

Argument in Poetry: (Re)Defining the Middle English Debate in Academic, Popular, and Physical Contexts

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ARGUMENT IN POETRY: (RE)DEFINING THE MIDDLE ENGLISH DEBATE
POEM IN ACADEMIC, POPULAR, AND PHYSICAL CONTEXTS

By

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ABSTRACT

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The core problem that drives my dissertation is to find a definition for what has been called Middle English “debate poetry” that accounts for the wide variety of themes, topics, and styles which poems labeled as ‘debates’ cover. The limitations of overly focused and restrictive definitions of the term ‘debate poetry’ encountered by previous scholars illustrates the initial problem of using a generic term that lacks a common vocabulary or framework for discussion. The result has been that each scholar who investigated a poem linked to this tradition used a different definition suited to his or her particular text(s) of interest.

In order to address this confusion, I apply the contexts provided by a variety of intellectual, cultural, and material rhetorical practices. I examine academic disputation and commentary practices, the textbooks that present the grammatical and poetic strategies which contributed to them, medieval sermon and preaching manuals, and the mystery plays. All of these rhetorical situations are formats for presenting a persuasive interpretation of a given text that require the use of authoritative evidence and interpretive strategies. In addition to the theoretical and literary background, I also include the physical evidence preserved in the manuscripts. Codicology presents a way to analyze how the poems were viewed when recorded, as well as how that perception changed over time. Such contextual clues give insight into how authority and persuasion is assumed or manipulated within the texts.

The solution that I propose presents two possible models that take their definitive characteristics from wide-spread methods of persuasion and argument from the medieval period: the academic disputation and commentary, and the medieval sermon. Each model contains features that distinguish ‘debate’ poetry from other genres that employ dialogue and argumentation, and features that are shared. I apply the resulting models to multiple poems to illustrate how definitive traits transfer to the ‘debate poem’. In my conclusion I present some final examples of how my two-pronged system can be applied to both medieval and modern texts.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Add./Addit.: Additional

BL: British Library

CCCM: *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*

C/S: Copeland, Rita, and I. Sluiter. *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

CUL: Cambridge University Library

DIMEV: Digital Index of Middle English Verse

EETS: Early English Text Society

LLT-A: Library of Latin Texts-Series A

MED: *Middle English Dictionary*

OED: *Oxford English Dictionary*

TCC: Trinity College, Cambridge

Chapter 1: Definition and Deliberation of ‘Debate’

A literature often referred to as ‘debate poetry’ was at its peak in popularity and versatility in Middle English between the late twelfth century and the sixteenth century, but the form has not been studied in modern scholarship as a unified general phenomenon.¹ This scholarly gap has been noted by studies on the subject as problematic yet the issue persists.² Academic interest suggests the recognition of the debate poem form as unique and worthy in its own right,³ yet the concept of a Middle English “debate poem” remains nebulous. Assembling a more systematic framework with set of criteria to distinguish these poems from other similar genres and styles will enable not only more productive discussion of the medieval literatures in question, but also present opportunities for exploring how the various forms and styles may have been passed down to later eras.

In this project, I will explore how “Middle English debate poetry” might be more comprehensively outlined and discussed through a set of distinguishing characteristics. I

¹These dates correspond roughly with the composition of *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and William Dunbar’s poetry. I am using the term ‘form’ in place of ‘genre’. Davenport discusses the problem of generic labels (23-35). He specifically notes the convenience factor (24) and that medieval narrative theory found in the handbooks goes back to Ciceronian discussion of the term *narratio* and his divisions of narrative based on action into the categories of *historia*, *argumentum*, and *fabula* (9-13).

²For example, Conlee refers to the imprecise nature of the debate as a medieval genre (x), and Fletcher (2005) notes that there is a substantial amount of variation within the category (241).

³There have been many discussions (some still ongoing) of individual poems or themes that reoccur with regularity, and some studies of the form in other languages (namely Medieval Latin and French). For example, see Corinne Denoyelle’s 2010 work on French dialogue verse, concentrating on romance. She does not directly focus on debate, however her analysis French verse romances does include considerations of complaints, which have close associations with debate poems. For another example, Emma Cayley considers epistolary exchange and the verse debate traditions in late medieval France. The major study of the form in Latin is *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (1920) by Hans Walther. A more recent example concerning a Latin debate poem is Neil Cartlidge’s article, “In the Silence of a Midwinter Night: A Re-Evaluation of the *Visio Philiberti*”. *Medium Ævum*. 75.1 (2006): 24-45.

will need to consider whether the form is a distinct, self-contained genre or a set of rhetorical devices commonly used together. In addition, analyzing what distinguishes the rhetorical and formal features of the verse debate from other types of writing based on dialogue will provide information regarding which tropes are shared and which are unique to 'debate'. The intellectual, cultural, and material contexts I consider are the academic and folk traditions, and the manuscripts which record the poems. I will construct an argument by examining what scholarship has been produced on the subject roughly over the past fifty years, how textbooks and handbooks might have influenced the form and content of the poetry, what academic and popular rhetorical applications of dialogue suggest, and what a variety of examples of arguments in verse reveals about the form. All of these different kinds of texts share a concern with the treatment of *auctores* and *auctoritas*, which will be the basis for comparison. Finally, I will consider how the manuscript records might inform perceptions and interpretations of "debate poems".

For my analysis of the work which has already been done on the subject, I will use two main issues that persist, and two questions raised in the process of engaging with them. The first difficulty displayed by much of the previous attention paid to this form of poetry is that the analyses often focus on a theme or feature that limits the application of the defining elements. The second issue is a lack of in-depth consideration of the opposing or binary nature of the perspectives represented. Attempts to address these issues raise the following questions: "does a work have to be wholly dedicated to the argument to be a 'debate' or is it possible for a text to have a "debate scene?" and "how important is the presence of a judge or verdict to the classification of an argument-based text?" These issues and questions will serve as guides to begin my exploration of how to

most effectively construct a systematic framework for “Middle English Debate Poetry” that can serve as a common language for scholarly discourse, and provide a new lens for considering range of texts and styles.

Dialogue and Debate

One of the key reasons why a common set of definitive characteristics for 'debate poetry' is important is so that it might be distinguished from 'dialogue', a related and common form both in poetry and prose. Given that the term 'debate' is the primary question at stake, I will instead use the label 'verse argument' until further definition can be established. I will review this element of the problem of definition through the scholarship of Elizabeth Merrill, Francis Utley, and Douglas Kelly. Originally published in 1911 and reprinted in 1969, Merrill's study, *The Dialogue in English Literature*, examines prose and verse dialogues from the classical period through the Renaissance. Merrill's justification for her study is that English dialogue displays unique qualities that render them deserving of more attention and appreciation than has previously been given.⁴ Her study is useful for considering the 'contention poem' for two reasons.⁵ First, the study shows the continuity of a genre from the medieval period into the Renaissance and beyond (which will be useful when the question of what might have happened to debate poems after the Middle Ages arises), and second, it provides a basis for establishing some key elements of the dialogue, which will be helpful in distinguishing 'dialogue' and 'debate'. Merrill's distinction between the means and the end of dialogue-

⁴Merrill iii.

⁵ This is the term Merrill uses to refer to verse arguments. See for example pages 26 and 28.

based text provides the lens to compare and contrast various textual examples across cultures and time periods.

One of the most useful and detailed parts of Merrill's study is her proof for continuity of the dialogue form. Two poetic titles mentioned in this context are "Interludium de Clerico et Puella" and "The Nut Browne Maide". The connection to the ballad, made by the reference to "The Nut Browne Maide", is separated from "later development of the dialogue" (29), although the medieval dialogue continued to influence and share features with drama, lyric and romance of the Tudor period.⁶ Merrill's discussion of the medieval verse argument concludes with the claim that the form "became the courtly and artificial dialogue or interlude of the sixteenth century" (38). The initial discussion of the medieval applications of dialogue in relation to verse arguments relates mostly to literary poems which remain unclassified beyond the label 'contention poem', such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*. The final conclusion of Merrill's study argues that the English applications of the form imperfectly preserve unity in purpose and means (131).⁷

As criteria for medieval verse arguments, Merrill's proposals are problematic because they focus more on prose-specific qualities. In her survey of the Greek and Roman tradition, Merrill notes changes in the use and perception of the dialogue as a form as opposed to a method.⁸ She argues that the English adaptations become more

⁶See pp.30ff.

⁷See Merrill 129-131. She argues that although the form was practiced through the nineteenth century, expanding the use of a narrative frame, the poetic touch present in the Greek dialogues is still lacking.

⁸ Merrill argues, "with Plato, (...) his purpose, the discovery of living truth as shaped and conditioned in the minds of men, and his means, the conversation which leads to the discovery of truth" (11). The Romans, from whom the English took their primary examples, adapted the dialogue as "a *method* rather than a *form*, a method of which the end is satire or simple characterization" (11).

expository and less dramatic than their Greek predecessors.⁹ However, the nearly universal use of a narrative framework is the one feature that she suggests verse arguments have in common (26). Merrill goes on to look at other argument poems which are largely narrative-based more as dialogue than debates. She notes, “There are many medieval English poems, such as *Pearl*, of which a central dialogue forms the very substance”, and also observes the presence of “many wooing poems...that tell a whole story by means of dialogue” (29).¹⁰ This part of her discussion suggests that poems like “Interludium de Clerico et Puella” and “The Nut Browne Maide” are dialogue-based poems which use the dramatic character interactions as the primary means of presenting the problem being argued. These poems raise the question regarding the ratio of dialogue or argument to narrative necessary for a text to be considered “debate”. *Pearl*, for example, is not labeled a “debate” even though multiple sections of the text are dedicated to argumentative dialogue between the dreamer and the Pearl Maiden. On the other hand, *The Parliament of Fowls* has been called a “debate”, even though significant portions of the poem are narrative.

Texts that illustrate the problems in applying an argument based largely on prose to define the poetic complexities of a similar style include *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and “The Meeting in the Wood”.¹¹ In the case of the former, the topic and the argument are both the means and the end of the poem, while narrative exposition provides critical elements equal to the drama of the discussion. Considering the lack of definitive

⁹Merrill iii. A second weakness of the English adaptations of the form, according to Merrill, is that they lose the element of “real conditions of a rich national life, even real conversations” (9).

¹⁰ Her judgement of the philosophical nature of such poems appears a few pages earlier when she claims that the French and English adaptations of the Roman version of the dialogue are “literary exercise rather than the expression of deep thought” (26).

¹¹ The second title reference is Conlee’s (296). The first line of the poem is “In a fryt as y con fare fremede”.

judgment in the poem, the use of argument to explore the ideas (means) and the goal as having an exploratory conversation (end) fits into Merrill's analysis of Plato. She examines *The Owl and the Nightingale* primarily for its general thematic features, instead of the details of the argumentation and exploration of ideas.¹² The use of a fictional setting and speakers does not prevent the poem from considering philosophical questions with real-life implications. The majority of the poem is dramatic (the dialogue) but the expository elements, including the intervention of the wren and the narrator's occasional commentary throughout, play crucial parts in the overall exploration of truth. In the case of the latter text, although a comic element is present, both the form and method are again shared. As with a Platonic dialogue, both the purpose and the form desired of the text is the argumentative exchange aimed at finding a meaningful truth. Unlike *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the dramatic dialogue in "The Meeting in the Wood" overtakes the exposition. The use of a narrator who doubles as a participant in the dialogue combines the expository role of the narrator with the dramatic role of a participant. This second factor complicates Merrill's contrast of the Greek and English dialogues.

Utley's bibliography of the literary "dialogues, debates and catechisms" displays similar uncertainties about definition of verse arguments to Merrill. Utley declares, "Though a dialogue is not a duologue, and may be shared by more than two persons, the present account...has taken as basic principle for selection exemplars built around two speakers, except where the medieval title uses the term dialogue or debate" (671). Utley

¹² Merrill takes a brief look at *The Owl and the Nightingale* and some of its fellow English verse arguments on pages 26-30. She argues, "The English examples of the contention-poem, which grew out of the direct Latin tradition, partly under French influence, are in general less apt than the French poems to conform closely to the conventional types. They show many variations, but they nearly always appear in a narrative framework" (26).

also claims, “One does not know why one poem is a dialogue and another is a debate- if there is supposed to be a sharper element of conflict in the debate this is not objectively measurable” (672). He goes no further in working towards a distinct definition, and proceeds with his bibliography.¹³ He presents three categories based overall on general theme which are subdivided according to content but also classified by literary type. The religious and didactic works are labeled as ‘dialogues’, the works on love and women are labeled as ‘debates’, and the works dedicated to scientific and Biblical lore are ‘catechisms’. The only specific definition that Utley provides is for catechisms, which are, “informational exchanges, usually between a teacher and pupil, and lack the element of conflict found in the first two groups” (Utley 736).

Utley’s discussion of what constitutes ‘debate’ presents some ambiguities and possible contradictions. Even though he argues against a difference between dialogue and debate in poetry, Utley alludes to, “A true Debate (or Disputison)” (693). The idea that anything that is labeled as a ‘disputison’ is a real debate, along with the corresponding notion that anything else is not a real debate, is problematic because it leaves open the question of whose definition of ‘disputison’ is applicable. Possible perspectives include that of the author of the piece, the person who copied it down, or the person who reads it. The *Middle English Dictionary* defines ‘disputen’ as “To engage in a formal debate or controversy” (1a), “To engage in discussion, conversation, or reflection” (2a), and “To maintain or defend (a proposition)” (3a). The noun ‘disput’ is not clearly attested to until c. 1600, although the term ‘disputacioun’ has entries dating from the late 1300s.¹⁴

¹³Utley does take note, as Reed later does in far more depth, of Stephen Gilman’s division of competing perspectives into the categories of ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ (671).

¹⁴ The note about the dating of the word ‘disput’ suggests that ‘disput’ might have evolved from the use of the infinitive ‘disputen’ as a subject. The reference tentatively dated in the 1390s occurs in poem 106 in

‘Disputacioun’ is defined as, “A formal debate or discussion before an audience or in an official body; (b) debating, arguing; a dispute or discussion; (c) reasoning”. The complexities of the uses and definitions noted by this dictionary point to the problems and questions of labeling a work a ‘disputison’.¹⁵ All of the definitions relate to presenting different ideas and/or conversing with another voice, but the element of antagonism that Utley noted is not universally present.¹⁶

The questions left by Utley’s lack of complete definition of his terms creates difficulty when attempting to classify a poem such as “Dialogue Between Mary and Jesus on the Cross”.¹⁷ The poem is a dialogue with each stanza presenting a claim or comment in Jesus’ voice and a response from Mary. There is disagreement over how Mary ought to feel about what she is witnessing, but there is no antagonism as Utley requires. For example, when Jesus explains that his suffering death is necessary to prevent the rest of mankind from going to hell, Mary responds, “Sone, þou me bi-hest so milde;/ I-comen hit is of monnes kinde/ Pat ich sike and serewe make” (ll.28-30). There is also no title or label in the manuscripts to assist in classification.¹⁸ The problem with leaving the poem as simply ‘dialogue’ is that the term also applies to poems like “Gabriel’s Greeting to Our Lady” in which the angel and Mary discuss her impending role as Jesus’ mother.¹⁹ After the angel’s initial greeting and announcement, the two engage in expository dialogue,

Brown and Smithers, “I wolde witen of sum wys wiht” (pp.160-164). Specifically, see lines 33-34 “Alle þeos disputacions /Idelyche all vs ocupye”.

¹⁵ Other spelling alternatives include ‘desputeison’, ‘despitesoun’, ‘despitousoun’, and ‘disputisoun.

¹⁶ Fourteenth century uses include Trevisa, in the *Polychronicon* 5.119, “[Pope Silvester] overcome þe lewes in disputacioun [L disputando confutavit]” and the *SE Legendary* (Barlaam 1.928-Bodl. 779), “Wole we go I-fere down in to þe toun, & þer we mowe here a fayr disputacioun”. While the first use clearly suggests an antagonistic situation, the second does not. Unless otherwise noted, all citations in this paragraph are from the *MED* (see entry ‘disputacioun’).

¹⁷ Textual references are from Brown’s edition (1932), pp.87-89.

¹⁸ See manuscript list and notes for *DIMEV* 5030.

¹⁹ This title is Brown’s (1932, p.75).

‘Wichewise sold ichs beren
 child with-huten manne?’
 þangle seide, ‘ne dred ten out;
 þurw þoligast sal ben iwrou (15-18)

 To þangle hie andswered:
 ’hur lordes þeumaiden iwis
 ics am, þat her a-bouen is. (28-30)

Like the poem concerning Mary and Jesus, the talk between Gabriel and Mary also has musical and liturgical associations,²⁰ but, unlike the discussion with Jesus, Mary’s responses have no trace of argument. According to Utley’s categories, another problem lies in whether this poem should be called a ‘dialogue’ or a ‘catechism’. The nature and tone of the two discussions is different, yet under Utley’s categories, both poems might be given the same classification.

The ambiguities and difficulties faced by Utley and Merrill in distinguishing verse argument from dialogue are directly addressed by Cartlidge.²¹ He makes two major claims in the matter. The first claim states that a generic definition is not possible. Cartlidge directly argues for the impossibility of an actual definition of a genre when he states, “medieval debate poetry is a very complex phenomenon, so complex that it is hazardous to generalize either about the circulation or origins of individual debate poems, or about the contexts and purposes for which they were designed...It might be ultimately more useful to analyze medieval debate-poetry, not as if it were a single literary tradition, but as a set of related traditions - not as a genre in other words, but as a nexus of genres” (2010, 244). Cartlidge makes several major points about the difficulties of dealing with

²⁰ See *DIMEV* 1484.

²¹The overall problem of a lack of definition for 'Middle English debate poem' is emphasized by the gaps in time between the publication of Merrill's study in 1911, Utley in 1967, and Cartlidge (2010).

the idea of a ‘genre’, but he restricts his comments to the applicability of a definition to individual poems.

Cartlidge’s other major claim, that in place of a generic definition, the study of verse argument poems is the study of a set of recognized masterpieces, brings the first claim into question. The question of ‘what is a debate-poem’ suddenly presumes the existence of an answer. Cartlidge begins by quoting Hans Walther’s definition of Latin verse arguments, which details several specific criteria.²² Cartlidge does not reject Walther’s chosen features as wrong, and admits that by Walther’s standards, “The Owl and the Nightingale” is a ‘debate poem’. He questions the implications of using the label ‘debate poetry’ as too limiting to a very complex poem. He concludes his opening discussion with the observation that “The real story here is perhaps not that of debate-poetry, but of a relatively small number of particularly influential debate-poems” (Cartlidge 2010, 239). The problem with this claim is that it presumes that this set of ‘particularly influential debate-poems’ is both known and commonly accepted.

While Cartlidge’s concerns with defining ‘Middle English debate poetry’ are valid, the rejection of a comprehensive definition is confused by the continued use of the concept of a ‘debate poem’ and the presumption of distinctive formal features. The rest of his exploration of the genre concentrates on comparisons of *The Owl and the Nightingale* with the body-soul tradition, other bird debates, and an Old French poem, the “Petit Plet”. He notes the traditions in Old French poetry of birds as advocates in love debates, and the limited amount of ‘verbal competition’ in the French poems as opposed to their Middle

²²The definition cited for ‘debate’ is that they be “poems ‘in which two or three persons, personified things or abstractions, deliver speeches in a dispute, either in order to compare the merits and qualities of the speakers themselves or to determine some extraneous problem” (Cartlidge 2010, 237).

English counterparts.²³ The result of his exploration is the concern that “‘debate-poetry’ starts to look less and less cohesive as a generic category, and thus less and less reliable as a means of defining the rules by which the Owl-poet worked”.²⁴ The lack of following the rules presupposes that there was an actual rule or set of rules that a ‘debate poem’ might expect to follow.

In spite of his criticism of the idea of a literary type in Middle English that might be labeled ‘debate poetry’, Cartlidge still appears to believe that the concept has uses. Cartlidge notes that Utley “was not particularly concerned with delineating ‘debate poetry’ as such; and his chapter can hardly be taken to demonstrate the existence of any very substantial tradition of debate-poetry in Middle English literature” (2010, 239). However, he goes on to suggest that Utley “seems to recognize that, even within the larger category of ‘debates, dialogues, and catechisms’, there is a hard core of texts that are fundamentally shaped and characterized by debate in a way that others are not” (2010, 240). This positive recognition of the idea of ‘debate poetry’ in Middle English creates the impression that, although he may have significant problems with any attempt so far in defining the term, Cartlidge recognizes that it is a useful label to use.

One of the most in-depth attempts to define ‘debate poetry’ in Middle English is David Lampe’s 1969 dissertation “Middle English Debate Poems: A Genre Study”. He examines four poems in detail, although he does refer briefly to other works which might also be classified as ‘debate poems’. Using *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Lydgate’s “Debate of Horse, Goose and Sheep”, and “The Cuckoo and

²³See Cartlidge (2010) 242-243.

²⁴See Cartlidge (2010) 243-244. Although the narrow focus of the definition of ‘debate’ is suitable to the actual application that Cartlidge has in mind, his definition has limited applicability beyond *The Owl and the Nightingale*.

the Nightingale”, he identifies several features which he determines are characteristic of the verse debates in Middle English.²⁵ Those features are the conventional “vaguely suggested pastoral” setting (Lampe 1), three particular sorts of participants and a narrator, and “implicit usages of external frames of reference which give structure to the debates in the poems and allow us to understand the poet’s strategy” (Lampe 140). He also includes observations regarding the use of fiction and comedy to treat serious subjects.

Although Lampe’s exploration makes many strong observations, the focus on four main poems leaves room for ambiguity and questioning of other works which may use the techniques in question. His categorization of three types of participant ignores works such as “Robene and Makyne,” in which the human participants have individual identities, and poems such as “The Debate of the Carpenter’s Tools”, which combines participant types. The particular type of setting that Lampe requires of a ‘debate poem’ leaves also works such as “In a Bēstri Stude y Stod” out of consideration as its frame presents an unhappy scenario. Similarly, not all verse arguments use a narrator, such as “Dialogue between Mary and Jesus on the Cross”. Although Lampe does acknowledge a difference between ‘dialogue-confession’ and ‘debate’, the distinction is confused by the necessity of a narrator, and the requirement of consolation, which is not always certain in poems such as Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowls*.

Even discussion of genres that are broader than ‘Middle English debate poetry’ suggest how flexible the medieval period was when it came to applications of ‘the rules’ in literature. Douglas Kelly, in his analyses of handbooks for writing literature, mentions an analysis of Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s architect metaphor for what a writer should do, and

²⁵ See Lampe 1-4 for an explanation of the features in the following list.

notes that “The techniques and devices taught by these treatises serve the expression of the meaning or truth the author intends to express...Every phase of composition, from conception to ornamentation, is subservient to auctorial intention” (1991, 38). One of his key points regarding the genre of the *artes* handbooks supports the idea that the writers of Middle English thought in broader terms than contemporary writers/scholars about genre. Kelly states that “the modern designation ‘arts of poetry’ is inaccurate because it is too narrow. The so-called arts of poetry treat both prose and verse composition” (1991, 39). The flexibility that Kelly observes in the handbooks presents a major reason why the study of verse argument has been lacking any standard definition or common vocabulary. Modern attempts at a definition have been too narrow and limited by the contemporary concept of ‘genre’.

Anthologies

Two major difficulties in creating a definition are shared by the three anthology collections that concentrate on 'debate' poetry. First is the lack of definitive formal features, and second is a presumed binary as a necessary component for a ‘debate’. These anthologies reflect an understanding of the verse argument as a wide-spread genre covering a variety of themes and styles, all somehow involving a central argument between the characters. What is left unsaid is what formal features define a 'debate poem'. Questions such as ‘What distinguishes these poems from poetic dialogues?’ or ‘What makes one poem a 'debate poem' and another a narrative or lyric dialogue?’ remain unanswered.

The problem of restrictive definitions for the Middle English verse argument becomes clear in the only anthology dedicated specifically to it. John Conlee points out that “Medieval debate poetry, like most medieval literary genres, resists simple definition” (xii). Nevertheless, he proceeds to establish a list of primary features, “that fundamental to all debate poems is the depiction of a verbal confrontation between a pair of natural opponents” (Conlee xii). He also adds the features of the opponents being evenly matched “in an emotionally charged contest of words” (Conlee xii). Eventually, Conlee declares that “by the end of the fifteenth century the debate poem had more or less exhausted its potential as a distinctive literary genre” (Conlee xiii). The possibility that the verse argument survived in some form into the 21st century increases alongside the potential for finding a more open set of definitive criteria when the contributions and influences of the direct literary ancestors are supplemented by other literary genres, textbook guides, and academic practices, among others. Conlee's inclusion of the criterion of 'evenly matched' makes poems such as *Remors of Conscyence* and “The Dialogue between Mary and Jesus on the Cross” difficult to consider. In the first example, God and Man are certainly not equal, but their discussion is not pure dialogue as it includes persuasive speeches. In the second example, the equality of the speakers is a complicated question, since both speakers have divine and human attributes.

As Conlee's observations about the genre illustrate, attempts at defining verse argument tend to be restricted by the focus of their author. His own discussion of the various themes and titles demonstrates the restriction of definition by examining a set of common themes and titles, which reflects his anthology's organization by general thematic category. Conlee's categories represent the Body-Soul tradition, the alliterative

tradition in Middle English, didactic and satiric disputations, bird debates, and the pastourelle in Middle English.²⁶ Patricia Black's discussion of "debate poetry" presents a similar problem with a different focus. She examines the historical evolution and spread of the verse argument tradition in Europe. Black's article dedicates itself to listing various representative types of 'debate' as they manifested in various parts of Europe in Latin and in vernacular languages, and the scholarship which surrounds each area of the tradition. Given Black's historical and representative focus, she does not so much define the genre itself as list examples. The only hints at a definition of the 'debate poem' genre are the several references to 'dialogue' genres and to the various terms used for the genre in various languages.²⁷ Both Conlee's and Black's discussions leave open questions regarding poems with features beyond their particular interests. Poems with different themes or which might contain a scene of argument in a larger narrative are disregarded. Poems such as *The Buke of the Howlat*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, or *The Disputacyon or Complaynt of the Herte throughe Perced with the Lokynge of the Eye* are left unaddressed.

Exemplifying a second set of anthology selection criteria, the overall description of the genre of 'debate poetry' in Altmann and Palmer's anthology of medieval verse arguments is limited by what the editors view as the primary literary influences. The two major literary traditions that are covered are the love debates (mainly the *judgement du amour* and *jeu partie*), and the courtly romance. All of the debates presented are by known authors, and all but one were originally written in French (the odd one out being

²⁶These categories are listed in the table of contents (v-vi), and covered in more depth definition-wise in pp.xiii-xxxvi. Even in the more extended discussion, the various sub-types are defined according to their contents, not necessarily how they might handle the representation of whatever common features link them all as belonging to a single category of 'debate poetry'.

²⁷A second limitation of Black's treatment is that different poems use different terms, and that the manuscripts do not always agree on labels for a given poem. On a related problem, labels are not always contemporary with the poem, which raises the question of change in perception over time.

Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*). The editors make sure to state that their purpose in covering both languages is to show the importance of literary dialogue conducted between England and France.²⁸ First, they present a discussion of “the larger intellectual and literary history in which the genre participates in order to trace its literary pedigree and outline thematic preoccupations that place it at the heart of medieval sensibilities” (Altmann and Palmer 1). Next the editors present the poetic model of Guillaume de Mauchaut, which generally displays “a debate argued by two or more characters, each of whom speaks to a particular side of an issue concerning love” (Altmann and Palmer 1).

Both Conlee and Altmann and Palmer suggest that a requirement for a verse argument is the inclusion of binary positions. Conlee directly mentions 'natural opposites', and Altmann and Palmer's concerns with gender and nationality implies the same.²⁹ This feature would prove problematic in discussing poems such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, whose discussants begin their argument over their personal attributes. As fellow birds, they may be different, but not opposite. In the second section of the argument, although the Owl's arguments for chastity and the Nightingale's for freedom in love appear opposite, both sides make their claims on the shared grounds of wanting the best for women. Although the Nightingale argues on behalf of maidens and the Owl for married women, they use similar reasoning, which undercuts the supposed opposition between the two kinds of ladies. The Nightingale claims,

²⁸In their own words, “The point that the late-medieval authors represented here were not addressing only their own countrymen. Even though France and England were engaged in that intermittent but bloody struggle known to modern scholars as the Hundred Years War, the writers of the two countries shared an intellectual and literary culture” (Altmann and Palmer xi).

²⁹ In their preface and introduction, Altmann and Palmer do acknowledge the complexity of the concept of ‘love’ and associated questions, but they concentrate on the gender divide which is commonly depicted as a pair of perspectives that are binary opposites (see xi-10). Even when the disputants are of the same gender, their perspectives are often presented as binary opposites (such as the question of a clerkly versus knightly lover).

Ne mai ich for reop lete,
 Wanne ich iseo þe tohte ilete
 Þe luve bringþ on þe 3unglinge,
 Þat ich of mur3þe him ne singe. (ll.1445-1449)

Using the same claim of sympathy and comiseration, the Owl responds,

Herof þe lauedies to me menep
 An wel sore me ahwenep.

 Mid heom ich wepe swiþe sore
 An for heom bidde Cristis ore” (ll.1563-1568).

Conlee points out a similar situation in his introduction to “Mede & moche thank”, that the poem may be read as suggesting that the courtier and the soldier may seem different at first, but through the course of the poem, begin to appear more similar (210).

Even the anthologies which focus on vernaculars besides English display similar restrictions in definition. Michel-Andre Bossy opens his anthology of non-English medieval vernacular verse argument works with the observation, “Playful battles of words and wits exist in all societies. But the social customs and literary conventions which regulate such contests are far from uniform...The appeal of all these contests of words and wits is grounded in a common human impulse: the primal fascination with opposites, the teasing desire to create inversions through mirrored images, to conjure separateness out of oneness” (xi). He continues on to target three major factors for the surge of verse argument in Western Europe during the Middle Ages: “the growth of literacy and textuality, the ethos of polemics in education, and the focalizing of group consciousness in cities and courts” (Bossy xvi). What Bossy has chosen to do is to isolate key factors that he believes the verse arguments and social conditions that produced them reflect in each other. Given this focus, a general definition of the overall genre 'debate poetry' remains of secondary importance and unstated. The overall focus on the cultural

background and social conditions that may have motivated the popularity of verse argument suggests that the poems presented will be chosen and analyzed according to these same principles, which is exactly what Bossy does. In his notes on his editorial policy, Bossy explains that he wanted, “a representative sampling of the major themes and polemical styles of verse debates” (Bossy xxiv). He also notes that his translations are designed to “strive for accuracy but not at the expense of comic intent or the flow of thought...One cannot understand how medieval debates function either as polemical exchanges or as literature unless one respects the ploys of wit and the intonations of humor” (Bossy xxv).

Bossy comes closest to probing the problem with the strict binary when he comments on the paradox of using separation as a unifying factor, but his idea of fascination with opposites and inversions does not resolve the problem of recognized opposites being in place at the beginning. He is also the editor who chooses to concentrate the least on formal or literary features. The lack of notice of formal features causes problems when considering poems like *Remors of Conscience* and “The Complaint of God”. Although these two poems consider the same question of Man's relationship to God using dialogue, the formats are different. *Remors of Conscience* uses exchanges of dialogue, while “The Complaint of God” uses a long speech by God with a brief response from Man. Without any formal distinctions to consider, whether both or either poem is a 'debate' remains unclear. These two poems also illustrate the difficulties of the assumption of a binary. Although the two speakers may be recognized as opposite, the problem of inversion and contest still remains. Verse arguments with a divine disputant make the notion of inversion problematic. This concept is also troublesome for

considering poems such as “The Debate of Nurture and Kynde” in which the two figures represent opposing forces, but as characters are similar. This verse argument also presents the difficulty of containing several potential conclusions. The narrator reaches one conclusion, while the narrative presents another. Other conclusions are possible as well, and this potential for multiple interpretations suggests that the two characters (and what they represent) are not simple opposites that can be inverted at will.

Scholarship on Verse Arguments as Individual Works

Specialized scholarship on Middle English verse argument displays the same gaps in defining the genre as the more general works. To date, only three book-length studies on Middle English verse argument have been published, and of those, two focus on specific poems. The definitions of the verse argument are both times dictated by the authors’ interpretation of the single poem chosen as their central focus. Thomas Bestul’s *Satire and Allegory in Wynnere and Wastoure* and Kathryn Hume’s *The Owl and the Nightingale: The Poem and its Critics* display similar interpretive techniques, including a focus on allegory, satire, and strategies of rhetoric and narrative. While the two studies use different poems as a main example, they end up illustrating the same difficulties regarding verse argument through a limited focus or consideration of the binary problem.

The discussion of general genre and the references to other poems creates an impression that Bestul’s features are potentially applicable to other poems besides the one analyzed in detail, *Wynnere and Wastoure*. Overall, Bestul notes elements of three major genres: the dream vision, the allegory, and the debate (24). His general overview of the argument in literature concentrates on the idea that “The medieval debate probably had its

origins in the schools, where the debate form or, more properly, the dialogue, was used as an instructional device. The didactic tendency may be seen in literary debates” (Bestul 29). Bestul also points out the use of a narrative frame, emotions expressed by the participants, and the problem of judgment as definitive features.³⁰ In relation to the final decision of the dispute, Bestul concludes that, “one aspect of the king’s judgment is clear: both parties are banished from the king’s presence. The difficulty in rendering judgment arises, not as in the Owl and the Nightingale, because each side has argued so well, but because, morally at least, each side has argued so poorly” (Bestul 31).

Bestul’s definition is designed especially for *Wynnere and Wastoure*, but deriving a specific definition from general attributes that appear differently elsewhere brings up the same problem as the anthologies regarding a presumed binary. When he addresses the argument tradition in his analysis dealing with the tradition of satire: first, the extreme position that each side takes is ‘untenable’;³¹ second, neither disputant argues well and both use rhetoric in improper ways (see Bestul 75-78); and, third, both express an inclination towards solving their dispute through violence while making claims of rationality (See Bestul 64-75). This analysis assumes an understood binary between ‘reason’ and ‘emotion’ that is not consistent from poem to poem. In other verse arguments, the division between reason and emotion is more complex than Bestul’s analysis suggests. For example, in “The Clerk and the Nightingale”, the clerk resorts to a threat of violence in order to get his opponent to back off, but his opponent does not respond in kind. The ‘didactic tendency’ that Bestul suggests defines ‘literary’ debate

³⁰See Bestul 30.

³¹ *Wynnere and Wastoure* connects to the tradition of satiric verse because “The satire and humor depends on a recognition that they [the debaters] outrageously defend untenable positions” (Bestul 74).

applies in this poem, as the Nightingale attempts to instruct an unwilling student, but the separation between reason and feeling is not clearly present. The irony in the Nightingale's initial admission of defeat and flight, and her final admonition to the clerk hints that she might be feeling anger.³² In this case, the rational character does succumb to emotion, but maintains a reliance on speech as opposed to action.

A definition based only on *Wynnere and Wastoure* also presumes a collapse of the forms of dialogue and argument. Although arguments do require dialogue, the presence of dialogue in a poem does not automatically qualify it as an argument. For example, aubade poems presenting lovers' dialogues are generally not arguments. A second example is poems that appear to be in dialogue with each other, but are not arguments. British Library Arundel MS. 248, folio 154r-154v, contains a pair of such poems. The first poem, "Jesus Sorrows for His Mother", presents Jesus on the Cross worrying about his mother Mary. The companion poem, "Our Lady Sorrows for Her Son", presents Mary's point of view of the same scene.³³ The poems are part of a sequence which Brown links to the same tradition as "Dialogue Between Our Lady and Jesus" (p.200-203).

Like Bestul, Kathryn Hume's definition of verse argument is both defined and limited by the scholarly approach. Hume's central question in her study of *The Owl and the Nightingale* manifests in the first page of her argument when she asks why there is no scholarly consensus about any of the issues of the poem, be they interpretive or factual

³² Textual reference is from Conlee (p.266-277). The Nightingale says, "Love wher thy ert may be-happe./ What-so-ever sche be;/ And sche schal make a glasyn cappe./ Amd to skorn lawth the.//Fare-wel, clerk, and have goodday,/ No more wyl I spute./ Now wyl I fare in my way:/ I rede þou to my words tak hede" (ll.79-86).

³³The text of these two poems can be found in Brown (1932), poems 45 (p.77-78) and 47 (p.83-85).

(3).³⁴ She suggests that “The Owl and the Nightingale is a debate or altercation, and we can learn a great deal about the piece by comparing it with other examples of the genre” (Hume 35). Hume’s focus on how her poem reflects certain qualities as opposed to other poems might be helpful in considering the single poem at stake, but it is less helpful when considering the nature of the common features that make the poems all ‘debates’.

Both of Hume’s discussions regarding verse argument run into trouble based on the limiting foci, and the presumed binary inherent in her analysis. While Hume’s analysis overall is not designed to consider other poems, her reference to other examples implies that the features she observes are of a general sort. Hume focuses her attention on the problem of resolution when she claims, “the resolution is naturally the focal feature of any debate” (35). She examines a variety of attempts at analyzing how the argument might be resolved, concluding,

Three points emerge. (1) Non-human protagonists normally debate non-intellectual issues, and if they speak on serious subjects, it is directly (as in *The Thrush and the Nightingale*), not obliquely through the disguise of animal concerns. (2) The Nightingale’s technical victory is suitable, both because she is the pleasanter debater in a lighthearted poem, and because she is a perennially popular bird not elsewhere defeated. (3) By looking at the ironies and moralities of other endings, we can recognize the intellectual and even legal insubstantiality of the Nightingale’s self-proclaimed victory. (Hume 47)

After the other approaches fail to explain the irony of birds talking about human issues, her own reading of the poem is “as a burlesque-satire on human contentiousness” (Hume 100). Her list of general features ignores verse arguments, such as “The Debate of the

³⁴ She notes that “Various approaches, all of them plausible and seriously argued, have produced wildly diverse answers to the poem’s problems. Without a better understanding of why critical methods have failed, why they are apparently invalid (wholly or in part), one cannot hope to make any real progress” (Hume 12). The methods that she examines includes analyses based on the nature of the protagonists, a variety of thematic interpretations, structure, and the significance of the argument form.

Carpenter's Tools". This poem does not feature a purely non-human cast addressing a serious human issue, and it has a conclusion to the argument in which the 'pleasant' fun-loving side loses. The binary of human and non-human is problematic in two main respects. The inhuman cast takes on a subject as relevant to themselves as to their human counterpart, and they are eventually joined by a human speaker (the Wife) who turns what had been a straightforward argument in a different direction. Although the argument superficially treats practical morality, the introduction of the Wife's perspective suddenly reframes the entire piece as a potentially intellectual examination of gender, class, and fate.³⁵

The second time Hume revisits the argument form is in the justification of her burlesque-satire reading, and this section of argument runs into the difficulties of assuming common applications of features. Hume claims that "Literary forms are defined by varying criteria", and she notes as characteristics of the verse argument genre, "conflict, types of subject, resolution". She also suggests that some genres "are recognized by their format: the epistolary novel, the sestina, the debate" (113). Overall her point is that "debates exist for their conclusions, and most debates reach resolutions of some sort. But lack of resolution does discredit quarrelling, by suggesting that either it cannot reach a conclusion, or that it can do so only with violence or arbitration" (Hume 113-114). Her dismissal of unresolved arguments has been disputed by later scholarship, and her description of the 'debate' genre assumes a recognizable format with no details provided on what the recognizable features might be.³⁶

³⁵ Conlee notes some possible literary and intellectual significance the introduction of the Wife might have (pp.222-223, and note 268 p.234).

³⁶ Reed in particular would disagree with the claims that debates exist for their conclusions, and that most debates do in fact have them. He argues that the unresolved nature of many such poems was part of their

Like Hume, Alan Fletcher also uses *The Owl and the Nightingale* as a case study, and his definition of 'debate poem' is similarly limited by that focus. Even though Fletcher admits, "by virtue of that very sophistication, it is not entirely typical" (2005, 241), he still uses *The Owl and the Nightingale* as the basis for a general claim. He proposes that the verse argument exemplifies what he terms "socially productive binaries".³⁷ Fletcher suggests that the purpose of verse arguments, such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, "may locate less in its disputed issues and possible outcome than in the communal bonding it fosters" (2005, 242). In other words, the opposing nature of the opponents allows them to define themselves against their opponent, thus tying them together in a common social activity. The communal aspect also relates to the readers of the poem. In his conclusion, Fletcher suggests that "The hostility of the birds dialogically convenes an amicable community among the audience/readers who witness it" (2005, 253).

Fletcher's definition does not take into account verse arguments with more serious tone and content, which could potentially be divisive for the audience. His idea extends to the possibility that more serious poems were intended to educate the audience in a communally acceptable viewpoint on the topic at hand; however, the amicable nature of the 'communal bonding' is likely to be lost. Fletcher notes that "the dynamic of debate powered influential circles of late-medieval English society, making that society extremely 'debate conscious'" (Fletcher 2005, 242).³⁸ In spite of this observation, the idea

intellectual appeal (see for example pp.8-20, 53-61, and 201-203). Also, Hume does not provide a definitive list of characteristics (format or otherwise) that might be used for identification purposes. The suggestion seems to be that 'debate poems' were inherently recognizable and distinguishable from other types of poetry, an assumption which is problematic given the sheer variety present in many medieval literary genres.

³⁷See Fletcher 2005, 241.

³⁸Reed makes a similar comment, although in a different context. He suggests that "shared educational and

that this consciousness was always beneficial and friendly is not thoroughly substantiated. In the single context of the poem in question, the idea may be true; however, it does not transfer equally well to other verse arguments. For example, *Remors of Conscience* is more didactic in nature and does not create the sense of pleasant ‘communal bonding’ suggested by Fletcher. Although people might recognize a commonality in the sinful nature of humanity, the context and message of the poem is not nearly as conducive to the bonding that Fletcher proposes as a more humorous poem like *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Verse arguments that deal with human-divine conflict also prove difficult for Fletcher’s ‘socially productive binary’. For example, “Dialogue of Mary and Jesus on the Cross” presents two characters who do not represent a strict binary. Both characters have human and divine attributes, and although their arguments might reflect a human versus divine perspective of the Crucifixion, the result is not decisive. The lack of hostility creates empathy for both sides as opposed to a clear divide between them.

Even scholars who examine multiple examples of verse argument run into this problem of a limiting focus. Thomas Reed stands apart from previous scholars in that he attempts to analyze multiple poems on different themes using a common lens. The focal concept of Reed's study is “the curious but marked formal and ideological irresolution which characterizes some of the greatest English debates” (2). His second chapter dedicated to 'Institutional Context' provides relevant information regarding the general outline of university program of study, as well as possible links to dialectic and legal

social experience of debate poetry's authors and audience informed their expectations for and experience of the literary genre” (42). He proceeds to explore institutionalized debate practice (scholastic disputation, legal argumentation, and parliamentary procedure) and how these practitioners might have used their knowledge in a more recreational version of argument (the poems).

training. Literary background is necessary and included as the third chapter. Reed chooses to present the intellectual background before the literary, creating an impression of connections between the logic and education and the literature. Reed's initial comments focus on the medieval popularity and subsequent decline of the verse argument, concluding that "Here, it seems to me, is a genre that is as "distinctly medieval" as a genre can be" (2).

