begins to speak the truth in "wordes bolde" (IX.258), Phoebus laments the loss of his merry song:

> "What, bryd?" quod Phebus. "What song syngestow?
> Ne were thow wont so myrily to synge
> That to myn herte it was a rejoysynge
> To heere thy voys? Allas, what song is this?" (IX.244-47)

Again, Chaucer links the "voys" and the heart. Here, however, the act of remembering is preface to a swift tumble through radically changing affects precipitated by the crow's words: the crow tells Phoebus of the "greet shame" done him by his wife (IX.260), who then "thoughte his sorweful herte brast atwo" (IX.263), "and in his ire his wyf thanne hath he slayn" (IX.265). As Craun and David Wallace have pointed out, the crow's silent witnessing and later reportage are also violations of pastoral rules and good sense – reminiscent of the Manciple's own rebuke of the Cook – but the attention to the "herte" here is worth marking.[93] Bold speech excites disastrous and uncontrollable results; the same heart that felt a "rejoysynge" at a voice can be broken, and thus excited to violence, by the same voice. It is an object lesson in the value of holding your tongue. The Manciple even models an apparent attempt at rhetorical decorum – though not an ethical one – in response to Phoebus's violence: "This is th'effect; ther is namoore to sayn" (IX.266).[94]

The Manciple's Tale thus sets the terms of the tale-telling competition under a kind of examination – an examination that ends with the conclusion that one must "kepe wel thy tonge and thenk upon the crowe" (IX.362). The crow was a merry tale-teller; he told too much, and so we must learn to keep our mouths shut. The self-evident irony of the tale is that the Manciple is too garrulous himself, inserting himself into the narrative and debasing it with his commentary.

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[92] On court poetry, see Louise Fradenburg, "The Manciple's Servant Tongue: Politics and Poetry in *The Canterbury Tales*," *ELH* 52 (1985): 85-118; Stephanie Trigg, "Friendship, Association, and Service in *The Manciple's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003): 325-330. On the noble household, see David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 252-60.

[93] Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 194-96; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, 253.

[94] On the ethics of glossing over male violence against women, see Eve Salisbury, "Murdering Fiction: The Case of *The Manciple's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003): 309-316. On "th'effect," see Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, 254.

The cynicism and contradiction in the Manciple's performance has been widely noted.[95] It takes the topoi of pastoral instruction and bends them toward vulgarity, as in the Manciple's interjection on labeling Phoebus's unnamed wife's lover her "lemman":

> Hir lemman? Certes, this a knavyssh speche!
> Foryeveth it me, and that I yow biseche.
> The wise Plato seith, as ye may rede,
> The word moot nede accorde with the dede.
> If men shal telle proprely a thyng,
> The word moot cosyn be to the werkyng.
> I am a boystous man, right thus seye I:
> Ther nys no difference, trewely,
> Bitwixe a wyf that is of heigh degree,
> If of hir body dishonest she bee,
> And a povre wenche, oother than this –
> If it so be they werke bothe amys –
> But that the gentile, in estaat above,
> She shal be cleped his lady, as in love;
> And for that oother is a povre womman,
> She shal be cleped his wenche or his lemman...
> Men leyn that oon as lowe as lith that oother. (IX.205-21)

The Manciple swiftly contradicts himself: he asks forgiveness for his "knavyssh speche" and then speaks knavishly, asserting the fungibility of language in digression shot through with crude misogyny.[96] His comments here call back, in a roundabout way, to the debate of Reason and the Lover in *La roman de la rose* on the propriety of language; that debate – not consciously debased – became a live and ongoing one in the fifteenth century, and it provided an important model for Chaucer.[97] For all its crudity, the Manciple's digression calls back to a number of other junctures in the *Tales*. The repeated and somewhat misplaced assertion that "word moot nede accorde with the dede" recalls the Chaucer-narrator's insistence that "wordes moote be cosyn to the dede"; the Manciple is in a sense reiterating that opening *apologia*, and seems to agree with its message that narrators have a fidelity to their matter unimpeded by decorum or taste. The Nun's Priest does much the same in his own tale – "Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne; / I kan noon harm of no womman divyne" – but in that case, it is a fitting comment for a tale so attentive to the deceptive pleasures of hollow rhetorical performance (VII.3265-66). In the case of *The*

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[95] See, for example, the unflattering comparison of Manciple to Parson in Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 226-29; or the comments of Charles A. Owen, "Chaucer's Manciple: Voice and Genre," in *Retelling Tales: Essays in Honor of Russell Peck* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 259-74.

[96] On fungibility in these lines, see also Warren Ginsberg, "The Manciple's Tale: Response," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003): 331-37 (335).

[97] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. and trans. by Armand Strubel (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1992), 6983-7230. The *querelle* recalled pastoral topoi, as in the citation of Christ's harsh words and its repudiation; see, for instance, Christine de Pizan et al., *Debate of the 'Romance of the Rose,'* ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 53.

Manciple's Tale, which ends by concluding "be noon auctour newe / of tidynges, wheither they been false or true," it seems utterly incoherent (IX.359-60).

Two explanations can be offered here. First, the Manciple's explanation proceeds from a distrust of the bodily expression of speech expressed elsewhere in the tale. Earlier in the tale, he declares:

> Flessh is so newefangel, with meschaunce,
> That we ne konne in nothyng han plesaunce,
> That sowneth into vertu any while. (IX.193-95)

This extremist suspicion of the body – whose "plesaunce" is incompatible with "vertu," expressed in terms that anticipate but do not equal the *Retraction*'s – is the other side of Prioress's focus on the innocent song that traverses the clergeon's body. The Manciple's invocation of the mouth in his exchange with the Cook and the repeated references to tongue and mouth as organs in the concluding conduct poem, which holds that God "walled a tonge with teeth and lippes eke," suggest a kind of leveling of speech to its bodily elements (IX.323). In so doing, the Manciple draws on conventional pastoral depictions of sinful speech, albeit one that would seem to forbid the easy vulgarity of his rumination on "lemman."

Second, the Manciple's tactical use of vulgarity is in fact consistent with a vein of pastoral tradition. As I discussed in Chapter One, the author of the *Book to a Mother*, for example, inveighs against the "grete folis" that "chargen more to here þe deuel nempned þan to breken Godus hestus" – that is to say, who cringe at a bad word but live a sinful lifestyle.[98] A certain kind of speaker can use vulgarity to access a higher moral register, a truth-telling plane on which to look down on delicate speakers. The Manciple is a "boystous man," as he says, and "boystous" as a self-imposed label links him to a particular tradition of religious writing. His words recall the "boistres wordis" that writers for the devout reading public dealt out.[99] As with Hawkyn's borrowing of anti-romance polemic, this fictionalized stance of rough truth-telling is a failure. Chaucer is indeed pushing the stance to the point of incoherence, in so doing mocking a certain vein of verbal self-aggrandizement. Moreover, boistous is not exactly a nice word in Chaucer: Walter, for example, speaks "boistously" at the moment of casting Griselda away in *The Clerk's Tale* (IV.791). This posture is itself undermined, however, by Manciple's invocation of his own childhood at the end of the *Tale*: his knowing vulgarity is vitiated by his sudden self-presentation as the object of his mother's instruction.

The Manciple's Tale is a self-contradiction and a failure; its attempt to offer a path to perfected speech consumes itself. Its coordination of anger, "sorwe," and firm direction to hold one's tongue nevertheless begins the process of concluding *The Canterbury Tales*, a purpose confirmed by its placement.[100] But the tale's logic of silencing is inadequate. The entirety of the *Tale* is anticipated in *The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue*, where the Canon upbraids his Yeoman and is rebuffed in turn:

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[98] *Book to a Mother: An Edition with Commentary*, ed. Adrian J. McCarthy (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1981), 202. I will return to boistous speech in the next chapter.

[99] As in the same passage in the *Book to a Mother*: "For whanne Crist spak to his modir boistres wordis, he louede hire neuere lasse" (202). Chaucer has already fictionalized this stance in his apologia, turning it to his own use and suggesting the considerable space for negotiation that pastoral discourse could open up: his reference to Christ speaking "ful brode in hooly writ," for example, is a conventional justification for a "boistous" style.

[100] See, for instance, Patterson, "*Parson's Tale*," 378-79.

"Hold thou thy pees and spek no wordes mo,
For if thou do, thou shalt it deere abye.
Thou sclaundrest me heere in this compaignye,
And eek discoverest that thou sholdest hyde."
"Ye," quod oure Hoost, "telle on, what so bityde.
Of al his thretyng rekke nat a myte!"
And whan this Chanon saugh it wolde nat bee,
But his Yeman wolde telle his pryvetee,
He fledde awey for verray sorwe and shame.
"A!" quod the Yeman, "heere shal arise game." (VIII.693-703)

Like the crow, the Canon's Yeoman publicizes the "pryvetee" of his superior. The Canon deploys the Manciple's rhetoric to forbid him from doing so: "spek no wordes mo" is, in short, the message of the last forty lines of *The Manciple's Tale*. But the Host intercedes, subordinating the Canon's ethical claim to the need for more tales, and the Canon's anger becomes involuted as silencing "sorwe and shame." Freed to speak, the Yeoman commits himself to "game." The affective and ethical logic of the tale-telling competition takes precedence.

Unlike *The Prioress's Tale*, which successfully builds a fiction *about* devout speech, the attempt *The Manciple's Tale* makes to silence the process of tale-telling is designed to fail. But the persistence of the tale-telling past the Manciple opens a space for the Parson's "myrie tale," and with it a kind of conversion of the Canterbury project. The Parson accepts the terms of the tale-telling competition as given, but redefines them in a new register – in a sense, articulates a conversion for them. His tale, after all, provides the comic end to the *Tales* as a whole, ending with joy, bliss, and wholeness (X.1075-80). *The Parson's Tale* does not cleanly map onto the tales and tellers that precede it, as Frederick Tupper suggested in the early twentieth century, but its attitude to expression and feeling nevertheless casts an eye back on the broadly secular project of *The Canterbury Tales*: the Parson claims that if Christ "ne hadde pitee of mannes soule, a sory song we myghten alle synge" (X.315).[101]

Conclusion

The imperative for "myrie" tales puts positive affects at the heart of Chaucer's poetic project. The anger, despair, and devout sobriety of individual tellers is subordinated to a general rule of mirth. That mirth also justifies the dilatory and idle speech of tale-telling itself, to the point that Chaucer can freely "kidnap" terms and topoi from the pastoral tradition without danger to the ongoing project of his art; it is in the transvaluation of such mirth that the project brings itself to an end. *The Canterbury Tales* thus represent a particular historical and conceptual opportunity. I prefaced this chapter with epigraphs from two very dissimilar twentieth-century thinkers, C. L. R. James and G. K. Chesterton. For James, speaking in 1960 during the fleeting decolonial moment of the West Indies Federation, the disappearance of "Merry England" showed that elements of a collective national character are passing and changeable. For the conservative Chesterton, Chaucer's fiction was the distillation of that changing moment, a transitional figure who showed both the peculiarly medieval qualities of Merry England and aspects of an incipient modern national character.[102] Now, Merry England is an ideological myth and was recognized as such well before James or even Chesterton made their respective comments; even the notion of a

[101] Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," *PMLA* 29 (1914): 93-128.
[102] Chesterton, *Chaucer*, 189-221.

national character is rather fraught.[103] But what James and Chesterton both point to is the historical particularity of a collective structure of feeling, the way that one moment's "merry" is made and passes away. As Chesterton suggests, *The Canterbury Tales* both emerges from this historical particularity and depicts it: in the overheated image of "the highest happiness" flashing in Chaucer "like the noonday sun upon a naked sword," he points to how Chaucer confects a particular picture of happiness from the cultural resources of the late fourteenth century in the fiction of *The Canterbury Tales*, and how the process of that fiction eventually disassembles it.

In the previous chapter, I showed how one emotion is subject to searching investigation in *Piers Plowman*, a poem that shares the aspirations of instructional religious writing but ultimately rejects its methods. For his part, Chaucer can make local use of the methods of such writing but rejects its aspirations. Rather than the reiterating questions of *Piers Plowman*, *The Canterbury Tales* juxtaposes multiple systems for evaluating the value of language. The praise-poetry of *The Prioress's Tale* and the "sobre" response it elicits is subordinated to the Host's imperative for "myrie" entertainment. The same imperative vitiates the anger, shame, and "boystous" silencing of *The Manciple's Tale*. The *Retraction*, meanwhile, subordinates the values of the tale-telling contest to a retrospective accounting of moral and sinful written matter. The *Retraction*'s system enjoys pride of place at the end of *The Canterbury Tales* – another basis for the evanescence that Chesterton recognizes – but it does not fully supersede what came before: the Parson's conversion of the tales toward spiritual emendation has already shown how the terms established by the Host can continue to resonate in a pious key.[104] Instead, in this succession of systems, mirth, anger, sorrow, and shame come and go, subject to redefinition and exploration. As in the early modern drama that Steven Mullaney describes as "a place where players, playwrights, and their audiences could explore the social imaginary they shared, in all its faultlines and gaps and dissociations," *The Canterbury Tales*, with its interior audience, experimentation in genre, and openness to sin and devotion, allows emotional and ethical fragmentation under the capacious sign of a merry tale.[105]

As I have argued, the *Manciple's Tale* is both consistent with this project – his silencing tale is figured as one among many – and, understood on its own, a failure. But the example set down by the Manciple proved influential. "Boistousness" could still be a positive value in the fifteenth century, as my next chapter will show.

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[103] See the somewhat embarrassed comments by G. G. Coulton, *Chaucer and His England* (New York: Putnam; London: Methuen, 1908), 272-73.
[104] Cf. Watson, "Chaucer's Public Christianity."
[105] Steven Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 93.

Chapter Four. Hard Truths

The preceding chapters have traced an idea of the truth as it emerged in didactic religious writing of the late fourteenth century. For the stringently devout writers of texts like the *Book to a Mother*, truth proceeds from the alignment of inwardness and outward presentation: you must do as you say, and you must speak as you feel. The virtuous convergence of speech and emotion was, in other words, the linchpin around which a broader mode of life was organized. A number of longstanding textual traditions fed this way of thinking – these works tend to link Christ's teaching in the Gospels and pastoral instruction on the sins of the tongue with a commitment to the rhetorical plain style and (to a lesser extent) the exegetical literal sense – but these fourteenth-century writers mobilized these traditions in new ways. Namely, in proper apostolic fashion, this mode of primarily lay religious life was presented as a genuinely disruptive and confrontational stance to the world. Be simple and humble in bearing and feeling, these texts said, but be uncompromising and strident in your honesty to yourself, to the world, and to God. Equally important, their teaching and polemic convened a community of truth-tellers: as you speak the truth of your heart, they said, know that likeminded others are doing the same elsewhere, disputing the hypocrites, heretics, and false feigners who fill the church and rule the secular world. The pious were set apart by their scorn and their shame, and their honesty could foster a sense of belonging.

But there was more than one way to talk about the truth in the late Middle Ages.[1] A parallel tradition spoke in proverbial rather than didactic terms, invoking "the truth" as a single abstraction rather than honesty as an element of a mode of life. Poetic satire sits at the heart of this tradition, but it emerges from Biblical prophecy and wisdom literature, and elements of it appear widely in late-medieval sermons, narrative poetry, and conduct literature. What draws these forms together is a fatalistic sense of truth's downfall, expressed via aphorisms that lament a universal moral decline: whoever speaks the truth is punished; everyone deceives everyone else; falseness reigns; truth is nowhere to be found. Although past editors of "abuses of the age" poetry long attempted to connect doomsaying aphorisms like these to particular historical conditions, and in some cases were justified in doing so, taken as a whole this tradition cannot be defined by contemporaneity. Instead, it offers a library of evergreen truisms with which to register the failings of the world.[2] Unlike pastoral writing, which among other things attempts to name and moralize the psychological dimensions of everyday experience, this tradition leaves little room for an explicit account of emotion.

Mum and the Sothsegger, the longest and most formally accomplished poem in this tradition, is an exception. Its version of the truth valorizes emotional expression. Like devotional writing, *Mum and the Sothsegger* is deeply suspicious of the kind of courtesy that recommends verbal restraint. Sothsegging is "bustuse."[3] You should not veil your feelings, the poem says, but

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[1] The definitive treatment of the multiple meanings of truth in oral and written cultures of late medieval England remains Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

[2] See Derek Pearsall, "The Timelessness of *The Simonie*," in *Individuality and Achievement in Middle English Poetry*, ed. O.S. Pickering (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 59-72.

[3] "Mum and the Sothsegger," in *The Piers Plowman Tradition: A Critical Edition of 'Pierce the Ploughman's Crede,' 'Richard the Redeless,' 'Mum and the Sothsegger,' and 'The Crowned*

speak them honestly: an attitude toward public speech, like *The Book to a Mother*'s or Will's, grounded in Gospel injunctions. But *Mum and the Sothsegger* expresses these ideas with images of bodies. In the most vivid such image, repeated twice, truth-telling lances boils of negative emotion. These images combine old Christian metaphors of the tongue as a sword and a physiological account of emotions as forces that swell in the chest and burst forth as speech. In prescriptive writing, sharp tongues and bursting anger were usually conjured up as dangerous forces in need of restraint. By contrast, *Mum and the Sothsegger* presents sothsegging as a laudable *lack* of restraint. A similar inversion occurs in Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*, which depicts itself in part as the effusion of grief and woe from Thomas's own swelling chest. Those images suit the *Series*'s attempts to write the psyche. They provide the work with a sense of urgency; more subtly, they cast Thomas as a fallible speaker, vulnerable to the movements of his disordered will rather than his reason, and thus available for the kind of moral judgment that can be found in early Hoccleve criticism. But *Mum and the Sothsegger*'s swelling feeling is anger, an emotion whose usefulness was widely accepted in the later Middle Ages. More to the point, the poem has no interest in its speaker's psyche. Its narrator is mostly an argumentative cypher with little pretense to interiority; the boils are on other, nonspecific people. The poem's physiology of emotion is instead continuous with a broader figurative allegory that depicts abstractions like the truth by means of figures whose sensory qualities can be readily imagined, like sores and salves.

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Mum and the Sothsegger was unknown until 1928, when a short, fragmentary, and unglamorous manuscript – now London, British Library Additional MS 41666 – came up at auction.[4] Its first editors, Mabel Day and Robert Steele, linked it to the poem *Richard the Redeless,* tentatively proposing that the two fragments were parts of a whole. Both poems belong to the *Piers Plowman* tradition, lifting the Langlandian alliterative line and aspects of the older poem's conceit for the purposes of more narrowly political satire. (*Richard* was itself attributed to Langland by Skeat, an attribution discredited by the time *Mum* appeared.) Consensus now holds that the poems are separate works, written by the same poet at different times.[5] Though addressed to Richard as though he were king, *Richard* was probably written soon after the Lancastrian usurpation in 1399. *Mum and the Sothsegger* was written sometime between 1406 and 1409. The poem is usually read as an artifact of those times, a well-founded approach to understanding the poem that has unfortunately tended to obscure some of its distinctiveness in both form and content, particularly its ideas about speech.

King,' ed. Helen Barr (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), l. 50. All subsequent citations will be made in-text by line number.

[4] Though undecorated and unrubricated, the poem has space left for initials and is heavily corrected; I will return to the corrections, which have been largely overlooked in the criticism, below. This paragraph is indebted to *Mum and the Sothsegger*, EETS os 199, ed. Mabel Day and Robert Steele (London: Oxford University Press for EETS, 1936), ix-xix, and *The Piers Plowman Tradition*, ed. Barr, 14-30.

[5] For the fullest argument against the identity of the poems, see Dan Embree, "*Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*: A Case of Mistaken Identity," *Notes and Queries* 220 (1975): 4-12. On evidence for common authorship, see Helen Barr, "The Relationship of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*: Some New Evidence," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 4 (1990): 105-33; and Simon Horobin, "The Dialect and Authorship of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 18 (2004): 133-52.

The sole text of *Mum and Sothsegger* is headless. What survives begins midsentence, midway through a satirical opening prologue. The realm is in crisis, because it lacks sothseggers – counselors brave enough to tell the truth to rulers. Sothseggers are cast out of court and ignored; truth itself is "doune y-troode and tenyd ful ofte," trod upon and tormented (171). As a result, things have gone all wrong. But truth always prevails, the poem insists, and we'd all benefit from telling the truth. After several hundred lines, the poem abruptly changes: Mum bursts into the narrative as a sudden apparition of scorn and counterargument, a jarring technique that the poet lifts from Langland. Mum deflates the accumulating complaints of the poem's opening with a jeering opening line: "Nomore of this matiere" (232). Mum is the poem's antagonist, a personification of politic speech and self-interested silence, and he plays a vivid narrative role in the first half of the poem. (He remains offstage in the second half, becoming a one-note byword for all manner of ills.)

Mum's entrance marks a shift in the poem's genre. In the margins of the manuscript, a corrector has written "here begynneþ the disputacioun bitwyne mum and þe sothsigger."[6] The voice of the opening section becomes the voice of a character, an earnest and moralizing narrator-seeker reminiscent of Langland's Will. Mum and the narrator twice fall into debate, and twice the narrator seeks outside opinions, first among the universities and friars, then among secular lords. He finds only ignorance, feigning, and hypocrisy. The exception, strangely, comes in the second debate with Mum himself, who insists for unclear reasons and to the narrator's surprise "*qui tacet consentire videtur*" [whoever keeps silent is seen to consent] (745). The narrator asks Mum to evangelize this truth, but Mum refuses: he keeps his truth to himself, as his allegorical role dictates. Frustrated and dejected in the wake of these debates and travels, the narrator comes across a solitary truthteller licking his wounds in a shop. With this sad sight, the narrator falls asleep, and the poem's second act then unfolds: a dream vision of a garden, a beehive, and a gardener, who delivers a long and authoritative speech against Mum and for truth-telling. Ordered by the gardener to record his vision, the narrator awakes and, in the poem's final act, unpacks a bag full of "pryue poesy" (1344), political writings that the poem catalogues until it breaks off incomplete.

Throughout this plot, the poem makes coded references to its historical moment. *Mum and the Sothsegger* was written well after the dimming of popular hopes about the new regime, when (as one chronicler put it) "the peple off þis londe began forto groche agaynes Kynge Henry and bere hym hevy."[7] *Mum and the Sothsegger* pins all of the troubles in the realm on the suffering of truth-tellers, and there were real restrictions on speech at this moment. Upon acceding to the throne, Henry IV undid Richard II's controversial revisions to the statute of treasons, which had made speech against the king a treasonable offense. But in 1402, facing a persistent crisis of legitimacy and state of both magnate unrest, he began to prosecute treasonable words again. To spread a seditious rumor in particular was to risk being hanged, drawn, and quartered. While such punishments were never common, alleged Ricardian plotters and others were executed between 1402 and 1406.[8] (For its part, the firmly Lancastrian *Mum and the*

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[6] London, British Library Additional MS 41666, 3r.

[7] *An English Chronicle, 1377-1461: A New Edition*, ed. William Marx (Woodbridge, SFK: Boydell, 2003), 29 (record for 1402).