In spite of the greater potential for application of Reed's contextualization of verse arguments, his focus also proves to be limiting when discussing what constitutes 'debate poetry'. The focus on specific themes and poems in all of the studies that focus on title or theme illustrates a common weakness in their overall applicability. One element of Reed's consideration of the presence of verse arguments in medieval society that is shared with Bestul, Hume, and Fletcher (2005) is an element of recreation and entertainment.³⁹ Reed's hypothesized aesthetic of irresolution is contrasted with an observed "dominant aesthetics [that] would seem to have required the artistic revelation of a unified truth" (2). The attraction to a lack of resolution stems from, according to Reed, its promise of "a temporary escape from the daunting and extracting need to decide-continually to consider grave choices-impressed on medieval humans at every pass" (14). This observation applies when considering the more lighthearted debates, but the more serious verse arguments, such as those focusing on theological issues, have a more purely didactic focus. Henryson's "Ressoning Betwix Deth and Man", "Disputison Bitwene a God Man and the Devel", and Lichfield's *Remors of Conscyence* all lack the humorous elements that the poems considered by the above scholars, falling more into the category

³⁹For more on the idea of literature for recreational purposes, see Olson. He identifies evidence that people in the medieval period understood literary pleasure as having hygienic, recreational, and consoling effects.

classified by Reed as the “dominant aesthetic” requiring a unified truth and presenting an indisputable conclusion.

The limitations of Reed's definition are two-fold. Firstly, as Reed himself acknowledges, his definition is intended to suit his study of a particular sort of verse argument, those that do not include a clear winner. Secondly, Reed's reading of both Gilman and Wells suggests that a 'debate' can only happen between perceived equals. Gilman distinguished between two sorts of dialogues: the horizontal and the vertical. The vertical debates “involve an exchange between a naïve persona and an authority with obvious claims to moral superiority” (Gilman in Reed 3), while the horizontal reflect “two nominally equal parts” (Reed 3). Reed then adds Wells's definition of 'debate' as “a verbal contest for supremacy, between two or more persons or personifications, capable or regarded as capable of carrying on a dialogue” (Wells in Reed 3). Reed's observation that “occasionally, what appears to be a horizontal debate will reveal itself to be -after the fact- vertical” (4) does not resolve the problem that even an argument between uneven opponents is still an argument, albeit one that will be more likely have a clear winner. On a similar note, Reed does not suggest the possibility that the reverse might also be true, that what appears to be a vertical debate might end up as being horizontal in retrospect. An example of such a poem is “Als I Lay” in which the Soul presumably has the moral upper hand throughout the argument.⁴⁰ The horizontal reality appears in the Soul's final speech, when it states that both Body and Soul will be punished until they reunite on Judgment Day (see lines 489-496).

⁴⁰ The Body admits that the Soul is correct in the accusation of the Body's lack of spiritual concern during life (see lines 451-488).

Viewed together these studies show some of the key areas that need attention in considering what a general definition of 'debate poetry' might be. What Bestul, Hume, Reed, and Fletcher (2005) all illustrate in their discussions of verse debates in Middle English is that the genre is complex, and that while focusing on a single poem or type of poem can offer interesting insights into the particular poem or category in question, the notion of a definition of what the concept of 'debate poem' is remains open. In spite of their shared difficulties with the question of binaries and a restricted focus, all four scholars highlight important features that should be kept in consideration as applicable to a broad generic definition. Reed in particular shows how important considering some of the external social or cultural influences is, and how considering related genres, such as dialogue and drama, provides useful ideas. Hume and Bestul reveal the importance of formal characteristics, and Fletcher's consideration of audience experience reflected in the poem points to the usefulness of considering how the audience might have interpreted the poems as literature or as more general experience.

General Poetic and Interpretive Techniques

A key element that many scholars have left unexamined is that the range of verse arguments varies widely. All of the studies cited so far have focused on a narrow range of poems, defined by the author's desire to focus more intently on a single work or theme. A more broadly applicable, though not necessarily total, set of criteria will have to come from a much wider survey of poems. Even poems that have not been perceived as worthy of study have information to offer. Judith Davidoff notes that, "What is curious about these 'uninteresting' and 'inept' poems is that they are so numerous and that so many are

extant in multiple copies”, and she goes on to suggest, “in the unimaginative, one can often see patterns more clearly than in the imaginative, where the patterns have been used but have been interlaced and combined in subtle ways that evade easy detection” (14-15).⁴¹ Davidoff’s observation partially accounts for the limited definitions offered by scholars who focused on the exceptional examples. Davidoff also provides a second suggestion that, when trying to classify and define medieval poems, one should be prepared for the inevitable poem(s) that do not entirely fit into any categorizing scheme.⁴² Although her study covers a range of genres (including the *chanson d’aventure* and the dream vision), one of the genres given attention is that of the debate. Given the broad focus of her study, how Middle English poems open, her methods provide insight into how to conduct a study of breadth.

Davidoff does not explicitly define what she casts as a ‘debate poem’, although her analysis of poems is divided in a way that makes some discussion of genre possible. Under ‘Dream Visions’ she discusses several poems which are traditionally labeled as debates including Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowls*, Clanvowe’s *The Boke of Cupid*, *The Parlement of Thre Ages*, *Wynnere and Wastoure*, and *Death and Liffe*.⁴³ Under debates, she lists 7 poems: *The Owl and the Nightingale*, “De tribus regibus mortuis”, “An Holy Medytacion”, *Speculum Misericordie*, *The Buke of the Howlat*, *Floure and the Leafe*, and *The Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*.⁴⁴ Although she notes that some of the

⁴¹Davidoff’s study presents a general survey of Middle English poems. Robbins makes a similar comment in his anthology of fourteenth- and fifteenth- century lyrics, stating “I have tried to include poems which would illustrate, irrespective of poetic merit, all the various types of Middle English secular lyrics” (vi).

⁴²Davidoff says, “Although the poems vary in length, in genre, in quality, and in intent, and range from early in the Middle English period to its end, when poems are grouped by types of openings, it becomes clear that almost all poems begin with one of six basic opening modes” (25). The qualifier ‘almost’ is the suggestion that a perfect fit is an unreasonable expectation.

⁴³The titles in this list occur on p.72, and some appear again in a more detailed division on pp. 76-77.

⁴⁴See Davidoff 81.

dream visions she discussed are also debates, the analysis of this point is relegated to a footnote.⁴⁵ Her definition is straightforward and simple, as she states that verse arguments have “debates as their cores” (Davidoff 81). The list of poems that she gives specifically in her section on formal verse arguments is focused on poems which begin with 'the adventure motif'.⁴⁶ For Davidoff, it seems that 'debate' is synonymous with 'argument', and therefore a 'debate' poem is one that is focused on an argument held among the main characters.

Davidoff's hint that many verse arguments are framed within adventure settings or dreams, while not set as a defining characteristic, does make the point that arguments generally do not spontaneously happen without provocation. The frame or set-up is a formal element which ought to be taken into consideration, and Davidoff's book provides a useful introduction on how the opening of a poem contributes to an analysis of the poem overall. Similarly, Reed focuses largely on the conclusions of the poems, again illustrating the importance of formal arrangement and organization of a poem. Besides the formal elements, the discussion of what a verse argument is and what separates it from other genres will be expanded here to include other technical features, as well as cultural elements which have affected the contents, style, and perception of verse arguments.

Besides focusing on a single area of formal structure in the poetry, another approach that has been taken is the historical literary approach. Derek Pearsall, in his book *Old English and Middle English Poetry*, organizes his general study by time period as opposed to genre or formal feature. The overall intention behind the book is that it

⁴⁵See p. 81, note 1 (the note is detailed on p207).

⁴⁶See Davidoff 81.

“pays attention throughout to matters of provenance and audience, so as to provide as much information as possible on poetry as a social phenomenon as well as an artistic one” (xi). Within the various time periods, special attention is given to features of language and rhetorical poetic strategies at work, alongside the focus on the manuscript book. Elements relevant to a discussion of verse argument are present in each chapter, suggesting the wide-spread and varied nature of the form, as well as illustrating the utility of a historical organization of the discussion.

Pearsall's focus on historical periods and manuscript culture allows him to make note of what changed, as well as what stayed the same. In each period, he notes instances of verse arguments in the vernacular, and although many of the titles mentioned are well-known and admired, they cover a wider range of theme and style than other studies concentrating specifically on the verse argument genre. In the later Old English period, his example is the Solomon and Saturn dialogues. In his discussion, he observes that both poems appear in the same later tenth-century manuscript, and that they make different uses of the 'dialogue' element.⁴⁷ The first poem is labeled as more “a demonstration of the power of the Paternoster,” while the second “is more like a true dialogic” (Pearsall 63-64). Relevant elements of a verse argument that Pearsall points out are the fundamental presence of dialogue between characters, as well as the didactic component and contest of wit.⁴⁸ In the earlier Middle English period, the key example is *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Pearsall sees connections with both Anglo-Norman and Latin traditions, but they are not the only focus on the discussion. As expected, Pearsall does provide some comments on the formal elements of the poem, but he then turns the focus on both

⁴⁷See Pearsall p.63. The manuscript in question is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 422.

⁴⁸ See Pearsall p.64.

surviving copies' existence in miscellany collections, and how miscellanies of that time reflected historical and cultural happenings. Towards the end of the discussion, Pearsall brings in a second poem of the same tradition, "The Thrush and the Nightingale", even though he labels it as a lesser work compared to his first example.⁴⁹ Again, Pearsall's comments focus on a few elements of the formal style, but mainly concentrate on how the poem reflects the miscellany culture of the time.

Along with a major cultural shift, the fourteenth century illustrates the rise of popular prophecy and dialogues in poetry, topics which Pearsall examines and which are reflected in the verse arguments that date to this time period. One of the major changes in the social and intellectual environment of England in the medieval period begins to appear in the 14th century, and Pearsall makes note of the phenomenon early on. The rising "cult of the individual poet" that would become obvious by the time of Chaucer represents a key change in the social and intellectual backgrounds of the literature of the time.⁵⁰ This shift also manifests itself in the appearance in the fourteenth century of "that self-consciousness about the text and the possibility of textual corruption" that resulted from the rise of not only authors as individuals but also of increased patronage and copying (Pearsall 120). A complaint poem, "The Song of the Husbandman", suggests some qualities distinct from the Latin tradition, particularly that the complaint within the poem is specific and detailed.⁵¹ Although this poem is not a verse argument itself, Pearsall suggests that it represents an ancestor of *Winnere and Wastoure*, as well as *Piers*

⁴⁹See Pearsall p.98.

⁵⁰See Pearsall p.119. Robbins makes similar comments about changes in general style around the end of the fifteenth century, "when the artist becomes a unique person" (lv). Stylistically, he notes the loss of sincerity and simplicity in general as poems became more intended "for the eye rather than for the ear" (liv). Other shifts involve the rise of the secular lyric (xvii, xxii), a preference for English among the higher classes (liv), and an association of specific styles and meters with particular social classes (xliv)

⁵¹See Pearsall p.123.

Plowman.⁵² In addition to representing a Middle English debate, *Winnere and Wastoure* reflects the political concerns of its time by using prophecy in a popularized style, something which Pearsall suggests is common to the time.⁵³ The fourteenth century also saw the compilation of a now-major manuscript that “shows a special fondness for dialogue”, the Vernon manuscript (Pearsall 141). Pearsall names several of the verse arguments, including *The Dispute between a Good Man and the Devil* and “The Disputation of Mary and Jesus on the Cross”, and makes note of a generally higher level of 'intellectual sophistication' present in the collection as a whole.⁵⁴

Pearsall also gives extensive attention to the alliterative and courtly traditions, both of which produced some verse arguments, but the next major shift does not come about until the explosion of literary activity in the fifteenth century. While the concern with individual poets continues, the two shifts represented are a focus on the preservation of the oral style, and an observed decline in the quality of poetry in English. Pearsall shows that “English is now, for the first time, unquestionably the dominant literary language”, and that this dominance was related to the overshadowing of any poetic accomplishment by the temporal bookends of “the golden age of English poetry” in the fourteenth century and the “great Elizabethans” of the seventeenth (223). Along with a comparative dip in poetic quality, Pearsall suggests that outside of the achievements of alliterative and courtly poetry, much of the literary brilliance and advances in the fifteenth century occurred in the realms of prose and drama.⁵⁵ One innovation of the time that Pearsall does note is that, with the rise in “technology of reproduction and dissemination”

⁵²See p.124.

⁵³See Pearsall p.125.

⁵⁴Ibid. pp. 141-142.

⁵⁵Ibid. p. 223.

beginning around the time of Chaucer and continuing with Lydgate, “a popular and predominantly oral verse began to be preserved, so that the age of Lydgate is also the age of the first recorded ballads” (226). Lydgate himself authored several verse arguments, including “The Churl and the Bird” and “The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep”, both of which Pearsall discusses in the context of Lydgate as representative of the inflated poetic qualities of the fifteenth century.

The major usefulness of Pearsall's method of organization lies in the visibility of change as well as continuity within a given style over time. Pearsall's conclusion makes note of “a confused pattern of change, decline, and adaptation” (282), which he generalizes as “a shift in the role of poetry from a social form to an art form” (283). Pearsall establishes the key link in this conclusion that the perception of poetry and its connections to the general intellectual and social atmospheres greatly affected the composition and reception of the poetry of each time period. The general qualities that Pearsall observes in each time period will be useful starting points of analysis of the verse argument tradition in English, as will his conclusion about change, decline, and adaptation. For example, the thirteenth-century verse argument “Als I Lay in a Winteris Nyt” represents an early example of the tradition of body-and-soul interactions in Middle English that eventually includes Lydgate’s fifteenth-century poem “An Holy Medytacion”. Considering how the general poetic features as well as those of verse argument evolve together through this pair of poems can illustrate what becomes standard for the verse argument, and what marks a specific time and place of composition.

Alongside the chronological rise and fall of popular techniques in poetry, examining formal trends that appear specifically in the lyric poetry of the thirteenth

through fifteenth centuries will help isolate those elements that are unique to verse arguments, as well as consider how verse arguments may have followed general poetic tastes. In the introduction to his anthology of thirteenth century English lyrics, Carleton Brown makes three general observations about the poetry of that time. First, he observes the use of folk elements in religious lyric alongside the tendency towards didactic over lyrical motivation.⁵⁶ The second trend that he points out reflects how manuscript studies can contribute to knowledge about circulation and readership. Brown shows that many lyrics existed in collections, and that many of the extant collections show overlap, evidence which he uses to discuss possible circulation and transmission.⁵⁷ Lastly, Brown presents a general outline of the rise, then fall, then rise of the use of musical accompaniment. He observes the use of musical accompaniment, explicit or not, in thirteenth century lyrics, followed by the rise of the literary lyric in the fourteenth century, and the eventual reappearance of musical background in the fifteenth century, which also saw the rise of the English carol.⁵⁸ Considering how the verse arguments that were being authored and copied in the thirteenth century fit such lyric categories will illustrate the extent to which the verse arguments were connected to general poetic traditions.

Two literary trends that extend beyond the lyric tradition and require attention are the medieval fascination with allegory and what has been called the 'alliterative revival'. These two categories demand particular attention because many verse arguments, both

⁵⁶See Brown (1932) xvi.

⁵⁷Brown (1932) makes the observations about collections and how he plans to use the manuscript evidence on pp. xix-xx. His discussion about the various manuscripts and the evidence they offer to ideas about transmission and circulation takes up the remainder of his introduction, pp.xx-xlii.

⁵⁸See Brown (1932) xli-xlii.

lyric and narrative, make extensive use of one or both techniques. Studies in these areas also illustrate some of the connections between the poetic traditions and certain external traditions, such as the *artes poetriae* and the use of exegetical techniques. In the introductory essay of his collection, David Lawton notes the complexities of dealing with the tradition of alliterative poetry in Middle English by asking a series of questions regarding classification and relationships between various linked traditions, and he notes that the problems listed “are to a considerable extent problems of context” (1). The classification scheme that he proposes is on the surface simple: formal or informal, based on overall poetic style.⁵⁹ Throughout the rest of his general overview, Lawton presents a focus in the poems on moral concerns, manuscript evidence suggesting links to oral traditions, possible influences of dictamen and the *ars rithmica*, and cross-influences between Latin and English poetry exemplified by Richard Rolle.⁶⁰ Besides these general ideas about external influences, Lawton also sees the presence of verse argument within the alliterative tradition.⁶¹ Although the argumentative tradition is not a special concern for Lawton, the fact that he links verse arguments into a larger tradition related to external influences shows the relevance of bringing specific poetic traditions into conversation with more general poetic traditions, along with cultural and social conditions of the time and place that produced them.

Both Lawton and J. Stephen Russell make suggestions that reveal similar interpretive ideas that Reed would later emphasize in connection to verse argument.

⁵⁹ See Lawton 2.

⁶⁰Brown and Smithers also note Rolle's poetry, or at least the influence it had, in their anthology of fourteenth century religious lyrics (xix). The comments refer particularly to a set of lyrics in Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Dd. 5.64, III.

⁶¹ Lawton lists several poems on pp.12-13, several of which have been suggested to belong to the verse argument tradition.

Lawton proposes a general classification scheme that links to external social and cultural traditions. Russell's collection of essays on the interpretive practice of allegoresis shares some key concerns with questions of interpreting and understanding verse argument. Russell's collection employs the interpretive notion of preferring the poetic experience over the conclusion that Reed also expresses. Russell notes, "While the contributors to this book do not share a common method, they do share an appreciation of allegory as experience; each in her or his own way would say that the 'encoding' and 'decoding' processes are far more interesting and mysterious than the decoded messages (if any)" (xi). Russell also observes that modern scholars and interpreters have narrowed the definition of the concept in a way that restricts their understanding and application of what was originally a far broader understanding of allegory. He argues, "Modern literary theory, however, has incarcerated the concept of allegory by associating it only with the stable sustained figurative narrative... In the Middle Ages, allegory was not a mode of writing; it was the self-conscious recognition of the way we perceive the world, replace any thing with words or other signs" (xi). Russell illustrates the endurance of his claim by quoting Hugh St Victor, "The insubstantial word is the sign of man's perceptions; the thing is a resemblance of the Divine Idea", followed by a very similar statement from Stanley Fish, "You're never not in an allegorical situation" (xii).

This notice of a restrictive focus relates to my analysis about the definition of verse argument, as does the core concept of the "Afterword" to Russell's collection. Julian Wasserman presents a definition of 'allegory' that he suggests fits both the medieval idea identified by Russell as well as the contemporary understandings illustrated by the essays in the collection. Wasserman argues that "without exception each

of these authors evokes a common image: that of the 'gap'- the disparity, disjunction, void, or simply unfilled space that all find at the heart of allegory” (Wasserman 215). After reviewing how each of the essays of the collection suggest this definitive image, he concludes that “Diverse clerks do practice diversely, as Dame Alice tells us in her oft-quoted lines. Yet in diversity there is, as we have seen, some commonality in practice” (Wasserman 226). Wasserman's final comments suggest how medieval and modern understanding of both dialogue and allegory meet, when he references the comments of 'a more modern Alice', how “even the practical young woman who asked 'What is the use of a book...without pictures or conversations,' knew that she had entered into the disconversant dialogue of allegory” (226-227).⁶² The links between dialogue and allegory, the ideas about poetic interpretation in both the medieval mind and the modern, and the notion of a varied yet common formal structure all have much to offer towards understanding verse argument in Middle English.

Combining the Old with the New

In order to build the proposed more systematic framework for exploring Middle English verse argument, I will combine the partial definitions previously offered with observations and analyses derived from readings of a range of verse arguments, medieval textbooks and disputations, mystery dramas, sermons, and scholarship past and present. Throughout my argument, I will rely on several established methods of studying medieval literature. In order to discuss the question of how university teaching and learning might have contributed to the verse argument form, I will borrow techniques

⁶²The more modern Alice referred to is Alice Liddell, the heroine of *Alice in Wonderland*.

from textual and source criticism. First, the basic textbooks that resulted from the rise of the universities in England offer insight into argument in literary forms. The grammars and rhetorics that were popular as textbooks show changes in attitudes from their Roman predecessors that suggest reasons for the popularity of and influences on the form of verse arguments.⁶³ Other related writings that take on the topic of the *artes poetriae* and the trivium but are not strictly textbooks include Allan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, his *Planctu Naturae*, his "Conflictus Justitiae et Misericordiae", and his *quaestiones*.⁶⁴ Sets of glosses, prologues, and other commentaries, such as the *Summa* of Petrus Helias on Priscian, contribute evidence of how medieval writers and thinkers defined and applied interpretive techniques. Texts such as these all provide insight into some of the techniques of form, content and style that are used consistently in many of the different types of verse arguments in Middle English.

Beyond the *artes poetriae* and textbooks on rhetoric, two other crucial sources of style for verse arguments are the understandings and practices of *disputatio* and the ubiquitous *artes praedicandi*. One of the key features of the medieval university

⁶³McKeon, Wagner, and Kelly (among others) all include consideration of Greco-Roman precedents for medieval rhetoric and grammar in their work. Some of the useful antique and ancient authors in the medieval canon of study include Cato's *Distichs*, Horace's *Epistula Ad Pisonem* (aka *Ars Poetica*), Donatus' *Ars Maior* and *Ars Minor*, Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum sive Originum*, and Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Some of the more influential medieval grammars and rhetorics include John of Garland's *Poetria Nova*, Matthew of Vendome's *Ars Versificatoria*, Alexander of Ville-Dieu's *Doctrinale*, the *Grecismus* of Eberhard of Bethune, and the *Quaestiones de Modis Significandi* attributed to Albertus Magnus.

⁶⁴Also of use are Alan's commentary on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and his *ars praedicandi*. Although some of these texts may not be immediately accessible, their existence shows that Alan was familiar with the materials and methods of such works, which likely influenced his other writings. To my knowledge, the commentary of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* remains unedited at this time, but it is described and discussed, along with the *quaestiones* and *ars preadicandi*, in d'Alverny's *Alain De Lille: Textes Inédits* (52-55). d'Alverny's book also includes descriptions and analyses of other glosses and commentaries attributed to Alan of Lille (71-106).

pedagogy was the rising importance and changes to the practice of *disputatio*.⁶⁵ The practical applications of medieval logic and argumentative rhetoric are visible influences in the more literary debate poems. Since the same elements of logic and rhetoric also applied to the preaching manuals of the time in a different context, the *artes praedicandi* provide insight into how various rhetorical and logical strategies might be combined for persuasive, didactic, and/or entertainment effects. In practice, *disputatio* would have been key training for future clergymen as well as lawyers, and both homiletic elements as well as legal procedure are clearly noticeable in certain verse debates. Clerks and students are likely candidates for both characters within verse debates as well as authors or scribes.⁶⁶ Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and William of Ockham represent the kinds of thinking and writing that influenced the realms of logic, theology, and argumentation during the times when both the universities and debate poetry were developing. All three thinkers composed disputational texts as well as a variety of other writings which shed light on the ways that disputation, logic, and rhetoric were combined and used in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries.⁶⁷

In addition to the theories of rhetoric, logic, commentary, interpretation, and argumentation, the records provided by the manuscripts offer examples of many of the

⁶⁵Orme (2006) and Murphy (*Rhetoric*) both outline some of the basic practices of the medieval *disputatio*. Spade looks at medieval *insolubilia*, and discusses Ockham, Aquinas, and Bradwardine in the context of the Liar paradox. All of the scholars named above, medieval and modern, suggest ideas about logic, *disputatio*, and argument in general that have useful applications in considering the techniques displayed in the verse arguments.

⁶⁶*The Owl and the Nightingale* involves a clerk as the agreed upon judge who has been speculated to be a candidate for authoring the poem. Some other verse debates starring clerks include “The Nightingale and the Clerk I and II”, “De Clerico et Puella”, and the “Ballad of the Crow and Pie”.

⁶⁷In regard to disputation texts, both Aquinas and Ockham published *Quaestiones*, and Abelard published *Sic and Non*. Other potentially useful texts include Abelard’s *Dialogus inter Philosophum, Iudaeum, et Christianum*, Ockham’s *Summa of Logic* and commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, and Aquinas’ commentary on the *Sentences*, and his discussions of Aristotle in the *Summa Theologiae* and commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

theories in practice. Codicological evidence is crucial for considering potential connections between medieval ideas about reading, writing, performance, and verse argument. Miscellanies of various kinds are the major source of manuscripts which preserve verse argument. Analyzing what kinds of other pieces the verse arguments are collected with sheds light on how/what people might have thought about arguments in verse, as well as offering information about the sorts of readers the poems might have had. If the manuscript was compiled after the sixteenth century, then the book might offer some perspective on how the view of the verse argument changed. The dialogue format of the verse argument form suggests that the poems may have been performed or read aloud in dramatic fashion, and this notion is echoed by stylistic parallels to dramatic forms, as well as some of the prefaces and frames attached to various verse arguments.⁶⁸ The performance element is also useful in considering the didactic slant that many of the verse arguments have, since verse (and dramatic narrative) has been linked to pedagogy by scholars both medieval and modern.⁶⁹

Verse argument cannot be treated narrowly as a straightforward genre because of its great variety. Genre and comparative studies will provide useful insights towards creating an analytical framework because the theoretical practices of these two areas allow for the analysis of a broad range of features within a single literary tradition. Much work has been done on the formal and cultural elements of many other popular Middle English literary forms, including drama, narrative verse, alliterative verse, romance (verse

⁶⁸For example, there is a preface to *The Flyting betwixt Montgomerie and Polwart* which states that the following series of poems are performances. Davidoff takes the idea of the frame story or setting as her main topic, and Merrill notes connections between verse and drama.

⁶⁹Ziolkowski and Carruthers both focus on the importance of poetry as a didactic tool on the modern side. Representing the medieval scholars, Matthew Vendome, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and John Garland all observe the importance of using verse to aid in instruction and learning.

and prose), love complaints, homilies, and lyric verse. All of these genres relate in some degree to verse arguments, and the comparisons and contrasts between the standard genre conventions and applications in verse arguments will yield insights into what might have been considered recognizable as the verse argument form. If verse argument is considered more broadly than just poems containing an argument between multiple voices, its features also appear in: the medieval drama, some of which are continued into the Renaissance and beyond; in lyric exchanges both in the medieval period and beyond; and in prose dialogues in the Socratic fashion (including *Dives and Pauper*, Trevisa's *Dialogue on Translation Between a Clerk and Lord*, and *Questiones bytwene the Maister of Oxenford and his Clerke*).⁷⁰ Comparing the verse arguments to other literature that has similar features will help to illustrate what makes the verse argument unique as a form.

In both anthologies and in-depth studies on single poems, the defining characteristics of the verse argument form are tailored to the particular work(s) in question. Several anthologies and studies concentrating on verse arguments exist, and what they note as definitive characteristics of verse argument vary from the use of narrative, to binary combatants, to the emotional charge of the rhetoric.⁷¹ In each case, the focus of the definition seems to mirror the qualities of the selections chosen for the

⁷⁰The medieval dramatic form most directly aligned with the verse argument is the mystery play. An example of a lyric exchange occurs in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson poet. 36. The first poem presents a letter in a woman's voice mocking her lover, "Unto you, most forward, þis letter I write" (3v), and the following poem gives the lover's mocking response "O Fresch floure, most plesant of pryse" (4r) (Robbins poems 208 and 209, p.219-222). A later example is Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" and Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd". Murphy's edition of *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts* and Camargo's *Medieval Rhetorics of Prose Composition: Five English Artes Dictandi and Their Tradition* provide an assortment of writing manuals from which to draw conventions and relationships between the different types of writing commonly taught.

⁷¹Utley notes narrative as a definitive characteristic, binaries are the focus on Bossy, Conlee, and Fletcher (2005) who all also suggest the influence of human psychology or sociology. Bestul and Fletcher both point to the emotional states of the main speakers.

anthology, and not necessarily the qualities of the form as a whole. In scholarship, the problem is similar. For example, Bestul's study of *Winnere and Wastoure* claims that the definitive feature of argument literature is a dedication to displaying human rationality and the marvel of speech, while Hume's study focusing on *The Owl and the Nightingale* suggests that the main feature of a verse argument was how the resolution is treated.⁷²

Previous scholarship regarding the *trivium* (especially rhetoric and grammar), *artes poetricae*, *artes praedicandi*, and *disputatio* is plentiful, but little of it concentrates on connections to verse argument in a sustained fashion.⁷³ Studies of logic and disputation tend to focus on the intellectual history and non-literary potential, while much of the scholarship on medieval poetic theory (including the works of the theorists themselves) restricts itself to stylistic and formal practices of verse in general.⁷⁴ Studies of sermon-giving (particularly of the how-to manuals) tend to concentrate on how the medieval preacher might keep an audience interested while at the same time imparting the necessary teachings. The nature of the teachings and how they were constructed and/or interpreted is also a relevant factor of the scholarship.⁷⁵ What the *artes poetricae*, *artes praedicandi*, and disputation all have in common is the importance of interpretation, the use of authority, awareness of an audience, and concerns with propriety and

⁷²See Bestul 74 and Hume 35 respectively.

⁷³Murphy (*Rhetoric*) discusses both rhetoric and *artes poetricae* in depth, but only in the context of primary and historical sources of study and not in the context of how such primary sources and knowledge may have been applied in literature. Copeland, in *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, makes the connection between rhetoric and the *artes poetricae* in the context of a chapter dedicated to exploring the medieval conception of *inventio* (151—178).

⁷⁴See for example Murphy (*Rhetoric*) and Minnis (2009) for scholarship on general composition theory during the medieval period. For composition theories of the medieval writers themselves, see for example Minnis' & Scott's anthology, and John of Garland.

⁷⁵For example, both Leff and Minnis (1988) include discussions of the relationships between practices in the arts and theology, and both examine the nature of theological interpretation and preaching as taught to students. Pieper examines the interactions between theology and logic.

correctness, both in form and content. These concerns are also crucial to verse argument, but the overlaps have not yet been explored, either in relation to their presence or their possible importance.

A general understanding of the rhetorical situation, both academic and popular, of debate poetry is another key element of recognizing and defining the form. The written aspects of the verse debates show a reliance on performances by the debaters, and occasionally the narrators. As such, studies regarding medieval dramatic performances as well as the performative aspects of reading have much to offer to scholars of verse debate.⁷⁶ In relation to reading and performance, codicological and philological techniques provide evidence of who read verse debates and perhaps even offer clues as to how they were read. Performance in writing relates to the medieval notion of repeating and adapting the *auctores*. Studies of medieval rhetorical theory have suggested that the writers relied often on canonical works of earlier writers, and the same idea is applicable to debate verse.⁷⁷

While these techniques of source criticism have been widely used to consider single titles as well as other forms of medieval literature, they have not been applied to the verse arguments form as a whole. Analyses concentrating on individual lyric arguments, narrative disagreements, and texts that contain argument scenes will create a composite idea of what the nature of verse argument is. This discussion will also illustrate what characteristics are necessary (shared) and which are not. Like the scholarship on

⁷⁶The notion of performative reading is a main focus of Coleman's study, and the subject is also discussed in Müller's article in Classen ("Performance of Medieval Texts", vol.2). Also see Gash and McQuillan, who both discuss different ways in which conversations and arguments can take place within a medieval play.

⁷⁷Minnis (1988 and 2009) concentrates on the medieval understanding of *auctoritas* and *auctor*. Watson focuses on a specific medieval writer's relationship with *auctoritas*, and includes some general comments on how *auctoritas* could be adapted and used by a writer in the medieval period.

genres and individual titles, the prologues and commentaries of various literary works make observations and arguments about interpretive techniques in the medieval period, even if none is applied directly to verse argument.⁷⁸

The verse arguments show possible connections with prose debates, dramas, as well as several other genres that were known during the medieval period. Considerations of the similarities and differences between the verse arguments and other types of literature are crucial in determining what separates the verse argument from other literary forms. Traits common to multiple forms and/or genres will prove useful in analyzing how the verse debate form as it existed in the medieval period adapted and evolved to fit changing literary tastes of later periods.

A key question in scholarship within the past few decades that relates to Middle English debate literature is why the form became so popular during the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, and seemingly dropped out of use in the sixteenth. Arguments about the form's initial popularity involve the rise of disputation and specialization of rhetoric/grammar understanding in the universities, the sharpening of group identities and consciousness that came with quickly changing social and political atmospheres, and modern interest in and attention to practices of performance, orality and reading during the medieval period. Representing the trend of investigating the changes in medieval

⁷⁸Such scholarship includes Baldwin, Bland, Minnis & Scott, and Murphy. An obvious reason for the lack of application of commentary and prologue traditions in the medieval period is that there are no known commentaries, prologues, or glossed versions of verse arguments. However, the techniques and analytical methods used both in the commentaries, glosses, and prologues, as well as the studies of them, are promising tools for the study of the verse argument. This potential comes largely from direct references to the practices themselves in Middle English poetry. For example, Chaucer references the practice of glossing early in his poem *The Parliament of Fowls*, and Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis* is set up as the inspiration for the first segment of the dream. On the scholarly side, there has been discussion of Chaucer's potential use (or at least awareness) of glosses on Boccaccio's *Tesseida* in the same poem (see for example Morgan's 2005 analysis).

education that reflect evolving understanding of the *artes poetriae* in light of rhetorical practices such as disputation, Copeland and Murphy (*Rhetoric*) both note the increasing specialization and broadening use of theory in university classroom and textbook practices.⁷⁹ Many such pedagogical trends have direct effects on the production of debate verse, which deals quite a bit with argumentation, as well as offering insight into the high percentage of clerks who appear within the poems themselves.⁸⁰

Elements of the university and social systems as influences on debate poems are presented in a similar light by Bossy. In the introduction to an anthology of medieval vernacular debate poems (none of which is in English), Bossy first defines the debate genre as, “Playful battles of words and wits [that] exist in all societies” (xi).⁸¹ He goes on to suggest that “The appeal of those contests of words and wit is grounded in a common human impulse: the primal fascination with opposites, the teasing desire to create inversions through mirrored images, to conjure up separateness out of oneness” (Bossy xi).⁸² For Bossy, more specifically medieval reasons affecting the increase of debate poetry are the rise of literacy, polemics in education, and the sharpening of group identities and consciousness.⁸³ He also points to the rise of urban educational centers over the more secluded monastic ones, which he suggests are linked to the rising prominence of dialectic over rhetoric and the emphasis on public performance.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Woods’ and Briscoe’s essays in Morse et al. also contribute to the exploration of university and textbook theory and practices.

⁸⁰Copeland, Murphy (*Rhetoric*).

⁸¹The anthology does not include any works in Middle English although the introduction does discuss some Middle English verse debates. Fletcher (2005) also examines verse argument in a social context, however his essay goes on to concentrate exclusively on a single title (*The Owl and the Nightingale*).

⁸² Fletcher (2005) also argues for a strong social function of the verse argument based on opposing binaries.

⁸³See Bossy xii-xvi.

⁸⁴See Bossy xii-xiii.

In both textual and oral forms, the authoritative nature of dialogue was a powerful rhetorical tool in academic and popular contexts. Ideas about performance in reading culture of the medieval time period are covered in more depth by both Carruthers and Coleman (1996). One of the foundations of Carruthers' discussion of memory in the medieval time period is that the current (ie-modern) understanding of the term 'memory' differs significantly from how the term would have been used in the Middle Ages. Throughout her book she traces how concepts and trends like metaphor, *inventio*, imagery, the *artes poetricae*, and the rise of book culture affected how people of the medieval period learned, thought, and received ideas from and about literature. Since the dramatic element of multiple voices is one of the key components of argument literature, the ideas that Carruthers covers are highly useful in considering how the audience might perceive a verse argument as well as how an author might attempt to structure one. Like Carruthers, Coleman's arguments also offer possible explanations for how and why verse arguments could have been so popular when it was. One of the keys to Coleman's argument is that even in the later years of the Middle Ages, when print culture was on the rise, people of every social level retained an appreciation for oral performance of literature.

This final dilemma of the survival of the verse argument form illustrates the need for a more comprehensive study of what constitutes a verse argument. Conlee claims, "by the end of the fifteenth century the debate poem had more or less exhausted its potential as a distinctive literary genre" (xiii). On the other side, Reed notes, "Looking at either end of what is admittedly a radical chronological bell-curve, the theme probably originated in the second millennium Egypt and endured long enough to find a modest if

largely unacknowledged place in the works of Longfellow, James Thomson, and Heine” (1).⁸⁵ By establishing some definitive features of the verse argument, the question of how the form evolved beyond the fifteenth century can be more easily addressed.

In summary, a systematic framework for the verse argument form needs to consider the intellectual and cultural contexts that influenced the literature as well as the formal literary features. In order to discuss the context of intellectual background of the poems, I will concentrate on university pedagogy and textbooks to consider the possible influence of the *artes poetriae*, textbooks on rhetoric, *disputatio* and the *artes praedicandi*. The cultural background of the Middle English debate poems will be considered by looking at a variety of related literary forms. The manuscripts which preserve the verse arguments are the tool that will bring together the cultural and intellectual contexts together with the formal, literary elements. The knowledge held by the authors, scribes, and readers is crucial evidence in determining the definitive elements of a genre, and such information is most directly available by looking at the manuscripts. Likewise, the manuscripts provide the most direct examples of the poems themselves, both as physical objects and as abstract literary representations.

Models and tropes shared by the poems and the academic disputation and popular sermon traditions suggest that the poems often referred to as ‘debate’ take inspiration from both the intellectual and popular traditions. One of the main goals of this project will be to identify the various structures which an argument in verse might take. Based on

⁸⁵ Reed’s paraphrase of Utley is made specifically in reference to the Body-Soul debates. Reed’s reference is especially interesting here because just a few sentences earlier he stated that “Not only has the culture that produced it receded into the penumbra of the Dark Ages, but the genre itself has virtually gone extinct”. The suggestion that certain debates survive but the genre as whole did not still illustrates the claim that the verse argument form in some way persisted well beyond the medieval period.

the survey of scholarship just presented, the poems commonly referred to as 'debates' will be defined here for the time being as “poems based around a dialogue expressing an argument between two or more voices who profess contradictory or contrasting thoughts on a given topic”. Many of the techniques applied in verse arguments appear in various structures, although not necessarily in the same usage. Beyond elements taken from the academic, cultural, and social traditions separately or in combination, two other factors that qualify a work as a verse argument are that the work be in verse, and that it presents interaction between at least two perspectives in some way.

The verse arguments must remain at the core of my argument. The importance of the external influences of intellectual and cultural background can only supplement the information offered by the poems themselves. Features shared by the poems will be identified as well as how individual poems might modify the common elements. Once a base of knowledge and interpretation is laid out, the question becomes how poems interact with their writers' and readers' knowledge presented through key techniques including the use of voices, narrative, argument, interpretation, notions of true and false, and claims of right and wrong. I intend to illustrate how opening up the criteria for recognizing a 'debate poem' by presenting multiple structural models of argumentation might prove enlightening, while at the same time providing more specific and detailed criteria for classification. Together, the external and internal features of the Middle English verse debate will provide a more broadly applicable vocabulary for classification of the form than has been previously offered, as well as offer some insights into the evolution and adaptation of the genre beyond the Middle English period.

Chapter 2-Foundations of Argument: The Logic of Poetry and Grammar

In spite of a theoretical binary that created tension between logic and the arts, the verse argument illustrates how the two areas of thought could coexist in application. I will argue that the Middle English verse argument engages directly with key concepts and questions related to the *artes poetricae*, medieval grammars and commentaries, and dialectical argumentation. The simultaneous application of dialectic and poetic techniques described in these works reflects a set of features that occur in a certain style of verse argument. These features are derived from the evolution of the intellectual traditions and associated *topoi*. In this chapter I will illustrate how academic disputation and commentary and the Latin poetic traditions provide a base outline for argument and some other key tropes that occur in the type of Middle English poem generally labeled as “debate”.

Shared concerns regarding organization, style, and interpretation link the *artes poetricae*, grammar textbooks, and commentaries to each other and to the verse argument tradition. Although these three key elements of the medieval education share some of the same techniques and tropes, theoretical discussion and application varies. Shared techniques include the use of *auctoritas* and the interactions between student and teacher voices. The different applications appear particularly in relation to the changing influences of the commentary and the influence of dialectical traditions on didactic dialogues and poetic theory. Common tropes which illustrate the shifting relationships are a thematic concern with definition and-or truth, a lack or ambiguity of judgment in the argument at stake, and a distinction of either an intellectual or active goal.

Formats and Precedents: Commentary, Dialectic, and Poetic

The ninth century saw the introduction of the commentary as more than marginal comments on the main text;¹ around the same time, some key predecessors of the Middle English verse argument were being composed in Latin. Many manuscripts recording these traditions date to the same time period as the Middle English verse arguments (the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries), which illustrates the likelihood that the traditions are linked. The Latin tradition of verse argument established several of the poetic tropes that the Middle English poems would later adapt, and the commentaries and disputations on grammatical and literary texts provided a structural model-outline for the argument itself. Manuscripts containing Latin verse arguments were in England at the time when many of the verse arguments in Middle English were being written and recorded. For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 754, dating to the fifteenth century, contains a Latin verse argument between Water and Wine; a Body and Soul argument was recorded in London, British Library Royal MS 7.A.iii, which dates to the twelfth century; London, British Library Harley MS 978 contains a version of the Phyllis and Flora argument, a Body-Soul argument, and a verse argument between a scholastic and a bishop (thirteenth-fourteenth century); Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge MS O.9.38 (late fifteenth-century) has versions of the arguments between Winter and Spring, and Wine and Water; and Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge MS O.9.28 has two

¹ Copeland argues that exegesis and commentary allows the human to replace the divine *auctor* as creative entity (112-113). This idea reflects the growing importance of the author as an individual with *auctoritas* beyond that of his source. Copeland uses the emergence of the *accessus* to argue that eventually the commentaries superseded the *auctoritas* of the original texts by adapting academic exegetical techniques for vernacular works (82-86, 186-202).

fifteenth century Latin arguments, one between a rich and poor man, and the other between the Body and Soul.