[8] See especially R. L. Storey, "Clergy and common law in the reign of Henry IV," in *Medieval Legal Records edited in memory of C. A. F. Meekings*, ed. R. F. Hunnisett and J. B. Post (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1978), 341-408 (355). More generally see Simon

Sothsegger refers to these punishments approvingly and repeatedly distinguishes sothsegging from rumor-mongering.) During this period, Henry IV was also intermittently incapacitated by illness. The King's Council governed in his stead; it became an arena for factionalism and ambition, and questions of counsel gained new relevance.[9]

These historical conditions have proven important in the poem's reception. Many of the most thoughtful critical treatments have shown how the poem reflects upon the politics of its moment, and the poem is indeed larded with allusions to contemporary events.[10] But the poem's seeming contemporaneity is in part an effect of the fiction. The narrator explains that the culminating bag of books, for instance, "was not y-openyd this other half wintre" (1347) – a promise to reveal hidden truths, but not truths that had been hidden very long. Steven Justice has argued that the *Piers Plowman* tradition in general produces a powerful "effect of historical immediacy," a sense of immediacy that ultimately makes the poems "so densely topical that they now are almost unreadable."[11] Justice ascribes that sense of immediacy to a formal gambit, a winking fiction of secrecy produced by repeated veiled allusions and instances of *praeteritio* throughout *Mum and the Sothsegger* in particular. A different sort of urgency comes from the poem's repertoire of metaphors: though they lack the specificity of pastoral writing's prescriptions for speech, these metaphors link truth to pain, growth, and movement, calling forward the *bodily* consequences of truth-telling and lying.

I. The Truth Downtrodden

For medieval writers, truth is always in decline. As Andrew Wawn has shown, *Mum*'s complaints are widely anticipated in sermon and satire of the period. Wawn's essay, published in 1983, has been oddly neglected in later criticism, perhaps because the historicist studies that have followed tend to argue for *Mum*'s place in the discourses of formal late-medieval politics rather than in a satirical or gnomic tradition. It shows how *Mum*'s tormented sothsegger belongs to a longer tradition of writing about truth-telling and its consequences by tracing the proverb "who sayth soth he shalbe shent" as it occurs throughout the later Middle Ages and across literary

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Walker, "Rumour, Sedition and Popular Protest in the Reign of Henry IV," *Past & Present* 166 (Feb., 2000): 31-65; cf. John Watts, "The Pressure of the Public on Later Medieval Politics," in *The Fifteenth Century IV: Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. Linda Clark and Christine Carpenter (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2004), 159-180.

[9] The classic account of King's Council in this period is K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 102-13; but see also Gerald Harriss, *Shaping the Nation: England, 1360-1461* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 500-05.

[10] See, for instance, Frank Grady, "The Generation of 1399," in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England,* ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), 202–29; or Helen Barr, *Socioliterary Practice in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); or Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 236-54.

[11] Steven Justice, "Literary History and *Piers Plowman*," in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Piers Plowman,'* ed. Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 50-64 (62).

forms.[12] Wawn suggests this tradition can be linked to the sins of the tongue in a common body of cautionary literature on speech, but there are serious distinctions in approach between the two. The sins of the tongue warn against *sinful speech* – speech that involves some bad emotion, some perversity of the will. They are moralized from the outset. The proverbial wisdom dealt out in lyrics, fables, and conduct literature instead describes some truth of the world verified by experience, sometimes as warning and sometimes as lament. Anne Middleton has described the fundamental form of the proverb as "expressing a relationship of cause to consequence."[13] Middleton's definition captures the mechanistic and amoral nature of a saying like "who sayth soth he shalbe shent" when taken on its own, away from a moralizing context. Both the sins of the tongue and the proverb's simpler equation offer tools to live by, but the former presents itself as normative ethics, the latter as descriptive wisdom.

Of course, the proverbial and the prescriptive were never far apart in the Middle Ages, thanks to the wealth of proverbial expressions that medieval writers found in Biblical wisdom literature. *Mum and the Sothsegger* draws on that corpus as well: the manuscript's annotator reproduces lines from Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, and Ecclesiasticus in the margins, and the poem twice invokes "Salomon and Seneca and Sidrac the noble," the supposed authors of Scriptural and secular wisdom writing (at 304-05 and 1212). But the broader spirit of the poem seems closer to Biblical prophecy, which laments the moral sickness of the realm, than to proverbs alone. That is to say, around the proverbial expressions like "who sayth soth he shalbe shent" that produce *Mum*'s image of the "tenyd" sothsegger, there lies a broader tradition of writing about truth's downfall. The complaint that truth is broken, when paired with a self-presentation as a courageous truth-teller, is practically a generic marker of alliterative and semi-alliterative satire.[14] The Auchinleck text of *The Simonie* begins with the speaker's promise that "I nelle liȝen for no man."[15] The poem goes on to identify the rein of falsehood and decline of truth:

> Falsnesse is so fer forþ ouer al þe lond isprunge,
> Þat wel neih nis no treuþe in hond, ne in tunge,
> Ne in herte.[16]

Wynnere and Wastoure, more conscious of its artistry but operating in the same rhetorical vein, begins by presenting itself as a correction to a poetic culture of deceit. "Nowe alle es witt and wyles that we with delyn," the poet declares, "wyse wordes and slee, and icheon wryeth othere":

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[12] Andrew Wawn, "Truth-Telling and the Tradition of *Mum and the Sothsegger*," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983): 270-287; see also Arthur B. Ferguson, "The Problem of Counsel in *Mum and the Sothsegger*," *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955): 67-83.

[13] Anne Middleton, "Dowel, the Proverbial, and the Vernacular: Some Versions of Pastoralia," in *Medieval Poetics and Social Practice: Responding to the Work of Penn R. Szittya* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 143-69 (145).

[14] *Mum and the Sothsegger* uses "soth" (factual truth) and "truth" (fidelity, trust, honesty, as well as truth) in close connection and sometimes interchangeably. On the semantic range of "truth" and the fourteenth-century convergence of the "soth" and "truth" under changing conditions of literacy, see Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 8-31.

[15] Dan Embree and Elizabeth Urquhart, *The Simonie: A Parallel-Text Edition* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1991), A.6 (cf. B.24 and C.6).

[16] *The Simonie*, A.364-66.

deceit and dissembling are the first in a catalogue of complaints of a world gone wrong.[17] As an opening gambit, *Wynnere and Wastoure*'s lament reads as the court-culture reflex of the conventional catechetical critique of romance, a throat-clearing declaration of honest dealing.[18] What enables this gambit, however, is the same pessimistic sense that "þat wel neih nis no treuþe" – that truth is banished from the world – and, underlying this fact, the confidence that falsehood was causing, hastening, or constitutive of a wider social breakdown. These poems, both almost certainly antecedent to *Piers Plowman*, are representative of the contours of the vernacular satirical tradition to which *Mum* belongs.[19]

The complaint that truth is gone or overturned was common across genres beyond alliterative satire, however, and was mobilized for any number of political or ethical claims. In lyrics, an enumeration of truth's sufferings often anticipates a turn toward ethical correction. Chaucer's "Lak of Stedfastnesse," for instance, declares in universal terms that "trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable, / vertu hath now no dominacioun" (15-16), but ends with an envoy to Richard commending him to "love trouthe and worthinesse" (27) and thus restore the virtue of the realm. A carol in London, British Library Sloane MS 2593 catalogues the ways in which "trewþe is put In low degre" and ends by telling readers to seek truth in Mary's bosom.[20] In other cases, the enumeration of the abuses of the age are spoken in the voice of the *laudator temporis acti*. In a letter to Eustache Deschamps, for instance, Christine de Pizan complains that lies are omnipresent and truth is in hiding, the core of a lament over bad governance that repeatedly draws unfavorable comparisons between present times and the lost golden age of antiquity. Sermons commonly drew on the same rhetoric of loss and decline.[21] In Easter week of 1406 – that is, roughly contemporary with the composition of *Mum and the Sothsegger* – the London priest Richard Alkerton delivered a sermon that declared that "þe langage of oure kyng, Ihesu, is trouþe" and complained that "þis langage is almoste destried amonge vs, for as God witnessiþ bi the prophete Osee [Hosea], iiij capitulo, 'Þer is no treuþe in erþe.'"[22] Alkerton is remembered as

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[17] *Wynnere and Wastoure and Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. Warren Ginsberg (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), lines 5-6.

[18] See also the positioning of the Anglo-Norman political verse of the Chandos Herald's *La Vie du Prince Noir*, on which see Ralph Hanna III, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 232.

[19] On *The Simonie* and *Piers*, see Elizabeth Salter, "*Piers Plowman* and *The Simonie*," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 203 (1967): 241-54. On *Wynnere and Wastoure* and *Piers*, see Ralph Hanna III, "The Versions and Revisions of Piers Plowman," in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Piers Plowman'*, ed. Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 33-49. On *Piers*, *Mum*, and Latin satire, see James Simpson, "The Constraints of Satire in *Mum and the Sothsegger* and *Piers Plowman*," in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 11-30.

[20] "Truth is Unpopular," IMEV 72, in *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 146-47.

[21] On evil times satire and religious writing, see Siegfried Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets, and the Early English Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 174-208.

[22] *A Study and Edition of Selected Middle English Sermons: Richard Alkerton's Easter Week Sermon preached at St. Mary Spital in 1406, a Sermon on Sunday Observance, and a Nunnery*

a member of Archbishop Arundel's party, but the sentiments of his Easter Week sermon can be found across the spectrum of late-medieval belief.[23]

These texts, regardless of genre, share a certain set of assumptions. They depend on an invidious comparison between a transcendent ethical standard of "truth" that "somtyme" was in force, as Chaucer puts it in "Lak of Stedfastnesse," and the present collapse of such standards. "Truth" is often defined broadly, encompassing assertive fact (denoted by the Middle English "soth"), promissory contract (a meaning now fallen into desuetude, but denoted by the archaic modern English "troth"), and a fuzzier kind of virtue that proceeds from both, suggesting fidelity to God and other people.[24] More importantly, regardless of what "truth" is intended to mean, it's gone. The total terms of *The Simonie* are representative: falseness is "ouer *al* þe lond isprunge." There is *no* truth in hand, tongue, or heart – an expression that displaces the traditional Augustinian categories of heart, mouth, and work from particular sin to a universal condition. That is to say, the reign of falsehood belongs to a broader Christian *contemptus mundi*. In satire, the solution is usually deferred to a future eschatological judgment. By contrast, proverbs describe the same situation as simply the way of the world. Chaucer's envoy to Richard encourages him to take on the role of the messianic good king who restores truth to the realm. Sometimes, satire aligns the static causality of proverbial wisdom with this long arc of Christian history. *Wynnere and Wastoure* says that just as Judgment Day, "the laste when ledys bene knawen," will redeem the truth-tellers, so a good and true poem will redeem the skillful and truth-telling poet – "Werke wittnesse will bere who wirche kane beste."[25] In the same spirit, *Mum and the Sothsegger* repeatedly invokes the Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30). For most late-medieval commentators, the parable referred to the sorting of heretics from believers and the good from the wicked, an act of divine judgment that awaits in the indefinite future.[26] The poem compares liars to the "fals cockil" (69) – "cockil" is the standard Middle English

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Sermon for the Feast of the Assumption, ed. V. M. O'Mara (Leeds: Leeds Texts and Monographs, 1994), 61.

[23] Alkerton was heckled by William Thorpe and earned a mocking currycomb from one of Henry IV's knights. The sermon that elicited these responses was delivered in November of 1406, several months after the Easter Week sermon. Thorpe's heckling is recorded in his *Testimony*, in *Two Wycliffite Texts*, lines 1961-77. Walsingham notes the incident with the currycomb; see *The St Albans Chronicle: The 'Cronica Maiora' of Thomas Walsingham*, vol 2, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss, 478-481. The scene is discussed by Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 24; and H. L. Spencer, "Sermon Literature," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 151-174 (156).

[24] On the semantic range of "truth" and the fourteenth-century convergence of the "soth" and "truth" under changing conditions of literacy, see Green, *Crisis of Truth*, 8-31.

[25] *Wynnere and Wastoure*, 29-30.

[26] See, e.g., the gloss to the passage in the Middle English Glossed Gospels in London, British Library Additional MS 28026, 82r: "he þat is prelate of chirche, sleep not: leste by neglicence þe man enemy aboue sowe darnels, þat is rechyng of eresies." Thus the Shipman's rebuke to the "Lollere" Parson in the endlink to the *Man of Law's Tale*: "He wolde sowen som difficulte, / Or springen cokkel in our clene corn" (1182-83). For further instances, see Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 103-08.

translation for the Vulgate *zizania*, translated in modern English as "tares" – and its central dream-allegory approvingly depicts a gardener pulling up weeds and smashing wasteful drones.[27] But like *Wynnere and Wastoure*, *Mum* holds proverbial wisdom close to the appeal to eschatological sorting. The poem glosses its first invocation of the Parable of the Tares with a pithy aphorism: "for atte the long goyng, / of euery segge-is sawe the sothe wol be knowe" – a statement that could refer to divine judgment, but could simply mean "the truth will out" (70-71).