In some cases, no records of English adaptations survive until after the Middle English period, but records of the Latin poems and other texts recording the same knowledge and conventions suggest that such poems did exist in the thirteenth through fifteenth century England. For example, Latin versions of debates between Water and Wine were known in England by the fifteenth century, but no version in English is known to have survived until the seventeenth century.² With the flower debates, the same problem exists. No medieval manuscript records of a verse argument in English between flowers survives, but the same tropes and qualities used in the verse arguments are preserved in other English sources. For example, in what Alicia Amherst calls “the earliest English gardening treatise” (48), roses, violets, and lilies are all mentioned in a list of “Herbys to make both sawce and sewe”. (ll.155)³ The English poem is titled “The Feat of Gardeninge” and is preserved in the fifteenth-century manuscript Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge MS O.9.38, ff.18v-20v. Elsewhere, lilies and roses were also recognized for both edible and aesthetic values.⁴ In the fourteenth-century *The Forme of Cury*, roses are mentioned in multiple recipes. One recipe reads,

ROSEE [1]. XX.II. XII. Take thyk mylke as to fore welled [2]. cast þerto sugur a gode porcioun pynes. Dates ymynced. canel. & powdour gynger and seep it, and alye it with flores of white Rosis, and flour of rys, cole it, salt it & messe it forth. If þou wilt in stede of Almaunde mylke, take swete cremes of kyne. (31)⁵

² Hanford (1913) 361.

³ Text is from Rigg’s edition. Violet and lily are listed in line 174, and roses in 179 (both red and white).

⁴ Amherst reviews several gardening and cookery books in English that include references to roses and lilies (59-62, 71-76).

⁵ The edition used here is Pegge’s.

On the literary side, Chaucer mentions lilies and roses in *The Knight's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale* in terms similar to those in the Latin verse arguments. The lily's representation of goodness and purity is used in a description of Emily ("That Emelie, that fairer was to seene/ Than is the lillie or hire stalke grene." (ll.1035-1036)), and the Nun's description of St. Cecilia: "First wol I you the name of Seinte Cecilie/ Expoune, as men may in hire storie see: / It is to sayn in English, Heven's lillie."(ll.85-87) The scent and color of the rose is mentioned in *The Knight's Tale* ("And on hire hed ful semely for to see/ A rose gerlond fresh and wel smelling." (ll.1960-1961)), and also in a fifteenth-century *Ave Maria*: "Heil be thou, Marie, that art flour of alle/ As roose in eerbir so reed!"⁶

Such thematic connections between the Latin and Middle English poetic traditions lead to a second point of intersection in the interactions of the traditions of poetry and logic. Some of the authors of Latin verse arguments also wrote academic commentaries, which enhances the likelihood that the two traditions were related. Two such writers were Sedulius Scottus and Alcuin. Alcuin was educated in eighth-century England and Scottus in ninth-century Ireland. Although records of knowledge of their poetry are scattered, the commentaries of both scholars were known in England.⁷ While both scholar-poets spent

⁶ The quotations from Chaucer come from Amherst's citations (60-61). Other floral references in these two tales include the rose and lily together, as in the prologue to *The Second Nun's Tale* (ll.27). A reference to a rose in connection to Emily's appearance follows that of the lily a few lines later in *The Knight's Tale* (ll.1038). Amherst also points out that in the records of the Norwich Priory, only roses and lilies are specifically mentioned (61), which illustrates the importance of these two flowers in particular. The quotation from the *Ave Maria* comes from Amherst (60).

⁷ The most direct evidence of knowledge of Scottus' work in England is from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner MS 3, which contains an eleventh-century booklist regarding the curriculum of grammatical *auctores*, including Scottus. Another list of *auctores* to study appears in London, British Library Cotton MS Domitian I (See Irvine 343-344). Other evidence of knowledge of the Priscian commentary comes from glosses derived from Scottus that appear in a ninth century manuscript of the *Institutiones* (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Auct. T. 1. 26). A thirteenth-century copy of the commentary on the Donatus *Maiores* made its way to England by the sixteenth-century (London, British Library, Arundel MS 43). Alcuin's writings are recorded in London, British Library Harley MS 4980; Salisbury, Salisbury Cathedral MS 165;

much of their academic careers on the Continent, their mutual influence by Virgil suggests that some of the poetic traditions in which they wrote were known in England, particularly the use of *auctores* and dialogue. Little is known about Scottus' education and background,⁸ but the references to Virgil in his poetry are abundant. Alcuin also uses Virgilian references in his works, and in his poem *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* he includes Virgil in a list of authors essential for study. Towards the end of the poem, as he describes the library of Sancta Sophia which he helped build, Alcuin states,

There you will find the legacy of the ancient fathers:/ all the Roman possessed in the Latin world/.../the teachings of Aldhelm and Bede the master,/ the writings of Victorinus and Boethius,/ and the ancient historians Pompey and Pliny,/ of keen-minded Aristotle and of Cicero the great rhetorician;/ all the poetry of Sedulius and Juvencus,/ of Alcimius Avitus and Prudentius, Prosper, Paulinus, Arator,/ the works of Fortunatus and Lactantius,/ the authoritative writings of **Virgil**, Statius, and Lucan; and the masters of the grammatical art;/ the works of Probus and Focas, Donatus and Priscian,/ Servius, Eutyches, Pompeius and Cominianus./ There, reader, you will find many others,/ teachers outstanding for their learning, art, and style” (1536-1537...1547-1559).⁹

These two scholar-poets exemplify early Latin examples of the connected traditions that would be picked up by the Middle English verse argument. Records of Alcuin's poetry in England are scattered, with no single collection known.¹⁰ For example, the tenth-century London, British Library, Cotton Claudius A.1 contains a copy of poem 18 (5r). A ninth-century manuscript with connections to England, London, British Library, Harley MS 208, contains three of Alcuin's poems within a collection of his correspondence.¹¹

London, British Library, Harley MSS 208 and 213; and Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge MS O.2.26, among others.

⁸ Doyle 9-10.

⁹ This list also notably includes Donatus and Priscian. Emphasis added is my own. Translation is Goodman's. Alcuin also quoted Virgil (and Ovid) in his letters, and his appreciation for Virgil was noted in his biography (Irvine 315-316).

¹⁰ Bullough notes that the poems are among the least well preserved of Alcuin's works (3).

¹¹ Duemmler labels the poems CCXIV, CCXXXII, and CCXXXIII (166).

The concerns about poetry and logic comes more from Alcuin's correspondence than his commentaries, but the shared admiration-concern with Virgil points to a thematic continuation in respect to poetic *auctoritas*. The verse argument between Winter and Spring attributed to Alcuin is not securely attributed to him, although the connection to the Goliardic style of poetry in which the poem is written was certainly known in England. For example, manuscripts recording *Apocalypsis Goliae Episcopi* include Harley 978, London, British Library Harley MS 2851; London, British Library Cotton MS Vespasian A xix; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 98; and Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge MS O.2.45.¹² Whether or not the verse argument between Winter and Spring is genuinely by Alcuin, the poem illustrates interactions between art and logic similar to Alcuin's letters, Scottus' later verse argument, and the commentaries of both scholar-poets. Given the persistence of the patterns through genre, time and geography, they are unlikely to be coincidental.

The argument between Winter and Spring attributed to Alcuin was known in England through another version of the disagreement recorded in *TCC* O.9.38. The version of this conflict preserved in *TCC* O.9.38 presents an incomplete argument and dates five centuries later. Alcuin's version presents a much earlier form of the argument that illustrates a likely precedent that the later poem and others like it built upon. Elements that would become common in Middle English verse arguments that are present in Alcuin's "Conflict of Spring and Winter" include an argument over who is better, a lack of final judgment, and a Christian theme.¹³ This verse argument includes some clear

¹²For a full list of manuscripts containing this poem, see Wright 1.

¹³Raby notes that this particular poem may be of Irish origin, which contributes to the attribution to Alcuin (1959, 465).

connections to the Virgilian tradition of amoebean contests with a pastoral setting and a couple of shepherds as the audience (and eventual judges).¹⁴ The give and take between the Winter and Spring reflects the amoebean pastoral tradition, as each response contains a verbal echo of what came immediately before it. For example, in the second exchange, Spring begins, “With strength, let my cuckoo come with the joyful sprout,/ it dismisses the cold, kind companion to Phoebus in the season./ Phoebus loves the cuckoo with growing gentle light” (ll.15-18).¹⁵ To this Winter responds, “Let not the cuckoo come, because it perchance brings labors,/ it increases struggles, estranges beloved rest,/ disrupts everything; on sea and land, they work” (ll.19-21). The verbal echo also gives the exchange a sense of continuity, as though Winter and Spring were actually arguing and speaking to each other.

After the second round of the contest, the argument suddenly takes a more personal and antagonistic tone that is not a feature of classical pastoral, amoebean song. Spring begins to interrogate Winter, and Winter is forced to defend his positions. Spring asks “What abuses are you singing, limping Winter?” (ll.22-23), and later, “Who, slow Winter, amasses wealth for/with you, (who are) always ready to sleep,/ or gathers any treasures,/ if spring or seasons do no work before you?” (ll.34-36) Winter responds by explaining his value and why the cuckoo and spring are problematic for him.¹⁶ The narrative interrupts the discussion at this point, and the two shepherds declare their judgment, “Cease these many things, Winter, you (who are) wasteful of things and harsh,/

¹⁴ These features are also used in Scottus’ tenth-century “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”. Reed points out the pastoral connection in Alcuin’s poem with ‘debate poetry’ (105-110), although he suggests that the pastoral-amoebean element is minimized in favor of the “actual substance of the debate” (106).

¹⁵Text comes from Raby (1959) poem 75. Translations are my own.

¹⁶See ll.25-27, 31-33, 37-39. Winter presents a restful scenario by the fire, and enjoying treasure and food. He also suggests that the proud yet poor peasant (*pauper inopsque superbus*, ll. 37) benefits from these things Winter offers, and not from what Spring offers, namely hard work.

and let the cuckoo come, the sweet friend of shepherds” (ll.42-43). The bias of the judges likely appeals to that of the audience, and the poem shifts from argument to a brief statement of praise for all that the cuckoo represents, including green branches (i.e. rebirth and spring) and love.¹⁷

Much like Alcuin’s poetry, the verse argument of Sedulius Scottus illustrates early examples of conventions apparent in later Middle English poems, but with no direct manuscript tradition to connect them. Two manuscripts record the bulk of the occasional poems of Sedulius Scottus (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 10615-729 and MS Mettensis 500).¹⁸ Although neither of these two main poetic manuscripts was known in England, several of the conventions used in Scottus' poems were. In Scottus' verse argument between the Rose and the Lily, many of the qualities that each flower argues for are also present in English sources. The Lily as a representation of purity and the Rose favored for its scent and beauty that Scottus uses were well-known in England in the time when many of the verse arguments were recorded and-or composed, as their presence in Chaucer’s work and other texts demonstrates.

Scottus' verse argument between the Rose and the Lily (“About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”) and his conversation with the Muse (“Holy Muse, Answer”) together with his commentaries on Priscian and Donatus show interconnections between the logical and poetic arts.¹⁹ The late classical grammarians relied on three primary principles

¹⁷See ll. 44-52. Reed suggests that the entire poem (and others like it) reflects this bias and that the argument itself is an exercise in aesthetic suspense (137).

¹⁸ MS Mettensis 500 contains poems 1-14, and a third manuscript, Fribourg MS 35 (prev. D. 1442) contains poem 41. Manuscript information is from Meyers (ix-xxvi).

¹⁹ The textual references to both poems are from *CCCM CXVII*. “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily” is labeled poem 81, and the title “De Rosae Liliique Certamine” appears in the manuscript. “Holy Muse, Answer” is poem 75, and has no title label. This poem is referred to by the opening words, “Sacra Camena, refer”. Translations are my own.

for establishing their own authority through *Latinitas: consuetudo, ratio*, and the one which would become the dominant concern, *auctoritas* (Irvine 74-75). In Scottus' poetic examples, *ratio* is demonstrated through the use of the disputation-commentary structure, *consuetudo* through the poetry itself, and *auctoritas* through references to Virgil. Within "About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily" Scottus uses parallels with the *Aeneid*, *Georgics* and *Eclogues*. For example, the first line spoken by the Rose states, "Purple gives royal power, purple becomes the glory of the kingdom" (ll.5), which reflects the phrases 'purple of kings' and 'painted purple moves not the king' from the *Georgics* 2.495 and *Aeneid* 7.251-252 respectively.²⁰ Later, the Rose claims, "And Phoebus loves me, I am the messenger of rosy Phoebus" (ll.14), which echoes *Aeneid* 3.119 and *Eclogue* 3.62. There are also Virgilian references in "Holy Muse, Answer" from the *Aeneid*. The Muse says, "He taught me to speak sweet poems of the Muses:/He, more skilled than Phoebus, plays musical gusts./ Glorify this father poet, in whose sight/ long-haired Apollo is nothing, good Christ" (9-12). These lines allude to "thus it is I begin to speak" (2.242) and repeat the epithet "long-haired Apollo" (9.638) from the *Aeneid*.

Along with respect for the *auctores*, Scottus' use of Virgil in his verse argument illustrates the beginning of questioning the relationships between the classical *auctores* and the Christian, and between art and logic. By referring to both literary and religious *auctoritas*, Scottus emphasizes the importance of evidentiary proof. This connection also appears in the two poems examined above, when Scottus shows his affinity for taking the classical images and their represented ideas and transitioning to Christian counterparts. A similar effect appears in Scottus' commentary. In his commentary of Book III of Donatus'

²⁰ Text from Virgil is from Meyers, supplemented with lines numbers and text as needed from Goold's editions. Translation is my own.

Ars Maiorem, poetry is present as a subject of discussion and as some of the *exempla*.

Scottus includes the Roman *auctores* presented by his predecessor, but he adds Christian examples as his most definitive proof. For example, when discussing Donatus' definition of 'barbarism', Scottus argues,

The question arises that what Donatus calls “barbarism” is one part a defect of speech, when many other parts are not defective, and Consentius defines it as: “barbarism is one defective part of speech in a certain part of itself.” To this it must be answered that Donatus spoke rightly because as the apostle Paul says: *if one limb suffers, all limbs suffer with it*, likewise when some letter and syllable or accent is corrupted, all these parts become deformed. (318, ll.46-53) ²¹

Scottus discusses and critiques the definitions of stylistic errors in a manner suggestive of a logical proof or disputation. The proof continues, “If however this proves true... We know... If therefore... If however... For this must be known...”²² After the Christian propriety is established, the commentary continues to present other grammarians and Virgil as sources of evidence.

Virgil is referenced as an example of Donatus' evidence, while Scottus' own arguments most often challenge or expand on Donatus and Virgil with the ideas from other grammarians including Isidore, Consentius, Murethach, and Lareshomensis.²³ For example in the discussion of problems with syllables, Scottus refers to Donatus' example from *Aeneid* IV.52,

²¹Text is from *CCCM XLb*. Translation is my own.

²²Ibid. p. 318, ll.56-65. “Si autem hoc verum approbatur... Sciemus... Si igitur... si autem... Nam hoc sciendum...”

²³ Murethach authored a text called *In Donati artem maiorem*, and the text known as ‘Lareshomensis’ is an anonymous *Expositio in Donatum maiorem*. All three commentaries (Murethach, Lareshomensis, and Scottus) date to the ninth-century, and concern themselves particularly with emphasis on written discourse in discussions of Donatus' treatment of *vox* in his *Ars Maior* (Irvine 97). Löfstedt's introduction to the Lareshomensis text suggests that there were manuscript connections between the three commentaries, although Scottus' and Lareshomensis' texts appear more directly related to each other than Murethach's (xiii).

SYSTOLE IS THE SHORTENING OF A SYLLABLE AGAINST ITS NATURE, THE OPPOSITE OF ECTASIS, AS IN ‘AQUOSUS ORION’, WITH ‘ORION’ MEANT TO BE SAID SHORTENED. But the poet, when an amphibrachic ought not be put in heroic verse, shortened the first syllable of his name against its nature. Moreover Orion is certainly a star in the sky.²⁴ (357, 23-27)

In this section of his analysis, Sedulius borrows from Murethach and Lareshomensis to critique Virgil, and clarify Donatus’ use of the *auctor*. Scottus rarely quotes a classical *auctor* as his own evidence in discussing Donatus, but when he does, Scottus uses the *auctores* to discuss each other. For example,

APHERESIS IS A REMOVAL FROM THE BEGINNING OF SAYING, THE OPPOSITE OF PROTHESIS, AS ‘MITTE’ FOR ‘OMITTE’. Whence Terence says, *rem potius dic ac mitte loqui* for ‘omitte’, because it is composed of ‘ob’ and ‘mitte’, but the ‘b’ is removed in the sequence. AND ‘TEMNO’ FOR ‘CONTEMNO’. So it must be known, because neither barbarisms nor metaplasms are called true thing, when additional monosyllables are either added or removed. Read the first book of Priscian on construction! Whence Virgil says, *discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos* for ‘contemnere’; the poet placed it so out of metrical necessity (356, 79-88).

In this section of his analysis, Priscian is the highest authority, while both Terence and Virgil are guilty of a grammatical solecism. Although Terence and Virgil are not used to critique each other, Virgil appears slightly less guilty on account of the explanation for the perceived error in his poetry.

The poems of Scottus illustrate two different uses of poetic dialogue, one a verse argument and the other a conventional *ars poetica* of humility. Disputation, unlike dialogue, requires an element of disagreement. In “Holy Muse, Answer”, the poet asks the Muse about poetic glory, and the Muse responds by first pointing at Homer (the

²⁴ I am following Löffstedt’s practice of noting Donatus’ original words in capitals, and quotations from other *auctores* in italics. I have left the shorter Latin quotations untranslated in order to demonstrate the grammatical errors being discussed.

ultimate poetic *auctor*), then Günthar of Cologne, and finally suggesting that poets should be honored: “I confess to you, Thyrsis-I found great Homer,/ and Muses and natural tropes./ The very powerful right hand of kind bishop Gunthar/ Rejoicing graces me with this ornament...Glorify, good Christ, the prophet-poet-father, in whose sight long-haired Apollo is nothing”(ll.5-8...11-12) The poet responds with a final question and comment regarding poetry as a means to salvation: “Greet such things going to be sung, kind Muse,/ and whoever adorns you, may he be saved in eternity./If he gives so much to you, do we hope to be enriched?/ We hope this may be the blessed era of the Pope.” (ll.13-16) ‘The Poet’ is also a voice in the disputation presented in “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”. In this verse argument, the Poet sets the initial scene and presents the concluding judgment and lesson offered by Spring.²⁵ As in “Holy Muse, Answer”, the discussion begins with classical references, and transitions/parallels them with Christian references.²⁶ Both poems begin with classical evidence and transition to Christian, and both are dialogues with clearly defined speakers.²⁷

Scottus' verse argument follows a pattern of alternating claims and interpretation of evidence, which points to a second link between his commentary practice of logic, and the artistic practice of poetry. Each flower begins with a claim to superiority based on her color, then points out a weakness in her opponent's argument. After the Rose makes her

²⁵Ll. 1-4, 29-50.

²⁶In “Holy Muse, Answer”, Homer is paralleled with Gunthar of Cologne, who was the Archbishop of Cologne in the mid-late ninth century. That he is the Gunthar referred to is suggested by his entry in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Ott). The Rose and Lily use their heritage in classical terms as evidence for their respective superiority, and later Spring suggests their equality in terms that have Christian connotations (see Lowes 129, 131-133). Reed also points out the religious metaphor, suggesting that it promotes “peaceful coexistence in a harmony ordained by God” (109).

²⁷Merrill suggests a variety of influences on medieval dialogue literature from the classical and Christian periods, as well as local traditions. Some of the *auctores* she points to are Plato, Cicero, Eddic poems, Boethius and Prudentius (8-11). She later points to overlaps between catechism and debát forms, and religious and secular topics (15-26).

initial claim, “Purple gives royal power, purple becomes the glory of the kingdom/White things become worthless to kings with an unpleasant color./ White, withered things grow pale with distressing appearance;/ The color purple is renown by all the world” (ll.7-8), the Lily responds, “Beautiful Apollo, esteems me as the glory of golden/ earth, and clothed my appearance with snowy honor./ Rose, what many things do you propose, painted with shameful blush,/ knowing your error? Is your face not blushing?” (ll.9-12). The third interpretation offered by Spring gives a third option for interpretation, “You, Rose, give the red award to martyrs as a garland;/ Lily, you must adorn stola-wearing maidenly multitudes” (ll.41-42). This third version of the evidence offers the Christian interpretation next to the Classical, just as in his commentary, albeit in the opposite order.²⁸

The use of evidence based on *auctoritas* is also a factor which dictates the difference between dialogue and disputation. In the argument within “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”, the evidence is used on both sides to support their cause, while in “Holy Muse, Answer”, particular evidence is used only by one side. Both poems share an educational purpose that is founded on the exchange of information between the various parties, one of whom is clearly superior in position and knowledge. The structure of the disagreement between ‘student’ flower voices in “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily” is presented as a series of challenges-questions and responses -- and the quarrel takes on the appearance of a dialectical school exercise.²⁹ In “About the Contest

²⁸ These uses for flowers were known and practiced in the medieval English Church. Amherst lists church records from the fifteenth century that detail the actual practices of wearing rose garlands (18-19).

²⁹ Many forms of disputation were governed by detailed rules regarding procedure and format. Leinsle reviews the theological *lectio* and *quaestio* formats (39-43) and Leff provides outlines of the procedures of *disputatio ordinaria* and *quodlibeta*. (167-174).

of the Rose and the Lily”, Spring is the master who presents the final solution, while the disputing students are the two flowers. The narrator-poet interrupts the argument by presenting the master with his solution: “At that time flowery young Spring was pausing in the grass./ .../And strong with flowers his head upheld with garlands of honor,/ “My dear pledges, why are you fighting?, he said/ Remember you are twins, sisters by mother Earth” (29-34). After reporting Spring’s decision that the two flowers are equal, the narrator continues, “And then Spring, father of the twins, giving a kiss of peace,/ harmonized the sweet girls in the custom of their country” (ll.43-44). The element of authoritative evidence on both sides of the discussion is not present in the dialogue poem. The talk between the poet and his Muse in “Holy Muse, Answer” is that of a master and her student that suggests no antagonism.³⁰ The poet asks his question of the Muse: “Holy Muse, answer: who ornamented you with clothing?” (ll.1) The Muse responds that she recognizes Homer and Gunthar (ll.5-8), and the poet states his acceptance of her answer in his final prayer (ll.13-16). The poet never questions the Muse, nor does she challenge him about his questions. The muse’s reference to two *auctores* provides proof of the correctness of her answer, and the poet simply accepts her proof.

A related distinction suggested by Scottus’ poems is that while both a dialogue and verse argument can invoke a student-teacher dynamic, only the verse argument complicates that relationship by adding an interpretive element expressed by a third voice (beyond those of the student and master). “Holy Muse, Answer” uses a question-answer method that is also employed by grammatical texts, including Alcuin’s “Dialogue

³⁰The poet refers to the Muse as a sacred being, and his comments are generally limited to questions and praise of the divine. The Muse responds in similar terms, addressing the poet as ‘Thyrsis’ a name used in Virgil’s *Eclogues*.

between a Frank and a Saxon.”³¹ The student is the one who initiates the discussion with the master, as the poet prays to the Muse. In “Holy Muse, Answer” the student requests and accepts unconditionally the advice he is given. In the verse argument “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”, the students are interrupted by a passer-by. First, the narrator interrupts by pointing out the presence of Spring, and then Spring himself continues the interruption. The reader is faced with the question: who is the final authority? The narrator and Spring both are superior figures in respect to the flowers, and both take part in presenting the lesson of the poem. The complexity for the reader is similar to that in a commentary, since the original author (or Spring in the poem) is treated as an authority, but interpreted through the perspective of the commentator (the narrator-poet of Scottus’ poem).

Alcuin's commentaries show closer connections to the dialogue-based method of presenting information than Scottus’ later efforts. Alcuin’s “Dialogue Between a Frank and a Saxon” is written in a conventional question-and-answer style of an introductory grammar as opposed to a commentary, but the interactions between the two pupils and the master (as opposed to one pupil and a master) allows for some features that hint at argument and commentary. Copeland and Sluiter point out an ambiguity and an innovation in Alcuin’s use of the didactic dialogue that result in the argumentative and commentary effects. The ambiguity results from the question of whether the students are asking questions and the master answering, or the students have already had their lesson and are reviewing it as an examination before the master (C/S 274). This ambiguity invites interpretation and commentary by readers of the dialogue. The innovation of using

³¹The question and answer format for didactic purposes falls under Merrill’s category of ‘expository debate’ which includes, but is not limited to, the catechism type of dialogue (60-62).

two students and one master allows for the students to organize and drive their own lessons, and also allows the master to refuse the students when they want to start with ‘littera’.³² The conversation begins as follows,

Master: Your proposition is pleasing, sons: and pleasing to the stipend for your knowledge. So first tell me from where you decide agreeably to start your discussion?

Students: Where else, master, but letters?

Master: You decide well, if you had first made a little consideration of philosophy. Whence from voice, which is the cause of letters, it is correct to start the discussion; even more first (the question) should be entirely considered, from what mode will discussion be established? (854, 268B-C).³³

The master’s redirection of the student’s conversation goes unchallenged by the students, but it still illustrates the students taking an initiative in their own instruction, a factor which continues throughout the rest of the text. The master’s disagreement with his students also sets up the potential for argumentation later in the text.

Both the question of final authority and the element of disagreement apparent in the verse argument that present in the text are the result of Alcuin’s innovations with the didactic grammatical dialogue.³⁴ The ambiguity regarding examination versus instruction poses a question of final authority since the older Frank questions the younger Saxon in place of the master who remains silent for much of the dialogue. In the beginning of the section on nouns, the dialogue opens,

Frank: Quick, let’s go, Saxon, let us begin talking about nouns in order, and tell me first, what is a noun?

Saxon: A noun is a part of speech, also of grammar, that assigns either the common quality or the proper quality to any sort of material or thing; and it called ‘noun’ as well as ‘nomen’,³⁵ from which we see apiece

³² C/S points out that the students drive the majority of the lessons, and that the master’s refusal to begin with the traditional ‘letters’ is an innovation (273).

³³ Text is from Migne. Translation is my own.

³⁴ Both of these features are also present in verse argument.

³⁵ The Latin words here are ‘nomen’ and ‘notamen’ which are used synonymously in post-classical Latin

substance or matter, common, as in: Man, student; or proper, as in: Virgil, arithmetic. Let's consider then, Frank, the master's philosophical definition of noun. (859, 271D).

The master then offers his opinion, which the Frank uses to begin questioning Saxon.

Later, when the two are supposed to be talking about grammatical case, the following exchange occurs,

Frank: While pronouns have case and number, it is necessary that they have declension, whose rules I require you to explain.

Saxon: You're a wicked examiner.

Frank: You're a close-fisted briber.

Saxon: There are four declensions of pronoun.... (872, 281C)

Because the two students are not arguing over the content of their lesson, this element of disagreement or dissent further enhances the resemblance between the grammatical commentary and the verse argument.

As poets and commentators like Alcuin and Sedulius Scottus began to question the relationships between the Christian and Classical *auctores*, scholars also began to consider the relationships between poetry and logic. William of Conches defined grammar as, "a collection of precepts by which we are instructed in writing correctly, and in pronouncing correctly that which is written".³⁶ He goes on to link grammar to logic and rhetoric under the category of 'eloquence'. William wrote,

grammatical handbooks. This parallel traces back to Priscian and Isidore (Love 93).

³⁶C/S 385. One change to note here is that this definition of 'grammar' concentrates more strongly on writing, while previous versions had referred mostly to speaking. Martianus Capella for example has Grammar define herself, "Letters are what I teach, literature is who I teach, the man of letters is whom I have taught, and literary style is the skill of a person whom I form. I claim to speak also about the nature and practice of poetry" (III.231). Translation comes from Stahl et al. The 'orationis' is translated as 'poetry' in this instance (Latin textual reference is from LLT-A). Alcuin emphasizes the use of the liberal arts as a means to wisdom, referring to the arts 'stages of theoretical learning' in parallel with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. He goes on to define grammar as "the science of letters and she is the guardian of correct speaking and writing" (See C/S 276, 280). Isidore of Seville defined grammar as "the knowledge of correct speaking" and labeled it "the origin and foundation of the liberal arts"(C/S 240). Curtius makes the observation, in reference to eleventh through thirteenth century Parisian universities, that the advent of theology and philosophy as a central focus came the expense of grammar and literature. Eventually, "Grammar became 'verbal logic'" (Curtius 56).

Three things are necessary for someone to be perfectly eloquent. [The first is] to know how to write correctly for the enlightenment of those who are not present and to make men's recollection [of the subject] more enduring, and to know how to pronounce correctly that which has been written, in order to enlighten those who are present. This grammar teaches. The second skill is to know how to define, divide up, and argue. This logic teaches. The third is to know how to persuade and dissuade. This rhetoric teaches. There are, then, three division of eloquence... (C/S 386)

He then defends his definition against the possible objections about the placement of grammar.

The tension between literary and logical practices was also a concern of logicians. The trend continues with Petrus Helias, although Helias' definitions suggest an openness to interpretation that would be friendly to poetry. The confusions regarding defining traditions and the flexibility required to consider such problems are also relevant to the verse argument which reflects similar issues. Petrus Helias essentially invented the *summa* as a genre, while at the same time complicating the relationship between logic and grammar.³⁷ The first thing Helias says in the prologue of his *Summa* is that in order to the best understanding of his subject, first detailed definitions must be set.³⁸ Helias defines grammar as, "the recognized discipline of writing rightly and of speaking rightly" (Prologue, ll.6). In his discussion of 'the letter', Helias argues, "And so the elders said that what is called a 'letter' is equally about the figure and the pronunciation, which seems insufficient to us. For we say that the figure is the same as the letter and the pronunciation which represents it. In fact, the term 'letter' is conjunctive, not equivocal.

³⁷Reilly comments about Helias as inventor of the *summa* form, and his insistence on separating grammar and logic to preserve flexibility of usage (16, 20). See also C/S 444-446. Murphy suggests that the rise in the commentary tradition also links to a change in attitudes towards grammar, including the development of *grammatica speculativa* and the perception of *the ars rithmica* as a separate field. Attitudes are explored through relationships between logic, *artes*, poetry and grammar (*Rhetoric*, 140-145).

³⁸Textual references are from Reilly's edition. Translations are my own. I have here paraphrased p.61, ll.1-5.

It is however a connective term...” (p.72, ll.8-12)³⁹ This openness to multiple possible interpretations is hinted at in the prologue when Helias suggests, “The source for any art is that in which the artist creates a second art. The material of an art must not be attributed whence it created, but rather in which it creates, just as elsewhere must be clearly shown” (p.62, ll.18-20). Helias’ concern with definition for understanding and his insistence on flexibility in the relationship between universals and specifics reflect an indirect application of logic-based techniques and terms to poetic interpretation.⁴⁰ Reilly, arguing for Helias’ connection to Stoic thought, points out, “Peter Helias accepts the distinction of things sensibly evident which exist properly or absolutely (863.57-59) and of *other things* (194.8-10) beyond sensible experience, whose existence is conditional, modal relative, non-existent in an absolute sense. Peter Helias (67.24-33) places speech, for example, in the latter category. This distinction is Stoic” (Reilly 17-18). The application of this idea appears in Helias’ insistence that “connotation and denotation are in an ordinary literary sense inclusive, mutual and overlapping. Even a proper name has the vague, universal quality imparted to it by its instances” (Reilly 20).

Helias’ inclination towards flexibility instead of absolutes in terms of language and definition places him in the middle of a discussion about the compatibility of grammar and dialectic. He disagreed directly with Peter Abelard, who claimed that grammaticality and truth were exclusive.⁴¹ R. W. Hunt points out that logic became a topic of interest for glossators of grammar texts in the early twelfth century, and that

³⁹Reilly discusses the problems that Helias tries to solve by separating grammar and logic by preserving flexibility pp.32-38.

⁴⁰Murphy discusses possible connections that Helias represents between the disciplines of grammar and logic, particularly in the form of *disputatio* practices and the rise of the *modistae* (*Rhetoric* 143-144). Law discusses the origins of the issue of universals in terms of dialectic, and then traces the spread of the concept to the grammarians (160-165).

⁴¹See Reilly 26-28.

Helias reflected this concern in some of his definitions (21).⁴² Priscian used terms like 'substance' and 'quality' when defining what a noun is and discussing the 'accidents' of parts of speech, and early commentators confused the grammatical and logical applications of these terms, a problem which Helias tried to avoid by separating dialectical questions from grammar.⁴³ One of the examples that Hunt cites is how previous glossators substituted *conveniunt* for *accidunt* but tried to use the sense of accident, which when discussing accidents of a noun then raised problems regarding types of nouns (23). Helias rejected that use of terminology altogether, suggesting that, "Words must not be said to be 'a kind', but 'of some kind'" (quoted in Hunt 23). In spite of the confusions, Hunt observes that there were still some forms of unity among the various *artes*, since the same *auctores* appeared frequently in *artes* on different subjects, and that the commentators and authors of the *artes* were themselves working in different subject areas as opposed to specializing exclusively in one area (30). One explanation for the increasing confusion among the *artes*, which in part accounts for the rise of the modistic grammatical school, was offered by Thomas Aquinas: "the seven liberal arts do not sufficiently divide theoretical philosophy".⁴⁴ In a similar claim, Hunt suggests, "there is an increasing awareness of the proper sphere of each subject. Dialectic remains the dominant partner, but the teachers of the *artes* are setting limits to the application of it to grammar" (30). These explorations of the complex relationships between competing traditions and the resulting tensions are also apparent in the verse arguments.

⁴²On a similar note, Law points out that commentators and glossators, by the Middle Ages, were concerned not just with interpretation, but also with ensuring that students were understanding a work from 700 years before their time (182-183).

⁴³ See also R.W. Hunt's discussion of Helias' influence in later grammatical glosses (70-73).

⁴⁴Curtius quotes the Latin (57). The translation is my own.

The tension between the two areas of logic and the literary arts comes through in the poem “A Disputation between a Christian and a Jew”. The poem opens with a description of the setting (Paris) and the two main characters as clerks of Divinity, all of which leads to the expectation that the poem will address a dialectical discussion. The poem obliges at first, by presenting the scene, “Eiþer maister wolde be/ foondeþ, 3if þei may./ Þus þei desputed so faste” (ll.11-13).⁴⁵ The Christian and Jew engage each other in an argument that reflects a disputation structure which includes the use of evidence with *auctoritas*. The Christian claims “Certeynliche, 3onde is he/ Þat for us dizede on þe tre/.../Woldest þou leeve on my lare/ Þi lykyng were liht” (ll.38-39...47-48), and the Jew counters that, “Þer is o God and no mare,/.../But he hedde never no sone/ ffor sinful was solde” (ll.51...54-55). In the second exchange, the Christian attacks the Jew’s denial of Mass and the sacrament of communion (ll.69-70), to which the Jew responds that he will summon Jesus to prove that the Christian’s Jesus (and God by extension) is not as powerful as the Christian claims (ll.87-91). The disputation ends when the Christian accepts the Jew’s wager of wine on the condition that they come back the next day to settle up (ll.101-108). The Christian acts on his side for the wager first, that “I wol take God me upon,/ And bere him wiþ me” (ll.131-132), and this claim leads to a magical experience which takes over the second half of the poem.⁴⁶ References to narrative tradition include the general plotline of the visit to a fairy world, a magic castle, a dangerous-to-a-mortal fairy feast, and altered passage of time.⁴⁷ In “A Disputation between a Christian and a Jew”, the emphasis on these literary narrative conventions

⁴⁵ Textual references come from Conlee’s edition, p.171-191. The set up continues until line 16.

⁴⁶ See lines 145-272 for the full Otherworldly narrative.

⁴⁷ See Conlee’s introduction (178), and notes on lines 147-256 for more details regarding the Celtic and other narrative traditions that are referenced in the second half of the poem.

comes at the expense of the focus on using authority as evidence as required by the disputation and commentary traditions based in logic. The narrator says, “Þe Jew3 sone in þat tyde/ He spak þer a word of pryde:/ Hose wol lenge abyde/ May lusten and lere.” (ll.193-196). Although the Jew’s chances of winning the argument are non-existent from the beginning of the poem, the poet’s lack of specific evidence to condemn him creates the impression that the resulting adventure story has become the focal point of the poem, and not the logic or the argument that started it.

Logic and the Arts: Friends or Foes

As the dialectic-based commentary interpreted the text, the *artes poetriae* considered how to guide interpretation.⁴⁸ Three key concerns for the *artes poetriae* were the use and definition of poetry, understanding and interpretation, and poetry’s relationship to elements of the *trivium*.⁴⁹ Matthew of Vendôme goes into detail in describing what poetry can and should do. In an extended metaphor/example he declares that poetry should “offer both a relief from labor and nourishment for study of the students of the Aeropagus,” and observes poetry’s value as a memory and study aid.⁵⁰ Even though his work is explicitly a handbook for writing poetry, Matthew of Vendôme’s work also presents much advice that aims at producing effective and accurate

⁴⁸ The *artes poetriae* concentrated on the composition, both style and content, of a written product, which is why they are the main source used in this argument. Certain types of translation exercises also served as instruction in both style and content. *Vulgaria* and *colloquies* were common exercises in the teaching of Latin (see Orme 1973, 110-115). See also Gwara’s edition of a series of *colloquies* dating to tenth century England.

⁴⁹ Kelly discusses how the *artes* in general were used and thought of in relation to the *trivium*. He points out that these handbooks were used in *trivium* instruction (1991: 41, 50-54). He also suggests that the *artes* represented the evolving ideas about imitation and interpretation (1978: 44-56; 1991, 45).

⁵⁰ Translation and textual references come from Parr’s edition. Here, Matthew of Vendôme 61.

interpretations, an aim shared with the commentaries. In discussing the idea of theme and variation in the use of ‘rhetorical colors’, Matthew suggests that “Taste is the judge of elegance and experience the arbitrator of difficulty or of truth” and, “division is not [necessarily] created by opposites” (91).

Matthew’s comment about division and opposites presents some guidelines for reading and contemplating Sedulius Scottus’ “About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”. The Rose and the Lily in the poem are not opposites, but they are different as their respective presentations of their own merits suggests. For example, the Lily claims that she is a favorite of Apollo, while the Rose responds that she is a sister of Aurora and Phoebus.⁵¹ Both flowers ally themselves with classical deities in order to express both their colors and their overall prestige. The judge, Spring, is described in a way which designates his experience and knowledge on the subject of flowers. His clothing is decorated with plants, he wears plant-based scent, and is also described as *floripotens* meaning ‘strong with flowers’.⁵² Given his expertise, Spring makes the decision in a difficult case, assigning to each flower separate yet equally important meaning.⁵³ Scottus leaves it to his reader’s taste and experience to figure out whether or not one of the flowers comes out of the argument better. A few subtle hints create the potential for an outcome more favorable to one flower than the other. Both flowers are addressed directly, but only the rose is told, “O lovely rose, be silent!” (ll.36) On the other hand, the rose is the one who in the final lines of the poem who “brings rosy flowers to the flower basket and enriches her snowy sister with great honor”. (ll.49-50) The first instance suggests that

⁵¹CCCM CXVII, Carmina 81, Ll. 9-10, and 14-15.

⁵²Ll. 30-32.

⁵³Ll. 33-50.

the rose should be ashamed, but this effect is balanced by the rose taking an active role in the final images of the poem.

The *Ars Versificatoria* also offers some suggestions regarding the practical utility of poetry. Beyond modeling style and offering composition and interpretation advice, some of Matthew's sample poems also make comments about the nature of poetry and a poet.⁵⁴ In one example, the poem suggests both poetic apology as well as praise of the unnamed subject (possibly poetry). The apology opens with advice concerning composition, "First comes a rough draft which in its prosaic/ Measures limps to the ears of a wise judge./ Diligence, the condition and friend of the writer,/ Improves the rough draft and redeems what might be paltry." (p.36, sec. 54.) Like the second poem on Helen, this problematic poem could be read as both a discussion of a subject or of the poem itself.⁵⁵ If the speaker is considered to be a poet, and the object of his speech is read as poetry, then the lines, "Hail, teacher, reflection of the fatherland, glory of the world, Exemplar of virtue, the fire of zeal, the way to honor" (p. 36, sec. 54) may have been listing the various functions that he believed poetry could serve. The poem concludes, "Hail mirror of the city and the world, remember your Suppliant pupil. The mind recalls the words of old. When one is first born, reason looking at its pupil says, 'I see my kingdoms, kingdoms are prepared for me.' I fall silent, the brevity of my meters shall bring this to a close, For the poem is awry which lacks brevity" (p. 36, sec. 54). These lines can be read as an apology by the poet, as well as a continuation of the topic of the

⁵⁴ Kelly explores the idea of modeling in poetry as a creative activity in terms of invention and patronage (1991: 91-96). He looks at how handbook authors like Matthew illustrated and explained ideas regarding authority in their poetry.

⁵⁵Parr suggests that the context and meaning of this poem are not clear, disagreeing with the proposal made by Faral (p.36, note 59). Faral links it with poem 58 (see p127).

functions of poetry. According to Matthew, in an earlier comment, experience is necessary in order to identify truth, and here he might be exemplifying poetry as method of exploring intellectual and emotional experience.⁵⁶

Poetry as a form of exploration and an interpretive tool also appears in other *artes*. Like Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's handbook contains many illustrations of the advice given, but unlike his predecessor, Geoffrey's handbook was itself in verse.⁵⁷ The *Poetria Nova* begins with a metaphor that makes suggestions about the artificial and contemplative nature of poetry, although it does not make specific links to other disciplines. Instead the links are more indirect, suggesting that Geoffrey was assuming that his reader would make the connection themselves.⁵⁸ For example, when introducing the topic of invention, he notes, "When, in the recesses of the mind, order has arranged the matter, let the art of poetry come to clothe the matter with words. However, when it comes to assist, let it make itself fit for the service of its mistress" (p.16-17, ll.60-63). Here, Geoffrey suggests that poetry is a method that helps explore and interpret thoughts. He also alludes to the notion that experience will be a necessity in producing the proper expression fitting to the situation.

Geoffrey of Vinsauf makes strong connections between poetry and prose, a confusion which may reflect the uncertain status of poetry during the thirteenth century,

⁵⁶Matthew defines verse specifically as, "A verse is metrical language moving along succinctly and clause by clause in a graceful marriage of words and depicting thoughts with the flowers of rhetoric, containing in itself nothing played down, nothing idle. A collection of utterances, measured feet, the knowledge of quantities do not constitute verse, but the elegant joining of utterance does, the expression of distinctive features and respect for the designation of each and everything" (19). Based on this definition and his details of the various functions of poetry together suggest the intellectual and emotional possibilities that might be explored through poetry.

⁵⁷Purcell claims that one possible reason for the structural differences hinges on Matthew's view of poetry as a natural phenomenon, while Geoffrey treats it as an artificial construct (73).