While satirical and proverbial modes of thought about the truth can coexist, this satirical tradition – with its nonspecific lamentation and its deferral to eschatology – definitively departs from the tradition of the sins of the tongue and the quasi-evangelic discourse on speech that developed from it. The sins of the tongue are grounded in considerations of circumstance and audience; universal statements that the "trouthe is put doun" necessarily omit such considerations. The frame of reference for a pastoral writer is usually the individual soul's relationship to God. Thus almost all didactic writing on sin foregrounds agency and, by extension, emotion. The action of the will in response to the unwilled "first movements" of affect is crucial to any evaluation of sin.[28] The will is in turn largely neglected in doomsaying laments over the decline of truth; they neglect individual psychologies in favor of a universal lament, a description of the state of the world.

Mum and the Sothsegger, however, pays attention to the will and especially to emotion Wawn comments that *Mum and the Sothsegger* "gathers up the wisps" of a proverbial tradition on truth-telling and "formalizes, concentrates, socializes, and politicizes it."[29] But it also *adds* to this tradition. Specifically, it adds an account of psychology otherwise seemingly missing from evil-times satire, articulated in a language of feeling and pain likewise gathered up from wisps of religious writing and courtly poetry. As in evil-times satire, *Mum*'s vision of truth-telling is ultimately non-specific, but it nevertheless comes across as urgent and pressing.

II. The Sore and the Salve

The figure of the sothsegger is central to this poetic effect. Wobbling between abstraction and concretion, the sothsegger appears by turns as an actual person, downtrodden and outcast, and as a more diffuse set of ethical principles. But sothsegging is also identified with a way of speaking, as in the first extended definition of the sothsegger in the poem's opening speech:

> He can not speke in termes ne in tyme nother,
> But bablith fourth bustusely as barn vn-y-lerid,
> But euer he hitteth on the heed of the nayle-is ende,
> That the pure poynt pricketh on the sothe
> Til the foule flessh vomy for attre. (49-54)

The sothsegger is indifferent to courtesy. His speech is violent and effective. As with Chaucer's Prioress's effort at perfected speech, his virtuous speech approaches inarticulacy – he babbles like an unlearned child. More importantly, he babbles "bustusely": crudely, harshly, without adornment or artistry.[30] The sothsegger thus extends a fourteenth-century style of pastoral address into fifteenth-century politics. The poem itself sometimes speaks "bustusely" to its

[27] See *MED*, s.v. "cokkel," 2.
[28] See Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling*.
[29] Wawn, "Truth-Telling," 271.
[30] *MED*, s. v. "boistous." See my full discussion in Chapter One.

imagined reader – declaring, for instance, "Thou, lewed laudate, litel witte has!" (637).[31] Robert of Gretham declares that "better is for to sei þe soþe boustouslich þan for to say fals þurȝh queyntise."[32] The sothsegger's speech is undoubtedly aligned with such precepts on the virtue of "boistous" speech, though unlike pastoral writing, his truth-telling is in this case not opposed to "queyntise" – a word that denotes by turns beauty, artistry, cunning, and the supernatural – but to "termes" and "tyme." As Helen Barr has pointed out, "termes" refers to academic language, the kinds of scholarly obfuscation that the poem later mocks.[33] "Tyme," on the other hand, denotes occasion: the sothsegger does not speak at the appropriate moment, but irrupts into conversation with his pointed truths.[34] Catechetical writing on speech paid close attention to context for assessing sinful speech – "tyme" mattered for diagnosing sin, or differentiating venial sin from mortal.[35] The need to speak spiritual truths even when they disrupt the normal protocols of social life is a central element of Gospel teaching, however (as in, for instance, Matthew 10:16-27), and such Gospel injunctions were cited to justify the "boistous" approach of pastoral writing for the devout reading public.

For all these clear debts, however, the description of the sothsegger ends on a strikingly unconventional note. The truth-teller's speech hits the nail on the head; "the pure poynt pricketh on the sothe / til the foule flessh vomy for attre." Hitting, pricking, the foul flesh vomiting out its poison – these are presented as *good things*, metaphors for the commendable practice of the sothsegger that call forward his violence and his efficacy. The conscious grotesquery of the image would not be out of place in Reformation polemic, but in a medieval text, it surprises: it inverts pastoral commonplaces of the wicked tongue as a sharp sword or an envenomed point. These conventional images of sin are turned to the good. The violence is curative – the sothsegger's speech pierces the skin, but only to lance a boil and save the body.

Mum and the Sothsegger invokes sores, wounds, and their salves eight times.[36] That is not to say that the same image is repeated each time to produce a consistent allegory. The image recurs, but it does not always mean the same thing, nor does the poet always use the same language. Instead, things get muddled. The point of the poem's sores *can* be straightforward enough. At the end of the poem's first movement, the poem's narrator describes seeing a truth-teller: "I saw a sothe-sigger, in sothe as me thought, / sitte in a shoppe and salwyn his woundes"

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[31] This rebuke is reminiscent of Holy Church's reproach to Will, "'Thow doted daffe!' quod she, 'dulle are þi wittes'" (B.1.140), or of Piers Plowman's rebuke to the condescending priest who reads Truth's pardon to him, "Lewed lorel!... litel lokestow on þe bible" (7.142); but these are not addressed to the *reader*. Cf. *Richard the Redeless* 3.67, where the poet likewise insults the reader: "A! Hicke Heuyheed! Hard is thy nolle."

[32] *The Middle English 'Mirror': Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan and Margaret Connolly (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 5.

[33] *Signes and Sothe*, 46-47. As James Simpson points out, though, the "topos of the plain, low style speaker might itself suggest the poet's sophistication, since it is drawn from the prescriptions of *scholia* and *accessus* concerned with satire." See "Constraints of Satire," 21.

[34] *MED*, s. v. "time" (n. 2), 4a.

[35] See Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, "Classroom and Confession," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 376-406.

[36] At 114-18; 314-20; 767-74; 846-47; 1118-33; 1139-40; 1338-42; and 1381-84. Barr's notes in her edition of the poem collect some of these instances; see *Piers Plowman Tradition* 328n770-1.

(846-47). This sad sight is another case in which truth is "doune y-troode and tenyd." In the poem's manuscript, the image is glossed with a Latin quotation from the Beatitudes, *Beati qui persecucionem paciuntur propter iusticiam* [Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake] (847a; Matthew 5:10). The image confirms everything that the narrator has learned over the course of the preceding eight hundred lines of Langlandian questioning and debate, the same lesson he could have found in proverbial wisdom – who sayth soth he shalbe shent. The sothsegger's wounds are the wounds of telling the truth in the world. In this case, the wound and the salve are signs of virtue, analogous to the Christian shame discussed in Chapter Two.

In earlier and later moments in the poem, however, the sore and the salve play a more complex role. The sore can be a sign of political sickness that must be probed and salved. In their strange second dialogue, the narrator declares that Mum has struck upon the truth. He "has rubbid on the rote of the rede galle / and eeke y-serchid the sore and sought alle the woundz" (770-71). ("Rede galle" refers to a swelling or pustule, not a humor.)[37] Rubbing on the root of the red gall and searching the sore are two ways of describing the same action: probing these physical ailments, which discloses their causes. By extension, searching the sores makes salving them possible. In the last movement of the poem, the narrator opens a bag of "pryue poesy" and performs his own act of semi-encyclopedic sothsegging by drawing from it in sequence, cataloguing a range of complaints about the state of the realm. The ruling conceit of this section is the "male" or bag of books, a textual fiction, but the sore precedes the bag:

> Thenne softe I the soores to serche thaym withynne,
> And seurely to salue thaym and with a newe salue
> That the sothe-sigger hath sought many yeres
> And mighte not mete therewith for Mvm and his ferys
> That bare a-weye the bagges and many a boxe eeke.
> Now forto conseille the king vnknytte I a bagge
> Where many a pryue poyse is preyntid withynne
> Yn bokes vnbredid in balade-wise made,
> Of vice and of vertue fulle to the margyn,
> That was not y-openyd this other half wintre. (1338-47)

Two conceits cross each other here. As Helen Cushman has shown, late medieval writing could present the "embodied hermeneutic" of reading as analogous to the tactile "assay" of the body; probing the body and probing a book are "equally affective, and somatic, responses to a site of knowledge making" – a point *Mum and the Sothsegger* registers in its recounting of the sensuous particulars of both soft sores and unopened books.[38] The narrator searches the sores in order to salve them; that salve, previously sought by the sothsegger, had been concealed by Mum, who carried away the bags and boxes that contained it. By opening the bag, the narrator can counsel the king and apply the new salve. In this case, the sore stands in for a problem of knowledge, an ailment that must be disclosed before it can be healed.

Mum and the Sothsegger is not the first poem to link sores and salves with political ills. Earlier poems likewise invoke the sore as a figure for undisclosed or unredressed problems. Gower's prologue to the *Confessio*, for instance – which draws on the conventions of evil-times satire – laments division, war, and the fall of justice and righteousness by saying that everywhere

[37] See *MED*, s. v. "galle," n.2, 1; *OED*, s. v. "gall," n.2.
[38] Helen Cushman, "Handling Knowledge: Holy Bodies in the Middle English Mystery Plays," *JMEMS* 47 (2017): 279-304 (299).

"men sen the sore withoute salve."[39] Closer to *Mum*, however, is a lyric on truth-telling that survives at the end of the Vernon manuscript. Wawn discusses this lyric, because its refrain holds "for hos seiþ þe soþe, he schal be schent," but its most suggestive connection to *Mum and the Sothsegger* comes in the fourth stanza:

> For let a mon be sore I-wounde,
> Hou schulde a leche þis mon releeue,
> But ȝif he miȝte ronsake þe wounde?
> For þauȝ hit smerte & sumdel greue,
> Ȝit most he suffre a luitel stounde.
> Ȝif he kneuh of his mischeue,
> With salues he miȝte make him sounde.
> Were grace at large, þat liþ i-bounde,
> Hap and hele mihte we hent;
> Lac of leche wol vs confounde,
> For hos seiþ þe soþe, he schal be schent.[40]

The Vernon lyric spells out the logic that *Mum*'s frantic mixing of metaphors obscures. The sore, gall, or wound is a symptom of an illness in need of diagnosis. Only searching the sore can yield the knowledge necessary for salving. Truth-telling is the practice that searches the sore or "ronsake[s] þe wounde" – it is equivalent to the physician's assay. It may hurt ("hit smerte & sumdel greue"), but it is necessary for healing. But because truth-tellers suffer for their actions, we will all suffer: "lac of leche wol vs confounde." As Wawn observes, this poem fumbles toward an "understanding of the necessity, danger, and process of truth-telling."[41] *Mum*, a more complex meditation on the same issue, absorbs the earlier poem's conceit without fully explicating it. The sore and salve become a kind of shorthand.

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But in *Mum*, that shorthand comes to carry a wealth of associations unanticipated in earlier poems. While the Vernon lyric makes no such explicit connection, *Mum*'s sores clearly reference the discourse of the body politic, which became a subject of particular interest in fifteenth-century vernacular poetry.[42] The imaginative leap from bodily to political ill-health was an easy one to make, given the common vocabulary of medicine and politics: according to Guy de Chauliac's surgical encyclopedia, for example, "bocches" (boils or ulcers, a word *Mum* also

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[39] John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, vol. 1, ed. Russell Peck and trans. Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2006), Prol.134. See further *MED*, s. v. "sor(e)," n.1, 6.

[40] Poem 103 (IMEV 3420) in *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, 2nd ed., ed. Carleton Brown and rev. G. V. Smithers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952 [1924]): pp. 152-4, ll. 38-48.

[41] Wawn, "Truth-telling," 276.