⁵⁸Purcell argues that Geoffrey uses grammatical resources and categories to develop his own ideas about how to create depth of expression (71).

as well as the practice of using the *auctores* shared by the commentaries and poetry.⁵⁹ The *Poetria Nova* suggests that, in terms of ornamented language, poetry and prose are linked. When discussing some of the requirements of meter, Geoffrey states, “In both prose and verse, let the words be tamed” (p.114-115, ll.1881) as well as “Metrical composition is confined by laws, but prose wanders on a freer road” (ll.1858-1859).⁶⁰ The text also contains subtle suggestions that logic has connections to the poetic advice as well. Geoffrey dedicates a section of his poem to the use of exempla, often in the form of proverbs. Gallo suggests that, because classical orators did not advise opening with a general proverb, Geoffrey got the idea from the *artes praedicandi* and *dictandi* which often relied on enthymeme and other forms of “quasi-syllogistic proof”.⁶¹ The concern with offering a list of examples, often derived from *auctores*, is a feature common to both commentaries and *artes*. In Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s discussion of invention, he dedicates substantial space to “what is invented in examples”, elaborating that, “An example is a saying or deed of some authoritative person that is worthy of imitation. Here, then, are invented sayings and deeds, authorities, and proverbs. But if no proverb is available to us, we should employ the following device. *Ars Inveniendi Proverbia...*” (p.10-11, ll.148-152). What follows is an extensive list of example proverbs all labeled according to topic.

John of Garland notes the utility of the *auctores* while at the same time hinting at connections with dialectic. He suggests that the value of the poets was to teach good style, as well as provide some instruction on virtuous living. In his *Morale Scholarium*,

⁵⁹ Medieval writers had different understandings about the distinctions between poetry and prose, both from each other and modern scholars (see Kelly 1991, 39-40). Kelly presents some of the various distinctions that different writers made between verse and prose, as well as some thoughts on how instruction was adjusting to include the new techniques and ideas (1991: 82-85, 55-57).

⁶⁰Translation is from Gallo. In note 78, Gallo interprets these comments as suggesting that ‘laws of rhythm operate in prose as well as verse, but not in the same way’.

⁶¹See Vinsauf in Gallo p. 139-150. The specific textual reference here is from p.140.

John writes, “The ancient classical authors fairly blossom in good Latin, and a perusal of them improves the style of our professors and makes them more useful in their lecture chairs” (p.166, ll.350-352).⁶² He criticizes the *Doctrinale* and *Graecismus* as textbooks, and praise Geoffrey of Vinsauf.⁶³ The concern with good Latin is evident from the beginning of the text, as is the approval of poetry and the arts. In the prologue, he writes,

When the fables of the poets are contrasted allegorically with true doctrine the manifest truth is accepted more cheerfully. This little work is not written in an ornate style, but, in order that it might not seem contemptible, it has been composed in Leonine hexameters for God does not forbid the use of literary art to glorify his name. Thus he has provided both philosophers and prophets, the former to endow the Church with the beauties of the Latin language, the latter to witness the truth. (154)

Later, he again links the life of a poor poet-scholar with virtuous living, saying, “For a long time, Clio my muse, has been growing old in the University of Paris...I write verses, but am never praised because I am a poor man. But even if I am not esteemed, nevertheless my heart is gold...I am fortunate, for, although I live in straightened circumstances, I am free from the cares of wealth and from secular anxieties” (161). In addition to concentrating on the arts, he also provides some scattered advice on disputations, hinting at the link between the arts and disputations.⁶⁴

The tension between logical and poetic arts that concerned John of Garland was also explored by John of Salisbury and Henri d’Andeli. John of Salisbury’s *Metalogicon* represents an attempt at reconciliation of the serious divisions between supporters of the traditional *auctor*-based curriculum, and the new logic-based course of study exacerbated

⁶²Paetow’s translation is used here. He discusses John of Garland’s concern with good Latin in his introduction to his translation and edition of the *Morale Scholarium* (“Introduction” to *Morale*, p.103-104, 129).

⁶³See p.166-167. Unless otherwise noted, citations refer to the main text and notes of Paetow’s edition.

⁶⁴References are made to disputation at ll.45 and ll.205-206.

by the unstable relationships among the elements of the *trivium*. In the prologue, he notes three things that he and other writers must contend with, “ignorance of truth, misled or wanton statement of falsehood, and the haughty assertion of fact” (7).⁶⁵ He presents his answer to avoiding these problems early in Book I, “The creative Trinity, the one true God, has so arranged the parts of the universe that each requires the help of the others...Just as eloquence, unenlightened by reason, is rash and blind, so wisdom, without the power of expression, is feeble and maimed” (10). This reasoning creates parallel between the Holy Trinity and the *trivium*, an analogy which serves as an appeal to the ultimate authority of John's day and sets up a frame for his concerns with the 'truth' and the *trivium*.

Although the *Metalogicon* tries to illustrate how the *trivium* ought to be interdependent, the definitions of the various elements suggest that logic has a bigger role than any of the other elements of the liberal arts. John of Salisbury states, “Logic (in its broadest sense) is 'the science of verbal expression and [argumentative] reasoning'...let us concede to logic its widest meaning, according to which it includes all instruction relative to words...In this more general sense, there can be no doubt that all logic is both highly useful and necessary” (32). 'Liberal' arts are so called because, “they liberate us from cares incompatible with wisdom”, and 'grammar' is “the science of speaking and writing correctly-the starting point of all liberal studies'. Grammar is the cradle of all philosophy” (37). Disputation is also included in the discussion, although not in depth. Disputation is called an art and used as an example of how natural ability should be refined and practiced, “The first disputation developed by chance, and the practice of disputing grew

⁶⁵Translation of the *Metalogicon* is McGarry's.

with repetition. Reason, then perceived the form of disputation, the art of this activity” (35). John refers to Augustine and grammar for his definition of 'dialectic', “Dialectic, according to Augustine, is the science of effective argumentation...Just as grammar, according to Remigius, is concerned with ways of saying things, dialectic is concerned with what is said. While grammar chiefly examines the words that express meanings, dialectic investigates the meanings expressed by words” (80-81). Finally, 'true' is discussed as “accurate apprehension of reality” and can be proved “in one of two ways: either from the form of the substance [of things], or [at least] from the effects of this form” (254).⁶⁶

Unlike John of Salibury, Henri d'Andeli chose a side in representing the struggle between the literary and logical curricula. In the thirteenth century, he wrote an allegory that directly addresses the tension between logic and literature, particularly as displayed by the curricular foci of two eminent universities in France.⁶⁷ His poem, *La Bataille Des VII Ars*, opens with the lines,

Paris and Orleans are at odds.
 It is a great loss and a great sorrow
 That the two do not agree.
 Do you know the reason for the discord?
 It is because they differ about learning;
 For Logic, who is always wrangling,
 Calls the authors authorlings
 And the students of Orleans mere grammar-boys.

 But they retort that verily
 They call Dialectic,
 In evil spite, a cock-a-doodle-doo.
 As for those of Paris, the clerks of Plato,
 They do not think them worth a button. (ll.1-8...14-18)⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The brackets are included in the translation.

⁶⁷See Paetow (“Introduction” to *Battle*, p.33-34) for evidence of dating both poet and the poem.

⁶⁸Textual references and translation of d'Andeli's poem are from Paetow.

Right away the poet's choice of terms makes very clear the divisive nature of the intellectual background of the argument. Paetow notes that 'autor' is the French equivalent for the Latin term 'auctor',⁶⁹ which is a fundamental concept in literary studies and theories in the Middle Ages. He also points out that when the poem was being written, Plato was losing popularity in favor of Aristotle.⁷⁰ In both cases, the primary insult revolves around the diminishment of a core idea. The 'auctores' supporting Grammar are grammatically diminished as are their followers. On the other side, Dialectic is described with a nonsense word,⁷¹ and the followers appear out of touch with current trends.

D'Andeli also makes clear distinctions about which medieval thinkers belonged to Grammar and which belonged to Dialectic, suggesting that he did not see the shifting connections between grammar, rhetoric and logic as rearrangement of links, but more as dividing. On Grammar's side, he places Donatus, Priscian, Sedulius and others.⁷² Once the battle starts, Priscian is supported in an attack against Aristotle by his nephews Sir Graecismus and Doctrinale, as well as a group of classical and early medieval Latin poets.⁷³ Rhetoric is presented as an ally of Logic, supported by Isidore, theologians, lawyers and others.⁷⁴ When attacked by elements of Grammar's army, Aristotle is supported by Boethius, Macrobius, and Porhphry.⁷⁵ Paetow notes that d'Andeli's division of the *trivium* is confused, as is his presentation of the *quadrivium*, particularly

⁶⁹Paetow p.37, note 7. For the importance of the 'auctor' see for example Minnis (1988).

⁷⁰Paetow p.38, n.17. Paetow notes that John of Garland made comment similar to D'Andeli's.

⁷¹Paetow suggests that the word 'quiqueliquique' is either nonsense or onomatopoeia for a rooster crowing (p.38, n.16).

⁷²ll.21-30.

⁷³p. 49-50.

⁷⁴See p.41 and 43. Paetow suggests that when the poet refers to Rhetoric, he is referring more to the practical uses such as the *artes dictamines* than the figures ("Introduction" to *Battle*, p.24-25).

⁷⁵See p. 51.

evidenced by some lines in which the poet has three of Logic's supporters “put the trivium and quadrivium/ In a tub on a large cart” (ll.55-56).⁷⁶ After the battle, both Logic and Grammar fare badly. Grammar is exiled to Egypt with her “sententious and frivolous authorlings” (ll.416), while “Logic is now for children!” (ll.411) The two sides remain engaged in meaningless attacks on each other “until a new generation will arise/ Who will go back to Grammar” (ll.453-454) thirty years in the future.⁷⁷

As the works of John of Garland and Henry d'Andeli suggest, the friction between arts-based learning and logic-based education was a source of inspiration for writing poetry suggesting disputation and conflict.⁷⁸ Raby refers to Walther's point that the idea of argumentative exercises comes from classical rhetoric, although Raby adds that the themes tended to come from popular folk culture (1934, 282). He also proposes that “the most important debates of all are the love-dialogues and similar pieces; for here, if anywhere, there should be some relation between the Latin and the vernacular” (1934, 289). Raby clarifies his idea in the concluding discussion of this type of poetry, claiming, “This poetry is essentially learned, the poetry of clerks, with an independent tradition from Carolingian times, but many of the themes may well have been current in the vernacular verse” (1934, 308). Curtius goes even further in depth in his exploration of the changes in the perception of rhetoric, grammar and poetry in the Latin Middle Ages. Some concepts that strengthened during the medieval era were those of the *auctores*, and

⁷⁶ See p. 42, note 55 which explains some of the details of Paetow's suggestion.

⁷⁷ Paetow notes that d'Andeli's prediction did come true, although it took longer than he anticipated, since Petrarch and the humanists did not rise until two generations after d'Andeli's time (p. 60, note 452).

⁷⁸ Murphy argues that the tension surrounding the definitions of the *trivium* was in part due to the claim of the grammarian of jurisdiction over language as whole and at the same time “the particular purposive uses of language” (*Rhetoric* 191). He gives the example of a prefatory *accessus* in which the scholar tries to relate the individual treatise to the whole of language study.

the importance of *exempla* and *sententia*.⁷⁹ Rhetoric, like grammar, passed into the medieval period through the *artes liberales*, and by the eleventh century had developed a new specialized use that focused on correspondence, the *ars dictaminis*.⁸⁰ A second adaptation of the classical and antique rhetoricians appeared in the form of the *artes poetriae*, which eventually influenced Dante.⁸¹

The Physical Evidence for the Logic and Art Traditions

Manuscript evidence suggests that many of the major grammarians and commentators were known and available to scholars in England who likely composed many of the Middle English verse arguments. At least three English manuscripts dating to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries survive of Helias' *Summa Priscianum*.⁸² Martianus Capellanus' *De Nuptiis Philologiae at Mercurii* was known in England as well, suggested by the survival of manuscripts from as early as the ninth century.⁸³ Remigius' commentaries were also available in England in the ninth or tenth century, as were Priscian's *Institutiones* and Isidore's *Etymologiae*.⁸⁴ Donatus and Boethius were known by

⁷⁹See Curtius p.48-51 for a list of curricular classical and late antique *auctores* and p.57-61 for medieval *auctores*.

⁸⁰Leff points out that *dictamen* initially referred to composition in prose and poetry, and that during the early Middle Ages it evolved to denote letter writing and legal documents (125). See also Curtius p.76.

⁸¹Curtius p.75-76.

⁸²The English manuscripts include Cambridge, Gonerby and Caius College, MS 341; London, British Library, Royal MS 2.d.XXX; and Oxford, Merton College, MS 301. For a full list of manuscripts, see R. W. Hunt 95-96.

⁸³Manuscript information is from Gneuss. Here, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College Cambridge MSS 153, 206, 330; and London, British Library Harley MS 438.

⁸⁴Ibid Cambridge, Gonville and Gaius College Cambridge MS 144; and London, British Library, Royal MS 15 A xxxiii; Cambridge, Jesus College Cambridge MS 28; and Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge O.2.51; Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge B.15.xxxiii; and London, British Library Royal MS 6.c.ii respectively. The particular commentaries by Remigius include his *Expositio super Sedulium* and *In Martianum Capellam*.

the tenth century.⁸⁵ Several of the major academics and handbook authors of the twelfth and thirteenth century were English, born and educated. John of Garland was probably English and studied at Oxford, although he spent much of his academic career in France.⁸⁶ John of Salisbury was also English and knew some of the major thinkers of his time, including Peter Abelard and William of Conches. He also presented his *Metalogicon* to Thomas Becket.⁸⁷ By the later thirteenth century, Oxford had some active grammar schools, and by the fifteenth century an endowed school of grammar had been established.⁸⁸ Hunt details some of the extant records of known teachers and scholars of the thirteenth-century Oxford.⁸⁹ One such scholar, John of Cornwall (14th c.) names some of his sources, including Priscian, Petrus Helias, Remigius, and Donatus.⁹⁰ Some fourteenth-century statutes that defined the teaching duties of a grammar master at Oxford state that masters were to expect verses and model letters from students every fortnight, and Hunt notes that no *auctores* were specifically named, although some later statutes forbade works by Ovid and the pseudo-Ovidian *Pamphilus*.⁹¹

Many of the various *artes* and poetic presentations were also known in England. Besides himself being of English origin, at least one extant manuscript of John of Garland's *Parisiana Poetria* was likely of English origin, and dates to the thirteenth or fourteenth century.⁹² Geoffrey of Vinsauf may have studied at Oxford, and thirteenth

⁸⁵Ibid. London, British Library, Cotton MS Cleopatra A.vi; London, British Library Cotton MS Otho A.vi; and London, British Library, Edgerton MS 267 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct.F.I.15 respectively.

⁸⁶Paetow ("Introduction" to *Morale*) p.82-83.

⁸⁷McGarry xvi, xix.

⁸⁸R. W. Hunt 167. See also Orme (2006) 105-109. Thomson points out that these schools were not directly part of the arts faculty, although they were regulated by the university (xi-xii).

⁸⁹R. W. Hunt p.167-191. In this section, he presents the example of the grammarian Richard of Hansbury who was at the school by 1288 (178).

⁹⁰R. W. Hunt 183, 185.

⁹¹ Ibid. 189.

⁹²See Lawler xx-xxi for a list of manuscripts. Here I refer to the manuscript Lawler labels 'C' (xx). Paetow

through fifteenth-century manuscripts remain which may have been produced in England.⁹³ Two manuscripts from the twelfth century survive of likely English origin of John of Salisbury's work, and three manuscripts exist in the UK of Matthew of Vendôme's work.⁹⁴ Another thirteenth century grammarian, Gervase of Melkley, refers to Matthew of Vendôme and Geoffrey of Vinsauf as key influences on the versification,⁹⁵ and Chaucer refers to Geoffrey of Vinsauf, which further reflects the interaction between poetry and the grammarians.⁹⁶ Poets also influenced each other, for example when John Lydgate borrowed a line from Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* for his own verse argument, the "Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep".⁹⁷

Logic and Art as Structural Models and Formal Influences

In addition to illustrating the changing perception of poetry as a source of *auctoritas* alongside its evolving relationship to the *trivium*, the grammatical commentaries and disputations provide a methodological outline that many disputation

also describes this manuscript, along with several others ("Introduction" to *Morale*, 148-151). Camargo similarly makes note of the circulation patterns of both John of Garland's and Matthew of Vendôme's works (179).

⁹³See Purcell 53 for the biographical information, and Nims' edition of Geoffrey's work for a partial manuscript list (81). Camargo also makes note of the popularity of Geoffrey's work based on manuscript evidence (174).

⁹⁴See Faral 13-14 for discussion of manuscripts of Matthew of Vendôme's work, and McGarry xix-xx for John of Salisbury. Two of the manuscripts of Matthew of Vendôme are dated to the fifteenth century, and are in English hands (Balliol 263 and 276). See full descriptions in Mynor's catalogue. The third manuscript is held in the Hunterian collection at Glasgow, is dated roughly to the thirteenth century, and also likely of English origin (see Young and Aitken 417-418) See also Camargo's notation of the popularity of Matthew of Vendôme's work (177-178).

⁹⁵ Kelly outlines the details of Gervase's classifications, and constructs a list of the best known *artes* according to Gervase's set-up (1991, 57-64).

⁹⁶ Murphy points out references to both Geoffrey and the *Poetria Nova* in Gervase's *Ars Versificatoria* (*Rhetoric* 168). Gervase ranks Geoffrey as standing between Matthew of Vinsauf and Bernardus Silverstris as a contributor to the development of versification (*ibid.*). For the reference to Chaucer, see Kelly (1969) 117. Murphy considers the effects of the connection between Chaucer and Geoffrey of Vinsauf in scholarship (*Rhetoric* 169-170).

⁹⁷ See Reed 95 and 364-366.

poems appear to follow.⁹⁸ Likewise, although the commentaries and disputations that consider or use grammar as a tool suggest a lessening of poetic influence, they do show some patterns which are paralleled in poems so far observed. Questions and the use of authority are used to present a variety of voices in conversation about the topic at hand. For example, in the section on ‘voice’ Helias cites Aulus Gellius’ *Attic Nights*, and suggests that Gellius’ definition of the term ‘voice’ has two interpretations, “one from the Stoics, the other from Plato“ (66, 10). After presenting his own analysis, Helias reviews and concludes, “Priscian indeed gives this definition: Voice is air, very weakly struck. Either therefore we say he used the Stoic meaning, and plainly deceived in this...Or if we prefer to defend Priscian against that mistake, we say that definition is given with reason...And so voice is air struck, not because voice is air, but because air being struck causes voice” (67-68, ll.40-47). In the commentary, Helias cites the ideas of several scholars, and his own questions, and finally arrives at his own answer. Relationships of learner and authority are set up both between the commentator and his reader, as well as between the original author, and the commentator and reader. Similar dynamics are present in the disputations as well, although the different voices are presented in a manner that suggests less of a narrative, and more of a listing of views. The notion of analysis of evidence and judgment is also present in the commentaries and the disputations, although without the narrative element explaining all trains of thought, the disputations have a stronger tone of final decision over the questions presented than the commentaries.

⁹⁸ The possible influence of the commentary tradition on the disputation-based poem is supported by the likelihood that John of Salisbury studied with Petrus Helias. Reilly cites a comment by John of Salisbury which claims that Helias was a better teacher than Thierry of Chartres (11).

The structure of the disputations and commentaries, the presentation of a student-teacher relationship in textbooks, and changing understanding about the value of poetry and the *trivium* in handbooks and poems of the early Middle Ages are features that appear in the Latin disputation-based poems that would pass on some of their features to the Middle English tradition. One twelfth-century Latin lyric, the anonymous “Contest of the Rose and the Violet”, presents some of the same qualities and questions as Scottus’ verse argument (“About the Contest of the Rose and the Lily”), which suggests that the tradition continued, while at the same time presenting some novel elements.⁹⁹ Violets, like roses and lilies, were known for both medical-edible and aesthetic qualities. For example, a recipe from *The Forme of Cury* calls for,

Take Borage, cool [2]. langdebef [3]. persel [4]. betes. orage [5]. auance [6]. violet [7]. saueray [8]. and fenkel [9]. and whane þey both sode; presse hem wel smale. cast hem in gode broth an seeþ hem. and serue hem forth. (19)

On the aesthetic side, a twelfth-century work, *De Rerum Naturis* by Nescham, claims, “The garden should be adorned with roses and lilies, turnsole, violets, and mandrake” (cited in Amherst, 67).¹⁰⁰

The common reliance on *auctoritas* and authority apparent in the explorations of literature and logic of the ninth century poets and commentators remains in “Contest of

⁹⁹Conlee notes some patterns present in the early medieval Latin verse arguments. Shared features include “[tone that is] light hearted but also somewhat learned; their surrounding frames are minimal; the exchanges between the debaters are few, brief, and carefully balanced; the element of personal animus, while distinctly present, is somewhat muted; and they achieve a resolution” (xiv). He observes that later innovations (post 9th century) include the introduction of the first-person narrator, an increasingly elaborate frame, the introduction of the dream vision, and the eventual inclusion of ‘goliardic whimsy’ (xiv-xv). A connection that Conlee does not comment upon is that the “Contest Between the Rose and the Violet” has a manuscript situation similar to Scottus’ verse argument in England. Neither poem has a direct record in England, yet the knowledge and conventions displayed were clearly known (see previous discussion of records in England). The verse argument between the Rose and Violet is recorded in Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, MS 5371 (Tobler 153).

¹⁰⁰ The emphasis added here is mine. Other medieval references include *The Feat of Gardening* (see Amherst 72-74), and the 15th c. cooking text in Sloan MS 1201 (Amherst 74-76).

the Rose and Violet” three centuries later. The poem begins with the speaker in a garden contemplating something when he observes two flowers, “Once I pondered a certain topic in my mind/ and wearied of contemplating this thing often/ rising I went to the garden to rest,/ perceiving green fields that I might be revived” (ll.1-4).¹⁰¹ This pastoral, vision-like experience presents many parallels with the dream-poem genre which was popular during the medieval period. Two common features are that the narrator's consciousness undergoes a shift, and that attention is paid to the setting especially in the moments following the transition to the dream.¹⁰² In the “Contest of the Rose and the Violet”, these two features begin simultaneously in the first stanza and continue into the second, “The two flowers stood upright, in eyes and hearts/ more beautiful in sight than other flowers/ in decoration not unlike or of one color,/ equal but extraordinary they were exhaling scents” (ll.5-8) The two flowers are described as equal in many ways, but are having an argument, “While they earnestly emit their scent, the odorous ones are competing,/ desiring to recommend their own merits,/ discussing many of their own particular virtues,/ they were both preferring themselves to the other” (ll. 9-12). The

¹⁰¹Textual references are from Raby (1959) poem 210. The opening scene is covered in ll.1-8. Translation is my own.

¹⁰²See for example Davidoff's discussion of dream visions in narrative lyric poetry. She argues that features of the dream vision include a separation of the frame from the core of the narrative sequence, and “a change in surroundings, mood, activities, and/or shift to allegory” (60). She also notes that, especially with *chansons d'aventure*, the frame and core together produce a before-after relationship in which the dream addresses a problem of the narrator's “in a didactic manner”, and after the dream “the poet-narrator generally acknowledges that the dream had been helpful in his need for enlightenment” (61). She later points out that many *chansons d'aventure* and dream vision poems are ‘debates’. Among the titles she considers are *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the *Speculum Misericordie*, and *The Buke of the Howlat* (81). Davenport also makes note of levels of narrative within dream poetry (44) and comments on a shift in the role of the narrator from focal point of the narrative to “merely the channel through which the subject is flowing” (47). He includes some discussion of how the dream is often used as “an enabling framework” that leads to the core of the narrative (197). Several of the poems that he examines are verse arguments, including *Winnere and Wastoure*, *Disputation between the Body and the Worms*, and *Parliament of the Three Ages*, and near the end of this discussion he points to the use of the dream as a means of exploring “states of ‘altered consciousness’, and the opportunity to claim that their visions had greater truth than observations from real life” (209).

antagonistic element that also appears in Scottus' poem is clearly present in this stanza, especially in some of the Latin word-play. The poem uses the verb *certare* which refers to a contest or struggle, and the adverb *certatim*, which can refer to rivalry or earnestness.¹⁰³ The finale also shares the feature with Scottus' poem of putting the authority of the characters and speakers in question.

The complexity surrounding who has the final authority in the argument gives the possibility of a final decision over to the reader. Unlike Scottus' verse argument, but like later verse arguments poems, the twelfth-century poem includes the request for a judge, which are only words of a contestant directly quoted. The Violet requests, "You must sit upon a seat in the manner of judgment,/ You must dissolve our suit as judge in honor" (ll. 14-15). The poet responds by telling the two flowers that they are equals in value and ought to behave according to their dignity as sisters, rather than fight.¹⁰⁴ The direct address by the Violet initially could be aimed at the reader or the poet, which creates the vague position of the reader as potentially either teacher-judge or student.

The opening up of the decisive authority within the poem to include the reader directly is a feature new to this version of the flower verse argument. This feature is less obvious in Scottus' ninth-century version which uses an authoritative third-party judge (Spring). Nevertheless, the connection between the two poems remains because both 'judgments' fail to settle the actual argument at hand. The poet's response in "Contest of the Rose and the Violet" does not offer a decisive verdict, allowing the reader to maintain a distinct opinion, "I wish to lay down judgment about the proposals;/ I don't want you to

¹⁰³The Latin text reads, "Dum certatim redolent, certant redolentes,/ commendare merita sua cupientes,/ de virtute propria multa disserentes,/ erant alter alteri sese preferentes".

¹⁰⁴See ll.17-24.

go further with riddles... You are both noble flowers, flowers of good pedigree,/ beloved by all, valued by all;/ you should not become abusive,/ you should not be willing to be hateful to each other.” (125-126...129-132)¹⁰⁵

The twelfth-century “The Strife of Body and Soul” also presents conventions that reflect elements that would become common in the Middle English poems, including an argument about who is better, a lack of final judgment, and an emphasis on Christian evidence as authority. An influential Latin example of the Body-Soul tradition preserved in Royal MS 7.A.iii presents a second structural model for a disputation poem.¹⁰⁶ Instead of repeated exchanges during which the combatants accuse and answer each other back and forth, both sides present their case without much direct exchange, relying more on long speeches in which the second voice answers the first, and something happens in the end to suggest a verdict or at least conclude the scene.¹⁰⁷ The manuscript, likely copied in England, is dated to the late twelfth century, and the poem was probably written some time earlier.¹⁰⁸ Heningham points out that the Latin poem was likely a direct influence on the Middle English poem “Als I Lay”. She argues, “the Middle English poet used both Latin version of the debate... It will be noted that at all these points the *Desputisoun* parallels the Royal text more closely than it does the *Noctis*, and that several of them have no equivalent in the *Samedi*” (46...49).¹⁰⁹ The Christian theme and the argument

¹⁰⁵Reed points out that the poet narrator went into the garden in the first place to escape his studies (17-18), which may account for part of his unwillingness to make a particular choice in the matter (145).

¹⁰⁶The edition used here is Heningham’s. This poem is different from its well-known twelfth century counterpart the *Visio Philberti*, which like the Royal poem suggests some parallels with the French poem *Un samedi par nuit*, and may have also been an influence on “Als I Lay”. For some discussion of the tradition involving the *Visio Philberti*, see Kittridge’s introductory comments in Child’s edition (v-ix). See Raby (1934) 302-303 for analysis of the Royal poem.

¹⁰⁷Heningham suggests that the poem uses a type of dialogue separate from the argument-disputation tradition, even though there are references in the poem to disputation (ll. 1465, 1921) (p. 11).

¹⁰⁸See Heningham 4, and 17-18; 43 for reference to date of poem.

¹⁰⁹In between these two quotations, Heningham presents a series of passages from the “Als I Lay” (ie-

over who is to blame are supplemented by a scene imagining the celestial court pronouncing judgments on the Last Day, and the final scene in which demons take away the Soul.

The overall frame and the first speech by the Soul sets initial expectations that what will follow will be largely theological in nature, which is true at first. The frame presents the argument as a dream of a bishop in which first the Soul lists all of the wrongs the Body has committed. The Soul presents its accusations as a series of questions and direct attacks against the body, while it rarely mentions itself in the first person until almost halfway through its speech. The Soul briefly suggests that, “On account of your pride,/ I am delivered to hell...On account of my lodging/ I am sentenced to torment” (ll.417-418...425-426).¹¹⁰ From this point, the Soul brings its personal perspective into the argument, and begins to diverge from the initial expectations set by the opening of the poem, After elaborating on how it tried to do its job properly but the body thwarted its efforts, the Soul presents the idea: “Thence if you had wished/ to believe me,/ you might have lived/ freely, justly, piously, soberly,/ but you did not want it/ with justice unfortunate scorned,/ you have wasted/ all senses in sin/.../O rotting abandoned/ beauty, now you teach/ what I bestowed to you/ while I invigorated you” (ll. 567-574...583-586). The Soul returns to the practice of physical insults later on in its speech, eventually transitioning to its final argument, the imagined court of heaven.¹¹¹ The Soul concludes, “This is death eternal/ which to us, most wicked one,/ is brought on us/ on account of your fault/ in earthly things/. A just reproach/ from a most just lord” (ll.1447-1452).

Desputisoun), the Latin poem she presents from the Royal manuscript, and an Old French version, *Un Samedi par Nuit*.

¹¹⁰Textual references are from Heningham. Translation is my own.

¹¹¹See ll. 985-1056 and 1140-1400.

The poem includes an answer by the Body, but takes an unusual direction with the Soul's response. The Body's first question in response is, "Why do you reproach me/ for all your shortcomings/ and designate all your/ unfortunate works to me?" (ll.1471-1474) Next, it claims, "Behold even now in this/ trifle when I suggest to you that/ you sinned, blaspheming/ divine justice; for God is just/ in all acts" (ll.1535-1540). The majority of the Body's argument consists of a variety of ways in which the Soul shares the blame for their impending fate. Like the Soul, the Body engages in some insults and admits to little guilt itself. The exchange between Body and Soul remains inconclusive because the Soul's response is not directed at the Body, but instead at the judge, God, "Why were you/ made so very unhappy?/ Why had you been created/ (you) who were not able to die?/ O king of the heavens above/ and equally of the earth,/ why are you angry at me/ when I am such a fragile thing?" (ll.2177-2184) The narrative presents the outcome between the Soul and God because as the Soul is crying out, two demons appear to drag the Soul away.¹¹² Like the disputation between the Rose and the Lily, the disputation between the Body and Soul leaves the argument between the contestants unsettled (at least between themselves), and thanks to the interruption by another voice, presents a clear bias on account of the judge that reflects the likely understanding of the audience.

The Middle English Inheritance and Innovations

The Middle English tradition reflects the continuation and evolution of the Latin verse argument through its adaptation of tropes from the older tradition. These techniques include combining personal and rational argument, the presence of a judge figure, and

¹¹²Ll. 2453ff.

internal references to the argument. Many of these tropes appear in some form in one of the earliest extant examples of a verse argument in Middle English, *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Other common poetic features include verbal exchange, elements of antagonism and/or information, use of authority such as the appeal for a judge, teacher-student dynamic, and some uncertainty about the placement of the reader as observer-student or judge-teacher. The opening to *The Owl and the Nightingale* follows the tradition presented in Sedulius Scottus' verse argument and continued by the Rose and the Violet, by starting with a pastoral setting, and the narrator suddenly taking notice of the speakers who will conduct the disputation,

Ich was in one sumere dale,
 In one suþe diþele hale:
 Iherde ich holde grete tale
 An hule and one niþtingale. (ll.1-4)¹¹³

The antagonism is present even before the narrator begins to report the actual speeches by the birds when he comments,

An aiþer aþen oþer sval,
 & let þat vole mod ut al;
 & eiþer seide of oþeres custe
 Þat alre worste þat hi wuste. (ll.7-10)

The setting of the scene focuses especially on the mean-spiritedness and the contentious nature of the discussion to come, since the opening twelve lines contain the description about the antagonism as well as two different terms for verbal argument, 'tale' and 'plaiding'.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Text comes from Cartlidge's edition.

¹¹⁴'Plaiding' is used in the last line of the introduction, "...& hure of oþeres songe/ Hi holde plaiding suþe stronge" (ll.11-12).

The birds follow a model of disputation throughout the poem by speaking to each other in turn, answering charges and questions posed by the other. The concern about truth and rhetoric is of clear importance for both sides. The Nightingale worries at points about countering the Owl's arguments which appear both truthful and logical, while the Owl has moments of pausing to consider how best to deal with the Nightingale's rhetoric.¹¹⁵ The majority of the poem consists of verbal exchanges, in which, after the initial exchange of personal insults, the Owl and the Nightingale bring in folk authorities and proverbs as their evidence.

The divide between the personal attacks and those made on the basis of an *auctor* is clearly designated by the Nightingale's call for a judge,

Ac lete we awei þos cheste,
Vor suiche wordes boþ unwreste,
& fo we on mid ri3te dome,
Mid faire worde & mid ysome.
Þe3 we ne bo at one acorde,
We mu3e bet mid fayre worde,
Witute cheste & bute fi3te,
Plaide mid fo3e & mid ri3te. (ll.177-184)

The beginning of the section of the disputation in which the two birds try to use rhetoric and logic to best each other begins with the Nightingale, who is described as experienced and begins her speech with a request for honesty, “seie me soþ...” (ll.217)¹¹⁶ She includes in the defense of her position about the Owl's ugliness, a proverb which she attributes to King Alfred: “He shunet þat hine vul wot” (ll.236). The Owl's response begins with a

¹¹⁵See for example ll. 394-404 and ll.467-472.

¹¹⁶The two line description of the Nightingale is, “Þe Ni3tingale was al 3are./ Ho hadde ilorned wel awaire:” (ll.215-216). This reference complements Matthew of Vendome's comment about the use of rhetorical techniques in regards to taste, elegance and experience (see n.51 above and accompanying discussion).

refutation of the Nightingale's use of rhetoric before responding with a proverb of her own,

& luste hu ich con me bitelle,
 Mid ri3te soþe witute spelle.

 At sume siþe herrde i telle
 Hu Alured sede on his spelle:
 'Loke þat þu ne bo þare,
 Þar chauling boþ, & cheste 3are!
 Lat sottes chide & uorþ þu go!
 & ich am wise & do also.
 & 3et Alured seide anoþer side
 A word þat is isprunge wide:
 'Þat wit þe fule haveþ imene
 Ne cumeþ he neuer from him cleine'. (ll. 263-264, 293-302)

The direct use of literary *auctores* in Middle English verse argument represents a major innovation to the verse argument from the Latin. The importance of the *auctoritas* of Alfred's proverbs is a focal strategy in *The Owl and the Nightingale*,¹¹⁷ which suggests that even in comic situations, the same rules of basic style as dictated by the textbooks and handbooks apply.¹¹⁸ Even the narrator quotes Alfred in support of the commentary he offers. When the Nightingale faces the problem how to answer the Owl, the narrator comments,

An hit is suþe stronge to fi3te
 A3en soþ & a3en ri3te.

 Þanne erest kumed his 3ephede,

¹¹⁷ Reed points out some details regarding the characters' use of Alfred's proverbs, although he does not offer an explicit reason for why Alfred might have been so authoritative (233-234, 246). He does note Alfred's influence on the literary traditions in regards to dialogue (101), which could help account for the poet's use of Alfred in particular. Cartlidge points out that while Alfred was a known *auctor* in the time the Owl and the Nightingale was written, many of the Alfred attributions in the poem do not survive in any collections of Alfred's proverbs (2001, xxxix). As such, Cartlidge suggests that Alfred may simply have been used as "a distant and archetypal figure of wisdom" (ibid). Alternatively, J.C. Russell suggests that Alfred's name may have been part of a patriotic attempt on the author's part to appeal to a royal patron (179).

¹¹⁸ Kelly notes the importance of *amplificatio* and *descriptio* in the *artes* (1991:77-78, 71-75). He also reviews the importance of tradition and use of *auctores* (1991: 111-115).

Wone hit is alre mest on drede.
 For Alured seide of olde quide-
 An ȝut hit nis of horte islide-
 'Wone þe bale is alre hecst,
 Ponne is þe bote alre necst': (ll. 667-668...683-688)

Alfred is even referred to as gospel when the Owl quotes him on the subject of warning against danger.¹¹⁹ Alfred is not the only authority mentioned, although he is by far the most relied upon, and the only author mentioned by name.

The Owl's comments about her learning point to the shifting of her position from student to teacher, a dynamic which is never settled since the Nightingale refuses to use the same framework for representing her perspective. The Owl refers to her learning, both from books and from the Church,

Ich con inoh in bokes lore;
 An eke ich can of þe goddspelle-
 More þan ich wule þe telle.
 For ich at chirche come ilome
 An muche leorni of wisdom. (ll. 1208-1214)

In response to the charge that she has only one useful skill,¹²⁰ the Nightingale responds, that not only in her one skill better than the Owl's put together, but she also puts it to better use,

Clerkes, munekes & kanunes,
 Þar boþ þos gode wicke-tunes,
 Ariseþ up to midelniȝte,
 An singeþ of þe hovene liȝte;

 Ich singe mid hom niȝt & dai:
 An ho boþ alle for me þe gladdere... (ll. 729-737)

The Owl then responds that the Nightingale is telling lies and using trickery to sound truthful, and that her own song is doubly useful to people,

¹¹⁹See ll.1269-1270.

¹²⁰ See ll.555-558.

Ich helpe monne on eiper halve.
 Me muþe haveþ tweire kunne salve:
 Þan gode ich fulste to longinge,
 Vor wan hin longeþ ich him singe;
 An þan sunfulle ich helpe alswo,
 Vor ich him teche ware is wo. (ll.887-892)

When the Owl claims to be a helpful teacher, the Nightingale's parallel claim is that she has an inspirational or emotional function.

Confusions in the student-teacher relationship are also present in the narrator's interaction with the reader. Beyond offering bits of narrative in between the speeches, the narrator in *The Owl and the Nightingale* also makes suggestions interpreting motive, especially for the Nightingale. When the Nightingale has difficulty refuting the Owl, the narrator comments,

Ac nopeles he spac boldeliche,
 Vor he is wis þat hardeliche
 Wiþ is uo berþ grete ilete,
 Þat he vor areþe hit ne forlete-
 Vor suich worþ bold 3if þu fli3st,
 Þat wule flo 3if þu nisvicst. (ll. 401-406)

A second time this happens, the narrator expands upon his commentary with several reflections, including two quotations of Alfred.¹²¹ Cartlidge suggests that the narrator's purpose might be to draw attention “by insisting on the delicacy of the situation and the rhetorical virtuosity with which the protagonists handle it. Such a demand can only be ironic, for neither of the birds can really be regarded as exemplary speaker” (p.64).¹²² Cartlidge's point places the narrator in the position of instructor to the reader's student; however, this designation does not apply to the end of the poem, since the narrator concludes, “An hu heo spedde of heore dome/Ne chan ich eu na more telle-/Her nis na

¹²¹See ll.659-700.

¹²²See explanatory note on lines 659-706.

more of þis spelle” (ll.1792-1794). The question of final authority in the argument is unclear. The poet suggests that Nicholas will have the final say, and his lack of knowledge of that authority diminishes the narrator’s poetic authority in the closing moments of the poem, putting his authority throughout the entire text in question. Final authority in the case of the text as a whole is given over to the reader, which is a general feature in verse arguments.

The ambiguity of the reader's position in *The Owl and the Nightingale* maintains the element of uncertainty from previous examples. The reader's place in the scheme of the poem, as potential observer, teacher, or student, is made particularly unsettled because of the birds' consistent responses to each other using different frames of reference, the narrator's participation, and the lack of a definitive conclusion to the overall argument. The reader is not strictly an observer, since the narrator inserts his own commentary about the situation which can only be directed at the reader. In previous examples, the narrator might present the concluding judgment, as in the “Contest of the Rose and the Violet”, although in that case, the poet is speaking directly to the disputers. The narrator might take on the role of instructor as to how each flower ought to be interpreted, but does not tell the reader which to prefer. That judgment is left to the individual, and has little influence on the overall outcome of the poem.

The Owl and the Nightingale represents the beginning of the verse argument tradition in English, a poetic category which expanded in the following centuries to cover a range of themes, types of argument, and styles. From the later thirteenth century, “Als I lay” represents a Christian theme, and an argument about who is better (or, in this case, worse). From the fourteenth century, “The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep”

presents a verse argument that suggests a court, and provides no concrete judgment. From the fifteenth century, “The Debate of Nurture and Kynde” presents clerkly characters. The types of disputation covered are those with two characters arguing back and forth (Nurture and Kynde, and Body and Soul), an argument consisting of multiple perspectives being listed (Horse, Goose, Sheep), and the narrative disputation in which there is action included that relates directly to the outcome of the poem (Nurture and Kynde, and Body and Soul). Each of these types has been presented in some form by a Latin predecessor. The back-and-forth appears in the “Debate of the Lily and Rose” and “The Conflict of Spring and Winter”; the use of narrative sections relevant to the outcome and the listing of perspectives occurs in the “Debate of the Body and Soul”.

The Middle English Body and Soul verse argument “Als I lay” presents an argument that consists of back and forth between the speakers, as well as a narrative intrusion that influences the final outcome. The poem dates from before the late thirteenth century, when its earliest surviving manuscript was compiled.¹²³ The poem was likely well known, since there are more manuscripts extant of it than “any other debate poem in Middle English” (Conlee 19). Like its direct ancestor, the Latin “Debate of the Body and Soul”, “Als I lay” is framed as a dream, although the dreamer is not specifically designated as a religious man in the Middle English version.

One of the features which characterizes the poem as an argument is the use of different frames of reference by the two disputants. In both cases, the choice of terms to describe their argument relates directly to the speaker’s main argument. Throughout their discussion, the Body in particular tends to stick with terms of right and wrong to describe

¹²³ Conlee lists seven extant copies of the poem (19-20). The earliest manuscript is Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud misc. MS 108.

the dialogue, and argues primarily that it was not taught the difference between right and wrong properly. The Body says, “Soule, ʒif þu it me wilt atwite/.../Þou berst þe blame & y go quite,/ Þou sholdest fram schame ous have yschilt” (ll. 177...183-184).¹²⁴ Later on, the Body also says, “I-weneste þouʒ, gost, þe geyned ouʒt/ For to quite þe wiþal” (ll.337-338). In these instances, the Body frames the discussion in terms of antagonistic finger pointing involving blame and response-redirection. After one such moment, the Body continues, “Y þe say at wordes lite,/ Wiþ riʒt resoun, ʒif þatow wilt” (ll.181-182). Value and correctness of words becomes a concern addressed in more depth, when the Body claims,

Gast, þouʒ hast wrong, i-wys,
Al þe wit on me to leye
.....
Were was I bi wode or weyʒe,
Sat or stod or dide ouʒt mys,
Þat I ne was ay under þin eyʒe?
Wel þouʒ wost þat soth it ys. (ll.258-264)

The Body also asks, “ʒwat wist I wat was wrong or rith...” (ll.345) without the Soul’s help, and claims, “Þanne haved I nevere lerned/ ʒwat was vuel ne ʒwat was guod” (ll.457-458). The Body’s apparent concern with its lack of proper guidance is enhanced by its use of language suggestive of teaching and learning. It points out that God gave understanding and ability to the Soul, and left the Body in the Soul’s care.¹²⁵ The Body also frames the relationship as that of master and servant, as well as teacher-student. It says, “I þolede þe and dide as mad,/ To be maister and I þi cnave” (ll.335-336), and soon after, “ʒwanne þouʒ me tauʒtist on untiʒth/...” (ll.349)

¹²⁴ Textual references from the poem are from Conlee’s edition (p.18-49).