[42] The poem itself references the body politic at lines 763-66. On the body politic, see Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study of Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997 [1957]); John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: On the Frivolity of Courtiers and the Footsteps of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 67. For fifteenth-century English treatments, see among others Poem 15, "The descryuyng of mannes membres," in *The Digby Poems: A New Edition of the Lyrics*, ed. Helen Barr (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2009), and John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e. s. 121-24 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924-27), 2.834-47.

uses) are produced by "malice of þe gouernance" of the body.[43] The discourse of the body politic also licenses one of the variations *Mum* makes to the sore-formula, the festering sore or wound. The king, the poem explains, is kept from the men who could "saye hym the sothe sum while among, / Hough he shuld grece the griefz er the woundz gunne festre" (115-17). As in the Vernon lyric, the sothsegger directs the physician to the wound, but here the roles are clearly assigned: the physician is the king, who must be made aware of the "griefz" that he alone can salve.[44] Without a sothsegger, the wounds will fester. Again, the *Mum*-poet is not alone among fifteenth-century writers in making metaphorical use of the image of the festering sore. Lydgate, for instance, laments that the speed of slander means that "to late kometh the salue and medecyne / to festrid soris whan thei be incurable."[45]

Unlike evil-times satire, however, *Mum*'s sores also denote the swelling and bursting of emotion. In the poem's depiction of Parliament – its idealized venue for truth-telling – "showing the sores" comes to stand for more than just the probing of collective problems:

> When knightz for the comune been come for that deede,
> Semblid forto shewe the sores of the royaulme
> And spare no speche though thay spille shuld,
> But berste oute alle the boicches and blaynes of the hert
> And lete the rancune renne oute a-russhe al at oones,
> Leste the fals felon festre with-ynne;
> For as I herde haue, thay helen wel the rather
> Whenne the anger and the attre is al oute y-renne. (1119-26)

The speech, delivered in the voice of the authoritative beekeeper in the poem's central dream vision, reproduces each of the various meanings elsewhere ascribed to the sore. It begins with the problem of knowledge: Parliament exists as a venue for truth-telling, and knights assemble on behalf of the commons to "shewe the sores of the royaulme," at risk to themselves. And just as the sothsegger's "pure poynt" drives poison from body politic, the knights' honest speech prevents the festering of the "felon," a word that in Middle English can mean treachery or a virulent suppurating sore depending on context.[46] As a political statement, its message is thus

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[43] *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, EETS o. s. 265, ed. Margaret S. Ogden (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 277/7-9.

[44] The king's role here – salving or "greasing" the realm's wounds – is analogous to the more common pastoral metaphor in which the parson "greases" his sheep; see "De officio pastorali," in *The English Works of Wyclif: Hitherto Unprinted*, EETS o. s. 74, ed. F. D. Matthew (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1902 [1880]), 454; and "Secounde Sonday Gospel aftir Eestir," in *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. Thomas Arnold, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-71), 1.140. *Mum and the Sothsegger*, 1380-81, uses the same metaphor, though it follows it with a connected but incongruous image of a surgeon neglecting to see sores – in other words, another problem of knowledge.

[45] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, 9.2996-7. On speech-as-contagion, see Chapter One, especially the discussion of 2 Timothy 2:16-17. See also Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978), 72; on the analogy of body and polis in Paul, see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 30-31, 38-68. On *Mum*'s sores as plague buboes, see Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature*, 243-44.

[46] *MED*, s. v. "felon."

aligned with the poem's broader defense of parliamentary rights.[47] But pinning these familiar images of disclosure and festering together, and underlying the explicit political statement about speech in Parliament, is a portrait of embodied emotion. The sores on the body politic are continuous with the "boicches and blaynes of the hert." Speaking truthfully involves venting anger: "rancune" must be purged, lest it fester and, as the poem goes on to suggest, lead the knights to "rise agayne regalie and the royaulme trouble" (1128).[48] These lines produce a sense of both personal and collective interiority – a vision of a container filled with a poison, the possibility of "spilling," the need to see inside – but it is an interiority that must immediately be exposed, its boundaries broken down in the interest of health.

By linking the "boicches and blaynes of the hert" with "the sores of the royaulme," *Mum and the Sothsegger* sharpens the otherwise vague convention of the ailing kingdom. The connection drawn between inward feeling and public institutions grants individuals' anger a central and positive role in the collective work of healing wounds and redressing wrongs. The role afforded emotion is a new one, *Mum*'s addition to the truth-telling tradition discussed in the preceding section. But *Mum*'s "boicches and blaynes" belong to a more widely-dispersed physiology of emotion, and the approving take on bursting anger has an odd parallel in the poetry of Thomas Hoccleve, whose *Series* (probably written 1419-21) likewise depicts the heart swelling and a truth-telling voice bursting forth.[49] Hoccleve's swelling and bursting serves a different end, producing a fallible authorial persona rather than a sense of truth's value and its stakes, but his physiology of emotion makes clear what *Mum and the Sothsegger* gets from its boils – a way of rendering passionate speech immediate and urgent but portable, a form that delivers affective force independent of narrative content.

III. Swelling and Bursting

The *Series* begins with an autumnal parody of the first eighteen lines of the *General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*:

> Aftir þat heruest inned had hise sheues,
> And that the broun sesoun of Mihelmesse
> Was come, and gan the trees robbe of her leues,
> That grene had ben and in lusty freisshenesse,
> And hem into colour of ȝelownesse
> Had died and doun throwen vndirfoote,
> That chaunge sanke into my herte roote.
>
> For freisshly brouȝte it to my remembraunce
> That stablenesse in this worlde is ther noon.

[47] On *Mum* and "the specific privileges of given jurisdictions," see James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 2, 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 217; and Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature*, 237-54.

[48] *MED*, s. v. "rancune." Though the word is only attested in *Mum and the Sothsegger* in the *MED*, it is more common in medieval French; see *AND*, s. v. "rancune," and *DMF*, s. v. "rancune," where it carries the sense of lasting anger fed by a remembered injustice or insult.

[49] On the dating of Hoccleve's *Series* and its relationship to his life, see David Watt, *The Making of Thomas Hoccleve's 'Series'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 7-11.

There is noþing but chaunge and variaunce. [50]

These lines are an homage – a way of marking Hoccleve's debts, of borrowing a little of Chaucer's star-power, and of flattering readers capable of recognizing the allusion. But the changes it makes to its source are important. As a number of critics have recognized, by opening in "the broun sesoun" rather than the spring, and by looking to the "herte roote" and the leaves underfoot rather than the whole of England moving in pilgrimage, Hoccleve presents the *Series* as a *Canterbury Tales* reimagined: depressive rather than merry, belated rather than new, solitary rather than communal.[51] As in the *Tales*, global seasonal changes are correlated with a shift in affective temperament. Unlike the *Tales*, that change in temperament is located in the narrator himself, linked to a physiological change (the change sinking into the "herte roote," a Chaucerian term in itself), and offered as evidence of a propositional claim ("stablenesse in this worlde is ther noon").[52]

The *Series* gets much of its humor and pathos from this kind of hangdog emotional immediacy; the attention to Thomas's disordered interiority is an inward-looking gambit parallel to the outward-looking urgency *Mum and the Sothsegger* gains from its eruptions of political anger. As an opening gesture, Thomas's sorrow suggests his need for consolation. It is probably patterned at least in part on the insomnia that troubles Chaucer's narrator in the *Book of the Duchess*. But the dream-fiction of the *Book of the Duchess* separates psychopathology and the actual narrative content of the poem; epistolary fiction provides a similar distance for the love-sick Machaut in the *Voir Dit*.[53] But, as A. C. Spearing has pointed out, "in borrowing from Chaucer he is exposing in himself the vulnerabilities that Chaucer reveals in third persons."[54] Thomas's sorrow is in fact directly identified with "My Complaint," as the final stanza of the prologue makes clear:

> The greef aboute myn herte so sore swal
> And bolned euere to and to so sore
> That nedis oute I muste therwithal.

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[50] Thomas Hoccleve, "Series: 1. My Compleinte," in *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), lines 1-10. All subsequent citations will be made in-text by line number.

[51] On this manner of poetic self-presentation, see the foundational article by David Lawton, "Dullness in the Fifteenth Century," *ELH* 54.4 (1987): 761-99.

[52] The "herte roote" and cognition (especially memory) are associated in Chaucer: the Wife of Bath says that "whan that it remembreth me / upon my yowthe... / it tikleth me aboute myn herte roote" (III.469-71); in the (possibly Chaucerian) *Romaunt*, the Lover declares that it "a ful gret savour and a swote / me toucheth in myn herte rote" when he remembers the sight of Beauty (1025-26). Guillaume de Lorris places the feeling in the "cuer," not its root; see Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. and trans. by Armand Strubel (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1992), 1007. But the other references in Chaucer (in the *Legend of Good Women* at F.1993 and in the dubiously Chaucerian *Romaunt* at 1662 and 2039) refer to depth of feeling independent of memory.

[53] On Machaut and Hoccleve, see John Burrow, "Hoccleve and the Middle French Poets," in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 35-49.

[54] A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Autographies: The "I" of the Text* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 180.

I thouȝte I nolde kepe it cloos no more,
Ne lete it in me for to eelde and hore,
And for to preue I cam of a womman,
I braste oute on þe morwe and þus bigan. (29-35)

Thomas's "greef... so sore swal" and "bolned... so sore" – as Hoccleve puts it, in a neat bit of emphatic grammatical chiasmus – about his heart that he has no choice but to burst forth into "My Complaint." The poet's feeling forces out speech. (We later learn, however, that what follows is written rather than spoken.) The act of speaking is explicitly self-asserting: Thomas bursts forth "for to preue I cam of a womman." But Thomas's "I" seems to have only partial control, or so these lines suggest: his greef swells "so sore... so sore" that "*nedis* oute I *muste*" – I *must necessarily* speak out. His speech is thus portrayed as the product of swelling and bursting, the outward expression of an interiority on the verge of illness. The parallel with *Mum* is surprisingly precise – like the knights in Parliament, Thomas speaks to prevent the festering of bottled-up emotion.

The psychophysiology that underlies these images of swelling and release – the sense that anger especially, but emotion more broadly, wells within the container of the body, with potentially deleterious consequences – is common across cultures and languages.[55] By the start of the fifteenth century, that psychophysiological account was also very old. Leslie Lockett has shown how vernacular Anglo-Saxon psychology reflected a "hydraulic model" of the mind rather than a Neoplatonic division of body and soul-mind. In the hydraulic model, emotion literally causes swelling, boiling, and tightness in the chest or breast, which is the seat of feeling and indeed thought.[56] Speech, the primary medium in which emotion is expressed, likewise emanates from the chest.[57] As Lockett points out, the hydraulic model blurs the lines between "folk" and learned psychologies, in part because relatively few authors in Old English were exposed to the Neoplatonic model. But even later learned works reproduce something like the hydraulic model. The two traditions that inform late-medieval pastoral discourse on speech, for example – the Scriptural and the rhetorical – both attest to conceptions of emotion as swelling and speech as venting. Psalm 38 links sorrow, the heating of the heart, and the expression of feeling through the tongue: "I wex doumb, and I am mekid, and I stillide fro godes, and my

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[55] Zoltán Kövecses has argued that the central metaphor for anger in Chinese, Japanese, Hungarian and English is "(hot) fluid in a container," which allows speakers to conceptualize – in addition to the psychophysical sensation of anger – "intensity (*filled with*), control (*contain*), loss of control (*could not keep inside*), dangerousness (*brim with*), expression (*express/show*)." Seething, boiling, and bursting are aspects of the metaphor. Zoltán Kövecses, "The 'Container' Metaphor of Anger in English, Chinese, Japanese and Hungarian," in *From a Metaphorical Point of View: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Cognitive Content of Metaphor*, ed. Zdravko Radman (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 117-45 (119-20). Such metaphors may reflect the legacy of humoral theory, as Gail Kern Paster has suggested, but their deep history and presence across cultures point to a broader intuitive sense of the embodiment of emotion. See Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 6-7.

[56] Leslie Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[57] Eric Jager, "Speech and the Chest in Old English Poetry: Orality or Pectorality?" *Speculum* 65.4 (1990): 845-59.

sorow is renewede. Mi herte hetide wiþinne me, and in my þenkyng shal brenne fier. I spake in my tunge" (Ps. 38:2-3).[58] Eliphaz the Temanite upbraids Job for allowing his spirit to swell up against God and vent itself in speech (Job 15:13). In this verse, the Middle English Bible translates the Vulgate *tumet*, swells, as "bolneth" – the same word Hoccleve uses to describe the grief in his heart.[59] The word is used elsewhere in Middle English to denote both intensifying emotion and, in medical texts and miracle stories, bodily swelling and inflammation.[60] Speech and emotion are both conceptualized, in these instances, as movements of breath and blood, converging in a chest that swells, heats, and releases.

Classical and medieval rhetoricians, working in a different intellectual tradition, nevertheless plotted similar bodily convergences. In the rhetorical tradition, the body is both incidental – rhetoric is focused on social persuasion rather than individual feeling – and central: the ends of rhetoric is the *movement* of an audience. Book 2 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the earliest surviving systematic treatment of emotions as they are evoked and expressed in speech, cites a line delivered by Achilles in the *Iliad* on *thumos* (anger): "A thing much sweeter than honey in the throat, / It grows in the breast of men."[61] Like the later pastoral discourse on speech (which descends in part from ancient rhetoric), the *Rhetoric* consistently treats emotions as elements of social relations.[62] Aristotle's interest is thus the sweetness Achilles describes – the pleasure of anger, derived from relations with other people – rather than the bodily growth that accompanies

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[58] *Obmutui et humiliatus sum et silui a bonis, et dolor meus renovatus est. Concaluit cor meum intra me, et in meditatione, ea exardescet ignis. Locutus sum in lingua mea.* All passages from the Vulgate will be drawn from *The Vulgate Bible*, ed. Edgar Swift and Angela M. Kinney, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 6 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011-2013), and cited henceforth by chapter and verse. Translations of the Psalter drawn from *Two Revisions of Rolle's English Psalter Commentary and the Related Canticles*, vol. 2, EETS o.s. 341, ed. Anne Hudson (Oxford: Oxford University Press for EETS, 2012), 427-29. See the Introduction.

[59] *Quid tumet contra Deum spiritus tuus ut proferas de ore huiuscemodi sermones* ["What bolneth thi spirit aȝens God, that thou brynge forth of thi mouth siche wordis?"] *The Books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon according to the Wycliffite version*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881).

[60] *MED*, s. v. "bolnen," 1, 3, 4. For medical uses, see John Arderne, *Treatises of Fistula in Ano*, EETS o. s. 139 (New York: Scribner, 1910), where the word is used throughout. See especially 57, which describes hemorrhoids as a product of swelling "melancolious blode" such "þat ouþer þe blode bresteþ out or þer ar gendred bolnyȝ of diuerse spiceȝ and schapeȝ."

[61] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.2.2 (116). On the *Rhetoric* in late medieval England, see Rita Copeland, "*Pathos* and Pastoralism: Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Medieval England," *Speculum* 89 (2014): 96-127. On *thumos*, an emotion and force with multiple meanings in Greek antiquity, see D. L. Cairns, "Ethics, Ethology, Terminology: Iliadic Anger and the Cross-Cultural Study of Emotion," in *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*, ed. Susanna Braund and Glenn W. Most (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 11-49; and Christopher A. Farone, "*Thumos* as Masculine Ideal and Social Pathology in Ancient Greek Magical Spells," in *Ancient Anger*, 144-62.

[62] See the discussion in David Konstan, "Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: The Strategies of Status," in *Ancient Anger*, 99-120.

it. Despite more rarefied structures of sensation and cognition that he establishes elsewhere, however, Aristotle accepts Homer's "folk" sense of anger's physiological growth and its location in the chest as a matter of course.[63] For later rhetoricians, the bodily expression of emotion was central. Medieval rhetoricians inherited from Augustine the threefold Ciceronian mandate to teach, delight, and *move*. Movement is in this case not only a metaphor: in Stoic, Aristotelian, and Galenic thought, the passions and affections are quite literally a movement – a way of thinking encoded in the etymology of the post-medieval word "emotion" itself – involving physiological as well as psychological components.[64] Such associations were reflected in vernacular usage; in Middle English, terms like *meven* and *stiren* flexibly denoted bodily, emotional, and verbal action.[65]

In late medieval poetry, the burst heart was a cliché, the swelling of affect nearly so.[66] In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer describes a bereft Troilus's lamentation as bursting emotion: "in his brest the heped wo bigan / out breste."[67] In the *Merchant's Tale*, Proserpina likewise invokes both bursting hearts and swelling affect when defending women against her interlocutor, Pluto:

> "I am a womman, nedes moot I speke,
> Or elles swelle til myn herte breke.
> For sithen he seyde that we been jangleresses,
> As evere hool I moote brouke my tresses,
> I shal nat spare, for no curteisye,
> To speke hym harm that wolde us vileynye." (IV.2305-10)

The accusation that women jangle, or speak too much, prompts Proserpina to speak out, despite

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[63] In *De anima*, Aristotle describes the natural scientist's view of anger as the heating of the blood around the heart; see Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. Christopher Shields (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2016), 1.1.403a32-33. This passage is discussed in Jeremy Tambling, "Dante and the Modern Subject: Overcoming Anger in the *Purgatorio*," *NLH* 28 (1997): 401-420.

[64] For a concise summary of Aristotle and the Stoics, see Rita Copeland, "*Pathos* and Pastoralism," 119-22. On the Stoics and medieval thought, see also Barbara Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 16-34 (see also 150-51 on *motus* and emotion in medieval thought), and Peter King, "Emotions," in *The Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 209-226. On Galen, who understood the emotions to be "movements in the systems of the liver and the heart which affect other functions of the inner systems," see Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97. The centrality of motion has been updated for contemporary thought in Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

[65] *MED*, s. v. *meven* and *stiren*. As Jasmin Miller has shown, Julian of Norwich's "stirring" translates the Latin "motus" to describe the movement of the soul; see Miller, "Discernment of the Spirits in Julian of Norwich's Revision," forthcoming.

[66] See *MED*, s. v. "bresten," 3, and s. v. "swellen," 6.

[67] *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), IV.236-37; he bursts out again at 257 and 373. Subsequent references to Chaucer will be made in-text by line number.

what "curteisye" would demand.[68] Proserpina presents her speech as a necessity brought about by her identity: she *must* speak, because she is a woman, and must respond to women's defamation; if she did not, she would swell until her heart breaks. Affect's pressure forces Proserpina to ignore the silencing norms of courtesy. The prologue to "My Complaint" seems to echo these lines – though if it does, it contains a winking gesture of identification and disavowal characteristic of Hoccleve's play with gender and his sources: namely, Thomas speaks to prove that "I *cam of* a womman," not because "I *am* a womman."[69]

These references in Chaucer suggest that swelling and bursting is a conventional image in poetry, but they do not suggest it is *admirable* or *desirable*. Instead, they reflect strongly gendered ideas about emotion, the body, and agency. Troilus's extreme emotion is an illness; his "heped wo" has left him "neigh ded for smert" (IV.373). His sorrow in abandonment recalls his earlier lovesickness. In both cases, sorrow becomes manifest in the suddenly permeable male body; the rational self is divided and usurped by "an outward showing of inner distress" ultimately attributable to a woman's actions or appearance.[70] Proserpina's speech, on the other hand, links a woman's honor with the unbridling of emotion. Jill Mann has pointed out that Pluto's accusations of feminine untruth ring a little false: as she reminds us, "*this is a rapist talking*" to Proserpina, his victim.[71] Mann goes on to argue that Proserpina is written in the position of the shrew, whose shrewishness supposedly answers and punishes masculine violence. That is to say, *her* swelling heart comes from the antifeminist portrait of the domineering woman, whose seemingly unbridled emotion in fact serves as a tactic in the continuous household war of position: "al hadde man seyn a thyng with bothe his yen," she says thirty lines earlier, "shul we wommen visage it hardily, / and wepe, and swere, and chyde subtilly" (IV.2272-74). Proserpina's theory and practice do not neatly align – she does not weep or swear or chide deceitfully; she argues – and whether she really plays the role of shrew is something of an open question.[72] But in this case, swelling emotion is nevertheless qualified by context. For Chaucer, the swelling heart and bursting emotion are tropes in love and misogynistic discourses, intertwined medieval traditions that respectively present emotion as something capable of overruling reason and as something capable of being feigned on account of reason. Thomas's

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[68] On jangling and women's speech, see Susan E. Phillips, *Transforming Talk: The Problem with Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2007); on Chaucer and "jangleresses," see especially 106-17.

[69] On Hoccleve and gender, see the discussions of Hoccleve's translation of Christine de Pizan's *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours* in Laurie Finke, "The Politics of the Canon: Christine de Pizan and the Fifteenth-Century Chaucerians," *Exemplaria* 19.1 (2007): 16-38 (24-27); Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 45-75; Perry, "Chaucer's French Tradition," 64-82; and Jonathan Stavsky, "Hoccleve's Take on Chaucer and Christine de Pizan: Gender, Authorship, and Intertextuality in the *Epistre au dieu d'Amours*, the *Letter of Cupid*, and the *Series*," *Philological Quarterly* 93.4 (2014): 435-460.

[70] Sealy Gilles, "Love and Disease in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003): 157-97 (188).

[71] Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 53 (emphasis original).

[72] See Holly A. Crocker, "Performative Passivity and Fantasies of Masculinity in the *Merchant's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 38 (2003): 178-98 (192-93).

explosive "greef" – which proceeds from the social isolation that followed his madness, but is also of course a fiction summoned up by Hoccleve the poet, or so the Chaucerian apparatus suggests – points to both possibilities.

The subsequent assertions that Thomas is *no longer* "so resounlees / as men deemen" only end up affirming that ambivalence (222). Emotions that run ahead of reason are dangerous. Against Psalm 38's burning God-given speech, one might weigh the *Parson's Tale* on anger, "the fervent blood of man yquyked in his herte, thurgh which he wole harm to hym that he hateth. / For certes, the herte of man, by eschawfynge and moevynge of his blood, wexeth so trouble that he is out of alle juggement of resoun" (X.535-36). Specifically, the Parson refers here to the venial sin of "sodeyn Ire or hastif Ire," to which "the resoun of a man ne consente nat," rather than the mortal sin of premeditated anger, which involves the exercise of reason (X.540-41). Anger, the emotion of *Mum*'s knights, is the *locus classicus* for such discussions. Gregory the Great, in a letter to Augustine of Canterbury recorded by Bede, discussed how even righteous anger is troubling to the feeling subject, because it confuses and disturbs [*confundi atque turbari*] the mind, leaving a sense of guilt in the wake of a commendable emotion.[73]

The distinction between rational and irrational emotion can be traced ultimately to Augustine, whose discussion of emotion in Book 14 of *The City of God* insisted on the supremacy of the will: "cupiunt timent laetantur et boni et mali. Sed illi bene, iste male, sicut hominibus seu recta seu perversa voluntas est" [both good and bad desire, fear, and rejoice; but the good feel these emotions in a good way, and the bad in a bad way, just as human acts of will are right or wrong].[74] Augustine was scornful of the notion that emotions originate in the body rather than the soul and are in and of themselves vices, a mistake that he ascribed to Platonists and Manichaeans; sin and virtue are the domain of the soul, and the distinction between good emotions and bad depends on the will rather than the body.[75] The exception is *libido*, lust, which is preceded by the promptings of the flesh. Lust is where Augustine draws on the tropes of embodied emotion: he never describes desire or fear as swelling, boiling, or bursting, but he laments that genitals are "aestu libidinis incitata" [moved by the heat of lust].[76] In Augustine's estimation, lust is uniquely shameful because the triumph of body over soul represents the usurpation of the higher part of the self by the lower. In the pastoral and penitential tradition that followed, some of these finer Augustinian distinctions seem to get lost, and the heat of anger can start to blur with the heat of lust. In the theological tradition, finer Augustinian distinctions are preserved, but even theologians debated whether the involuntary "first movements" of emotion were in and of themselves venial sins, *contra* Augustine's insistence on the centrality of the will.[77] Augustine accepted as a matter of course that the expression of *all* emotion must be restrained and controlled by the will, even if he viewed that restraint not as a sign of moral