¹²⁵ See ll.185-232.

The Soul's characterization of the disputation is suggested in terms of lament and mourning of unhappy results in spite of much effort to the contrary. The Soul's initial speech is labeled as "michel mone" (ll.138), in which the Soul lists instances of the Body's misbehaviour and how, "Ich may wepe þat þou bi louȝ,/ For al mi ioie for þe is tint" (ll.95-96). The Soul soon picks up on some of the antagonistic representations that the Body uses, "Wenestouȝ, wreche,.../Of all dedes þouȝ didest ille/ þat þouȝ so litli schalt be quite?" (ll.202...207-208) The term 'quite' suggests restitution, and since it is used by both parties at different points, the word provides the occasional reminder that there is tension in spite of claims of friendship on both sides. The tension is paralleled by the Soul's tendency towards presenting the Body as a failure of a student, while the Body counters that the Soul was a poor teacher.¹²⁶

The emotional complexity of this particular argument reveals the tonal shifts between friendly advice and mean-spirited accusation employed on both sides. Already within the Soul's opening speech both tones are present. The Soul's opening speech contrasts in tone to the Soul's declaration that it loved the Body, since the Soul begins with a curse against the Body and continues with an unflattering portrait of the person the Body was as well as what's probably going on physically after death. Later on in the argument the Soul says,

Softe þe for love I ledde,
 Ne dorst I nevere do þe wo;
 To lese þe so sore I dredde,
 And wel I wiste to getin na mo. (ll.301-304)

¹²⁶ This lack of agreement in the speakers' self-presentation is similar to the mismatch in *The Owl and the Nightingale*. Unlike the earlier poem, "Als I Lay" does at least contain a settled student-teacher dynamic, although neither student nor teacher is effective in their role.

Continuing with the wavering tones, the Soul also says, “Bodi, allas, allas/ Pat I þe lovede evere 3ete,/ For al mi love on þe I las!” (ll. 378-380) The Body also fluctuates between love and disgust in its speeches. The first words the Body speaks are, “Wheþer þou art mi fere,/ Mi gost þat is fro me gon?” (ll.143-144) Even though the first thing the Body says in response to the Soul’s opening rant contains a reference to the Soul as companion, it later suggests,

Oc for I þe so eise fond,
 And þi wretche wit so þunne
 Pat ay was wriþinde as a wond,
 Þefore couþe I nevere blinne. (ll.365-368)

“Als I Lay” also hints at multiple levels of argument. There are three arguments in the poem: the explicit argument between the Body and the Soul, the implicit disagreement between the Soul and Jesus, and a second implicit argument between the Soul and the devils that come to take it away. The only spoken exchanges occur between the Soul and the Body. When the Soul perceives that the devils are closing in, it calls out to Jesus, “Ihesu Crist þat sittest on hey,/ On me, þi schap, nou3 have merci!” (ll.579-580) The Soul’s desperate prayer continues for another full stanza, and includes the suggestion that Jesus bears some responsibility for the Soul’s present difficulties.¹²⁷ This accusation is not answered by Christ, and the devils step in with their own claim,

Loren þou3 havest þe cumpainye
 Þou havest served us so 3ore;
 Þarfore nou þou schalt aby
 As opere þat leven onoure lore. (ll.596-600)

The Soul does not get to dispute with the devils, and the narrative intervention provides the overall conclusion to the action. Between the description of the devils and the

¹²⁷ See ll.585-560.

narrative of what they do to the Soul,¹²⁸ the argument over exactly who bears responsibility for sin is not clearly resolved. The Soul gets torn up and dragged to hell, but the Body is not really absolved either as the Soul points out,

O poynt of ore pine to bate
 In þe world ne is no leche;
 Al tegidere we gon o gate:
 Swilk is Godes harde wreche. (ll.469-472)

“Als I Lay” presents a combination of sources of *auctoritas*, secular and religious, that are used to support the disputants’ points as well as to question them. The Body and Soul each make direct references to Biblical passages. The Body refers to Genesis, a proverb based on the Gospel of Matthew, and a scenario reminiscent of Job,¹²⁹ while the Soul refers to apocalyptic scripture such as Revelations.¹³⁰ Throughout their disputation, both sides also refer to a variety of folk proverbs and poetic traditions.¹³¹ This reliance on secular tradition as a major source of *auctoritas* reflects both the poetic interest demonstrated by the *artes* in the use of proverbs, and also hints at the audience the author might have had in mind for the poem.¹³² The lack of major scholarly references suggests, though not definitively, that the audience and/or the author was perhaps more inclined towards poetic and folk tradition than pure theology. The Soul’s final questioning of Christ supports this notion, as a serious theological argument would not be likely to include such a feature. This questioning of ultimate authority towards the end of the poem

¹²⁸ See ll. 497-576, 601-612.

¹²⁹ See ll.185-186, 375-376, 453-454.

¹³⁰ Ll. 213-216 (see also Conlee’s note on these lines, p.30).

¹³¹ See for example ll. 18, 21, 25, 31, 159, 163, 249, 269, 467, 497, 562.

¹³² Kelly’s discussion of authority and patronage is also relevant to this point (ref. note 54 above).

puts the Soul's reliability in question, especially since it had previously advised the Body that it was too late to pray for forgiveness and mercy.¹³³

“Als I Lay” may have an ambiguous conclusion to the disputation over who bears responsibility for sin, but the poem does not have an ambiguous overall message. The ambiguity is reflected in the role of the dreamer, while the directness of the overall message parallels the clarity of the reader's final position. The Middle English poem includes a prayer at the end that is not present in the Latin version, which presents the dreamer as a generic person who has realized the value of Christ's mercy. The message comes through clearly in the narrative spoken by the dreamer once he wakes up. After some personal reflection, the dreamer speaks directly to the reader,

þo þat sunful ben, I rede hem red
 To schriuen hem and rewen sore:
 Nevere was sunne i-don so gret
 þat Cristes merci ne is wel more. (ll.621-624)¹³⁴

The direction given to the reader is clear, as is the reader's position as a student who ought to learn from the dream. The dreamer is presented in a similar manner, as a student who must learn from the dream, but the dreamer is also the teacher who passes the lesson on to the readers.

An argument based exclusively on secular knowledge appears in “The Debate between Nurture and Kynd”, and the use of proverbial *auctoritas* supports the secular tone. The evidence for the arguments comes from proverbial sources, as does the overall plot of the narrative. Both the personification of Nurture and that of Kynde use proverbs

¹³³ See ll. 579-592, 465-472.

¹³⁴ The soul alludes to the same message in ll.473-488, but the context of the soul's accusations towards the body, and soon after Jesus Christ, suggests that the soul is not an objective and wholly trustworthy source of judgment within the world of the poem.

throughout their discussion.¹³⁵ Even the narrative sections have proverbial connections, such as when Nurture tries to use the example of his cat as evidence.¹³⁶ The overall theme, that nature conquers nurture, was well known in proverbs and literature in medieval Europe.¹³⁷ The narrative occupying the second half of the poem, which re-enacts a variation of the cat and the candle story, provides the overall conclusion to the argument, and is itself based on a fable that traces back to the classical period.¹³⁸

The student-teacher relationship is a key element of the poem's overall theme, and also plays a direct role in the depiction of the disputation itself. Nurture's initial position reflects an argument that learning can determine a man's position in life. His initial speech concludes, "A vertuys man men may oft fynd/ Pat moche worship wynnes in many a place:/ I preve þat nurture passis kind." (ll.2-4)¹³⁹ Kynd responds with a less generous view of education, "ffor alle thy helpe and socoure,/ Yet þou will shew sum touch from whens þou came yn a gere:/ I preve that kynd passis nurture." (ll.9-12) The terms used to describe the disputation by the two speakers themselves rely heavily on proving and showing, both terms that are established in the initial arguments presented, especially in the refrains used by Nurture and by Kynd.¹⁴⁰ More traditionally argumentative terms are also used to describe the dialogue, for example when Nurture suggests, "Come soupe with me;/ Thus to stryve alle day I hold us not wise." (ll. 29-30) To the idea that they stop striving, Kynd replies, "...if it be so,/ That I shal I wete or I

¹³⁵ Textual references are from Conlee's edition. Kynd: ll.7-8, 23-24, 25-27; Nurture: ll.15-17.

¹³⁶ See ll. 33-36.

¹³⁷ See Conlee 216.

¹³⁸ Ibid. See also p.220 n.41.

¹³⁹ Conlee notes that while the beginning of the poem is imperfect in the sole manuscript (London, British Library, Harley MS 541), little seems to be missing (p.217, and p.217 n.1).

¹⁴⁰ 'Preve' is used at ll. 4, 8, 12, 20, 28, 52. 'Show' or variations of the word, including 'see', are used at ll.11, 14, 27, 31, 36, 44.

blynne.” (ll.37-38) The poem also contains references to truth-telling and lies in reference to the arguments presented, a feature which appears in other verse arguments as well. Kynd says, “I shalle not lye” twice during the back and forth.¹⁴¹ He also colloquially refers to truth, “ffor sothe” (ll. 21). As Kynd is the only voice to use the language of truth or false, it emphasizes that his position in the argument is one being questioned, as opposed to Nurture who is placed in the position of doing the questioning, at least at first.

The verbal back and forth contained in the disputation shows a casual, almost friendly tone of the argument which transitions to narrative action that is less friendly. The first four stanzas present a pattern of alternation indicated by the repetition of phrases by the speakers. Each side has a refrain with which they conclude their stanzas of argument, and Nurture repeats ‘yn faith’ in his second section in repetition of Kynd’s opening of his first statement of argument, which Kynd varies as ‘ffor sothe’ in his second statement.¹⁴² The casual tone is set not only by the language used by also by the nature of the attacks and defenses provided by both sides. Neither Nurture nor Kynd attack the other personally in a direct manner, and both reserve their insults for their opponent’s position. In the first response, Kynd uses the image of trying to make a crab apple turn into a sweet apple to disprove Nurture’s claim of superiority, to which Nurture responds with the image of teaching a child to think and act like a pig.¹⁴³ The implicit association that Nurture makes between the pig and Kynd keeps the argument from being

¹⁴¹ See ll. 5, 21.

¹⁴² See ll.4, 12, 20, 28, 36, 44, 52 for the refrains. See ll.5, 13, 21 for the theme and variation beginning on ‘in faith’ that both characters use to begin their points.

¹⁴³ See lines 7-10, 13-19.

a purely friendly affair, and preserves the element of antagonism that other verse arguments present.¹⁴⁴

In addition to the friction between characters, there is a sense of tension between the narrator and the disputation he recounts. The narrative section that follows the end of the verbal exchanges presenting the trial with Nurture's cat Nyce illustrates a shift in argumentative strategies that accompanies the increased tension between the two characters. Kynd, who had previously used references to truth telling and lies, lies to Nurture about going back to his room to lock up valuables and proceeds to catch a mouse with which to test Kynd's theory without warning his opponent.¹⁴⁵ The tension between characters is also suggested by Nurture's invitation to Kynd ("Kynd neybor, welcome, tru pou may me fynd." (ll.50)) and Kynd's silence throughout the entire trial.¹⁴⁶ Although the initial frame is missing in the sole extant manuscript, the narrator's voice reappears in the conclusion to suggest a difference of opinion with the conclusion presented by the disputation and narrative featuring Nurture and Kynd. The narrative concludes, "'What, Nyce,' said nurture, 'Come do thi cure'./ By þat the cat had geven þe mous a clout./ She dud her kind & left nurture" (ll. 58-60). In spite of the conclusive nature of the disputation and narrative, the narrator-poet still ponders,

Yet could I never declare, yn fay,
For alle my helpe and socoure;
But nedes þai must togidre, yn fay,
Be closed yn on, kind and nurture. (ll.65-68)

¹⁴⁴ Kynd responds on a similar level suggesting that in spite of an appearance of good breeding and education, Nurture will eventually show his low origins (ll.25-27).

¹⁴⁵ See ll.39-44.

¹⁴⁶ See ll.45-60.

The narrator's re-interpretation of the lesson he just witnessed situates the reader in a position of questioning which outcome to accept. The actual verbal argument does not reach a specific conclusion, the narrative illustrates a conclusion in favor of Kynd, and the narrator presents the opinion that a choice is not necessary.

While "The Debate between Nurture and Kynd" presents a lighter toned verse argument in an informal setting, "The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep" shows how a verse argument with a more formal tone and setting deals with the same elements of authority and ambiguity. John Lydgate's "The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep" presents similar complexity in determining a lesson for the reader based on ambiguous authority, which is striking given the courtroom setting and the narrator's lengthy attempt at explanation in the second half of the poem. The lion and eagle are named in the third stanza as the judges in Lydgate's verse argument, and the reader is reminded of their presence in stanza 72, when the decision is presented that,

Of all these thre bi good advisement,
 Of Hors, Of Goos, of Ram, with his gret horn,
 Sauh in re publica myht nat be for-born;
 Bi short sentence tavoyde al discorde,
 Cast a meene to sett at a-corde.//
 This was the meene tavoide first the stryves,
 And al old rancour with her hertis glade,
 Use her yiftes & her prerogatives
 To that eende which that thei wer made, (ll.501-508)¹⁴⁷

At this point, the lesson to the reader appears to be that all of the three speakers have their own value, and they ought to recognize each other as such. This judgment leaves the disputation unresolved. When the poet steps in after the narrative concludes to provide a

¹⁴⁷ Textual references are from MacCracken's and Sherwood's EETS edition.

lengthy interpretation of his own, the reader is faced with the dilemma of which voice is the real authority.¹⁴⁸

The effort by Lydgate to explain the lack of definitive judgment in the imagined animal disputation by describing it as a fable from a folk tradition creates a contrast in tone with the legal setting of the fable and the terms used to describe the disagreement.

The first stanza of the poem declares,

Controversies, pleys & discordis
Attween persones, wer it too or thre,
Sought out the ground bi wittnessis of recordis:
This was the costum of antiquyte;
Iuges wer sett that hadde auctor[i]te,
The cas conceived stondyng indifferent,
Attween parties to yeve a iugement. (ll.1-7)

The Horse, Goose, and Sheep are present before judges to ‘compleyn’ (ll.24) and the poet says, “The processe was nat to profounde nor deepe,/ Off ther debat, but contrived of a fable.” (ll. 26-27) The introductory stanzas also make reference to going before a court about a ‘quarell’ (ll.10). The language of legal antagonism is also employed when the judges present their verdict. The three animals are told to avoid ‘stryves’ (ll.505) and “to doon her office as natur hath hem wrought” (ll.511). The notion of duty and tradition implied by the disputation and its frame is continued in Lydgate’s envoy, but the tone shifts from legal to sermoniac. Each stanza in the envoy ends with a variation of the refrain, “For no prerogatiff his neihbore despise” (ll. 547).¹⁴⁹ The exempla used in each

¹⁴⁸ The envoy begins, “Of this fable conceiveth the sentence;/ At good leiser doth the mateer see,/ Which importith gret intelligence;/ Yiff ye list take the moralite/ Profitable to every comounte,/ Which includith in many sondry wise,/ No man shuld of hih nor lowe degree,/ For no prerogatiff his neihbore despise” (stanza 78). The further exploration of the theme includes calls for princes to not despise their dependents, and for the social classes to not despise each other. For princes see ll.597, 584, stz 88-90. For rich and poor, see ll.587, stz 85, 87.

¹⁴⁹ Although some later stanzas alter the language somewhat, the word ‘despise’ is consistently used, as is the general theme of ‘do not despise’.

stanza support the change in tone by turning from the literary and historical to the more proverbial. During the argument itself, stanzas 7, 8, 33, 35, 41 refer to historical events or figures, and stanzas 11, 12, 37, 43, 45, and 46 present literary or Biblical examples.

During Lydgate's sermon, stanzas 79, 82 83, 91 all make use of proverbial expressions.

The shift from learned *auctoritas* and exempla to more proverbial language and ideas is accompanied by a shift in speaking voice from narrative to lecture.¹⁵⁰ In the process of setting up the frame, the speaker says,

Upon this mater shortly to conclude,
Nat yoor a-gon as I rehearse shall,
I fond to purpose a similitude
Ful craftily depeyntid upon a wall: (ll.15-18)

The narrator also makes particular note of the main characters,

These wer the dreadful roiall iugis tweyn,
In ther estate sittyng, I took keepe,
That herde the parties bi & bi compleyn,
The Hoors, the Goos, & the symple Sheepe. (ll.22-25)

The personal voice then disappears for the majority of the disputation, and reappears in the penultimate stanza of the disputation section when the reader is addressed directly regarding "this fable which that ye now reed" (ll.530). The first person personal voice does not return except for a brief reference to his reading, but the envoy continues to speak directly to the reader, promising, "...gret intelligence/ Yiff ye list take the moralite" (ll. 542-543). The speaking voice conceivably belongs to the poet, as suggested first by the first person address in the opening narrative and a reference in the envoy to his learning, by the references to the reader, by a heading in the poem, and by a statement of poetic *auctoritas*. The reference to himself in the first person presents the poet-speaker as

¹⁵⁰ Reed claims that the reliance of all three speakers on authorities and allusion is a traditional strategy, but that none of the three do it well (365- 367).

a man of learning: “Ther was a kyng whilom as I rede,/ As is remembrid of ful yore a-
gon,” (ll.620-621).¹⁵¹ The heading that separates the disputation from the sermon reads,
“The Auctor makith a lenvoie upon all the mateer be-fore said”.¹⁵² The statement of
poetic authority claims,

Of many strange uncouth similitude,
Poetis of old fablis have contryvid,
Of Sheep, of Horse, of Gees, of bestis rude,
Bi which ther wittis wer secretly apprevid,

.....
Bi exmplis of resound to be mevid, (ll.580-586)

Although the poem has an obvious didactic slant, the position of the reader as the
poet’s student is not always clear. Within the frame surrounding the argument, the reader
is in a stable position of a student learning, but as an observer of the actual disputation the
reader appears equal to the poet-instructor. “The Debate of the Horse, Goose and Sheep”
presents some more direct references to teaching and learning than other verse arguments,
which emphasizes the didactic moral purpose suggested by the concluding sermon. Also,
the narrative frame includes mentions of learning on both ends. The opening section
includes the recognition of education’s ability to strengthen an argument: “Ech for his
partie proudly gan procede/ Tenforce hym-silf bi record of scriptur/ In philosophie as
clerkis seen or rede,” (ll.29-31). The concluding envoy also makes a reference to the use
of knowledge but of a more practical kind, “The poore lith lowe aftir the comoun guyse,/
To techyn al proude of resoun & natur,” (ll. 617-618). The judges are not presented as the
instructors in the disputation because they never speak directly for themselves. Instead,
the narrator reports the contents of the verdict, which emphasizes the poet-narrator’s

¹⁵¹ Although the reference to reading is conventional, context allows it to suggest authority on more than
the basic conventional level.

¹⁵² This division appears between stanzas 77 and 78. Variations of it occur in multiple manuscripts, so it
may be treated as a part of the poem in general. See the apparatus criticus for textual variants, p. 562.

position as the teacher. The reader's position as student is reiterated by the poet's establishment of himself as instructor and the direct address to the reader as one who has the opportunity to learn. However, the reader's position as observer of the actual disputation places the reader in a similar position of observation to the poet, which complicates the relationship set up by the frame.¹⁵³

Although the initial argument over who is more beneficial receives an answer, though not a conclusion, the second verbal skirmish about war and peace remains unaddressed. When the Ram turns to the judges on the matter, "And sith the Sheep louthythes of innocence,/ Yeuyth to his party diffynytiff sentence." (ll. 496-497), the judges, or at least the narrator's account of them, ignores the issue in favor of the initial problem of who is most beneficial to mankind. The reader is left with no direction to turn in search of an answer, and on this matter is taught nothing directly.¹⁵⁴ Lydgate's envoy likewise does not address the second issue of war, but concentrates on the general relationship between the powerful and commoners. The poet makes one reference to violent oppression that uses the images of the Horse and Sheep, but it is set less in the context of war than social inequality.¹⁵⁵

Overall, the trends revealed by considering the academic perceptions and practices of poetry and the *trivium* during the medieval period all are present in the verse

¹⁵³ Reed points to and disagrees with an argument made by Pearsall that Lydgate was not a master at creating argument (368). The existence of this question by itself supports the idea that the poem creates uncertainty on the part of the reader.

¹⁵⁴ Reed suggests a connection between the beginning of the poem and the envoy by noting the mutual judicial and political language and concerns (370-372). Taken with a previous comment suggesting that the skirmish on war resulted from the Horse apparently catching the Ram in a lie (367), this reading might suggest that the reader is meant to overlook the entire discussion on war as a separate argument, and focus on the ideas of justice and general respect for differences that are scattered through the entire work. Even in this case, the war is still a distinct issue that remains unexamined in the same depth as the other issues addressed.

¹⁵⁵ See stanza 81.

arguments examined thus far. The poems all illustrate the intellectual background of the shifting ideas regarding poetry and grammar, the commentary-disputation format, and the rising importance of interpretation as opposed to knowing the original text. The interpretation of the evidence and authorities to one's benefit is a crucial method that the verse arguments appear to have borrowed from the commentary tradition. Other elements that further reflect the intellectual atmosphere of the times and are shared by all of the poems so far examined are the presence or allusion to a student-teacher relationship, uncertainties or ambiguities regarding the reader's position, the use of textual *auctoritas* and appeals to external authorities (textual or character), combinations of personal and rational argument, and internal references to the argument.

All of these features appear in some form in poems that span time and theme, which supports their potential for further exploring the tradition of the verse argument in Middle English. In addition to the grammar and commentary traditions intellectual-literary influences present in England, other traditions, such as drama, prose 'debate' literature, and general lyric trends, invoke many of the same tropes in applications suited to their particular styles. Of particular interest will be the treatment of the *auctores* and other forms of *auctoritas*. With the addition of folkloric sources of authority, explorations of the proper use of pagan and Christian sources, both together and opposed to each other, lead to second outline model for the argument inherent in 'verse argument': the medieval sermon.

Chapter 3: Models of Argument and Narrative Authority in the Popular Tradition

While commentary and dialectical practices inform the presence of argument in poetry through form and content specific to their disciplines, sermons provide another way of presenting an argument that is both an art form and an established formal method. Key differences between the commentary-disputation model and the sermonic are that the sermon model of an argument both assumes possible objections and preemptively tries to respond to them. These two features allow one voice more authoritative control over the discussion, but at the same time permit artistic and argumentative flexibility. In order to limit this flexibility, verse arguments that follow a sermon-model argument employ more popular knowledge as evidence. By using evidence that has a traditional, understood meaning and is less susceptible to interpretation, the speaker making the argument is able to limit or preempt questions that might arise in opposition to his-her claims. Such a model often results in a verse argument with a finite or pre-determined conclusion, as the argument itself appears more one-sided. The overall structure of the poem and its argument remains predominantly constructed according to principles discussed, practiced, and refined by scholars and artists alike.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how popular and folkloric traits reinforce several of the tropes inspired by scholastic conventions, and supplement them by employing the shared techniques in different applications in the set of Middle English poems commonly referred to as “debate poems”. Literary forms compatible with presenting an argument that are suitable to a popular rhetorical context include

catechisms, lyric poems, mystery plays, and sermons.¹ These styles offer an assortment of methods for imparting information both explicitly and implicitly. Catechisms and other prose dialogues rehearse material via an explicit conversation in the text for students unfamiliar with the material or argument.² The sermon presents ideas and, using a more implicit form of dialogue, assumes responses and questions of the audience. The medieval mystery drama makes use of its explicit form of enacted dialogue alongside the more implicit instructive dialogue conducted between student-audience and the interpretation of the Biblical text presented. The Middle English lyric poem provides the opportunity for both implicit and explicit use of dialogue within a range of styles and purposes. The sermon and disputation forms provide individual models for a verse argument, while lyrics, dramas, and prose arguments illustrate how the two models might be combined.

By examining applications of *auctoritas* and *exempla*, and narrative devices in several types of dialogues, I will determine which tropes are distinctive to the sermon model, which applications are unique to the disputation model, and which are shared. In particular, both models involve the use of *auctores* and *exempla*. In a disputation, *auctores* and *exempla* are used both to support the speaker's claims and to disprove the opponent. In contrast, the *auctores* and *exempla* within a sermon are used primarily to support one speaker's interpretation and argument. Similarly, both disputation and sermon structures employ techniques of narrative and voice, but generally do so in

¹ Copeland points out that some medieval writers in English, such as Gower and Chaucer, 'translated' the canonical *auctores* both literally and figuratively. They also started to use academic frameworks for literary works in English to create *auctoritas* (185-186).

² I am differentiating between 'catechism' and 'prose dialogue'. 'Catechisms' are those dialogues which consist of the student only asking questions and never attempting to engage with the master. A 'prose dialogue' may also have a master-student set-up, but includes a more complex relationship in which the student might question the master on his reasoning or argumentation as well as his knowledge.

different ways. Narrative and voice are both used to present tension between the reality and the ideal in both sermon and commentary-disputation; in a sermon both sides of the dialogue refer to the same real and ideal interpretations, whereas in a commentary-disputation based text the speakers within the work differ over at least one definition.

The Use of (Disputation vs Sermon) Structure for *Auctoritas*

Using a dialectical-commentary structure to establish credibility and truth is a tactic from the *artes praedicandi* which could be used both in the theological preaching context, and a literary situation.³ In one of the earliest known examples, Allan of Lille's *Ars Praedicandi* shows the technical nature of the 'university style' sermon, but also hints at the opportunities for creativity. Roughly a century later, Robert of Basevorn wrote his *Forma Praedicandi* which covered much of the same structural advice but in a manner which concentrated more on the ornamentation and creative rhetorical elements of a sermon.⁴ In spite of this difference, both *artes* exhibit the concern with structure linked to the use and interpretation of an original text. The sermon presents one major type of dialogue that might appear in a popular context. As a dialogue, the sermon directly relates one side of a master-student dialogue, while the student side remains largely implicit.

³ Minnis (1988) observes that the genre of the original text might have dictated the degree of *auctoritas* (10-11; 158-159). In reference to theology and scripture, authority was especially complex, because the ultimate author was not a human master, but a divine one (Minnis 1988, 36-39).

⁴ See Krul's introduction (Baservorn 112) and Evans's introduction to her translation of Alan of Lille's work (5-6) for some discussion of the basic connections between the sermon style and dialectic. Caplan's article explores some of the connections between the general understanding and practices of rhetoric and the *artes praedicandi*. He links the rise of scholasticism and the preaching orders to the interest in rhetoric (77). Roberts notes the influence of rhetoric in the *ars poetriae*, *ars praedicandi*, and the *ars dictaminis* (41-42).

The model of the sermon outlined in both *artes praedicandi* reveals a pattern of repetition of the same point through various examples and authorities. Alan outlines a sermon as follows: first it must open with “its own proper foundation from a theological authority” (20), followed by the preacher establishing goodwill through his own example and presenting the usefulness of the subject.⁵ Once the listeners are assured of the preacher’s proper intent (including a promise not to be too long), he should begin his exposition by including closely related *auctores*, and follow up with any other relevant authorities, including pagan philosophers or poets, concluding with examples.⁶ Robert’s general sermon outline consists of a theme (a Biblical passage), development and explication, followed by a concluding prayer.⁷ Both of these general outlines fit in with the traditional overview of a medieval sermon: theme, occasion (or antetheme), protheme, process, and divisions, sometimes with intervening re-iterations and extensions.⁸

A poetic example that explores opposing a sermonic style argument with a disputation-commentary argument appears in “Jesus and the Masters of the Laws of the Jews”. The poet emphasizes the superiority of the disputation model by exploring the concern of properly appealing to *auctoritas*. The initial exchanges reveal a difference in the use of *auctoritas* as well as a disagreement over the format of the ensuing discussion with Jesus suggesting disputation, and the masters suggesting preaching.⁹ The masters

⁵ Alanus 20-21. Translation is Evans’s.

⁶ Ibid. 21-22.

⁷ See Baservorn p. 132. All textual references are from Krul’s translation.

⁸ See O’Mara 53-58 for the general outline and four examples of its application. Murphy presents the same components using slightly different terminology and order (“Introduction” xix). O’Mara’s example outlines show that some variation in the order of parts was practiced.

⁹ Textual references come from Conlee, p.167-177. The masters specifically accuse Jesus of preaching improperly at ll.21-24. Their treatment of him initially also illustrates that the masters wish to preach to the people, not dispute with them.

open the argument by asserting their authority over the child Jesus, saying “Pou sittest staleld in ure stage” (ll.16). They back up this claim without referring to any *auctores*, instead relying on the personal attributes of their superior age and presumed education, telling Jesus, “Pou shuldest lerne A.B.C/ ffor þe fayleþa foiundement” (ll.25-26). Jesus takes advantage of that discrepancy to challenge their knowledge:

Whi is A. bi-fore B.?
 Tel me þat, spekest in present,
 Or I schal tymeli teche þe
 Bi reson raþe þe schal repent. (ll.36-39)¹⁰

Jesus offers his answer when the masters refuse to dispute with him, suggesting that A is the first letter because of its representation of the Trinity.¹¹

The masters’ initial reluctance to dispute properly, along with the judgment of the audience, illustrates the poem’s approval of Jesus’ interpretation of the authorities and his decision to engage in disputation to settle the argument. The masters’ first reference to an authority shows that Jesus succeeds in drawing them into a disputation. In response to Jesus’ interpretation of the Trinity, they offer a counter-argument by using a different authority: “Bi Moyses lawe nis not founde/ Þe laws þat þou tellest heere” (ll. 71-72).¹² The second part of the masters’ response again asserts that masters’ earlier self-imposed authority over Jesus, but continues the disputation by posing a new question, “Pou kennest comeli clergye,/ And 3it to teche þou ar to 3yng/.../Þis qwestion to þe I make:/ Tel me what is þe Trinitie?” (ll. 95-96, 107-108). Jesus then draws from a Scriptural reference to Isaiah and links his response back to the original question regarding the

¹⁰ Conlee’s note points out that Jesus is also asserting authority by demanding an immediate response (p.170, n.38-40).

¹¹ See ll.43-46 and ll. 49-68 for the master’s refusal to dispute on the academic question posed by Jesus.

¹² The masters repeat this point at ll. 85-87 towards the closing of their response.

alphabet: “ffor þe Trinite, I þe seye,/ A. is letter of alle cheef” (ll.141-142).¹³ The masters counter with their own references to the prophecies of Isaiah, and they go one step further by quoting the Latin to enhance the *auctoritas* of their argument.¹⁴ The verse argument poems were not the only forms to adapt dialogue for didactic purposes; many of the same techniques displayed in verse arguments were also used in mystery plays and sermons.¹⁵

Instead of contrasting the two models, the mystery play covering the fall of Lucifer uses the sermonic model. In the Chester Cycle’s version, Lucifer and Lightborne take turns with the other angels in asserting why their stance should be accepted, in a manner that appears adapted from *Sic et Non*. Minnis and Scott argue that Abelard’s challenge to students and scholars in *Sic et Non* is to apply the general rules of reasoning set forth in his prologue to the questions posed using the material listed from various *auctores* on the subject in question.¹⁶ Although the prologue contains instructions for a commentary-disputation based argument, *Sic et Non* itself is more of a catalog of exempla that allows its user to consider and anticipate possible objections. This particular characteristic of a sentences collection enables a form of argumentation that both lends itself to a dialog format and suits a sermon style argument just as well as the commentary-disputation model.

¹³ See ll. 117-140 for Jesus’ response and Conlee’s notes identifying the Scriptural reference. The notes also point out that Jesus also refers to some popular knowledge of the incarnation of Christ.

¹⁴ The masters’ response is ll. 151-173, and the quotation of the Latin is ll.173-174. Both Jesus and the Masters refer to Isaiah 7:14, but present it differently. See lines 119-120 for Jesus’ version, and ll.151-152 for the Masters’. The Latin quoted comes from the Masters’ use of Isaiah 11:10 to enhance their argument (see Conlee p.175, n.170-1 for the Scriptural citation).

¹⁵ See Merrill 24-25.

¹⁶ Minnis and Scott say, “Difficulties are raised but not resolved; that is the challenge offered to the student, who has to apply the general rules set down in the Prologue” (67). They also present the rules and examples that Abelard includes in the introduction to *Sic et Non* (p.67-69). The text of the Prologue follows on pp.87-105. See also Peter King’s article, sections 1.2 and 7.

In the Chester play, the amoebean pattern of repeating language and theme from the opponent's previous statement mimics the *sic et non* style of presenting a series of pro and con statements on the same question. The overall sermonic structure is enhanced particularly by amoebean repetition of a previous speaker's words within the argument scene.¹⁷ The argument among the angels also uses the sermonic structural component of repetition of theme. If Lucifer and Lightborne are the *sic*, and the other angels the *non*, then God's final command before leaving the stage can be read as the question at stake: whether or not "Was never none so like me, soe full of grace,/nor never shall as my fygure" (ll.120-121).¹⁸ Lucifer's initial statement of his *sic* position picks up on some of God's language,¹⁹ particularly in the use of the attribute of brightness: "Aha, that I ame wouderous brighte,/amongest you all shingene full cleare!" (ll.126-127) Lucifer establishes himself as the opening of the argument by asking, "What saye ye, angels all that bene here?/ Some comforte soone now let me see" (ll. 132-133).²⁰

The amoebean repetition of key phrases, and variations on the same theme continues throughout the argument as the other angels take turns speaking in the *non* position. The Virtues and Cherubim refer to God's command to keep their places, and both groups repeat the word 'pride'.²¹ After a response from Lucifer, the Dominations

¹⁷ For details regarding the amoebean style see *Oxford Classical Dictionary* "amoebean verse", "pastoral poetry, Greek", and "pastoral poetry, Latin".

¹⁸ Citations from the Chester plays are from NeCastro's edition.

¹⁹ See God's lines ll.116-125.

²⁰ Diller argues that the devils in the mystery plays are fully self-aware of what they are, and that this certainty undermines the perception of disputation that might occur within the dialogue (226-227). Although the Lucifer in the early parts of the Chester play has not yet fallen to devildom, he takes a position apart from the other angels. The position that Lucifer and Lightborne take sets them up to show a process of interaction through dialogue, which Diller suggests is the mystery plays' way of moving beyond transforming emotions into actions, and placing them into a psychological context (62). Sturges argues that at first Lucifer and the other angels (and later Adam and Eve) are in a reciprocal relationship with God presented through direct communication, but through the course of the Fall the communication becomes more indirect (29-32).

²¹ See lines 134 and 141 for uses of 'pride', and lines 136-137 and 138-139 for references to God's earlier

and Principalities refer to the ‘thrall’ that will result from Lucifer’s proposal.²² Lucifer’s response to the Virtues and Cherubim reflects their use of the word ‘distress’, and sets up the Dominations to repeat the word ‘beauty’.²³ The Cherubim who speak after the Principalities provide the bridge between Lucifer and Lightborne, who speaks the next statement of the *sic* position. The Cherubim repeat the word ‘counsel’ used by the Dominations, and in turn set up Lightborne’s speech by naming him and making reference to the throne.²⁴

The dialogue of the play illustrates how an argument based on a sermon structure that takes stylistic cues from *Sic et Non* makes use of repetition and a predetermined outcome. Lightborne’s statement of the *sic* position picks up on the Seraphim’s language while at the same time repeating Lucifer’s previous rationale. The Seraphim first used ‘brother’ to refer to the previous speakers of the *non* position, while Lightborne uses it to refer to his compatriot in the *sic* position, Lucifer.²⁵ In addition to using the term ‘brother’, Lightborne also repeats the image of the throne: “In fayth, brother, yet you shall /sitt in this throne-arte cleane and cleare-” (ll.158-159). He also repeats the notion of brightness: “The brightnes of your bodie cleare/is brighter then God a thousandfoulde” (ll.164-165). Lightborne’s reference to brightness represents a slight shift, because until he says it, only God and Lucifer had used the word. After Lightborne directly points out Lucifer’s “brightnes”, both the Thrones and Powers mention ‘brightness’ as well.²⁶ The

command.

²² See ll. 149, 150.

²³ See ll. 141 and 142 for ‘distress’ and ll. 143 and 147 for ‘beauty’.

²⁴ For the use of ‘counsel’ see ll.148, 154. The Cherubim name both Lucifer and Lightborne in line 155, and refer to the throne in the phrase “beware you this chair” in line 156.

²⁵ See ll. 154 and 158 for the uses of ‘brother’.

²⁶ See ll. 169, 172 for the Thrones’ two references and ll. 176 for the Powers’ single usage.

Thrones and Powers also make reference to pride and beauty, picking up on previously established *non* threads.

As with his first response, Lucifer responds to the Powers by repeating their last phrase or word, and he adds the element of using the high formal language that God used in the initial address. Lucifer's first line reads, "Goe hense? Behoulde, sennyors one every syde" (ll.178). His second address to his audience of angels uses the term 'seigneur,' which has etymological connections to French and Latin.²⁷ This term stands out in style, since other addresses use the far more common terms 'angels'.²⁸ Lightborne, whose response immediately follows Lucifer's speech, supplements stylistic elevation by praising Lucifer: "thou hast them torned by eloquence" (ll.199).

The final exchange is marked by some breaks from previous patterns. The Dominations are the only *non*-based voices who speak a second time,²⁹ and when they do so, they break with the pattern of repeating a work or phrase from the previous speaker. Although nothing from Lightborne's speech is repeated directly, the Dominations do use the term 'sovereign,' which Lucifer had used just prior to Lightborne's speech. Lucifer says, "All angells, torne to me I read,/ and to your soveraigne kneele one your knee" (ll.190-191), and the Dominations reply is that "Bouth Lucifer and Lightborne, to you I saye, /our soveraigne lorde will have you hense/...Goe too your seates and wynde you hense" (ll.203-206). Lucifer's answer also breaks with previously established patterns, in that he does not repeat something from the just-finished *non*-speaker right away. Instead he says:

²⁷ See MED listing for 'seignour'.

²⁸ See ll. 180, 190.

²⁹ The Dominations may be a composite character represented by multiple actors who might speak at different times, but they remain the only group perspective to be represented twice.

I redd you all doe me reverence,
 that ame repleth with heavenly grace.
 Though God come, I will not hense,
 but sitt righte here before his face. (ll.210-213)

Unlike a *sic et non*-based assessment, the angelic argument has a definite conclusion that is initiated by an action as opposed to words. Immediately after Lucifer sits and speaks his last line, God returns to the stage to a hymn of praise marked in the stage directions: “*Gloria tibi Trinitas*”. After God pronounces his judgment, Lucifer and Lightborne fall and curse their fates. God then presents the conclusion to the argument as part of the final speech of the play.³⁰ He says, “Behoulde, my angells, pride is your foe./All sorrowe shall shewe wheresoever yt is” (ll. 280-281). The reference to pride which has been established by use throughout the play by the angels representing the *non* side, suggests that theirs was in fact the correct side. The only reference to pride on the *sic* side is made by Lucifer, who ironically dubs himself ‘prince of pride’.³¹ This repetition of a single claim throughout is a marker of the sermon model of argument, particularly when combined with an outcome that can be predicted from the beginning.

Both the N-Town and York cycles contain versions of the Lucifer-God conflict with similar elements, although neither is as extensive as Chester’s version.³² In N-Town’s version, the repeated words are ‘worship’ and ‘worthiness’. N-Town allows for both sides to be presented in two rounds of Lucifer making his claim and Angels responding. The first response is that of Good Angels: “Oure Lorde God wurchyp we,/

³⁰ In consideration of questions regarding direct address to the audience in the plays, Diller takes note of expositional techniques borrowed from liturgy such as prayer or sermonic monologue (109-116). God’s concluding speech in the Chester play falls into such a category by clearly explicating the major lesson.

³¹ See ll.184.

³² Barrett argues that in the Chester version Lucifer represents a figure of civic disenfranchisement, reflecting the contemporary tension between the city and the palatinate exchequer over matters of jurisdiction (62, 79-83). Such a political context might help explain why the Chester play differs from the other two as much as it does.

And in no wyse honowre thee!” (ll.49-50)³³ Lucifer retorts that “A wurthyer lorde forsothe am I/ And worthier than he evyr I be!” (ll.53-54), to which the Bad Angels respond, “Goddys myth we forsake,/ And for more worthy we thee take” (ll.62-63). The message of the rebellion episode is also communicated by God as he casts Lucifer and his followers out: “Thu, Lucyfere, for thi mekyl pryde-/ I bydde thee falle from hefne to helle” (ll.66-67). This version of the disagreement presents a more condensed version of the story, and highlights the nature of the predictability of the narratives often used in a sermon based argument. The *sic et non* element is also present and especially straightforward, with the Bad and Good sides clearly labeled.

The York cycle retains the presentation of the two sides among the angels, but in this variation of the argument the angels are not so much speaking to each other as speaking in alternating soliloquies to the audience.³⁴ Lucifer concentrates on becoming more certain of his superior power and brightness, until in the third and final restatement. He finally decides to proclaim,

I shall be like unto him that is highest on height!
 Oh what! I am perfect and proud...
Out, deuce! All goes down!
 My might and my main are all marring.
 Help, fellows! In faith, I am falling. (p.17-18)³⁵

The other angels take their turns praising God largely in terms of love and grace.³⁶ Like the Chester play, the York play presents the initial conclusion to the argument through

³³ N-Town references are from Sugano’s edition.

³⁴ Pamela King suggests that the York cycle drew on the liturgy for structure (155-178), which helps explain the format of alternating speeches. Diller argues that mystery plays in general have connections to liturgical performance and practice (see especially 9-32). He also presents the idea that the plays of the Chester and York cycles have a distinctively ‘civic’ character (4-5) which helps account for some of the difference between these two mostly complete cycles, and that of N-Town.

³⁵ References to York plays are from Purvis’ edition.

³⁶ See pp.16-17

action; in York's case, Lucifer literally begins to fall. Instead of pride, Lucifer's sin is in York's play labeled as 'disobedience', first by Cherubim, and then by God.³⁷ God rephrases the crime slightly, "These fools from their fairness in fantasies fell. . . . So passing of power they thought them./ They would not me worship that made them" (p.19). God alludes to pride, but his speech concentrates more on the act of disobedience before he proceeds with his explanation of his creation process. This method of using the sermon outline gives voice to the implicit second perspective, which questions or argues against the first, while maintaining the rehearsed and repetitive claims and reasons on both sides. The indirect nature of an objecting or questioning voice is a key component of the sermon model that distinguishes it from the disputation-commentary based style of argumentation.

The mystery plays more strongly evoke the sermon style of argument, while Peter Abelard's early twelfth-century dialogue, *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, reflects how the same *Sic et Non*-based style is applied in a commentary-disputation based argument.³⁸ The exchanges between the Philosopher, Christian, and the Jew are based on disputation formats,³⁹ but the Prologue that introduces the two dialogues is more suggestive of a sermon. Abelard himself does not directly participate in much of the following discussion, but he does offer his thoughts on disputation and argument in the Prologue.⁴⁰ Abelard also presents his final comments in a style analogous

³⁷ The Cherubim says, "Since Lucifer our leader is lighted so low,/ For his disobedience in bale to be burnt" (18-19).

³⁸ The dialogue probably dates to the 1130s. See Payer 6-8 for discussion of the problem of dating the work more precisely. Textual and title references and translation from the *Dialogue* come from this edition.

³⁹ See Payer 11-12 for the use of the *quaestio* method. Leinsle (90-94) discusses the foundations of Abelard's theology, and notes in particular the importance of *ratio* in relation to *scriptum* and *sententia* (see esp. p.91). Reed examines the idea of *Sic et Non*'s influence on the verse argument tradition (112).

⁴⁰ Pieper reviews the argument between Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux as one based on the tension between rationalism and faith (82-83). He goes on to argue that the basis for Abelard's logic was linguistic

to a sermon. He makes his statement, inserts an *auctor*, repeats his theme, and offers further references to *auctores* to back up his point, which is then judged in the affirmative. He says, “I believe that I will learn something from this...I believe that there is no disputation so frivolous that it does not contain some instructive lesson” (p.23). Although the Prologue reflects a sermon, the dialogues present disputations based on the same questions regarding *auctoritas*.

In the Prologue to *Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, Abelard makes a statement regarding fair use of authorities in the impending arguments that emphasizes using *auctores* as supplementary to one’s own points, and not as the main source of one’s argument. He replies to the Philosopher's proposal,

For, accustomed as I am, like you, to the vain disputations of this world, I would not undertake a serious hearing on things which I have been accustomed to be entertained. Yet you, O Philosopher, who profess no law and submit to reasons alone, do not overestimate the advantage you may seem to have in this contest...You can bring against them both reason and the written word, but they cannot use anything in the Law against you since you do not follow the Law: and indeed their use of reason is much less powerful against you, to the extent that you, more practiced in reasoning, have more abundant philosophical armor. (p.22-23)

The use of *auctores* and *auctoritas* presented here reinforces the distinction between the frame as adhering to the sermonic format, and the arguments of the dialogues making use of disputation structures. Abelard states that in a disputation the Philosopher has an advantage thanks to his knowledge both of argument structure (‘reasoning’) and of the *auctores* (the ‘written word’). Both the Jew and the Christian are limited to their respective Scriptural traditions and associated methods of discussion, which may help

(84-87). This understanding of Abelard’s ideas helps explain Abelard’s reluctance to engage directly, and why he chooses to allow the three characters to speak instead.

explain why the dialogue introduces the sermonic elements in order to balance the Philosopher's supposed advantage.

The claims made in the second dialogue also support Abelard's earlier allusions to himself as a potential new *auctor* by making a more explicit case for the validity of new, living *auctores* in addition to the old ones. The Christian points at converting on the basis of being "moved to the faith by [previous philosophers'] example, saying with the Prophet: 'For we are no better than our fathers'"; the Philosopher clarifies his position that, "We do not accede to their authority in such a manner that we refuse to submit their words to rational scrutiny before we give our assent" (p.79). Not long after, the Philosopher proclaims, "using his own reason, each and all choose the authorities they follow" (p.82). In answer to the Philosopher's suggestion that relying exclusively on *auctoritas* in a disputation is shameful and distrustful of one's own powers of reasoning, the Christian responds in partial agreement, that "in every discipline controversy arises in regard to the written word as well as in regard to the opinions expressed, and in any disputation the giving of a reason is firmer than a display of authority...no one can be shown the truth except on the basis of what he already admits, nor is he to be refuted except on the basis of what he accepts" (p.86-87).

Abelard's novel reference to his own works supplements two key concepts that eventually influence the Middle English verse argument traditions; the first regards his style of argumentation that lacks an explicit conclusion, and the second concerns varying the uses of *auctores*. The lack of any conclusion marks the application of *Sic et Non* style evidence in a commentary-disputation based argument, while the sermon style is determined by the alternating statements of authority on the same question. In the

prologue of *Sic et Non*, Abelard sets forth two major guidelines for his method. First, he claims that even the *auctores* were prone to error. He refers to this argument several times, including when he points out, “In the course of correcting and retracting much from his own work, Saint Augustine admits that he included in them much that came from the opinion of others rather than from his own. For even in the gospel some things seem to be said which agree with the opinion of men rather than with the true state of things” (92).⁴¹ Secondly, he states, “But in the case of the works of subsequent writers, contained in vast numbers of books, even if they are thought to be erring from truth because their meaning is not being properly understood, the reader or hearer has in this case free choice to approve what he has found pleasing, or attack what has offended him” (97). What these principles mean for a disputation-based argument is that commentary and interpretation of evidence is the critical factor, and that the conclusion is often open enough for the audience to make their determinations.

Much like the dramas and prose dialogues, Middle English lyrics have the capacity to follow either model but tend to choose one form or the other to uphold. For example, Robert Henryson's verse argument “The Ressoning Betuix Deth and Man” adheres to the sermon model of presenting the argument. The argument revolves around Death’s claim, “All erdly thing that evir tuke lyfe mon de;” (ll.3)⁴² Specific to the sermon model is how only one side consistently uses authoritative evidence to enhance the claims made, while the other voice presents evidence that has a more personal derivation, often to enhance the speaker as opposed to the point being made. In the case of Henryson’s poem, Death’s evidence is conventional but authoritative, as it is universally accepted.

⁴¹ Textual references and translation are from Minnis and Scott’s edition.

⁴²Textual references are from Fox’s edition.

For example, Death points out, “Quair evir I pas, owthir be it lait or air,/ Man put thaim heill on fors under my cure” (23-24). After challenging Death’s claim at first, “Now quhat art thow that biddis me ythus tak tent/.../Is none so wicht, so stark, in this cuntre,/ Nor I sall gar him bow to me on fors” (ll.9-10...15-16), Man’s only evidence of his sinful nature is personal (but also conventional): “Inn my 3owtheid, allace, I wes full irk” (ll.27). The argument continues for another round because Death still needs to convince Man to repent, which he does: “This wrechit warld for me heir I defy,/ And to the, Deth, to lurk undir thi caip,/ I offir me with hairt, rycht hummilly,/ Beseikand God...” (ll.42-45).

Also particular to the sermon model is the repetition of the same point with the same or similar evidence. A commentary-disputation modeled verse argument might repeat a point and-or evidence with interpretive variation, which often occurs in the context of the opponent restating an offending claim in order to refute it. In contrast, the sermon-based model has an individual speaker repeat his-her-its own point. If the opponent decides to accept that position, he-she-it then repeats it as well. In “The Ressoning Betuix Deth and Man” two particular ideas are repeatedly mentioned. First is Death’s power over mankind, regardless of station, as when Death points out, “Paip, empriour, king, barroun, and knycht,/ Thocht thai be in their ryell estait and hicht,/May nocht ganestand quhen I pleis schote this derte” (ll.4-6). Death repeats the point of his universal power in both his subsequent turns at speaking.⁴³ Man eventually picks up the idea once he is convinced of Death’s claim: “That 3ung and auld, riche and pur, man de” (ll.26). The second repeated idea is that of repentance. Man is the first to mention the idea

⁴³See Death’s other speeches especially at lines 21-24 and 37-40.

directly-- “Or with thi dert I suld rycht sair repent?” (ll.11)-- and Death addresses it at the beginning of his final speech: “Thairfoir repent and remord this conscience” (ll.33). The reappearance of repentance demonstrates a second method of repetition, as Death proclaims the idea that Man previously set forth as his signal of defeat.

The *Auctores* and *Auctoritas*

While the prose dialogues and mystery plays make use of elements of the sermon and the disputation in various ways, the *artes praedicandi* focus exclusively on the sermon form. In contrast to these, the lyric poems that concentrate on the disputation-commentary argument format contain some unique features. In addition to reliance on and-or advocacy for the disputation-commentary model, a disputation-commentary based lyric also includes the interpretive use of *auctores* and *auctoritas*, either academic or popular.⁴⁴ Although many verse arguments make use of both sermon and disputation-commentary based elements, one form or the other frequently prevails. When the highlighted structure is that of the comemtnary-disputation, this emphasis is made clear through the use of *auctoritas*.

Robert Henryson’s “Robene and Makyne” exemplifies a verse argument in which the commentary-disputation form dominates other structures alluded to in the poem. Makyne opens with a love complaint, “Robene, thow rew on me!” (ll.4),⁴⁵ to which Robene responds that she is 'rude'(ll.9) and asks,

⁴⁴ This point has already been alluded to in the earlier analysis of “Jesus and the Masters of the Laws of the Jews”. Similarly in the upcoming discussion of “Dialogue between Mary and Jesus on the Cross” the point will be made regarding universal recognition of a speaker’s *auctoritas*. The quoted source or reference must be indisputable as authoritative.

⁴⁵Quotations are from Fox’s edition, p.175-179.

Quhat hes marrit the in thy mude,
 Makyne, to me thow schaw,
 Or quhat is lufe, or to be lude?
 Fane wald I leir that law. (ll.13-16)

Makyne seems to want a love complaint dialogue, but Robene responds with a disputation-like question.⁴⁶ Makyne responds to Robene with a direct answer which is characteristic of a disputation, and she even offers some advice referring to conventional *auctoritas*:

At luvis lair gife thow will leir,
 Tak thair ane A B C:
 Be heynd, courtas, and fair of feir,
 Wyse, hardy, and fre,
 So that no denger do the deir,
 Quhat dule in dern thow dre;
 Preis the with pane at all poweir,
 Be patient and previe. (ll.17-24)

The 'how to be a lover' ABCs that she cites comes out of the popular tradition as would be fitting for her shepherdess character.

Robene's response solidifies the disputation pattern that the rest of the argument will take, setting it in the category of a disputation. Robene also suggests that Makyne's intention is not really complaint, but seduction:

I wait nocht quhat is luve,
 Bot I haif mervell in certane
 Quhat makis the this wanrufe.
 The weddir is fair and I am fane,
 My scheip gois haill aboif;
 And we wald play, us in this plane,
 Thay wald ws bayth reproif. (ll.26-32)

⁴⁶ Petrina argues that Henryson's poem is a sophisticated exercise that avoids generic classification (108). Among other generic traditions, she notes elements of 'debate' in combination with ballad (111-112). Newlyn argues that Robene and Makyne are both naïve characters who lose their innocence through the course of the poem. In the beginning Robene is bumpkin who feels bad about hurting Makyne's feelings but is more interested in his sheep, while Makyne is caught up in a courtly fantasy (36-37). I argue that part of the sophistication of the poem is the manipulation of the dialectical form on Henryson's part, and that the use of disputation does not reflect intellectual elevation on the part of his characters.

His rejection of the idea that they 'play' points towards a failed seduction, and he also rejects Makyne's complaint in favor of his intellectual problem regarding the nature of love. As she engages in his disputation, Makyne does so by continuing to use the language of complaint and seduction:

Robene, tak tent unto my taill
 And wirk all as I reid,
 And thow sall haif my hairt all haill,
 Eik and my madinheid.
 Sen God sendis bute for baill,
 And for murning remeid,
 I dern with the bot gif I daill,
 Dowltes I am bot deid. (ll.33-40)

Makyne counters Robene's rejection of 'play' directly by declaring that she is ready and willing to give both her heart and maidenhead, and she continues to use complaint language in her final line.⁴⁷

Once Robene realizes the Makyne is not willing to fully engage in the intellectual disputation that he wants, he attempts to end the conversation by leaving:

“Robene, thow reivis me roif and rest;
 I luv bot the allone.”
 “Makyne, adew, the sone gois west,
 The day is neir hand gone.”
 “Robene, in dule I am so drest
 That lufe wilbe my bone.”
 “Ga lufe, Makyne, quhair evir thow list,
 For lemman I bid none.” (ll.49-55)

This quick exchange of complaint from Makyne and intention of action from Robene continues for another stanza, until Robene finally does get up and leave. Makyne still gets the last word of this first round of argument when she cries, “Now ma thow sing, for I am

⁴⁷ Cornelius traces evidence of both *pastourelle* and elegy in the poem, as opposed to complaint (85-91). Cornelius does allow that the poem contains techniques of courtly romance, which corresponds to the complaint tradition (84-85).

schent;/ Quhat alis lufe at me?" (ll.71-72) Makyne's repetition of Robene's initial question raises the possibility that she is finally ready to dispute, although she is now by herself.

As soon as Makyne's unwitting concession to Robene is revealed, the poem makes another humorously ironic revelation, that Robene has been affected by the exchange as well: "Be that, sum pairte of Mawkynis aill/ Outthrow his hairt coud creip" (ll.77-78).

The rest of the poem almost mirrors the first round of exchange, with the twist that the two parties have now switched positions: Robene wants to seduce or complain, while Makyne wants to engage in disputation. Robene opens the exchange,

For all my lufe it salbe thyne,
Withowttin depairting:
All haill thy harte for till haif myne
Is all my cuvating;
My scheip to morne quhill houris nyne
Will neid of no keping. (ll.83-88) ⁴⁸

In these lines he repeats her initial argument, while reversing his own. Makyne responds not only with an intellectual point but also with direct reference to *auctoritas*:

Robene, thow hes hard soung and say
In gestis and storeis auld,
'The man that will nocht quhen he may
Sall haif nocht quhen he wald.' (ll.89-92)

Her use of the word 'hard' suggests an intellectual problem with his claim, and her citation of a proverb is an even more direct reference to authority than anything Robene has mentioned or suggested in his disputation attempt.

The two basic positions are repeated from the first set of exchanges, but the different speakers use different evidence and arguments which allows the poem to continue as a disputation to its conclusion. While Makyne had presented her argument for

⁴⁸Both Petrina and Newlyn stress that Robene is being practical and dutiful with this objection, not making fun of Makyne (Petrina 119; Newlyn 36-37).

seduction by outlining what they could do, Robene defends that position by looking at their surroundings and pointing out,

Thair ma na janglour us espy,
That is to lufe contrair:
Thairin, Makyne, bath ye and I,
Unsene we ma repair. (ll.101-104)

As for the rejection of this position, where Robene had initially suggested that his sheep would disapprove and he lacked interest, Makyne instead makes the point by stating,

For of my pane thow maid it play,
And all in vane I spend;
As thow hes done, sa sall I say,
'Murne on, I think to mend'. (ll.109-112)

The second round (and the poem overall) concludes in the same way as the first as the two debaters go their separate ways with their dispute unresolved. In an unusual take on the disputation model thus far, Henryson presents a verse argument in which both sides win their initial desire.⁴⁹ Robene gets Makyne to dispute with him, and Makyne gets Robene to engage in complaint and seduction.

Like “Robene and Makyne”, “The Clerk and the Husbandman” presents a lyric argument based on a disputation on the topic of love, but in more conventional fashion.⁵⁰ The key question to be disputed is whether or not women are false. The popular tone is established early on, as each speaker uses a refrain with which he ends each speech.⁵¹ The

⁴⁹ Newlyn suggests that the poem ends in tragedy, and with Makyne bitterly uttering a malicious curse against Robene (Newlyn 39-42), while Cornelius on a similar level suggests that Makyne wishes for revenge (90-1). Cornelius’ reasoning also includes the idea that Robene loses the argument because of his delay in accepting his traditional gender role as the aggressor (84-87).

⁵⁰ Other poems that use the same treatment on the topic of love as “The Clerk and the Husbandman” include *The Owl and the Nightingale*, “The Thrush and the Nightingale”, “The Clerk and the Nightingale”, “The Merle and the Nightingale”, and “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” (also known as “The Boke of Cupide”).

⁵¹ Chambers (*Aspects*) discusses how medieval lyric poems and popular songs both made use of the refrains or ‘burdens’ (265-266, 279-280, 290-291).

Clerk's refrain, "Quia amore languio," comes from a common mystical lyric model in which Mary or Christ pleads for mankind, and the Husbandman's "Bot turn up hyr haltur and let hyr goe!" also appears in other poems.⁵²

Although this verse argument relies more on conventional ideas and presentation of the disagreement, the poem reflects the capacity of verse argument to function within established thematic conventions. The specific references to *auctoritas* begin after the initial exchange, and establish direct engagement between the two disputants:

How shulde I do so? Then sayd þe clerke,
Thay wolde me lofe with all þair mayn;
Syth I fynde no faut yn worde nor worke
Withowte a cause I may not complayne. (ll.17-20)

The Clerk's use of a question and his reference to his opponent's position clearly show his engagement in the argument, and his reference to 'word and work' suggests *auctores*. The Husbandman responds to his opponent's sentiment and cites a specific source of *auctoritas*: "Ȝet avyse þe bettur & do be cownsell/.../Thow wenis þat þai be in þe gospell-" (ll.25-27). The Clerk's evidence contains a reference to a fable, which the Husbandman counters with 'daly experiens'.⁵³ The Clerk's response suggests the opinion that the Husbandman's resort to personal *auctoritas* has lost him the disputation:

The clerke unsward & sayd, 'in bokys I fynde
.....
Ther-fore reherse no sych myspreve,
ffor wethur þou tell me treuth or noe,
Thou shalte nott make me myse-beleve,
Quia amore languio!' (ll.49-56)

⁵²Textual references are from Robbins' edition, poem 181, p.180-181. Here, see Robbins' notes on this text, p.281-282.

⁵³See ll. 33 and 42.

Another lyrical verse argument based on a disputation that employs both textual and personal *auctoritas* appears in “Dialogue between Our Lady and Jesus on the Cross”. The poem presents a lyric argument which follows the dialectical model of an opening statement of the problem at stake and exploring various angles of that problem by invoking multiple kinds of *auctoritas*. The poet avoids the problem of establishing his personal *auctoritas* by relying exclusively on the unquestionable *auctoritas* of the speakers, Christ and the Virgin Mary. The opening dialogue establishes the identity of both voices as well as making the opening statement of the question to be disputed:

Stond wel, moder, ounder rode,
 Bihold þi child wiþ glade mode,
 Moder bliþe miȝt þou be.
 Sone, hou may ich bliþe stonde?
 Ichh se þine fet and þine honde
 I-nayled to þe harde tre. (ll.1-6)⁵⁴

There is no frame and no word in the poem that is placed in the voice of a narrator or character other than Jesus and Mary, neither of whom are named, which speaks to their universally recognized authority. The text rehearses the Crucifixion and the reasons for it, again presenting a narrative with inherent *auctoritas*. Christ in particular speaks through both his personal authority as well as on the textual authority of the Scriptural explanations for his life and death, for example when he says, “If ich ney deye þou gost to helle” (ll.26).⁵⁵

Mary speaks also on her personal authority, but her argument has far less textual basis. None of the Gospels record Mary saying anything at the Crucifixion,⁵⁶ and the poet

⁵⁴ Text is from Brown’s edition (1932), p.87-89.

⁵⁵ See also ll. 19-21 in which Jesus presents the idea that his death will enable Adam to leave hell, and redeem mankind in general.

⁵⁶ Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19 present the narrative of the Crucifixion. Only John makes explicit mention of Mary, Jesus’ mother, being present at 19:25-26. Turville-Petre also makes this

relies purely on her personal *auctoritas* to speak in her voice. Christ himself makes the point of his mother's inherent *auctoritas* near the end of the argument: "Moder, of moder þus I fare./ Nou þou wost wimmanes kare,/ Pou art clene mayden on" (ll.43-45). Both the intimate mother-son nature of the argument over whether or not Mary ought to be sad and her position as a woman and mother give further personal authority to her repeated insistence that she has the right to be unhappy about what she is seeing. For example, when Christ points out that he has to die in order to get Adam and the rest of mankind by extension out of hell, Mary replies, "Sone, wat sal me þe stounde?/ Pine pinen me bringeþ to þe grounde,/ Let me dey þe bifore" (ll.34-36). Given the lack of textual *auctoritas* that the poet has to go on, this exchange as well as the rest of Mary's argument illustrates how a dispute might stay authoritative while presenting a personal, emotional position by using a voice with unquestionable academic and popular *auctoritas*.

Besides the inclusion of personal emotion, the use of humorous popular traditions to explore serious topics is another technique that renders the disputation format more palatable to a non-university audience. By alluding to tropes and techniques that most people, regardless of education, would be familiar with, a work might assume some *auctoritas* based on its appeal to public knowledge. "A Disputation between the Body and the Worms" presents an example. The female Body's primary challenge is against the Worms' "Here gnawing my flesche þus with gret cruelte/ Devowryng & etyng nowe as 3e may se" (ll.82-83).⁵⁷ The Worms first respond humorously that the body is no longer

observation in the context of the changing emphases towards the human elements of Christ's and Mary's suffering starting in the twelfth century (152). Diller points to the twelfth century tradition of the Marian lyric *planctus* as a way of considering the lyric poem alongside dramas and hymns that include similar narratives and themes (45-51).

⁵⁷ Textual references come from Conlee's edition, pp.50-62.

pretty and should therefore not care what they are up to, and then they point to the *auctoritas* of their previous attentions to the Nine Worthies and their associations with other beasts.⁵⁸ The Body first acknowledges that the Worms represent the reality of death: “No langer wul I dispute þis matere/.../ Do þour will with me at þour benevolence;” (ll.137-139) and supports her new understanding by citing David’s Psalms.⁵⁹ The next intellectual step that the Body makes is a rejection of pride and open acceptance of salvation.⁶⁰ The multiple concessions to which the Body admits, and the continuation of the argument until she makes them, illustrate the importance of exploration as opposed to repetition, as well as the necessity of an intellectual victory in a disputation. After the Body’s final concession, the narrator reappears, having woken up, and restates the intellectual lesson for emphasis on the lesson over the humor in the poem.⁶¹

The *Auctoritas* in Language and Humor

The mystery plays also made use of the technique of using humor to mediate serious or technical lessons in order to appeal to public, popular knowledge. What they do differently, as sermon-structured arguments, is separate the comic and the serious elements rather than combine them. In the third play of the Chester cycle, Noah’s Flood, the argument scene functions as comic relief.⁶² The play opens with a long speech by God explaining what he is about to do and providing Noah with instructions. Once Noah,

⁵⁸ See ll.65-71 and ll. 86-106.

⁵⁹The reference to the Psalm is at ll. 140-141.

⁶⁰ See lines 176-204.

⁶¹ See ll.205-218.

⁶² Gash brings up three versions of the Noah play in which the wife character plays a humorous part, but discusses the wife more in terms of liminality (79-80). He also discusses how parody might operate on different levels, examining particularly Wakefield version of *Mactatio Abel* (76-78). The same sort of analysis of the comic relief applies to the Noah plays as well.

along with his sons and all their wives, has built the ark, Noah calls his wife to get on the boat, beginning the first round of the argument. She responds, “In fayth, Noe, I had as leeve thou slepte./ For all thy Frenyshe fare,/I will not doe after thy reade” (ll.99-101). He repeats the invitation and the wife again refuses. Noah makes a remark about women’s temperaments, then tells his wife,

Good wiffe, lett be all this beare
that thou makest in this place here,
for all the weene that thou arte mastere-
and soe thou arte, by sayncte John. (ll.109-112)

God interrupts the argument to instruct Noah regarding the animals he is to bring with him, and Noah and his wife resume their argument once the animals have been gathered.

The first exchange of the argument illustrates the use of linguistic attitudes in popular literature combined with some stereotypical domestic comedy. In her initial refusal Noah’s wife calls his initial request ‘Frenyshe fare’, making use of the perception of French as a language of either high style or rascality into a vernacular joke, since Noah’s first request was no fancier than, “Wife, in this vessell wee shalbe kepte; /my children and thou, I would in yee lepte” (ll.97-98). His second request is similar in language, albeit more concise -- “Good wiffe, do nowe as I thee bydd” (ll.102) -- and her response sets up the gender comedy by remarking, “By Christe, not or I see more neede,/ though thou stand all daye and stare” (ll.103-104). The wife implies in her response that her husband’s request is not reason for her to move, and that she can outlast him in a contest of will. Noah’s response acknowledges her supremacy on the issue, after first complaining about all women being ill-natured.⁶³ The wife is presented as the

⁶³ See lines 105-112.

stereotypical medieval stubborn and loud matron, while Noah is playing to the equally stereotypical image of the hen-pecked husband.⁶⁴

Besides the husband-wife dynamic, the comedic elements also include a drinking song that contrasts to the sacred songs indicated elsewhere in the script.⁶⁵ Once all of the animals and the rest of the family are aboard the ark, Noah invites his wife on board the ship for the second time. She again refuses, this time on the basis that she will not leave her girlfriends behind.⁶⁶ In the midst of the discussion, the Good Gossips sing a drinking song expressing their support of the Wife and her position.⁶⁷ Noah appeals to his sons, and his wife refuses even their pleas until Shem finally forces his mother's compliance: "In fayth, mother, yett thow shall,/whether thou will or nought." (Il.243-244)

The use of varied levels of language and *exempla* as didactic tools for reaching students of different levels is supported by evidence from preaching manuals. Many *artes praedicandi* discuss the use and importance of stories and proverbs that would appeal to common knowledge, as well as the best way to structure a sermon in a manner understood by a student not necessarily educated in the formalities of Latin and dialectical structure.⁶⁸ One caution to keep in mind with this line of argument is that, by itself, a less literary or academic reference cannot define the rhetorical situation as un-

⁶⁴ Diller suggests that Noah's complaints and asides serve to manipulate the relationship between the public and the play (129). See also Sturges, who argues that the audience of the mystery plays was required to exercise some imaginative authority of their own (28).

⁶⁵ Mills' textual notes at lines 224 and 260 point out that a hymn is specified after line 260 in a 1607 manuscript, but not in a 1591 manuscript (p.58-59). Either way the stage directions request a song which interrupts Noah's description of the flooding he is seeing, and is in all likelihood a sacred song of some kind. Mills notes that a 1592 manuscript actually labels The Good Gossips' Song". The beginning of the Good Gossips' song is at line 224 in NeCastro's edition, and the hymn is noted between lines 252 and 253.

⁶⁶ See lines 193-208.

⁶⁷ Barrett argues that Noah's wife, as well as the Alewife in the Harrowing of Hell play (both referring to Chester versions), reflect the loss of civic identity and opportunity that women were experiencing during the sixteenth century (78).

⁶⁸ See Baldwin 232-238, and 248-250. Turville-Petre makes a similar point about the adaptation of Latin Scripture into English for didactic purposes (138-151).

instructional.⁶⁹ Similarly, oral tradition and folk knowledge does not by itself define colloquial or informal language. For example, folk references in written texts can be every bit as literary and constructed as texts modeled on formal poetic sources.⁷⁰ What the presence of less elevated language and style can be used for is in determining the lesson that the assumed student is meant to learn. Blake points out that the presence of good, proper speech in opposition of a lower, more vulgar style can to some degree point towards the moral value of a given character's stance (158-160).⁷¹

Both the Chester and York plays use domestic conventions and references to prestigious languages to create scenes of argument, but while the Chester play uses them for humor, the York play uses the same techniques to enhance the didactic lessons of the flood story.⁷² By creating ways for a student to relate to the characters that appear fallible and human, the play increases the credibility of the message. The York version retains the husband-wife dispute but keeps the tone more serious, first by making the scene a platform for the Wife to present a legitimate complaint against her husband, and second by Noah's response to the Wife's final objection. The wife in the York version refuses on four levels. First, she refuses to go with the son that Noah sends to get her, saying,

⁶⁹ For example, *colloquies* were used to teach Latin style and proper conversational techniques. Evidence of the presence these elementary dialogues in England dates as early as the tenth century. See Gwara's edition of several pre-conquest *colloquies* found in English manuscripts.

⁷⁰ See Blake 154-160 for a more detailed explanation. In short, his argument is that in Old and early Middle English the written aspect of a composition automatically disqualified it from being 'popular'. He notes a distinct lack of definition of the term 'colloquial', and argues that oral style does not automatically mean 'colloquial'. Chaucer represents an example of a poet using practicing the use of folk sources in highly constructed verse. For example, see Holton's discussion of Chaucer's manipulation of speech length for effect in the Knight's Tale versus the Miller's (54-55), and Bryan et. al. for an analysis of a variety of folk tale analogues that Chaucer may have referenced for the Miller's Tale (106-123).

⁷¹ This argument is in part supported by evidence from medieval dramas (see also Turville-Petre 144-151 about drama used for educational purposes). Allen makes a similar suggestion, that, "The world of truth can be reached at any point from the world of fact, by simply naming it properly, and by telling the story. It is this truth which medieval literature enacts" (312).

⁷² The N-Town version of this play is not discussed here because it substitutes the interaction between Noah and his wife with a bit of black comedy involving a blind archer and his servant. See ll. 142-197.

“Must? That would I wit-/ We wrangle wrong, I ween” (p.50). When Noah speaks directly to her, she refuses a second time on the grounds that Noah is being foolish.⁷³

After each refusal, Noah or one of his sons repeats the same plea for haste, and each time the Wife presents a new concern. The third time she refuses because she claims that,

Noye, though might have let me wit,
Early and late when you went out,
And aye at home you let me sit,
To look not what you were about. (p.52)

The final refusal that the Wife gives in the York play is similar to the final refusal presented in the Chester play:

Now, sure, if we win free from woe
And so be saved as you say here,
My comrades and cousins also,
I would they went with us in here. (p.52)

Noah admits that he did not tell his Wife about what he had been up to while building the ark, proving that complaint to be accurate,⁷⁴ and puts off addressing her final problem until the flood is well underway.

While these complaints set forth by the Wife are conventional for domestic comedy, they are not given the same lighthearted entertainment factor as in the Chester play, largely because of the response given to the final complaint. Once the Wife is presumably on board, she asks Noah about where all their friends and family are, and he tells her, “Dame, all are drowned. Let be thy din,/ For soon they bought their sins full sore” (p.55-56). Noah then continues with a summary of God’s motivations for the flood, occasionally quoting Latin to give weight to God’s words.⁷⁵ Instead of using “educated”

⁷³ See p.51.

⁷⁴ See p.52.

⁷⁵ See p.56.

or “cultured” language for comedic effect, the Noah in the York play uses Latin as a reference to *auctoritas* of divine word.⁷⁶

The mystery plays also use comedy as a means of illustrating spiritual growth or change. All three of the cycles contain a version of the Shepherd’s Play, but the Chester cycle presents the most comedic version of the story. The Chester version adds a fourth shepherd who becomes the serious foil against whom the first three rustics are played. While throughout much of the drama the interaction between the four shepherds is presented for comic entertainment, the conclusion presents a more thoughtful lesson once all four have become serious about their spiritual existence, and each shepherd heads off to his own version of a religious life.⁷⁷

The three original shepherds present characteristics of realistic local shepherds as well as some conventional comedic characteristics. The introduction of the first shepherd presents him as a realistic local character, as he names local areas and refers to herbal cures and illnesses common to sheep.⁷⁸ The final section of the introductory speech by this first shepherd establishes the basis for the humor,

But noe fellowshippe here have I
save myselfe alone, in good faye;
therfore after one faste wyll I crye.
But first will I drinke, if I maye. (ll. 41-44)

The second shepherd, who enters in response to the first, makes a comment about his clothing, but otherwise continues talking with the first shepherd about companionship

⁷⁶ Blake points out that the English language lacked linguistic *auctoritas* at this time, partially due to a lack of formal definition of ‘Englishness’ (48).

⁷⁷ Diller claims that, within the several types of dialogue that he identifies in the mystery plays, dialogues of strife or argument serve functions beyond comic relief (see p.224-231). In the Chester Shepherd’s play, he argues that the ‘comic abuse’ is “cushioned” by the fourth shepherd’s moralizing (243-245).

⁷⁸ See lines 1-40. Diller points out that alongside the localizing realistic details mentioned in these opening lines, the use of personal pronouns emphasizes and confirms that the speech is directly aimed at the audience as opposed to another character (117-118).

and food.⁷⁹ The third shepherd enters at the call of the first two, makes some comments about shepherds' work, alluding to the medicinal references made by the first shepherd, and adds his own comic point regarding his wife.⁸⁰

Although Trowle,⁸¹ the shepherd's servant, initially seems like one of them, he makes clear at the end of his introductory speech that he is in fact a different kind of character. After the first three have set out their lunch consisting of local ingredients, they decide that they will share their leftovers with their servant who has been watching the sheep for them. The second stanza of Trowle's song names the herbs and other small items he needs, including his dog, the third stanza suggests that he likes to rest, and the fourth suggests that he likes to drink.⁸² In the final stanza of the song, Trowle sings,

All this lottes I sect at little;
 nay, yee lades, sett I not by yee.
 For you have I manye a fowle fitt.
 Thow fowle filth, though thow flytt, I defye thee. (ll.194-197)

Trowle is a rustic shepherd as suggested by the references that all four characters make to their common occupation, but he clearly has a distinct relationship with the group. After repeating his refusal in response to a second invitation, Trowle adds, "But flyte with my fellowes in feare,/and your sheepe full sycerly save I" (ll. 218-219). His choice of a term used for verbal disputing hints that he might be on a different level from the rest of the shepherds. This suggestion is mitigated at first by his eager acceptance of a wrestling challenge that he refers to as a 'game'.⁸³ What follows is a comedy sketch of both

⁷⁹ See their exchanges in lines 49-69.

⁸⁰ See lines 70-94.

⁸¹ NeCastro's edition labels this character 'Garcius'. I have chosen to use the name utilized by Mills and Diller as it is the one by which the other characters address the servant boy.

⁸² See lines 173-203.

⁸³ The third shepherd makes the challenge at line 228, and Trowle accepts immediately at ll.230-233. See line 246 for the reference to the wrestling contest as a game.

physical and linguistic nature, as Trowle proceeds to beat each of his bosses, and taunt them in coarsely amusing terms.⁸⁴

Trowle is more firmly differentiated from his fellow shepherds once the star appears. The first three shepherds are rendered immobile, but Trowle declares,

That starre if it stand
to seek will I fond,
though my sight fayle mee.
While I may live in lond
why should I not fond,
yf it will awayhe mee? (ll.318-322)

He also suggests that he recognizes the divine nature of the star, “A, Godes mightis!/In yonder starre light is” (ll.324-325). The other three follow with their own versions of this sentiment.⁸⁵ Likewise, once the angels have appeared and sung, the three shepherds have an argument trying to understand what they just heard, while Trowle actually comments about the meaning. For example, a segment of the discussion runs,

3rd Shepherd: Wyll hee here howe hee sange 'celsis'?
For on that sadly hee sett him;
nayther sings 'sar' nor soe well 'cis,'
ney 'pax meryc Mawd when shee had mett him.'
Trowle: On tyme hee touched on 'tarre,'
and therto I tooke good intent;
all heaven might not have gonne harre,
that note on high when hee up hent. (ll. 408-415)

After a final round of exchange about the song, all four shepherds agree that they too ought to sing, and the phrasing suggests they might invite the audience to join in:⁸⁶

Trowle: Singe we nowe; lett see,
some songe will I assaye.

⁸⁴ See lines 246-287. Regarding the function of the low language used, Diller points out some linguistic markers that reflect the master-servant inversions that take place in the wrestling scene (243-245).

⁸⁵ See lines 328-345.

⁸⁶ Mills points out the possibility of inviting the audience to sing along (p.142, note 457). The plural ‘we’ and the reference to ‘all men’ present the potential for audience participation. Gestures from the actors would have made the invitation clear to the audience.

All men nowe singes after mee,
for musicke of mec learne yee maye.

Tunc cantabunt et postea dicat Tertius Pastor
Here singe 'troy, loly, loly, loo.' (ll.444-447 and stage directions)

The Chester play traces the development of the shepherds from a gang of quarrelling rustics into a united group of devout Christians by means of gradually lessening the degree of comic stereotype. First, Trowle becomes a serious character, eventually followed by his three bosses. At the conclusion of the play, the shepherds and Trowle are finally united in a single purpose, although they decided to enact their plans in different ways. After meeting the Holy Family, each shepherd presents a different version of how he plans to pass on what he has seen and heard. One appears to go preach locally, a second to preach ‘over the seas’, and a third to become a wandering hermit.⁸⁷ Trowle decides that he will give up being a shepherd in favor of devoting himself to prayer at a local hermitage, and speaks a final farewell to conclude the play.⁸⁸

The Authority of Folk Knowledge

Like humor, folkloric tradition can be used as a form of *auctoritas* in an argument by appealing to publicly understood knowledge. “Holvyr and heyvy mad a gret party” presents such a dispute. This poem represents a lyric that includes both sides of the argument by using many characteristics of a disputation-based exchange, including references to knowledge external to the narrative of the poem in question. The traditional folkloric nature of the Holly vs Ivy dispute is evident by a pair of poems which are

⁸⁷ See ll.651-676.

⁸⁸ Diller looks at Trowle’s concluding speech as a break between the ‘play sphere’ and the ‘audience sphere’ largely because of its sermonic quality of being directly addressed to the audience (117).

recorded nearly 25 pages later in the same manuscript.⁸⁹ In Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. e. I, a collection of songs and carols which dates to the mid-late fifteenth century, there is, in addition to the verse argument, a set of companion poems that each articulates one side of the argument.⁹⁰ The first poem defines and justifies holly, while the second presents the praise of ivy. Holly has two main attributes in the poem, the desire to please and the representation of a ward against personal attack. The poem states, “to pleass all men is his intent” and “Whoever ageynst holly do sing,/ he maye wepe & handys wryng” (#51, ll. 2, 10-11). On the other side, Ivy is likewise described as having two main attributes, a beautiful appearance and the representation of good luck. The poem declares, for example, “the most worthye she is in towne” and “Ageynst all bale she is blysse” (#51, ll.1, 7).⁹¹

The dialogue of “Holvyr and heyvy mad a gret party” belongs to the realm of verse argument because it presents the use of popular *auctoritas*, a common understanding which other poems confirm,⁹² as well as the ambiguity of a conclusion decided by action. The interchange also shows the exchange of a variety of evidence. Holly’s reply to Ivy opens a different topic than the first round of exchange, differentiating it from the sermon style of argument. Holly speaks its claim in the second

⁸⁹ Poetry surviving in other manuscripts provides additional evidence for the strength of this tradition. For example, “Holly bereth beris”, recorded in Balliol 354, provides descriptions of Holly and Ivy by presenting them as opposing forces, followed by brief narrative scenes repeating their contrary natures (See Chambers and Sidgwick # CXLI, p.239-240). Yet another example along the same lines is attributed to Henry VIII and recorded in Addit. 31922 (see Chambers and Sidgwick #XXIII, p.54, and Notes p.336).

⁹⁰ The poems to Holly and Ivy respectively are printed as Robbins #51 and 52, p.46-47. The joint treatment is Robbins #50, p.45-46.

⁹¹ Chambers and Sidgwick point out that this poem might be making references to a traditional Shrovetide game played by children in which boys and girls each burnt a doll (a Holly boy or Ivy girl) stolen from the other side (notes to CXXXVIII, p.374). Such references to folk traditions emphasize the ‘popular’ nature of the pair.

⁹² Chambers points out that although courtly and popular songs had their differences, the two traditions are not absolutely distinct as they both have connections to folk song and dance (Aspects 267). The Holly and Ivy poem makes use of a courtly scenario with characters derived from the popular tradition.

stanza (“I am frece and Ioly”), and Ivy speaks in the third (“I am lowd & prow” (#50, ll. 4, 7)). Holly’s self-presentation as the life of a party and Ivy’s presentation as the center of attention matches with the descriptions in the poems dedicated to each side, as does the action of the concluding scene in which Holly attempts to make peace. The first line of the poem refers to the discussion as a ‘party’, a term which means ‘contest’ or ‘debate’.⁹³ The final stanza presents an ambiguous conclusion: “Pan spak Holyver, & set hym downe on his kne:/ ‘I prey the, Ientyl hevvy, sey me no veleny/ In londes qwer we goo” (#50, ll.10-12). Holly’s actions suggest a possible admission of defeat, yet the words do not concretely support the image.⁹⁴ In the poem dedicated to Holly, Holly is described as noble,⁹⁵ and the courteous thing to do in an argument with a lady (Ivy is referred to as ‘she’ in poem 52) would be to ask for peace, regardless of whether or not there was actual agreement. Overall, “Holvyr and hevvy mad a gret party” is a verse argument built with popular *auctoritas* and a commentary-disputation structure.

The presence of *auctoritas* or allusions to knowledge external to the poem is not by itself enough to define a poem as a verse argument. Preserved in the well-known early fourteenth century lyric anthology London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, “Mon in þe mone stond & strit” represents possibilities for combining popular and allegorical understanding in the lyric form.⁹⁶ The poem illustrates the potential of a lyric to present perspectives and using *auctoritas* without presenting an argument or explicit dialogue.

⁹³ See MED ‘parti(e)’ 6. The poem opens, “Holvyr and hevvy mad a gret party,/Ho xuld have þe maystre/ In londes qwer þei goo” (#50, ll.1-3).

⁹⁴ This ambiguity is similar to the ambiguity suggested in the conclusion of Scottus’ ‘Rose and Lily’.

⁹⁵ “Her commys holly þat is so gent” (ll.1, Robbins poem 51, p. 46). See MED ‘gent (adj.)’.

⁹⁶ Textual references to the poem are from Brown’s edition (1932) p.160-161. Pearsall (1977) presents the idea that one way to distinguish ‘popular’ from ‘classical’ poetry was the presence of rhyme (p.70-74). The poem discussed here meets Pearsall’s definition as it conforms to a rhyme scheme. He also points out the in the thirteenth century, poetry was beginning to be used to instruct the laity about Scripture (p.102-108).

The *auctoritas* of the text comes in a popular form that might have the same function as a named *auctor*, but could be accessible by anyone.⁹⁷ Unlike the more academically-based allegories or symbol-rich poems, “Mon in þe mone stond & strit” invokes imagery of a rural landscape in connection with folk traditions.

The poem illustrates how *auctoritas* and implicit dialogue can be used in a purely narrative poem. The Moon by itself is a complex symbol, and the Man in the Moon at the center of the poetic narrative contains both Christian and folkloric meanings.⁹⁸ The poem tells the story of the Man’s nightly activities, details his difficult conditions, and draws attention to the mysterious nature of his existence. It points out “Nis no wyþt in þe world þat wot wen he syt,/ ne, bot his bue þe hegge, whet wedes he wereþ” (ll.7-8), and then asks “Whider trowe þis mon ha þe way take?” (ll.9) The implication of special knowledge required to understand the narrative of the poem comes from its folkloric nature. The narrator says at three points “I know...” which reiterates the idea of special knowledge.⁹⁹ These first and second person references may be conventional, but these conventions are used in the poem to create the impression of the oral recitation of a folktale.¹⁰⁰ Although “Mon in þe mone stond & strit” is neither dialogue nor argument,

⁹⁷ Carruthers presents the argument that in the process of creating *auctoritas*, first a writer would refer to their personal recollection of a text or reference and incorporate that memory into the writing. After the composition process performed by the individual, *auctoritas* is created by the social and communal recognition of the reference, in other words, appealing to public memory (see pp.234-273). The idea of an individual invoking public memory works in the favor of an argument suggesting a popular arena of memory that is distinct from the academic or textual.