[73] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. D. H. Farmer and trans. Leo Sherley-Price (London: Penguin, 1990), I.27 (p. 86).
[74] Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, 4 vols., trans. Philip Levine (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), vol 4, 14.8.
[75] Augustine, *City of God*, 14.5 and 7; see further James Wetzel, "Augustine on the Will," in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. Mark Vessey with Shelley Reid (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 339-52 (347).
[76] Augustine, *City of God*, 14.16.
[77] See Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 177-195.

health, but of universal postlapsarian "languor ex culpa" [feebleness due to guilt].[78] Aquinas honed the point in a famously ambivalent discussion of sexual pleasure: not a sin *per se*, but defective nonetheless, because it represents *ligamentum rationis*, the binding of reason.[79]

Needless to say, Thomas's surging "greef" exceeds the restraint of reason. The *Series* does not shy away from linking that emotional force to sin: its last constituent poem, the *Tale of Jonathas*, ends with the explosive death of the villainous Fellicula, whose bursting is unquestionably linked to her sin. Fellicula is described by turns as "a morsel of plesance" (5.159) and "the welle of deceyuable doublenesse" (5.590). She deceives and disinherits the eponymous Jonathas, who suffers a string of maladies but, recovered, returns to extract a confession from her. This confession is followed by a punitive reversal of fortune in which Jonathas feeds her a series of poisons he himself consumed, with dire consequences:

> as blyue in hir wombe gan they frete
> And gnawe so þat change gan hir herte.
> Now herkneth how it hir made smerte.
> Hir wombe opned and out fil eche entraille
> That in hir was. Thus seith the book sanz faill. (5.660-665)

The body horror in this scene is not original to Hoccleve. An analogue in the Middle English version of the *Gesta romanorum* in London, British Library, Additional MS 9066 likewise describes how, after the villainous lover (unnamed in this version) confesses her wrongdoing and eating Jonathas's poisonous fruit, "her bely opened, and all her guttes went out."[80] Both probably echo the description of Judas's death in Acts 1:18. But Fellicula's death, placed at the end of the *Series*, rewrites the beginning: hearts change ("change gan hir herte"; "chaunge sanke into my herte roote"); pain ensues ("herkneth how it hir made smerte"; "greef aboute myn herte so sore swal / and bolned euere to and to so sore"); and interiority comes spilling out into the world.

In Fellicula's case, speech acts are lent a monstrous metaphorical force. In the discourse of the sins of the tongue, for instance, lying and flattery are sometimes said to conceal the gall of the heart with honeyed words – a metaphor that conflates the content of speech with the sense of taste and an inside-outside psychological model.[81] Fellicula's death rewrites these metaphors in a spectacular form. Hoccleve lays hints of this reversal throughout: at the start of the tale, Jonathas rightly fears that if he tells Fellicula the secret of his prosperity, she "wilt deskeuere it and out it publisshe" (5.191); her downfall, described in a language of openness and falling-out – "hir wombe opned and out fil eche entraille" – makes a material equivalent of the verbal sin of *secreti revelatio*.[82] As Taylor Cowdery puts it, the image of her entrails spilling out "answers the many

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[78] Augustine, *City of God*, 4: 14. 19.

[79] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 4 vols. (Allen, Tex.: Christian Classics, 1981), I-II, 34, 1 (p. 68).

[80] S. J. H. Herrtage, *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, EETS e.s. 33 (London: Humphrey Milford, 1879), 193.

[81] See, e.g., "*The Pore Caitif*: Edited from MS Harley 2336 with Introduction and Notes," ed. Sister Mary Teresa Brady (unpublished PhD diss., Fordham University, 1954), 54-55 and further examples in Chapter One.

[82] On publishing as term for speech, see Chapters One and Two. "Open" is a rich and resonant term especially in late-medieval dissenting thought, aligned with "publishing" and associated with a literal sense understood to be immediately apprehensible; see especially Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Sect Vocabulary?" in *Lollards and their Books* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), 165-

earlier instances in the Tale where Fellicula manufactured a conceit of speech, or a form of behavior, to mask the truth of her actions."[83]

Other religious discourses on speech sit at the margins of this moment as well. Her honest confession seems to come to nothing, but her death "literalizes the image of confession as vomit" common in late-medieval penitential writing, as Robyn Malo has argued.[84] That turn seems to suggest confession's inefficacy, but as Malo notes, Hoccleve elsewhere seems to recommend confessional vomit.[85] The *Regiment*'s authoritative Old Man recommends it to the diegetic Hoccleve, afflicted by insomnia and anxiety:

> "Be waar of thoght, for it is perillous;
> He the streight way to desconfort men ledith;
> His violence is ful outrageous;
> Unwys is he that bisy thoght ne dredith.
> In whom that he his mortel venym shedith,
> But if a vomyt aftir folwe blyve,
> At the port of despeir he may arryve."[86]

Like Thomas's "greef" at the opening of the *Series*, "thoght" – a multivalent and complex term in the *Regiment* – enjoys its own agency and physical force.[87] More to the point, it is figured as shedding "mortel venym" that demands "a vomyt." Purgation holds off despair, but it does so in language that recasts the inherited vocabulary of the sins of the tongue: the "venom" that accompanies the honeyed words of lies and flattery becomes the venom seeded by thought, an interpersonal process remade as an inward one.[88]

Hoccleve's venom brings us back to *Mum and the Sothsegger*'s knights, bursting the boils of their heart to keep anger from festering inside. This images depends on a relationship between speech and emotion that is primarily intrapsychic rather than intersubjective, its structuring metaphor the rattling kettle of an agitated mind rather than the public disputation that

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80, as well as Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 125-40, which shows how dissenting ideas about the "open text" links the literal sense, lay participation in religious life, and discourse on sin. As Edwin Craun points out, Nicholas of Lyra draws on a logic that equates public or open exposure of sin with cutting into the body, suggesting that it is healthiest to privately correct sin, just as it is best for a medical doctor to heal "sine membri abscisione" [without cutting off limbs]; see Edwin Craun, *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 48 and 164n38.

[83] Taylor Cowdery, "Hoccleve's Poetics of Matter," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 38 (2016): 133-164 (153).

[84] Robyn Malo, "Penitential Discourse in Hoccleve's *Series*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012): 277-305 (298).

[85] Malo, "Penitential Discourse," 302n59.

[86] Thomas Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 1999), 267-73.

[87] On "thoght" in Hoccleve, see Travis Neel, "Fortune's Friends: Forms and Figures of Friendship in the Chaucer Tradition" (unpublished PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2017).

[88] On the relationship between confession, contrition, and despair, see Chapter Two; and, more broadly, Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 367-421. On venom, see Watt, *Making*, 138-43.

animates much of the material discussed in the preceding chapters of this dissertation. What both poets gain from this bodily metaphor of bursting or swelling is an intertwined fiction of necessity, vulnerability, and sensuous immediacy. In lieu of an ethical mandate to scorn despisers and speak the truth in the teeth of shame – a question of the will – these poems depict speakers compelled by their own feelings, their interiority permeable and open to judgment, their bodily experience of pain and relief made apprehensible for a reader.

For Hoccleve's poetry, that openness and immediacy is continuous with a broader impulse toward self-reflexivity. The *Series* is an unfolding drama of self-confrontation and self-exposure. In an influential early article on the *Series*, John Burrow described the work as a record of its own making: "it not only describes the making of a book, but also *is* that book."[89] The fiction of bookmaking is complemented by Hoccleve's willingness to offer his own mind and body as the matter for his poetry. Sarah Tolmie has described how the *Male Regle*, an early begging poem, "generates a body for the poet that is not available in Chaucer," what she describes as "a paradoxical body, both experiential and metaphorical, present and absent."[90] That paradoxical poetic body, with its recessive solitude and compulsively exposed interiority, recurs throughout Hoccleve's poetry – in the constituent parts of the *Series*, but also in the earlier *Regiment of Princes*, and even, refracted via Mary and Christ, in Hoccleve's translation of Deguileville's "Conpleynte Paramont."[91] Hoccleve's begging poems and the *Regiment of Princes* repeatedly invoke the writing body, its pains, and its need for "lyflode."[92] As has been widely observed, Hoccleve's invocations of the body fragment the narrating self, complementing explicit narrative content on indecision, uncertainty, and mental illness. Such dynamics apply to Thomas's swelling and bursting, too: Isabel Davis has observed of Thomas in the *Male Regle*, for instance, that "his poetry is a release of the self but also an account of his mental and bodily disintegration."[93] This willingness to depict the narrating persona as divided and open marks an exciting innovation in Hoccleve's poetry: the linked qualities of necessity, vulnerability, and immediacy that I identified turns inherited Chaucerian humility into a genuine drama, worthy of readerly attention in and of itself. The effect is in some ways similar to that of Langland's

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[89] J. A. Burrow, "Hoccleve's *Series*: Experience and Books," in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays,* ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984): 259-73 (266). This line has been widely cited, as in Knapp, *Bureaucratic Muse*, 162, and Watt, *The Making*, 1.

[90] Sarah Tolmie, "The Professional: Thomas Hoccleve," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 (2007): 341-73 (365). Cf. Shannon Gayk's commentary on Hoccleve's corporeal sight in *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45-46. In an influential earlier assessment, Stephen Medcalf suggests that Hoccleve "seems to take refuge from his troubles in continual movement, physical and spiritual"; see Medcalf, "Inner and Outer," in *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen Medcalf (Methuen: London, 1981), 108-71 (132).

[91] I draw here on Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 187-95.

[92] On this tendency, see especially Ethan Knapp, "Poetic Work and Scribal Labor in Hoccleve and Langland," in *The Middle Ages at Work*, ed. Kellie Robertson and Michael Uebel (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 209-28.

[93] Isabel Davis, *Writing Masculinity in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 153.

decision to restage the dream vision over and over again, turning a closed fictional form into an open-ended and inconclusive one.

Hoccleve's innovation was not appreciated by the majority of critics until recently. His narrator regularly elicited negative comments, like Furnivall's notorious declaration in the preface to his edition of the *Minor Poems* that "we wish he had been a better poet and a manlier fellow; but all of those who've made fools of themselves, more or less, in their youth, will feel for the poor old versifier."[94] For Furnivall, Hoccleve's swelling feeling makes him the antithesis of Chaucer, held by the Victorians at least to be a manly man (and a good poet).[95] But Furnivall's comment – and his less-often cited observations on Hoccleve's bloodthirsty politics that follow immediately thereafter, in which he wryly suggests that Hoccleve's enthusiasm for heretic-burning was not so different from the violent desires of his own nineteenth-century radical politics – also suggest how Thomas's fallibility provides a structure for identification. (Furnivall's mistake is, of course, in assuming the identity of narrator and author – it's a mistake that the poems invite.) But his suggestion of an affective connection with the poet is no mistake.[96] We understand Thomas's failings, we understand his account of a divided self, and we understand his swelling compulsion to speak, because those are dramatizations of being in the world that are made accessible by being grounded in a common bodily experience. The opening of the *Series* is defined by a peculiar irony. Bursting woe objectifies the subjective inwardness of the narrating I, downplaying Thomas's agency and making him morally suspect. But that objectification involves a script familiar from lived experience: the sensation of anger or sadness welling up inside and bursting out as rash speech is part of the phenomenology of everyday emotion. As with *Piers Plowman*, which anatomizes shame in order to offer an account of an unpleasant but necessary aspect of learning, Thomas's excessive and divided self holds a mirror to "all of those who've made fools of themselves" – which is to say, everyone.