⁹⁸ For a general discussion of both the allegorical and exemplification modes of interpretation in the medieval period, see Burrow p.90-124. See deVries entry ‘moon’ for the variety of interpretive possibilities. More specifically, popular medieval tradition held that the Man in the Moon represented Cain taking a bundle of thorns as a sacrifice, and the poem clearly relates details that align it with this story. See lines 1-24 of the poem. For the reference to the Cain story, see deVries p.392 #26, and Brown’s note p.234 (1932). deVries also notes that nursery rhyme tradition connects the Man in the Moon to a thief who was punished for trying to keep people from going to Mass.

⁹⁹ The word used is ‘ichot’, at ll.22, 34, 38.

¹⁰⁰ Edwards argues for connections between the lyric speaker’s presentation of image and landscape, and the realm of memory (16). He also makes connections between the uses of voice and grammatical person,

the poem does illustrate techniques of appealing to folk knowledge that are also be applied in verse arguments.

Intellectual and folkloric knowledge were not the only kind of *auctoritas* that might be used; a verse argument might also make use of technical knowledge in combination with different voices. “The Debate of the Carpenter’s Tools” presents a humorous argument in the dramatic voice to explore two perspectives of a common tradesman’s life. The poem exhibits several markers of a verse argument, which makes it a point of comparison to illustrate some of the key differences. This poem has no opening frame and begins right away with dialogue.¹⁰¹ The Chip Ax who begins the poem makes a general statement about its master’s ability to support himself, and the rest of the tools takes sides. They argue over whether the carpenter has no hope of prosperity or that he could prosper greatly if he and his tools worked harder.¹⁰² The technical knowledge required to recognize the various tools and the informal tone of their speech contrasts to the academic disputation model which their argument follows for a humorous effect. Many speeches begin with a colloquial “3e, 3e”,¹⁰³ and informal expressions and ideas such as “þou arte not worth a tord” (ll.110) and “Fore he wylle drynke more on a dey/ Than þou can lightly arne in twey” (ll.56-57) are scattered throughout the argument.¹⁰⁴

and cultural commentary on the natural and moral orders of the poem (45-47).

¹⁰¹Textual references are from Conlee’s edition, p. 222-235. Conlee notes that this kind of beginning is unusual for a verse argument, and that the manuscript evidence suggests that the poem may have been used for dramatic performance (p.223).

¹⁰²Conlee suggests that the Chip Ax represents one of three perspectives within the argument (p. 223-224 n.2-16). I am reading the opening opinion as a statement of topic, replacing the opening frame, as opposed to a part of the argument proper.

¹⁰³See ll. 13, 23, 39, 54, 79, 93, 121, 145, and 171.

¹⁰⁴Blake suggests that because the play cycles lacked a written narrative to identify good and bad, they had to rely in part on high versus low language to identify good and evil characters (159). In both instances in the poem cited here, the phrases are spoken by tools who end being in the wrong.

The use of *auctoritas* as evidence and the exploration of variety within common themes of the argument are employed on both sides, following the disputation-commentary model. Those who support the carpenter use as *auctoritas* their individual skills as tools, while those who taunt him refer to proverbs and tavern scenes.¹⁰⁵ While both sides each follow a common theme, each time a claim is made, it is based on a new example. Also like a disputation, the opposing sides engage directly with each other's claims. For example, the Chisel claims that,

Fore he loves gode ale so wele
That he þerfore his hod wyll selle;
Fore some dey he wyll vii^d drynke;
How he schall thryve I canen not thinke. (ll.75-78)

In response, the Chalk Line first refutes the Chisel, “My mayster is lyke to many folke;/ Tho he lufe ale nevere so wele,/ To thryu & the I schall hym telle”(ll.80-82), and then makes its own claim:

Y schall merke well upon þe wode
And kepe his mesures trew & gode;
And so by my mesures all
To the full wele my mayster schall. (ll.83-86)

The sermon model also relies on references to *auctoritas*, but the citations are used in a different context than disputation or commentary. In their *artes praedicandi*, Alan of Lille and Robert of Basevorn have some differing ideas on how to use *auctoritas* to reach the audience.¹⁰⁶ By way of filling out his definition of preaching, Alan of Lille declares, “Because preaching must be dependent on reasoning and corroborated by

¹⁰⁵ For the taunting, see for example ll. 28, 43-44, 57-58. For supporters, see for example ll.10-12, 33-38.

¹⁰⁶ Thompson points out how the *exempla* and *auctores* cited might be useful in considering the audience (20-21). Roberts notes a shift in rhetorical situation during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries towards more popular audiences, and links the shift in part to the rising concerns regarding heresy (44-45). Muessig concentrates on a particular type of sermon collection which is organized by audience type. She notes the general social elements in the categorizations (255-256), and goes on to look at several particular examples of such grouping.

authoritative texts...Preaching should not contain jesting words, or childish remarks, or that melodious and harmony which result in the use of metrical lines; they are better fitted to delight the ear than to edify the soul. Such preaching is theatrical and full of buffoonery, and in every way ought to be condemned”.¹⁰⁷ Alan does approve of philosophers and pagan writers because the Apostle Paul made use of them in his epistles, as well as “moving words which soften hearts and encourage tears” and examples, “because teaching by means of examples is a familiar method” (22). He also suggests an openness to using narrative in order to express a lesson. Alan’s prologue to his own work opens with the analogy of Jacob’s ladder to the faith journey,¹⁰⁸ and he also authored the didactic allegories, *De Planctu Naturae* and *Anticlaudianus*.

While both *artes* present a sermonic structure that is linked to the universities, Alan of Lille’s advice is aimed more at a rhetorical situation assuming familiarity with the *auctores*, while Robert’s advice suggests attention to a context that assumes less academic knowledge.¹⁰⁹ Robert of Basevorn allows, like Alan, for the use of allegory and analogy alongside of the *auctores*;¹¹⁰ unlike Alan, he makes some allowance for the

¹⁰⁷ Alanus 18. Not long after this statement, Alan presents a quotation from the Roman satirist Persius as a way to enhance a sermon of ‘despising the world’ (23). He later makes references to the likes of Ovid and Lucan (27, 32), which suggests that he was not thoroughly opposed to entertainment or pagan *auctores*, but rather rejected catering to popular (vernacular or vulgar) humor. Wagner points out that Alan, as opposed to later handbook writers, was more concerned with the material as opposed to form of the sermon (113). He (Wagner) suggests that the elevation of truth over ornament was connected with the rise of reason and the belief in the human capacity to understand and interpret the world properly (114).

¹⁰⁸ See Alanus p.15.

¹⁰⁹ Although there is some question as to how or whether the *artes praedicandi* were directly taught in the universities (Briscoe 41), the sermon handbooks and sermon collections were popular, eventually becoming available to lay readers (see Fletcher 2009, 27-30). Krul’s introduction points out that little is known about Robert, but he clearly presents knowledge of the universities, and that classical logic and oratory were influential during his time (111-113). Alan was certainly an academic and wrote his *arte* in that context as Evans suggests (3-5). Caplan lists a variety of medieval definition of preaching and considers some of the implications regarding classification of types of preaching (86-87).

¹¹⁰ Alan’s statement on the necessity of *auctores* appears directly in his definition of preaching, already cited. The majority of the handbook that follows presents lists of authorities on certain topics. Robert is less direct, preferring to present the use of *auctores* almost exclusively through example. In his introduction, for example, he uses the *auctoritas* of Scripture to help justify his handbook (see below), and

inclusion of humor and rhetorical, persuasive language.¹¹¹ After an extensive discussion of the methods of various authoritative preachers and the general elements that he considers part of the form and execution of a sermon, Robert of Basevorn includes some brief comments about seven more ornaments which “serve beauty” (211). He also includes the notion that detectable artistry should only be used modestly and in the presence of an intelligent audience.¹¹² Citing Cicero, Robert allows for ‘opportune humor’ to prevent boredom so long as the humor is appropriate and used no more than three times in a given sermon.¹¹³ The necessity of persuasion and the open allowance for some entertainment in Robert’s manual suggest that he had in mind (at least at times) a congregation less inclined to understand or accept a straightforward theological explication, or appreciate classically-based humor.

While verse arguments like “Robene and Makyne” and “Jesus and the Masters of the Law of the Jews” use a struggle over which model to follow for the purpose of humor, sermon-based dialogues in prose make use of the same technique for didactic effect. *Dives and Pauper* presents an argument in which the style of a sermon overcomes the attempt at disputation, in contrast to the dialogue combining a disputation-based argument and sermon opening frame used by Abelard.¹¹⁴ The prologue of *Dives and Pauper* sets up many elements of the relationship and discussion which will continue throughout the work. The argument consists largely of Dives making observations and

several of his models are based on the *auctoritas* of their originators.

¹¹¹ Caplan notes some of the objections to rhetorical techniques in preaching, particularly as used in the thematic model, which arose during the medieval period (94).

¹¹² See Krul p.210.

¹¹³ See p. 212.

¹¹⁴ The sermonic elements are not surprising in light of evidence which suggests that the author of *Dives and Pauper* also composed a set of sermons which survive in MS Longleat 4. See Barnum’s discussion of the history of the text and potential authorship (v.323, xvii-xxiv).

asking questions, and Pauper answering by relying on Biblical and patristic *auctores*, and providing his interpretations of these texts.¹¹⁵ Dives refers to the *auctores* as well, but tends to do so in order to set up a question, while Pauper's use of the *auctores* presents his interpretations as answers. For example, in Chapter iv of "Holy Poverty A", Dives explains that, "I was aferd þat God hadde nought louydde ryche men" (p.57, ll.1-2). Pauper answers that many of the Old Testament patriarchs were wealthy and cites a commentary on Luke by St. Ambrose in support.¹¹⁶ Dives responds, "Þerfore me thynkȝt alwey þat it is betere to been ryche þan pore, for poverty and myschef drawyt many man to ...synnys manye moo. And þerfor seyȝt Salomon: Propter inopiam multi deliquerunt, Ecclesiastici [27:1]" (p.57, ll.22-26). Pauper responds that he thinks riches cause more sin than poverty and cite both St Paul and Ecclesiastes. Dives gets in a single word, "Qheereof?" and Pauper takes the rest of the chapter to expound upon the point.¹¹⁷ The next chapter opens with Dives attempting to argue, "Ȝet contra....", and Pauper responding with a plea for action supported by several Scriptural references.¹¹⁸ Dives uses the language of disputation but Pauper refuses to play along, and responds with a sermon.

Once Dives stops trying to dispute, he settles into the role of a student asking questions which allow the preacher (Pauper) to continue speaking.¹¹⁹ In doing so, Dives gives Pauper the authority to preach to him. A very similar exchange to the one in the

¹¹⁵ Barnum points out that the author of *Dives and Pauper* composed a work in Middle English that relied heavily on the Latin classical traditions and also did a lot of his own translations of the *auctores* cited in the text (v.323, xxxi-xxxii; xxxii-xxxv).

¹¹⁶ See v.275, p.57, ll.10-12. All textual quotations that follow are from this volume.

¹¹⁷ See p. 58-59.

¹¹⁸ See p.59.

¹¹⁹ In her examination of the use of dialogue, Barnum notes the student-teacher relationship in the text (v.323, xxxv-xxxviii). I am interpreting the style here as 'dialogue' and not 'catechism' because of disputation attempt.

prologue occurs in Chapter iv of Commandment I. Dives opens, “Contra. On Good Friday overall in holy cherche, meen crepyn to þe croos”, to which Pauper responds, “Þat is soth, but nought as þu menyst...” (p.87). He goes on make several references to Bede. Eventually Dives gives in, “I assente...” (p.90), and Pauper continues to expand on his ideas by bringing in other *auctores*. The trend continues for the rest of the discussion. For example, in Chapter vii of “Commandment I”, Dives begins, “Qhat betokenyzt ymagerie in comoun or in general?”(p.94), and Pauper answers by quoting the Gospel of Mark, Bede and St Gregory. A follow-up question and later comment from Dives then allows Pauper to bring in further references to Isaiah, St Paul, and Hebrews.

Much like *Dives and Pauper*, Trevisa’s “Dialogue between a Lord and Clerk upon Translation” is organized as a sermon, and presents a similar kind of student-preacher relationship. The Clerk asks questions and makes statements for the Lord to correct in order to promote his views.¹²⁰ A second parallel to the sermon is the presentation of a goal towards action near the end of the first speech. The Lord’s introductory speech covers the Biblical origins of speech, and why speech is important to humanity. He ends with the suggestion that the clerk should do something: translate Higdens’ *Chronicles*.¹²¹ The third sermonic element is repetition of multiple facets of the same idea, in this case the question of whether or not English translations of key Latin works are necessary.¹²²

¹²⁰ Fowler suggests that the dialogue might be read as an entertaining rendition of an inception disputation. To this end, Trevisa places himself as the Clerk in the position of the devil’s advocate, and his patron, Lord Berkley, in the role of the Lord (70).

¹²¹ Textual references come from Pollard’s edition. Here see p. 203-204. Fowler notes that Trevisa was aware of the debate surrounding the translation of the Bible at Oxford (221), a consciousness even more evident in Trevisa’s other dialogue, a translation of *Dialogus inter Militem et Clericum* (145-163).

¹²² This question addresses a concern that was widespread in Trevisa’s time. Butterfield points out the rise in using English over French to teach Latin, and the various social attitudes and understandings regarding all three languages that are apparent in Trevisa’s work (325-328). She also makes note of the rise in the use of the pedagogic dialogue in the teaching of language (330).

After the introduction of the theme, the first half of the dialogue is dedicated to clearing up questions regarding the utility and necessity of translation, based largely on general and practical reasoning.

A fourth parallel to sermon-style is in the use of the *auctores* cited in the second half of the discussion. Sermons frequently used *exempla* and *auctores* to enhance the validity of the subject, as opposed to disputations which tended to present them in support of an individual speaker. The presentation of *auctores* begins after the following exchange:

Clerk: The Latin is both good and fair, therefore it needeth not to have an English translation

Lord: The reason is worthy to be plunged in a pludde and laid in powder of lewdness and of shame. It might well be that thou makest only in mirth and in game.

Clerk: The reason must stand but it be assoiled. (p.205)

To the Clerk's insistence on a defense of the Lord's opinion, the Lord gives an extensive list of *exempla* including a proverbial analogy, references to 'Aquila', 'Theodocion', St Jerome, and others.¹²³ All of the rest of the exchanges involve the Lord citing *auctores* and *exempla*, until the Clerk finally gives up and asks, "Wether is you liefer have, a translation of these chronicles in rhyme or in prose?" (p.207)

The inclusion of some hints at disputation are similar to *Dives and Pauper* in that terms of argumentation are used to keep the discussion going towards the beginning of the dialogue, but the effect is off-set by the Clerk giving in to the Lord's position. In this case, the Clerk concedes to the point of presenting the closing speech in the style of a sermon. In the case of *Dives and Pauper*, the student character wants to dispute while the teacher character refuses; in Trevisa's case, both sides try to dispute, but the student is not

¹²³ See Trevisa p.205-206.

strong enough to maintain the argument. The Lord introduces early arguments with phrases such as “This question and doubt is easy to assail” and “I deny this argument” (p.204). When the Clerk’s challenge to the Lord’s argumentation is thwarted by all of the authoritative *exempla*, the Clerk gives the closing prayer which begins, “Then God grant us grace grathly to gin, wit and wisdom wisely to work, might and mind of right meaning to make translation trusty an true...” (p.208)

Narrative Techniques and Voices with *Auctoritas*

The use of *exempla* and *auctores* has implications when considering the use of multiple voices within a text and authorial self-characterization, given the frequency with which *exempla* are cited in verse arguments. Davenport suggests that the relationship between the speaker, *exemplum*, and assumed reader could be manipulated in order to create varying degrees of distance and awareness between writer, character, and audience.¹²⁴ In an example of such manipulation, Ganim argues that the ironic use of language or narrative strategy meant to create *auctoritas* points to a major feature of medieval narrative. He posits that,

this tension between ideal intention and narrative representation is the most characteristic feature of late medieval secular fiction in England...the chief manifestation of this tension [is] an anxiety about communicating immutable truths in a secular narrative fiction, which by definition takes place in time and which reflects the contingency and confusion of earthly existence. As a result, the poet had to invent ways to exploit or obscure this contradiction. Narrative discontinuity, visionary moments, temporal juxtaposition and foreshadowings, spatial form...in medieval literature acquire a special, almost epistemological, importance.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Davenport 55-67.

¹²⁵ Ganim 142.

The Owl and the Nightingale presents a test case for exploring the use of *exempla* as a means for establishing *auctoritas*, and for connecting with various levels of knowledge because of its combination of both popular and academic techniques and forms. The majority of *exempla* cited within the poem are proverbial, and scholars have used this fact for various analytical purposes.¹²⁶ Points are attempted by the Owl, the Nightingale, and even the narrator, based on the *auctoritas* of King Alfred.¹²⁷ As *exempla*, proverbs were one source of knowledge that might be fitting for a wide range of contexts, both educated and not. Proverbs also have the capacity to define very specific situations, and as a result work well as evidence for specific points and direct oppositions.¹²⁸ This affinity of proverbs for specifics and binaries works in tandem with a variety of styles to appeal to the broadest range of taste and knowledge. As the most recent editor of the poem notes, *The Owl and The Nightingale* employs techniques of both high and low rhetoric, ranging from chiasmus and antithesis to invective and burlesque.¹²⁹

Vulnerability of a writer's authority as an author or interpreter is a problem relevant both to the language as well as the content of a text. As the case of Richard Rolle demonstrates, by the end of the fourteenth century, the notion of a living writer with *auctoritas* was becoming more accepted,¹³⁰ which resulted in some writers experimenting

¹²⁶ See both Gee and Schleusener. Gee argues that the two bird's use of proverbs reflects their distinct approaches to the argument while at the same time highlighting a shared theme. Schleusener discusses the use of proverbs specifically by the Nightingale and the narrator to suggest that the poet is making use of some specific qualities of the proverb to avoid reaching a conclusion.

¹²⁷ See Cartlidge 2001, xxxiv-xxxv.

¹²⁸ See Schleusener 186-187.

¹²⁹ Cartlidge 2001, xx-xxi.

¹³⁰ Watson 26. Burrow points out that anonymity and author presence present difficulties for modern scholars, citing as an example the idea of Nicholas of Guilford as a possible author of *The Owl and the Nightingale*. He notes that the idea of the individual author was only beginning to rise in the middle of the eleventh century and would not become firmly established for a long time (37-41).

with ways to establish themselves as *auctores* during their lifetimes. Rolle had to face the problem of dealing with a topic that was at the same time personal and public, mystic religious experiences.¹³¹ In his case, personal experience became his public *auctoritas*. Watson points out that Rolle often characterized himself as a *compiler* or commentator until his later works, which were far more personal and relied on his own experiences and thoughts.¹³² At times, Rolle added a personal touch to commentary on an established text by using unusually affective language.¹³³ On the other hand, when Rolle was relying on his personal experiences as a source of *auctoritas*, he framed them in very apologetic and humble tones.¹³⁴

Scholars and poets alike used an authoritative structure as a method of presenting themselves with *auctoritas* in the manner of an *accessus* or prologue to an academic or literary work.¹³⁵ As innovative with self-presentation of *auctoritas* as he was, Rolle also had a conventional side. Like other theologians of his time, Rolle used structure to help present his personal experiences as *auctoritas* alongside Scriptural references.¹³⁶ In terms of language choice, Rolle used Latin as the dominant language of scholarship for his more public works, and used English when writing pieces intended for a particular person (frequently a woman) or situation.¹³⁷ His goal and method of self-induced *auctoritas*

¹³¹ Waston 3-4, 22-23.

¹³² See Watson 96.

¹³³ Watson 150.

¹³⁴ See Watson 54, 75, 95, 162-163. Discussing certain texts of Rolle's as humble in tone can be tricky, because as Watson notes, Rolle was prone to using satire (5).

¹³⁵ Allen makes a case for the medieval concern with classification (37-8), then goes on to point out the relation of the *accessus* in relation to poetry and classification (68). See T. Hunt 103-104 for the idea of organization based on logic. See Minnis' description and discussion of various types of prologue, including R. W. Hunt's three categories (1988) 14-33.

¹³⁶ Watson points out that Rolle would have been familiar with the *quaestio* and commentary form from his own education (296-297). See also Watson 118-123 and 132-134. The first section describes the overall structure of Rolle's work. In the second section noted, Watson points out Rolle's use of a *quaestio* within the larger *Incendium Amoris*.

¹³⁷ Watson 223-224. The suggestion about the primarily female audience for the English works is made at

suggests a possible trend followed by many well-known late medieval authors, including Chaucer and Langland.¹³⁸

As suggested by the use of *exempla* and proverbs to establish *auctoritas* in *The Owl and The Nightingale*, employing a range of voices helps advance *auctoritas* in the argument, and assists with creating narrative. The use of a narrator with his-her own perspective is one technique that can be employed for both effects. For example, the verse argument “Jesus and the Masters of the Laws of the Jews” includes the poet’s concern to provide the narrator of the poem with *auctoritas*. The first appeal to *auctoritas* in the poem is made by the narrator in the introductory prologue to the argument. The narrator first establishes himself as a poet by using a conventional address to his audience, “Lusteneþ lords leove on londe” (ll.1).¹³⁹ He then proclaims the accuracy of his presentation, and backs up the claim with a reference to Scripture: “þe gospel seiþ in þis manere”.¹⁴⁰ The narrator cuts off the disputation towards the end of his poem and brings in Mary to interrupt with a Latin quotation from the Gospel: “Ego & pater tuus dolentes querebamus te” (ll.191).¹⁴¹ The disputation is settled by the audience of Romans, whose

p. 240. Watson also argues that Rolle used English when the need to speak more intimately outweighed the demand to establish *auctoritas* (231).

¹³⁸ Watson 264-265. Watson goes so far as to suggest that Rolle’s career illustrates “an inspired product of that process of forethought known to medieval poets and rhetoricians as the *ars veniendi*” (258). He goes on to parallel this assessment with a quotation from Chaucer in which Pandarus paraphrases Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s explanation of the nature of poetic planning. Burrow points out that many medieval literary works were intertextual and interdependent, a fact which hallowed the likes of Chaucer to play with notions of *auctoritas* and compilation (35-37). In reference to Rolle’s influences, Langland’s *Piers Ploughman* presents a poem making use of the style of the academic *quaestio*, as well as the *sic et non* technique used for considering politically dangerous ideas (Minnis 2009 54). See also Minnis’ discussion on John Gower’s practice of a technique of adapting and manipulating authority in both Latin and English to make potentially problematic claims (1988 175-177). See also Minnis (2009) 83-89 for an analysis of Langland’s allegorical exploration of indulgences. Minnis suggests that the pardon Piers receives from Treuth “need not, indeed should not, be taken at such face value” (84), and alludes to the notion that Langland may have adapted a *sic et non* strategy to present his argument. The use of the *sic et non* format as a tool is discussed specifically in reference to the Middle English prose argument *Dives and Pauper* (Minnis 2009, 34).

¹³⁹ Text comes from Conlee’s edition, p. 168-177.

¹⁴⁰ Paraphrase covers ll.2-8. Quotation is ll. 9.

¹⁴¹ The Latin is translated in lines 189-190.

presence and perspective is narrated by the poet: “Bi prophecie heo wusten uchon/ Þat he was Crist, with-outen lye” (ll. 210-211).¹⁴² In this case, the narrator’s voice presents a frame that establishes the *auctoritas* of the narrator-poet that both supplements the argument within the poem, and helps create a narrative setting in which the disputation can take place.

The tension between representative and ideal realities presented by Ganim at times manifests itself in verse argument and dialogue poems through the use of dream vision frames and potential disconnects between the frame and the argument within a poem. “Death & Liffe” makes use of a prologue as well as a narrative introduction before beginning the central argument of the poem. The prologue sets up the interpretive framework for the story and argument to follow by invoking Christ and addressing the concern, “But all wasteth away & worthes to nought,/ When Death driveth att the doore with his darts keene”.¹⁴³ The opening of the frame then moves towards presenting the narrator meandering in a pastoral garden setting, and eventually falling asleep and having a dream.¹⁴⁴ The narrator witnesses the argument between Lady Life and Dame Death, and the poem concludes with a brief scene of the narrator waking up and considering the meaning of what he dreamed.¹⁴⁵ The prologue serves to set up a sense of theological *auctoritas*, which does not come into the poem directly until the disputation begins at line 229. The dream frame allows the poet to bring in many typical literary features of various

¹⁴² Conlee points out that there is not mention of a Roman audience in the Gospel texts and brings up the possibility that the poet invented them in order to serve as the witnesses and judges of the disputation (see p.176, n. 208-209).

¹⁴³ The text of the poem comes from Conlee’s edition, pp. 139-165. Here, ll. 9-10. The prologue itself runs ll. 1-21. See Conlee’s remarks regarding how the prologue handles the introduction of the topic of the fear of death.

¹⁴⁴ See for example ll. 22-38, 60-68, 151-74. Works possibly referred to include *Winner and Waster*, *Piers Ploughman*, and *De Planctu Naturae* (See Conlee’s introduction to the poem as well as the notes).

¹⁴⁵ See ll. 452-459.

poetic types, including the *chanson d'aventure*, personifications of ladies, the longing lover, and references to a variety of other well-known works.¹⁴⁶

The length of the introductory narrative section of the dream presents the potential problem of obscuring the overall theme of the poem regarding the supremacy of Life over Death. The problem is circumvented by establishing the central theme of the disputation in the prologue, exploring the theme in the disputation through the use of *auctoritas*, and reviewing the same ideas in the closing frame. In the disputation itself, Life presents the initial challenge to Death, “Couldst thou any cause ffind, thou kaitiffe wretch,/ That neither reason nor right may raigne with thy name?/ Why kills thou the body that never care rough?” (ll.237-239). She supports her challenge by referring to Death’s apparent disregard for God’s commandments in an appeal to the ultimate *auctor*.¹⁴⁷ Death responds with her own reference to the divine, and makes her appeal by pointing to the Old Testament’s account of original sin.¹⁴⁸ Her challenge to Life is, “Therefore Liffe, thou me leave, I love thee but little” (ll.278). The second round of the dispute presents a related question which continues throughout the rest of the argument. Life charges that Death causes harm to people who do good things that God favors, while Death claims that she prevents men from sinning because of their fear of her.¹⁴⁹ The argument is finished by Life’s retelling of the Harrowing of Hell and the salvation of the Biblical heroes, which is then re-enacted by Lady Life and the revival of her followers.¹⁵⁰ The conclusion presents the lesson of the disagreement as well as the closing of the frame.

¹⁴⁶ See Conlee’s notes on ll. 22-38 for some details of conventions used. For some discussion of the personifications of Death and Life, see the introduction to the poem (pp. 139-140).

¹⁴⁷ See ll. 244-247.

¹⁴⁸ See ll. 265-277.

¹⁴⁹ For Life’s claim, see ll. 295-296, and for Death’s, see ll. 307-310.

¹⁵⁰ See ll.442-450 for the reenactment.

Without the frame, the popular and literary references would not have been logically incorporated into the poem, and without the prologue, the didactic purpose and the nature of the *auctoritas* would not have connected with the argument.

Through the use of a variety of voice types in different sections of the text, “Death & Liffe” exhibits a fifteenth-century exploration of the kinds of tensions later proposed by Ganim.¹⁵¹ All three types of voice are present, as are narrative action and the use of *exempla*. The opening of the frame is spoken in the ‘lyric’ first person, while the descriptions of the characters, including Lady Life and her companions, are spoken in the ‘dramatic’ third person.¹⁵² The use of the dramatic voice to describe characters sets up the action in which they will participate.¹⁵³ Sir Comfort’s speeches to the narrator and to Lady Death, and the argument between Death and Life are spoken largely in the ‘epic’ second person.¹⁵⁴ The use of the second person suits both the grammatical situation as exchange of dialogue, and the relationship of the speakers to listeners in these sections as student and teacher. Much of the action occurs during the sections spoken in dramatic voice, as the narrator serves his function as the eyes of the reader. In contrast, the majority of the *exempla* are presented in the epic voice portions as the characters speak for themselves, namely within the disputation.

¹⁵¹ For the difficulties in dating of the poem, see Hanford and Steadman 229-232. Ganim explores some of the complexities involved in discussing a medieval reading audience, as well as the presence of voice in medieval texts (145-154). Davenport traces medieval and later adaptation of the Ciceronian narrative terms to reach T.S. Eliot's classification of 'lyric', 'epic', and 'dramatic' voices (12). This division is roughly equivalent to the use of first, second, or third person address. I will use the terms 'first-', 'second-' and 'third person' voice as representative of both their literal grammatical context and Eliot's association of poet and audience.

¹⁵² The description of the setting covers lines 22-60. The description of Life and her companions covers lines 61-114.

¹⁵³ The action at lines 192-209 for example depicts Lady Death's actions towards the people of Lady Life, which becomes the catalyst for the argument that will follow.

¹⁵⁴ The argument covers lines 233-441.

When the frame presents possible contradictions or obstructions to the argument at the core of a disputation, the *exempla* can also serve as the connective factor. A second discontinuity in “Death & Liffe” is the potential that the shared truth between the prologue and the disputation might be at odds with the overall style and formal arrangement of the poem. The prologue begins with the epic second person in order to address a request to Christ, “Give us grace on the ground the greatlye to serve/ For that royall red blood that ran ffrom thy side” (ll.3-4). The prologue then shifts to a different addressee but remains in the second person:

But if thou have wrongfully wrought & will not amend,
 Thou shalt byterlye bye or else the booke ffayleth.
 Therefore begin in God to greaten our works,
 & in His ffaythfull Sonne that ffreeley Him ffolloweth. (ll.15-18)¹⁵⁵

The use of prayer and sermon-like advice does not correspond directly with the romance-adventure style action that comes in the narrative between the prologue and the disputation. The disputation itself is initiated by the narrative action, and only the Scriptural *exempla* connect it directly to the *auctoritas* established by the appeal to Christ and the reference to the ‘booke’. The indirect theme established by the prologue becomes more obvious through the *exempla* and the content of the disputation, thus enhancing the continuity between the various sections from beginning to end. The serious tone and style of the prologue also complement the closing prayer, which presents the romance and other secular elements in a permissible context of a theological exploration.

Ganim’s noted tension between ideal and representative reality is addressed in another way by the sermon-like structure employed in the mystery plays. The plays do not

¹⁵⁵ Conlee points out some of the stylistic shifts in the prologue, and suggests some possible textual problems (see notes).

address purely secular issues or narratives, but they still contain the same kind of tension that Ganim attributes to secular fiction. Instead of using a frame to support the connections between the narrative and the argument, three versions of the Emmaus mystery play rely on narrative and interactions between the characters to openly confront opposing ideas regarding disparity between truth and perception. The argument scene is between Thomas and his fellow disciples, and each of the three versions treats the scene differently. The key elements of the narrative in which the plays differ are the number of appearances that Jesus makes, and the number of disciples included at each appearance.

In the Chester version, Thomas is the only disciple who does not believe the reality which the others have seen for themselves, and their word alone does not carry the authority required to convince him to accept what appears only to be an ideal situation. The argument scene consists of three exchanges before the resolution, which places the mystery play on par with some of the lyric verse arguments in length. When the disciples encounter Thomas, Jesus has already appeared twice, first to Luke and Cleophas, then to Peter and Andrew. When Peter tells Thomas they have seen Jesus, Thomas first response is that he will not believe until he gets to see and touch Jesus.¹⁵⁶ Andrew then argues that the disciples need to stick together against the Jews, and Thomas responds that he will always stay with his fellow disciples, but still will not believe until he sees.¹⁵⁷ Peter tries again, and tells Thomas to be patient and he will probably see Jesus just as the others have, and Thomas repeats his first two responses, that he will always follow his fellow disciples but will not believe their words regarding Jesus.¹⁵⁸ Jesus then appears and the

¹⁵⁶ See ll. 218-223.

¹⁵⁷ See ll. 228-231.

¹⁵⁸ See ll. 236-239.

matter is resolved. This version of the scene suggests some characteristics of both a sermon and a disputation as Peter and Andrew try to influence Thomas with new reasons each time. Thomas, on the other hand, responds with the same point each time, which suggests the sermon model of argument.

Ganim's theory also provides another lens through which to consider the use of repetition that indicates sermon influence in an argument. The pattern of repetition indicative of a sermon structure used in the Chester play also appears through a repeated setting up and resolving of conflict between the real and ideal. In the opening speech of the play, Luke makes a complaint to which Cleophas responds but "Luke still appears to be speaking to himself".¹⁵⁹ This moment in the play serves two functions. First, by manipulating the uses of voice, the play creates an ambiguity regarding the reality of the dialogue as a conversation. In addition, once the two do engage directly with each other, they begin to question whether Jesus' prediction of his resurrection will actually become reality. Cleophas ends his initial response with the question, "[Lorde], whether he rysen bee/ as hee before hath sayd?" (ll.15-16) Luke answers,

Leyffe brother Cleophas,
to knowe that were a coynte case.
Syth he through hart wonded was,
howe should he lyre agayne? (ll.17-20)

The two continue to question the real versus ideal potential of Jesus resurrection until Jesus himself appears. This same pattern is repeated when Jesus appears to Peter, who cannot accept that Jesus represents reality until after he touches him.¹⁶⁰ The final iteration of the pattern then occurs with Thomas.

¹⁵⁹ Diller 115.

¹⁶⁰ See lines 168-187.

The ‘doubting Thomas’ scenes in both the N-Town and York Emmaus plays are longer than that in the Chester version, but still retain the sermonic structure of the argument with Thomas. The argument also still revolves around the tension between perceptions of ideal and real in the narrative, with Thomas’ main objection being his refusal to accept the other disciples’ word as authoritative. In the York version, Peter, John, and James together meet with Jesus before Thomas arrives onstage.¹⁶¹ Thomas’ first speech is a long monologue mourning the loss of Jesus, and his first reaction to Peter’s news is: “What say ye, men? Alas! For pain/ You are mazed, I trow” (p.337). Thomas’ reaction to John’s assertion that they are telling the truth is: “Away! These tales are tricks and vain,/ Of fools unwise./For he that was so foully slain,/ How should he rise?” (p.337). James then points out that they touched Jesus, and Thomas simply rejects the idea, “That trow not I, so might I thrive,/ Whatso ye say” (p.337). Peter tries a second time to convince Thomas, adding more details to what they saw, and Thomas responds that they must have seen a ghost.¹⁶² The exchanges continue for a few more rounds until Jesus appears to settle things, “Peace, brethren, now be unto you./ And, Thomas, tent to me now” (p.338). Each disciple addresses Thomas differently using the same evidence, and Thomas responds with a different objection accordingly. In this version of the play it is the other disciples who repeat their position, and reflect the sermonic structure of the argument.

¹⁶¹ The York version cuts the story into two sections. The first, put on by Woolpackers and Woolbrokers, contains Jesus meeting with Luke and Cleophas. Cleophas’ response to Luke’s opening speech is not directly a response as it was in the Chester version. Neither disciple realizes that they have met the resurrected Jesus until after he leaves them. The continuation, sponsored by the Escreveneres, includes the argument with Thomas.

¹⁶² See p.337.

The N-Town adaptation of the Emmaus story makes authority more prominent than either the Chester or York versions because it contrasts Peter's immediate acceptance of his friends' word against Thomas' doubt. In the N-Town version, Cleophas and Luke meet with Jesus, and then they encounter Thomas and Peter. Peter immediately believes the other two, while Thomas chastises him for doing so. Peter first responds with a reference to the *auctoritas* of Mary Magdalen's encounter with Jesus after the crucifixion, and Thomas responds with a question, "How shulde he levyn ageyn that so streyte was shitt?" (ll.312) referring to the stone in front of the tomb. After Peter responds that he saw the same thing Mary did, Thomas claims that he will not believe until he gets to touch Jesus, a sentiment that Peter calls 'bad witt'.¹⁶³ Jesus appears after Peter's judgment of Thomas, which makes the N Town version the only play in which Jesus does not appear after a response by Thomas. This deviation from other versions links Jesus' reappearance more to the believers than to the notion of Thomas' doubt. This change also sets up the concluding speech by Thomas in this play expressing his regret for being so mistaken in not believing, while the Chester and York plays conclude with a speech by Jesus explaining the significance of what has happened. This apology for having held the wrong position is uncharacteristic of a disputation. Positions may be changed in a disputation and admissions of doing so are made; however the reformed speaker does not apologize so blatantly, either in an academic or poetic disputation.¹⁶⁴ The emphasis on Thomas' apology combined with the emphasis on belief in the N-Town play serves to strengthen the sermonic nature of the argument in this version.

¹⁶³ See line 329.

¹⁶⁴ See for example the Body's final admission in "Disputation between the Body and the Worms". She never directly says "I'm sorry for being wrong before", instead proclaiming "þis þat I hafe complemed & sayd,/ In no displeasing take it 3ow unto./ Lat us be frendes at þis sodayn brayed" (ll. 191-193).

The apology made by Thomas in the N-Town Emmaus play, and the framing speeches by Jesus in the York and Chester versions, helps place it in the category of the sermon model rather than disputation. In all three cases the concluding speeches are meant to emphasize the overall doctrinal lesson the play is presenting. In the Chester play, the opening of Jesus' final speech states the overall message:

Yea, Thomas, thou seest nowe in mee.
 Thou leevest nowe that I am hee.
 But blessed must they all bee
 that leeve and never see
 (ll. 252-255)

The rest of the speech includes exactly what ought to be believed and why.¹⁶⁵ Jesus' first speech is not his first words of the play, but he makes this same point. Because the disciples have not realized who he is at that point in the play, Jesus uses *exempla* from the Old Testament to make the point that belief is the key to salvation.¹⁶⁶ The York play places an emphasis on the spreading of the message by making that point a key feature in Jesus' speeches that frame the Thomas episode. Just before Thomas speaks for the first time, Jesus tells those disciples who are currently onstage,

And peak nowhere my word in waste;
 That learn ye clear,
 And unto you the Holy Ghost
 Relieve you here. (p.336)

In the final speech of the play, Jesus makes a statement similar to the lesson highlighted by the Chester play, but the idea enhanced in the York play by the repetition in both

¹⁶⁵ Mills' preface to the play points to the overall message as the quotation from John 20:29 at lines 254-255 (p.336).

¹⁶⁶ See lines 72-95. Between the end of Jesus speech and Cleophas' response comes the textual reference, "'*Quemadmodum mater consolatur filios suos, ita et ego consolabor vos; et in Jerusalem consolabimini.*' *Esaias, capitulo sexagesimo sexton*".

speeches is that of the importance of preaching.¹⁶⁷ The conclusion of that speech makes the point clearly:

Now all fare forth, my brethren dear,
On all sides in each country clear;
My rising tell both far and near;
Preach it shall ye.
And my blessing I give you here,
And this company. (p.339)

A narrative that illustrates the differences in usage of narrative and voice between the sermonic drama and verse argument is “The Harrowing of Hell”. The interactions between the characters, their narrative, and their narrator all point to the distinction between the sermonic appeal to publicly known *auctoritas*, and the disputational reliance on personal knowledge. The Chester cycle version of the story presents very little direct argument among the characters. The play opens with speeches by a variety of Biblical figures who state their connections to the situation at hand, including Adam, John the Baptist, and David.¹⁶⁸ Next, Satan appears and explains to his curious demons what is going on,¹⁶⁹ and the group is vanquished by Jesus after a challenge by Jesus and some defiance by the demons.¹⁷⁰ Everyone expresses joy at being able to leave hell, except for Satan, who is upset at losing so many souls, and a tavern woman whom all the devils welcome. The N-Town play is similar, although it divides the harrowing into two separate plays. The first section consists of Jesus proclaiming his superiority and a lone devil admitting defeat,¹⁷¹ while the second section consists of Jesus calling the heroes out of

¹⁶⁷ See p. 338. Early in the final speech Jesus says, “Blest be he ever,/ That trusts wholly in my rising right,/ Yet saw it never”.

¹⁶⁸ See ll. 1-96.

¹⁶⁹ See ll.97-152.

¹⁷⁰ See ll.153-184.

¹⁷¹ Play 33, p.273-4.

hell, and again, one lament by the devil.¹⁷² Jesus and the devil never actually engage in dialogue, let alone argument. In both cases, none of the characters needs to prove his-her own *auctoritas*, even to each other. Instead, they present their narrative under the assumption that the audience already recognizes who they are and what they stand for.

In spite of the presence of argument, the York play, like Chester, remains outside of the disputation structure. The play opens with a speech by Jesus, Satan gets some explanation from David and Jesus regarding who Jesus is and why he has come to hell, and there is some argument between Jesus and Satan.¹⁷³ While Satan and his devils engage with David and Jesus, the majority of the dialogue is informative as opposed to argumentative. For example, when Satan asks, “Who made thee be so mickle of might?”, Jesus responds, “Thou wicked fiend, let be thy din./ My Father dwells in heaven on height,/ With bliss that never wanes therein” (p.307). The York play does contain a section of argument between Jesus and Satan; however, it is brief, and unlike a disputational argument, consists of both sides stating their points and evidence, and not engaging each other. Each side makes one claim, and then each side presents evidence. Satan’s claim is that “Thou movest thy men into the mire,” while Jesus’ claim is that “I work not wrong, that shalt thou wit,/ If I my men from woe will win” (p.309). Satan points to Solomon and Job as his proof, while Jesus refers to his prophets.¹⁷⁴ The dialogue and argument provides the characters with the opportunity to explain themselves to each other in more depth than in the Chester or N-Town cycles, but the lack of

¹⁷² Play 35, ll.1-88.

¹⁷³ See p.301-302, and 304-309.

¹⁷⁴ See p. 307-308.

disputational engagement suggests that the characters are speaking by virtue of publicly recognized *auctoritas*.

The poetic “Harrowing of Hell” contains many similar narrative elements to the mystery plays, but the poem also contains an argument scene that follows the disputation format.¹⁷⁵ The core of the poem is the disputation scene, and the frame opens with the narrator and closes with the *exempla* of Jesus’ rescue and the final prayer. One initial difference in the poem is that it opens with a statement by the narrator.¹⁷⁶ The opening both sets the scene and openly points to the existence of a narrator by using the lyric ‘I’.¹⁷⁷ The opening narrative is set by Jesus stating his purpose to end Adam’s suffering and Satan responding with a threat. Satan first asserts that he had the right to use the apple to tempt Adam, and then that he has the right to keep the souls that have already come to hell.¹⁷⁸ Jesus counters that the apple originally belonged to him, and that his death has earned him the right to take souls out of hell.¹⁷⁹ The direct engagement and response to each other’s arguments are both evidence of disputation as opposed to sermonic argument, and while neither side directly refers to any *auctores*, being Jesus and Satan, they can rely on the audience’s knowledge of the Biblical narrative to realize their *auctoritas*. Also like some verse arguments, the poetic “Harrowing of Hell” cuts off the disputation before the two combatants have a chance to finish their argument, and

¹⁷⁵ Textual references come from Hulme’s edition.