Conclusions: Sowing, Growing, and Turning

Mum and the Sothsegger is clearly up to something different. The common images of swelling and bursting in the *Series* and *Mum* show they share a poetic vocabulary – one that originated in the Chaucerian tradition, but was ripe for adoption by a Langlandian poet.[97] Both poets exercise

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[94] *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, rev. edn. by Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, EETS e. s. 61 and 73 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), xxxviii-xxxix.

[95] On manly Chaucer, see Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 20-21.

[96] Furnivall's gender policing does not entirely obscure the desire for connection that Carolyn Dinshaw describes in *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), which informs my comments here.

[97] For other suggestions of commonalities between the two traditions, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice, "Langlandian Reading Circles," *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997): 59-84; Simon Horobin, "Adam Pinkhurst and the copying of British Library MS Additional 35287 of the B Version of *Piers Plowman*," *YLS* 23 (2009), 61-83; Horobin and Linne R. Mooney, "A *Piers Plowman* Manuscript by the Hengwrt/Ellesmere Scribe and its Implications for London Standard English," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 26 (2004), 65-112. See more broadly the discussion of alliterative and non-alliterative traditions, and the influence of *Piers Plowman* in

considerable freedom with that vocabulary. Moreover, as I suggested above, the gifts of that freedom are similar. *Mum* gains immediacy and urgency from its boils and pustules. But *Mum* offers nothing to match Hoccleve's persona, with its metatextual interventions, its fragmented and complex psyche, its moral ambiguity and fallibility, its palpable presence for a reader. *Mum* has no interest in the moral ambiguity that its images impart. Instead, what *Mum* provides is a novel account of the act of truth-telling, highlighting vulnerability and necessity by drawing together elements from traditions discussed up to this point: the pastoral-polemical, the satirical, and the Chaucerian. Unlike prescriptive writing – and like Hoccleve – *Mum and the Sothsegger*'s idea of truth does not come with a consistent set of rules for speech and emotion: it is an abstraction, an affective structure built upon a set of metaphors that the poem repeatedly revisits and rewrites.

As I have suggested throughout this chapter, *Mum and the Sothsegger* has a formal tendency to roll an image around. Sometimes it carries over the vehicle of a metaphor but switches out the tenor. In other cases, the same set of words are rearranged with a different moralization. Bursting emotion is a case in point. In the "bag of books" sequence, the poet cautions against fraudulent lawsuits:

> Whenne rancune the redeth to reere debatz
> or angre at attre arteth thy herte...
> Bowe ere thou breste whenne thou arte bette y-fourmyd,
> And revle the by reason and renne not to faste,
> But gife hit vp with good wille whenne thy grovnde failleth,
> And falle of with fayrenes leste fors the assaille. (1550-56)

This advice begins with a dynamic conjured up several times earlier in the poem. Like the knights in Parliament, the imagined plaintiffs are compelled by a movement in the chest described in the same terms of anger, poison, and bursting – though "arteth" suggests a sense of constriction rather than swelling, it literally refers to the bodily compulsion exerted by feeling.[98] This time, though, the poet says to tamp down the anger and keep quiet. Bow before you burst – reasonable advice, and utterly conventional: every conduct manual and pastoral treatise would insist that you "revle the by reason." Don't act on passion; avoid the *ligamentum rationis*. This cliché is precisely what the earlier images of bursting boils had abrogated. In doing so, they made its elements live and surprising again. But the poet has rolled the image around, turning its elements toward a more conventional attitude toward emotion and speech.

The inconsistency can be attributed at least in part to questions of class and institutional rights. For *Mum*, a knight speaking in Parliament is entitled to speak, while grousing commoners, gossiping friars, and in this case fraudulent litigants and their lawyers (what are decried elsewhere as "falsquestmongers") are not. Nicholas Perkins, writing about Hoccleve and borrowing from Bourdieu, has described such differences as "a 'verbal economy,' in which the value of speech, and indeed silence, fluctuated according to the status of the speaker and the attitude of the listener."[99] The same economy applied to anger itself, defensible in knights but

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both, in Eric Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 114-19.

[98] *MED*, s. v. "arten," 1 and 2.

[99] Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 5.

beastly in peasants.[100] But that economy is not the only rationale here. In his strange second speech, which the poem presents as the truth, Mum advises against *lordly* anger in similar terms:

> For euery man that mynde hath may wel wite
> That prelatz aughten haue pite when princz bee moeued,
> And reed thaym so that rancune roote not in hert,
> And ere the grame growe ferre the ground so to wede
> And amende that were mysse ere any moore caicche
> Of man-slaughter or mourdre, as hath many dayes. (728-33)

Mum counsels that prelates should advise princes, when they are moved by emotion, so that anger does not take root and grow, fomenting violence. The terms are shared with the advice against lawsuits, though stakes are different: one is a question of reputation ("thy loos" [1557]), the other of violence and civil war.

But the propositional content here is less important than the way in which it is expressed. In both passages advising against anger, the poet turns to the same construction: a "ground" beneath emotion and speech.[101] The poet counsels angry plaintiffs, "Gife hit vp with good wille whenne thy grovnde failleth" (1555): when the ground of your claim falls away, give it up. After discussing the swelling pathology of anger, Seneca goes on to say that "anger has no sound footing: it doesn't arise from something stable and destined to abide but is windy and empty," lacking "foundation" (*sine fundamentis*) and "underpinning" (*nil solidi subest*).[102] The same sense of basis and cause clearly informs the *Mum*-poet's cautioning words to those pushing lawsuits, but the ground of princely anger, in need of weeding to keep "the grame" (a word which refers to both anger and its *source* in harm or indignity) from spreading.[103] The ground goes beyond the problem of knowledge crystallized in the figure of the sore, or the violent movements of affect depicted in its bursting. It is the substrate of feeling. Lucifer searches for a suitable ground to sow his seeds "that groweth al to grevance and gurdyng of heedes" (1160). On the other hand, in the idealized society of the dream-garden, "the grounde was so noble" (951). The "ground" ropes together multiple intangibles – it could refer to an individual affective disposition or personality, to a collective temper, to a just cause – in a single poetic solidity.

So the sore is not the only material figure in *Mum and the Sothsegger*'s poetic repertoire. The poet tends toward such figures when representing cognitive processes: tongue-tied interpretation is "knitting a knot" (240; 693); truth, attention, thought, and intent are physically "turned" (57; 203; 1392; 1465); spoken words are caught, not heard (164; 588). The simplicity of these habitual figures is part of their power, but they have other effects as well.[104] These images strip some of the matter out of cognition, privileging movements of the body over propositional content. Thought becomes an object turned by outside forces, emotion becomes the running fluid

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[100] Paul Freedman, "Peasant Anger in the Late Middle Ages," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), 171-88.

[101] Barr notes that "ground" is a "common term of authorization" in Wycliffite texts and legal writing; see 295n76. The *Mum*-poet's use seems to me slightly different.

[102] Seneca, *De ira*, 1.20.2 (32).

[103] MED, s. v. "gram(e)," 1 and 3.

[104] I draw on Erich Auerbach, "*Sermo Humilis*," in *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993 [1965]), 25-66.

of affect, personal and political grievances become sores to rub and search. Like Hoccleve, the *Mum*-poet shows a genuine interest in producing a poetry of cognition.

Unlike Hoccleve, however, the *Mum*-poet uncouples these metaphors from a narrative account of an individual's biography. Ultimately, these images have a paradoxical effect. On the one hand, as in pastoral writing but unlike the evil-times tradition described above, they emphasize individual inwardness, the heart and mind. On the other, by objectifying that inwardness as a series of incessantly recombined material images, the poem buffs out all the specificity in its conception of truth – arriving by a different route to the same mixture of universal lament and portable proverbial wisdom, connected by a thin tissue of contemporary political reference, found in the less sophisticated satire of an earlier generation. The poem reflects the influence of Ricardian poetry and late fourteenth-century devotional writing, but it does not fundamentally share their interests, unlike Hoccleve, who pushes Ricardian self-scrutiny to its destabilizing limits. My point here is not to pass a judgment on the artistic value of *Mum and the Sothsegger*, which seems to me unquestionable, but instead to suggest that Hoccleve and *Mum and the Sothsegger* can be seen to respond in very different ways to the same elements in their Middle English antecedents.

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I will end by returning to the poem's idea of the truth, the problem with which this chapter opened. While the poem mulls on the practice of truth-telling throughout, twice it offers a definition of the truth itself. One is put in the voice of the gardener in the poem's central dream allegory, who offers the narrator a path to the sothsegger:

> "His dwellyng to discryue," cothe he, "I do hit on alle clercz
> That I shal teche the treuly the tournyng to his place.
> Yn man-is herte his hovsing is, as hooly writte techet,
> And mynde is his mansion that made alle th'estres.
> *In corde fidelis est habitacio veritatis*.
> There feoffed hym his fadre freely forto dwelle,
> And put hym in possession in paradis terrestre
> Yn Adam oure auncetre and al his issue after.
> He spirith hym with his spirite that sprange of hymself
> To holde that habitacion and heuene afterwardes,
> To serue hym in sothenes and no souurayn eschewe
> For dreede of deyenge ne no disease elles." (1222-32)

This homiletic passage has an obvious debt to Langland: the gardener's instructions on "the tournyng to his place" replicate, in condensed form, Piers Plowman's itinerary for the pilgrimage to St. Truth. While the *Mum*-poet strips out most of Piers's step-by-step catechetical directions, the broad strokes are the same. Truth lives in the court of the soul, its authority established by the terms of creation and its rewards written into salvation history. Truth is a mandate and promise offered to "Adam oure auncetre and al his issue after" – to everyone, that is. To find truth, one must travel inward, into the dwellings of the heart and mind. And to properly serve the God that installed truth in the heart and the mind, one must speak the truth as inspired by the Holy Spirit. This definition of truth rests on the apostolic basis of Matthew 10:19: *Dum steteritis ante Reges & presides nolite cogitare quomodo aut quid loquamini. Dabitur enim vobis in illa hora quid loquamini* [Although you stand before kings and prelates, do not consider how or what to say.

For what to say will be given to you in that hour].[105] *Piers Plowman* puts this passage in Will's mouth, and subjects his evangelical fervor to scrutiny. Like the strident evangelical polemic *Piers Plowman* may have been echoing, *Mum and the Sothsegger* gives it straight.

But *Mum and the Sothsegger* never offers one definition where two would fit, and in its prologue it describes a different dwelling for Truth. Here, truth is a seed:

> Right as the cockil cometh fourth ere the corne ripe,
> With a cleer colour, as cristal hit semeth,
> Among the grayne that is grene and not ful growe,
> Right so fareth falsnesse that so freysh loketh
> Thorough the colour of the crosse that many men incumbreth.
> But whenne trouthe aftre tornement hath tyme forto kerne
> And to growe fro the grovnde anone to th'ende,
> Thenne fadeth the flour of the fals cockil.
> That lykne I to lyers, for atte the long goyng,
> Of euery segge-is sawe the sothe wol be knowe. (62-71)

This definition of the truth rests on the eschatological model inherited from evil-times satire. The Parable of the Tares is the intertext here: the "fals cockil" of lies will fade in time, but the "corne ripe" of the truth will endure "atte the long goyng." The poem offers its own twist on this topos, though. The seeds of truth sprout only "aftre tornement," a term borrowed not from the farm but from chivalry and saints' lives: though "tornement" could mean "tournament" and has the gardener's more neutral "tournyng" embedded in it, it also means "torture."[106] The change in register is necessary to impress the agonistic quality of truth, the fact that it emerges through struggle. Bodily pain continues to authorize the truth.

These two ways to the truth point to the mixed heritage of *Mum and the Sothsegger*. Both passages spring from deep Gospel roots, but the first is mediated by fourteenth-century pastoralia, the second by a longer tradition of satire and complaint. The first counsels urgency, the second patience. But they also suggest the homely poetic materialism that *Mum* conjures up to yoke these traditions together. The heart is a house; the truth is a seed. What could be vague moralizing or doomsaying becomes something tangible, something solid, the ground on which the imagination can rest.

[105] Cf. *Piers Plowman* B.10.448-53 and my discussion in Chapter Two.
[106] See *MED*, s.v. "tournement," and *MED*, s.v., "torment."