¹⁷⁶ This element is consistent across all three versions of the poem that Hulme covers. Unless otherwise noted, I will follow the version from Harley 2253 as it falls between the other two in date and has been the most studied (see Hulme’s discussion of the manuscripts (viii-xv).

¹⁷⁷ The couplet of the introduction reads, “þe he com þere þo seide he,/ asse y schal nouþe telle þe” (ll.41-42). Howard notes, in regards to the cycle plays, that the relationship between the audience-congregation and the sacred narrative contains reciprocal *auctoritas*. The play derives its *auctoritas* from the sacred text as well as the Church (3-4, 6), while the audience gains some *auctoritas* by virtue of the necessity for the play to have viewers (9-10).

¹⁷⁸ See the speeches beginning at ll.81, and 99.

¹⁷⁹ See speeches beginning ll.91, and 107.

switches over to action. The gatekeeper decides to run off because he has been frightened by the disputation, and Jesus takes advantage of the moment to bind Satan.¹⁸⁰ The rest of the poem covers Jesus' rescue of the Biblical heroes, and ends with a prayer for grace and entrance to heaven.

Overall, the use of *auctores* and narrative structure of the dramas, prose dialogues, sermons, and lyric poetry demonstrate several distinctive features of the medieval verse argument in Middle English. Popular *auctoritas* and canonical *auctores* both may be used as sources in a verse argument. When these two types of evidence are evenly applied on all sides, the argument tends to follow the disputation-commentary model. When application of one sort of evidence dominates on one side, the argument tends to follow the sermon model. Use of *auctores* for the purpose of enhancing the speaker as opposed to supporting a particular interpretation is yet another differentiating feature between the disputation and the sermon models. Poems following the sermon model tend to rely more on using *auctoritas* to enhance the speaker, while those following the disputation model tend to rely more on enhancing the speaker's position. A third feature differentiating the two styles of verse argument is the presence of exploration and variation in the argument as a marker of the disputation model, as opposed to restatements of the same position, which is a feature of the sermon. The use of either the sermon or disputation models in drama helps illustrate the difference between dialogue and 'debate'. For example, dramas rely on dialogue, but these exchanges only become a disputation type of argument when the speakers engage each other's points directly as opposed to simply stating opposing claims.

¹⁸⁰ See ll. 141-148.

These guidelines represent a set of general tropes which can be combined with other structures as already demonstrated. This formal flexibility is matched by the interpretive possibilities of the verse argument. This interpretive potential stems from the ambiguities for the reader present especially in the commentary-disputation model, but also from the sermon model's flexibility with types of *auctoritas*, and connection to the *sic et non* style. Adaptability will be further explored through the manuscript context which shows the variety of texts compatible with the verse argument in both form and content. The manuscripts also illustrate the flexibility of the verse argument by illustrating how perceptions of the various poems as individual texts and as a general literary form evolved, and by presenting a new kind of (physical) *auctoritas*.

Chapter 4: Physical Contexts and Interpretive Possibilities

Invoking *auctoritas* in an argument is the putative primary source of evidence for both formal and informal verse arguments. Previous chapters have reviewed how *auctoritas* might be gained for a work by referring to the content and structure of popular or academic *auctoritas*. A third kind of *auctoritas* remains. The implication of respect for the text or lack thereof suggested by physical attributes of the codex in which a poem resides also offers clues as to how verse arguments could be interpreted, both when they were first recorded and read by later generations. This chapter will examine the manuscripts which contain verse arguments in order to explore what other kinds of writing were collected alongside the verse arguments, and how individual texts were placed on the page. Speaker cues and labels in headers and margins, marginal comments and notes, and decorations all point to the evolving perceptions of a given text, and the overall quality of the codex and its components offer suggestions regarding the prestige of the individual written record. Such physical components of a text also present a lens through which to consider how the verse arguments were viewed when recorded, as well as how that perception may have changed or required assistance over time with the addition of features such as notes to the texts and tables of contents. Such contextual clues give insight into how *auctoritas* might be assumed or manipulated within the texts.

The poems are preserved in a variety of contexts. As an initial review for this project, I surveyed 45 poems as potential verse arguments (see Appendix 1). 82 manuscripts contain at least one of these texts under consideration (see Appendix 2), and 22 manuscripts contain more than one of the poems (see Appendix 3i). Of the 45 poems

in the set, 23 are unique to a single manuscript (see Appendix 3ii). The manuscripts vary in length and date of creation, although a substantial number dates to the fifteenth century. Some other trends are that the manuscripts tend to contain works that treat similar themes, they often contain a section of proverbs, and they rarely include academic works. I will discuss the manuscripts according to the general theme of the texts which they contain, and I will use a representative selection of manuscripts which characterizes each particular group. The manuscripts in general fall into the following categories: literary *auctores* (such as Chaucer or Lydgate), the moral-religious, those which focus on courtly romances and history, and those which represent a more arbitrary mixture. Each general thematic category provides a different interpretive lens through which to view the verse argument(s) contained therein.

“The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”: A Case Study of a Themes and Stylistic Influences in Manuscript Context

Since a significant number of manuscripts concentrate on literary *auctores*, the presence of verse arguments attributed to the likes of Chaucer and Lydgate is unsurprising. Until the nineteenth century, the verse argument “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” (also referred to as “The Book of Cupid, God of Love”) was attributed to Chaucer. Today the poem is tentatively attributed to a Chaucerian contemporary, John Clanvowe.¹⁸¹ This poem is recorded in five manuscripts, all of which concentrate heavily

¹⁸¹Conlee reviews the history of attribution and general poetic similarities to Chaucer's poetry suggested by parallels to *The Parliament of Fowls* and “The Knight’s Tale” (among works). He points out that until the 19th century, the poem was considered Chaucer’s, and that scholars now believe it was authored by either John or Thomas Clanvowe (249-250).

on Chaucer's poetry, and courtly-themed works in general.¹⁸² The works with which the verse argument is recorded, the layout of the pages of the codices, and the quality of the overall presentation serves to add new layers of *auctoritas* to the verse argument, and variety of interpretation of the poem overall. Although the manuscripts as a group represent a contextualizing thematic tradition, as individual witnesses, each manuscript offers its own unique interpretive possibilities.

“The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” presents many of the features of a verse argument. The overall frame follows the sermon structure, and concentrates on courtly praise of the god of love. The overall theme is presented in the opening line, “The god of love, a, benedicite!” (1).¹⁸³ The following seven stanzas recount things which the god is capable of and signs of his presence.¹⁸⁴ Then the narrator reveals that he has personal experience with love which gives him authority to speak (or report) on the subject: “I speke þis of feling, truli;/ If I be oold & unlisti,/ 3it I have felt of þat sekenes, þuru3 May,/ Boþ hot and cold, an accesse evereday,/ How sore, i-wis, þer wot no wi3t but I” (ll.36-41). The actual argument between the nightingale and the cuckoo regarding who sings better and whether love is good or harmful is presented as the narrator's dream. The narrator participates in setting up the argument in the beginning, clearly showing an initial allegiance to the nightingale's perspective: “A! Goode ny3tyngale’, quod I þanne,/ ‘A litle hast þu be to long henne;/ ffor here haþ bene þe leude cukko’” (ll.101-103). This allegiance to a particular side on the narrator's part fits into the sermon structure in which

¹⁸² Both Conlee (250) and the *DIMEV* (5299) list the following manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 346; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden B.24; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 638; and Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ff. 1.6. See Appendix 4 for a partial list of titles contained in each manuscript.

¹⁸³Textual references are from Conlee's edition, p.251-265.

¹⁸⁴See lines 1-35.

the speaker's argument is clear from the beginning and does not change. The conclusion of the argument has both birds leaving, with no resolution to their argument except that the narrator reaffirms his belief in the nightingale.¹⁸⁵

In the spirit of the verse argument, the readers' relationship to the narrator and disputants is ambiguous. The narrator clearly presents which side he believes in, but he learns nothing from the argument except that he wishes to continue with his original stance. The authoritative nature of the folk tradition represented by the two birds curtails the possibility for discussion. Conlee points to the likely folk use of the cuckoo as a bird representing bad luck in love if heard before the nightingale (note 47-50, p.253). Given the strength of the perspective supported by the majority of the voices within the poem, the need for the argument itself serves only to allow the narrator's perspective an opportunity to present the details of its position. Another factor that clouds any possible lesson is that while most of the features of the overall poem reflect the sermon model, the actual argument includes efforts towards a disputation. The problem with this combination is that the disputation model usually represents an effort at exploration of both sides through the use of evidence and questioning, and neither the evidence nor the questions presented by the cuckoo are given any consideration. The cuckoo's attempt at disputation is in the end thwarted by the nightingale's final response of starting to cry, and the narrator throwing a stone at the cuckoo in retaliation.¹⁸⁶ The reader is left to wonder whether or not the majority or the minority is the best side to take.

The complexity of the combination of structures is further enhanced by a combination of common folk knowledge and literary references. Much of the evidence in

¹⁸⁵See lines 206-240.

¹⁸⁶See lines 210-220.

both the sermonic and disputational sections of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” comes from a combination of folk knowledge and specialized knowledge of Chaucer or at least his style of poetry. The direct association with Chaucer gives the poem a type of *auctoritas* that many other verse arguments lack on account of being anonymous.¹⁸⁷ “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” directly quotes some of Chaucer's poetry and frequently refers to ideas shared by Chaucer's work. For example, lines 1-2 are quoted from “The Knight's Tale”, lines 55 and 80 mention the dates of May 3 and Valentine's Day in contexts borrowed from Chaucer, and lines 241-245 show parallels to the F Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*.¹⁸⁸ The references to proverbial and narrative conventions contained within the poem all suggest common folk knowledge, but the particular references to Chaucer's treatment of these conventions adds a dimension of specialized knowledge. Only a reader who had knowledge of Chaucer's works would recognize the boost of *auctoritas* the allusion to May 3 or the quotation from the *Knight's Tale* gives “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”. Authors are not consistently labeled in the manuscripts, and there are very few specifically identified attributions to *auctores* in the texts themselves. As such, recognition of these factors would have relied on the reader's specific knowledge of literature.

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16 contains an emphasis on dialogue and speech throughout the manuscript, which puts the verse argument in a particular context.

This manuscript is the longest of the set and also contains one of the better copies of “The

¹⁸⁷ Patterson considers some of the literary as well as historical allusions that appear in the poem (58-63).

¹⁸⁸ The quotation from the *Knight's Tale* is from Theseus' speech on the power of love (CT I 1785-6) (Conlee p.251 n.1-2). Conlee points to the reference to May 3 in *Troilus and Criseyde* (p.254 n.55) and Valentine's Day in the *Parliament of Fowls*, *Complaint to Mars*, and *Complaynt D'Amours* (p.255 n.80). The reference to the cult of the daisy hinted at in lines 241-245 of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” parallels allusions Chaucer makes in verses 40-57, 182-7, 201-2, and 211 in his *F Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* (Conlee p.263 n.241-5).

Cuckoo and the Nightingale”.¹⁸⁹ This manuscript is one of the most ornate and formal of the three, which may be due to its origin as a commercial production for a gentrified owner.¹⁹⁰ Norton-Smith agrees with the idea that Fairfax 16 was originally composed of a series of five booklets,¹⁹¹ the first of which presented a miscellany of Chaucer, Lydgate, Hoccleve, two anonymous poems presenting a light take on fortune, and “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”. This first booklet is the longest of the five, containing 172 folia, and includes a full-page illumination at its beginning (f.14v). The image illustrates the first text of the manuscript, Chaucer’s “Complaint of Mars.” Fairfax 16 presents “The Complaint of Mars and Venus”, “The Complaint of Mars”, and “The Complaint of Venus” as a single dialogue. The first segment, beginning on folio 15r, has the header title “Complaynt of Mars and Venus”, and the other two are marked by marginal titles (f.17r and f.19r).¹⁹² The explicit “Here endith the compleynt of Venus and Mars” (f.20v) and the contemporary table of contents (f.2r-v) both support the presentation of these three poems as a related unit of dialogue.¹⁹³

“The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” is presented on the page no differently than the other literary texts in Fairfax 16. The verse argument takes up the majority of the fifth quire and goes into the sixth (of 24) in the booklet, and it is placed between two works by

¹⁸⁹Fairfax 16 dates to the early-mid fifteenth century (based on the handwriting), and now consists of 343 leaves. See Conlee 250 in regards to the manuscript quality.

¹⁹⁰See Norton-Smith vii for details of the manuscript's ownership history and dating to the mid-fifteenth century.

¹⁹¹ See vii-vix for Norton-Smith’s discussion of the literary –historical attributes of the manuscript. Kerby-Fulton et al. define the term ‘booklet’ as “a quire or group of quires containing one or more written texts prepared with the intention of being bound or kept together” (xxiv).

¹⁹² All of the other main texts are marked by header titles, while sub-sections (including speaker markers, when present, in a dialogue) are placed in the margins. See for example the presentation of Lydgate’s *The Temple of Glass* (ff.63r-82v). *The Belle Dame sans Mercy* also uses speaker labels in the margins (see ff.50v-62v). This is one of the only poems in the manuscript to preserve both the stanza separation and makes use of marginal speaker labels (see also *Fortune* ff.191r-192v).

¹⁹³ The table of contents indents the three components of the dialogue between Venus and Mars, something that does not happen with any of the other titles.

Chaucer (*Anelida and Arcite* and *Truth*). Like other texts within the manuscript, the poem begins with a header title, “The boke of Cupid god of love,” in a slightly larger script. The poem is presented in stanza form, there are few marginal markings, and the poem concludes with “Explicit liber Cupidinis” (f.39v). The preservation of the stanzas is not uniform throughout the manuscript, so in the case of this verse argument, preservation of the stanzas might stand in for marginal speaker/section labels.¹⁹⁴ The facing page begins with a poem that lacks a title but which names Chaucer in the explicit (f.40r).¹⁹⁵ This page presents the first of very few mentions of Chaucer’s name outside of the table of contents, thus presenting a unique moment of direct appeal to the *auctor*.¹⁹⁶ The following text has inserted near both the title and explicit a second instance of direct naming of the author, in this case, Hoccleve (see ff. 40r and 47r). Although some other texts in the manuscript contain marginal marks, comments, and/or images, the margins of the pages presenting “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” are clear.¹⁹⁷

The combination of texts and elements of their presentation within Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Tanner 346 highlights the complaint over the dialogue elements in the verse argument, an effect created by the concentration on courtly complaints within the codex. Tanner 346 also uses the booklet arrangement and was likely copied around

¹⁹⁴ The stanza division might also have been done to emphasize the particular stanza form. Conlee points out that the rhyme scheme of this poem is only used by Chaucer in the envoy of “The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse”, although it was commonly employed by other, mainly French, medieval poets (250).

¹⁹⁵ The poem is Chaucer’s *Truth*.

¹⁹⁶ Chaucer is not named again until a heading added to the title of *The Book of the Duchess* on f. 130 r. Four direct author attributions in the first booklet appear in total (40r Chaucer, 40r Hoccleve, 47r Hoccleve, 130r Chaucer). A marginal note also points out an instance of Chaucer’s name in the text of *The Temple of Glass* (64r). Many of these attributions were added by a hand later than that of the main scribe.

¹⁹⁷ The texts both before and after “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” contain some *notae* in the margins. The text prior is Chaucer’s *Anelida and Arcite* (f.30r-35r). Marginal *notae* appear on 30r, 33v, and 34r. On 40r, to signal the otherwise unmarked beginning of Chaucer’s truth, there is another marginal *nota*.

the same time as Fairfax 16, although it is shorter and a less formal production.¹⁹⁸ Three different scribes worked on the manuscript, and Robinson suggests that they were working simultaneously without direct coordination.¹⁹⁹ Fairfax 16 seems to have been the coordinated production of a bookshop, while Tanner 346 may have been commissioned to a series of independent craftsmen in order to speed up the production process. Although each text begins with an ornamental initial, there are no illuminations in the codex, and few title headings at the beginnings of texts. Most of the title headings now present were added into the codex by later hands.²⁰⁰ Beyond the sparse decoration, inconsistency in the use of stanzas or continuous copying of verse indicates a less formal production. The first text, Chaucer's *Legends of Good Women*, was copied continuously while the rest of the first booklet was copied in stanza form. These texts include Lydgate's "A Complaynt of a Loveres Lyfe" and three of Chaucer's complaints. Unlike Fairfax 16, "The Complaint of Mars" and "The Complaint of Venus" are presented as separate texts, as each begins with a decorated initial letter (see ff. 65r, 67v, and 69v). In the second booklet, which contains the verse argument, the first text, *The Temple of Glass*, is copied in stanza form while the verse debate following is presented continuously, with stanzas being noted by paraphs in the left margins. Beyond such paraph markers and the decoration of some of the ornamented initials, Tanner 346 has very few marginal notes or additions.²⁰¹

Many of the additions to the manuscript were titles or attributive labels. With the exception of two complaints at the end of the first booklet and "The Cuckoo and the

¹⁹⁸ Tanner 346 dates to the mid fifteenth century (based on the handwriting), and now consists of 132 leaves.

¹⁹⁹ See Robinson 1980 xxiv-xxvi for the description of how the manuscript was initially produced.

²⁰⁰ See Robinson 1980 xx.

²⁰¹ Tanner 346 contains a few *notae* and brief marginal notes, but none are in "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale". Such marginalia are often later additions to the manuscript.

Nightingale”, all of the texts in the manuscript are by Chaucer, Lydgate, or Hoccleve.²⁰² In a seventeenth century table of contents, all of the titles are attributed to Chaucer, save the two anonymous complaints (flyleaf xxxiv).²⁰³ No other *auctores* are directly named in the manuscript, and even Chaucer is referred to only once in a title, “Chaucer’s Dream” (f.102r). Eight titles (out of fourteen texts) were added in the seventeenth century.²⁰⁴ Some earlier headings or marginal identifications were at one time present, because the manuscript shows evidence of trimming. For example, on folio 120r, which presents the beginning of *The Parliament of Fowls*, a heading or title that appears to have been cut off is visible above the current title heading. Authorities cited within texts are rarely identified as they might be in a commentary or academic disputation. For example, within *The Legends of Good Women*, only two examples of marginal attribution are present.²⁰⁵

“The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” is the second text of the second booklet, implying that it was recorded as a text of equal value compared to the rest of the codex, and not added as an afterthought.²⁰⁶ Like other texts in Tanner 346, the poem begins with an ornamented initial letter, and lacks a title heading (the heading now present was added in the seventeenth century). Unlike most of the other poems, the verse argument is presented as a continuous text with a little paraph in the margin to indicate stanza

²⁰² One manuscript contains a colophon naming Clanvowe as the author (CUL Ff. 1.6). See Ward’s article for the discussion of this manuscript and internal evidence of authorship.

²⁰³ In the “Introduction”, Robinson presents analysis of the dating of various additions to the manuscript including the table of contents (1980, xxvi-xxvii).

²⁰⁴ Robinson 1980 xxiii.

²⁰⁵ On f.1r there is the note “Bernardus monachus <*non vidit*> omnia”, and on 8v, “Cibella mater deorum”. These notes are not the only marginal additions. For example, on 4v, an omitted line is inserted in the margin and the notation “i(n) balade” is added. See Robinson xx-xxiv for analysis of who may have added what, and when.

²⁰⁶ The same thing happens with the poem in Fairfax 16.

division, as opposed to spaces between stanzas.²⁰⁷ The poem is preceded by *The Temple of Glass* and followed by “Envoy to Allison” which is presented as an envoy to the verse debate itself. The scribe who originally copied the poem placed the explicit immediately after the conclusion of the verse argument, and only slightly ornamented the first letter of the “Envoy” (f.101r). The sub-heading ‘The Envoy’ was also placed before the final stanza of the booklet (f.101v). A later hand inserted the line “explicit of cuck. & Nighting.” after the conclusion of the “Envoy” (f.101v).²⁰⁸

The third manuscript of the group, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 638, seems to have been designed for more practical shared use, as opposed to personal. Bodley 638 comes between Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346 in length, but is later in date. This manuscript dates to the later fifteenth century, and was the production of a single scribe.²⁰⁹ Each text is titled and each page has a running header telling the reader in which text they are currently located. Robinson notes that these titles and headers are done in red ink, making them strong guides with which to navigate the codex.²¹⁰ Bodley 638 is also less consistently ornamented, as it does not employ regular illustrations or ornamentations. Within *The Legends of Good Women*, each section is given a highly ornate explicit, and the following section begins with an ornamental initial letter.²¹¹ The

²⁰⁷ Robinson points out the particular differences in the presentations between “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” and several of the other poems in the manuscript (1980, xx).

²⁰⁸ Skeat points out that this ‘Envoy’ appears only in Tanner 346 and Fairfax 16. He argues that based on the majority of the manuscripts, and the differences in the poetic style, language, and meter, the ‘Envoy’ should not be considered poetically related to the verse argument (v.7, lxii). He also notes that the title “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” originally appeared in none of the manuscripts. That title appears to have originated with Thynne’s sixteenth century edition of Chaucer’s works (Skeat v.7, lvii).

²⁰⁹ Bodley 638 dates to the mid-late fifteenth century (based on the handwriting) and now consists of 219 leaves. See Robinson 1982 xxii-xxiii and xxvii-xxix for details of dating and handwriting of the manuscript.

²¹⁰ See Robinson 1982 xxv for details of presentation in reference to color.

²¹¹ See for example 78v-79r and 85v.

following text, *The Parliament of Fowls*, begins with no decorated initial, although it concludes with a decorated explicit (see ff.96r and 110r). Each text throughout the manuscript is written continuously, and stanzas are marked with a line at each division and paraps in the left margin. The handwriting itself is less formal and consistent than in the other two manuscripts, but remains clear and legible.²¹²

Bodley 638 has some features which indicates that its contents were chosen as teaching texts. Robinson suggests that this manuscript may have been used in a school (1982, xxxvii-xl), which would account for the many added annotations and scribbles in the margins of the codex. Some of the additions are simple notes ('hic cave' or 'nota'), while others actually update the language of a given line (see Robinson 1982, xxxi-xxii, and xxxviii-xxxix). Other less informative marginalia include pen trials and doodles (see Robinson 1982, xl). Although the annotations and additions present interpretive notions and names of readers or owners, there is no mention of any of the *auctores* represented within the manuscript in either the title headings or the explicits.²¹³ Later in the manuscript's history, during rebinding processes, the codex was re-trimmed, cutting off some of the marginalia that had been added over the years.²¹⁴ The manuscript is also missing folia. All three of the opening texts are consistently presented in terms of stanza markers, initial and final decoration, with the exception of the initial letter of the first text (f.1r). This inconsistency suggests missing pages before the opening as it now exists, an idea supported by other anomalies in the text itself, as well as the quire signatures.²¹⁵

²¹² Robinson suggests that the scribe was probably an amateur, particularly in comparison with Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346 (1982, xxxvii).

²¹³ There are a few *notae*, marginal comments, and pointing fingers throughout Bodley 638. On the pages of Bodley 638 containing "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale", there are a few marginal words, and a single manicule (f.12r, 14r, and 14v).

²¹⁴ See Robinson 1982, xxxi-xxxii and xxxiii-xxxiv.

²¹⁵ The manuscript begins with the lines "So doth this god with his sharp flon/ The trewe sleith & letith the

The selection of texts give the manuscript overall an emphasis on literary contemplations of fate. The first quire of Bodley 638 contains three texts: Lydgate's "A Complaynte of a Loveres Lyfe", Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, and the verse argument "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale".²¹⁶ This version of the verse argument is distinct from the other two in that it is not immediately followed by a brief text which Skeat calls "Envoy to Alison".²¹⁷ "The Envoy to Alison" presents the speaker-poet chastising his work as not being good enough for a certain lady. In Tanner 346, a note at the end of the poem treats it as the conclusion of "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale".²¹⁸ In the case of Tanner 346, the "Envoy to Alison" presents "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" in a more personal context as opposed to a philosophical contemplation. Although the "Envoy to Alison" is present in Fairfax 16, it is not attached to the verse argument, but is presented as a separate text.²¹⁹ The envoy is left out completely in Bodley 638. Subsequent texts in the codex include other works by Chaucer and other texts shared with Fairfax 16 and-or Tanner 346. Three of these works emphasize the theme of Fortune or chance: Chaucer's *Fortune*, the anonymous *The Complaint Against Hope*, and *The Chance of Dice*. Fate fits thematically with the courtly complaints and love laments that make up the majority of the other texts.

This general theme of fate presents the verse argument in yet another perspective.²²⁰ The two complaints concentrate on loss or lack of control over one's

false gon" followed by a stanza line (see f.1r). These lines in the text correspond with lines 468-469 in printed editions of Lydgate's "Complaint of a Lover's Life" (see Robinson 1982, xviii). See Robinson 1982 xxiii and xxxiii-xxxiv for discussion of evidence of missing folia.

²¹⁶ Robinson 1982 describes the foliation and collation at pp.xxiii-xxiv.

²¹⁷ Skeat questions the attribution of this text because he considers it of lesser quality (v.7, lxii).

²¹⁸ The note reads "Explicit of Cuck. & Nighting." (101v).

²¹⁹ Norton-Smith argues that the "Envoy to Alison" is not an independent poem, and possibly dates after *Clanvowe* (xxv).

²²⁰ Although such a theme exists in some of the texts in Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346, the concentration and

destiny, and *The Chance of Dice* presents a fortune telling game. *The Chance of Dice* also appears in Fairfax 16, and in both manuscripts the poem is bordered on by images of dice in the outer margins. These two manuscripts represent the only records of the poem (DIMEV 1318). Both times *The Chance of Dice* is recorded, the manuscript also contains “Ragman’s Roll”, which also deals with social games of fortune.²²¹ In terms of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”, such a context places a more favorable view on the narrator’s position in support of the nightingale and love, as opposed to the emphasis on the character’s actions in Fairfax 16. Many of the other texts in Bodley 638 are love complaints siding with the lover’s perspective, including Lydgate’s *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, Chaucer’s *Anelida and Arcite*, and *The Book of the Duchesse*. While Fairfax 16 also includes such texts, attention is drawn more towards themes of action and narrative due to the additional presence of texts such as *Venus Mass* and *Reson and Sensuallyte*. *Venus Mass* includes allusions to a sequence of actions, and *Reson and Sensuallyte* contains extended sections of narrative and action. When grouped with texts of this nature, the narrator’s actions and narrative sections within “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” appear more prominent.

The text remains fairly stable across the three versions of the verse argument, with one exception. Scribal differences help explain variation in spelling and occasional rearrangement or rephrasing of words within a line, and these deviations do not change the message or style of the poem a great deal. Rewording or rephrasing a line might

focus of such writings in Bodley 638 highlights the effect to a greater degree. Fairfax 16’s texts emphasize taking action, while Tanner 346 concentrates the courtly elements. See discussion below.

²²¹ Along with the remark regarding the shared theme of the two poems, Hammond also notes that “Ragman’s Roll” presents a women’s game, while *The Chance of Dice* includes both sexes (1). She also makes some observations regarding how the games might have worked, as well as how they reflected changing social conditions of the times (1-5).

achieve different poetic effects within the line or stanza, but do not affect the poem as a verse argument or as a representative of a general theme.²²² Tanner 346 presents the major textual variation among the ‘Oxford group’ with a missing stanza in the middle of the argument, and later combines two stanzas into one.²²³ Of the five manuscripts as an entire group, the one with the most significant differences in the text is Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24 whose copy of the poem is imperfect to begin with.²²⁴

Considering the number of common texts among Fairfax 16, Tanner 346, and Bodley 638, the pieces that are not shared illustrate how the verse argument is affected by individual manuscript contexts. All three manuscripts contain love complaints and similar courtly pieces not shared by the others,²²⁵ but each manuscript also contains one or two pieces that stand out from the rest. Fairfax 16 contains a dialogue between Reason and Sensuality attributed to Lydgate. Tanner 346 contains a complaint regarding the speaker's separation from his beloved, and Bodley 638 records a piece titled “On the Order of Fools” possibly by Lydgate.

The texts which appear in only one manuscript of the set which contain “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” reveal a theme and a stylistic focus which gives a unique

²²² The poetic merit of the individual variations of the poem is not the question here. While the textual differences may affect the technical style of a given version, none of the variants affect the poem's overall thematic features.

²²³ Because of their shared textual relationships and provenance, Tanner 346, Bodley 638, and Fairfax 16 have been referred to as “the Oxford group”. The missing stanza in Tanner 346 covers lines 201-205 in Conlee's printed edition, and the two combined stanzas lines 216-225. The missing stanza repeats the cuckoo's claim that love is troublesome, and the combined stanzas provide the narrative section in which the narrator throws a stone at the cuckoo. These sections add emphasis to what is already present in the rest of the argument, and as such their omission is not critical to the general themes of the poem.

²²⁴ See Skeat (v.7, lvii-lxi) for further details of the manuscript and literary history of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”.

²²⁵ As Patterson suggests, the courtly poem is rarely as simple as it appears content-wise (82-83). In considering tone, theme and formal features, the style is more uniform. Patterson argues “The court poem explores the vicissitudes of simplicity in a world of complexity” (82) and that this kind of poetry presents a “desire to transcend social context and yet an unavoidable need to recuperate and refigure it” (83).

perspective to the verse argument as well as other texts in the manuscript. The texts unique to Fairfax 16 place more an emphasis on dialogue and speech, and a theme of taking action; Tanner 346 emphasizes the complaint style, and concentrates on a theme of courtly concerns; finally, the text unique to Bodley 638 concentrates on a didactic model, and presents a theme of fate and chance. Both texts which stand out as unique to Fairfax 16 in comparison with the other literary-centered manuscripts are connected with speaking, either in the complaint form, song-ballad form, or narrative with strong emphases on dialogue.

Many of the texts in Fairfax 16 not shared with the others are shorter complaints, letters, or songs, with one major exception. Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte* takes the form of dream vision that includes several dialogues. The narrator first encounters Nature, and then Venus, and promises to serve both. The narrator next runs into Diana, who complains against Venus and expresses a desire to return to the times of King Arthur. The dialogue with Diana appears to be an argument, but the presence of the verse argument elements are quickly overridden by the chess metaphor which follows. Up until this point in the poem, the narrator's interactions with other characters has been purely instructional, but with Diana he argues his support of Paris' decision to favor Venus.²²⁶ She tries to persuade him that Venus is bad and dangerous by referring to Greco-Roman stories in which Venus causes trouble, but the narrator persists in his belief. He tells Diana that her way of life is not amusing and that Nature told him to enjoy himself, and that he promised Venus that he would serve her.²²⁷ Diana counters that the speaker has

²²⁶See ll. 3307-3314.

²²⁷ See lines 4487-4512 and 4537-4540.

misunderstood Nature's order.²²⁸ These exchanges amount to an argument (in verse) that follows the sermon model, in which each side lists why they are right with very little interaction with each other's points. Once the narrator leaves Diana and gets to the Garden of Pleasure and Cupid, he ends up in a chess game against a maiden at the request of Pleasure and Cupid. The narrator describes all of the maiden's allegorical game pieces, followed by his own.²²⁹ The poem abruptly ends with the introduction of the narrator's fourth pawn, Delectation, at line 7042.²³⁰ The reintroduction of the initial chess game metaphor refocuses what could have been a sermon-structured argument between Diana and the narrator. The reminder of the initial frame and allegory suggests that everything up to this point has been a part of the allegorical game, and overrides the potential sermonic argument. This loss of balance between the argument and the allegory illustrates how both context within an individual text and in a codex as a whole can be affected in regards to type of argument and potential interpretations in the poem. The allegory of the game of love distracts from the arguments in the poem, and limits interpretive prospects to courtly love, and romance literature.²³¹

Some verse arguments, including "Jesus and the Masters of the Law of the Jews" and "Robene and Makyne", illustrate how the disputation-based elements can suppress other structures in a poem, but in the case of *Reason and Sensuallyte* the reverse is shown. Arguments that open with one voice promoting disputation and another voice

²²⁸ See ll. 4684-4690.

²²⁹ The section begins at line 6931.

²³⁰ Sieper notes that the poem is a translation of a French predecessor, and presents what would have likely followed if Lydgate's version had continued (see p.59-64).

²³¹ The emphases on courtly love is enhanced by other texts in the manuscript including "Venus Mass" and "Four Things the Make Man a Fool". The version of the latter in Fairfax 16 emphasizes the problem of women, particularly in its conclusion, "And bookes alle, that poetes wroot and radde,/ Seyn women moste maken men to madde" (ll.20-21 of MacCracken's printed edition of Lydgate's works, p.709).

using another structure in vain include, for example, “Robene and Makyne”, “Jesus and the Masters of the Laws of the Jews”, and Trevisa’s “Dialogue on Translation Between a Clerk and Lord”. The courtly game of love overshadows the argument scene because of the close parallels that the literal and allegorical chess game has with the introductory frame, as well as the narrator's constant position, marking him as unwilling either to dispute or hear a sermon. As a thematic frame of reference, the diminishment of the debate mode suggests an emphasis on the conclusion of the verse argument, in which the narrator who has never wavered in his position regarding the two birds, acts to end the argument. These parallels with narrator of *Reason and Sensuallyte* might provoke a reading of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” which places the argument in the background, and highlights the narrative portions of the poem.²³² The case of *Reason and Sensuallyte* serves as a reminder that the presence of verse argument structures does not automatically define a poem as a verse argument.

Tanner 346 contains two items that appear in neither Fairfax 16 nor Bodley 638, both of which are complaints in ballad form.²³³ Although neither piece has a known author attribution, MacCracken proposes that both pieces illustrate “the Chaucerian school under Lydgate’s influence” (323).²³⁴ A table of contents added to the manuscript

²³² Patterson, in considering “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”, argues the narrator represents an exploration of theatricality and performative self-presentation within the realm of courtly literature (72-75). Such a reading supports the elevation of the action because it presents the narrator as active, physically and verbally, in attempting to control his self-presentation within the worlds of the poem. Whether or not he succeeds in his endeavor is another matter.

²³³ Both poems also appear in CUL Ff. 1.6. Since these are the only two manuscripts which record the two complaints, the general context of Tanner 346 makes them more unusual. The Findern manuscript does not share as close a historical and textual relationship with Tanner 346 as Bodley 638 and Fairfax 16. See Robinson 1980, xxiv-xxv for details on the shared history of these three manuscripts. CUL Ff.1.6 also presents a different context in relation to the contents of the manuscript because it presents a mix of *auctores*, as opposed to a concentration on Chaucer.

²³⁴ There is no author and no title heading at the beginning of either poem, although each is marked with a decorated initial letter (f.73r and f.74v).

presents the contents of the manuscript as “Some of Chaucer’s Works” with the exception of the two complaint ballads (f.i^v).²³⁵ The first complaint, “As ofte as syghes ben in herte trewe” (f.73r-f.74v), proclaims the speaker’s constant sighs for his beloved, and uses conventional spring imagery and references to classical mythology.²³⁶ The second complaint also follows convention by presenting three laments about the speaker’s inability to see his lady.²³⁷ This poem, titled “Compleynt for Lac of Sight” (f.74v-f.75v), is followed by an envoy in which the poet requests pity on both his poem and himself. The explicit does not provide a name. In light of this context within the manuscript, “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” appears to be more of a complaint of the narrator and nightingale against the cuckoo.

Bodley 638 also contains a text unique to it among the set of manuscripts, “The ordre of Folys”. The text cuts off abruptly at the end of the manuscript after six stanzas, indicating that a final quire has been lost.²³⁸ Although the text lacks an authorial attribution and the manuscript lacks a table of contents, the poem is elsewhere attributed to Lydgate,²³⁹ which makes it fitting for a collection of literary *auctores*. The poem in its entirety covers a series of portraits of undesirable character types derived from literature and Lydgate’s own time. This focus on moral instruction presents a second theme within

²³⁵ The location of the two poems is marked in the table of contents, which was added in the seventeenth century, with two lines of elipses.

²³⁶ The poem is also known as “A Lover’s Plaint”. See *DIMEV* 664.

²³⁷ MacCracken notes that the triple ballad form is incomplete, as the first section is missing a stanza. He argues that the inconsistency in the stanza count was likely the result of carelessness on the part of the scribe (Lydgatiana, 323).

²³⁸ See Robinson 1982 xii-xiii. She also points out that the scribe left out some lines in the portion of the text which does remain.

²³⁹ In MacCracken’s edition, he outlines what he sees as Lydgate’s definitive characteristics (Part I, vi-xv) and lists the poem under the category ‘genuine’ Lydgate (Part I, xxii). Schirmer notes that MacCracken was the scholar who established the modern Lydgate canon that remains the accepted standard (264). The *DIMEV* does not list any manuscript attributions directly to Lydgate (5428), but the attribution of “The ordre of Folys” remains uncontested by most scholars.

the manuscript; in addition to fate, Bodley 638 also has a didactic focus that the Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346 do not possess. Chaucer's *An ABC* is presented in the form of an instructional model, and several other works within the manuscript have strong didactic components.²⁴⁰ The element of seeking and finding knowledge reflects yet another compatible theme that works well with the verse argument mode.²⁴¹

The manuscript evidence implies that the verse argument was regarded with equal literary status as other texts with which it is recorded, and that the same verse argument could be connected with a variety of different literary themes and styles. The manuscripts also imply that author attribution was not needed (at least at the time of copying).²⁴² Most of the author attributions present in the title headings or tables of contents were added at later dates, and only a few instances of marginal source attribution or reference appear. Concerning "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale" itself, only one manuscript contains marginalia. This lack of author and title attributions or marginal notes contemporary to the manuscript's production suggest that the themes and styles of the verse arguments, as well as many other texts in the literary manuscripts, subscribed to well-known conventions. As such, these texts did not require a high degree of marginal interpretation and annotation. This case-study illustrates that the verse argument was recognized both in form and content without the need for explanatory notes.

²⁴⁰ Other works in the manuscript include Chaucer's *House of Fame* and *The Book of the Duchess*, both of which are framed in terms of an educational dream-journey. Although *The Book of the Duchess* appears also in Tanner 346 and Fairfax 16, and *An ABC* in Fairfax 16, the combination of texts in Bodley 638 is what gives it the stronger didactic focus.

²⁴¹ Patterson argues that the poem explores possible inversions and challenges of authority, particularly through the voice of the cuckoo (76-77).

²⁴² Nearly all of the attributions to the *auctores* are later additions to the manuscripts. For example, in the table of contents (f.2) in Fairfax 16, attributions to Hoccleve and Lydgate for "The Letter of Cupid" and *The Temple of Glass* respectively are added into the codex in later hands. The beginning of "The Letter of Cupid" also has an attributive note added to the header (f.40r). The opening of *The Temple of Glass* (f.63r) does not have such an addition.

The final two manuscripts of the set, Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Ff. I.6 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden B. 24, present some deviations from the connections established by the relationships between Tanner 16, Bodley 638, and Tanner 346. These two manuscripts share fewer texts with the group as a whole, and they present some unique physical features. CUL Ff.I.6, also known as the Findern manuscript, is unique among the set of five manuscripts for three reasons. First, this manuscript concentrates as heavily on Gower as Chaucer, and second, it contains the unique attribution of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” to Clanvowe. Lastly, this manuscript shows signs of having been a personal commonplace book, as opposed to the other four which were more professionally produced.²⁴³

The private and amateur nature of CUL Ff.I.6 is supported in particular by two factors. First, there is the presence of thirty different hands within the manuscript.²⁴⁴ Second, there is the variety of texts that appear. Approximately one third of the codex is dedicated to major *auctores* like Gower and Chaucer, while the rest of the contents ranges from the romance *Sir Degrevant* to courtly lyrics to religious poems. Together, the number of scribes and variety of texts indicate an informally planned codex that was shared among the family members to record texts as they wished. The personal commonplace book is likely to have undergone a lot of use, which may partially account for the damaged condition of the codex.

The pages which preserve “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” in the Findern manuscript present many of the same attributes as the other manuscripts. There is very

²⁴³ In his discussion of the composition and assembly of the Findern manuscript, Robbins suggests the possibility of a fourth unique feature, that significant portions of the manuscript may have been assembled and commented on by women (“The Findern Anthology”, 626-630).

²⁴⁴ See Beadle and Owen xi-xii for a general description of the variety of hands.

little marginalia throughout the codex overall, but there are a few notes and scribbles on the pages preserving the Clanvowe poem (ff. 26r and 28r). The scribe who copied the poem preserved the use of stanzas, but not a title heading, and used a neat and consistent hand. A different hand added the heading “Geffrey Chaucer's Poem of the Cuckoo and the Nightingale” (f. 22r). The original scribe left a blank spot that seems to have been intended for a decorated initial that was never added (f.22r). The same person also included an explicit, which gives the unique manuscript attribution of the poem to 'Clanvowe' as opposed to Chaucer (f.28r).²⁴⁵ There are several instances in the manuscript where a heading title is added by a hand other than the scribe who copied the main text, and there is also little decoration.²⁴⁶ Overall, the similarities between the presentations of the poem in the various manuscripts suggest that the text of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” is of a similar thematic nature as the other items in the manuscript. Many of the texts address matters of love and fate using established literary conventions and formats (courtly romance, complaint, etc.), and these similarities are reflected in the common physical presentations in the manuscript.

In spite of the wider variety of texts in comparison to Tanner 16, Bodley 638, and Tanner 346, Ff.I.6 also displays an overall theme and formal attributes. Also like the other manuscripts, the Findern manuscript contains texts not present in any of the others that provide a unique lens through which to view the verse argument. The majority of the texts in the manuscript present poems concerned with courtly love in some manner. The

²⁴⁵See Ward's article for an analysis of authorial attribution of the poem. Ward pays particular attention to the explicit in Ff.I.6 and considers several possible candidates.

²⁴⁶For examples of added headings, see ff.29r, 59r, 61r, and 71r. Folio 71r includes a heading in the same hand as the main text, but two suggested authorial attributions are added in a second hand. For examples of the little ornamentation that is present, see ff. 45r and 48r.

excerpts from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* combine the moral and/or courtly concerns present in many of the other texts which include courtly love complaints and religious lyrics.²⁴⁷ Gower's work as whole presents a series of *exempla* interspersed with interpretive commentary, and the Findern codex contains excerpts of both elements. In addition to the many poems and poetic excerpts, the Findern manuscript contains a few brief prose pieces which solidify the overall theme of the informative *exempla* that runs throughout the codex. Folia 110r-113r contain a short chronicle describing 'seynts and kyngys of yngelond' (title heading, f.110r), and folio 113r-v continues the informative trend with some royal heraldic notes.

Viewing the manuscript as a whole as a collection of *exempla*, some in support, some against, and some ambiguous about courtly ideas connects the Findern manuscript to the *sic et non* disputation tradition. The excerpts from Gower teach against courtly ideals and the pieces by Chaucer are ambiguous, while the complaints and romance celebrate courtly love. The historical prose and the final text of the manuscript (f.181r-185v), a poetic paraphrase of part of the *Cato Maior*, do not address the courtly concerns covered by the majority of the other texts, but they do fit into the theme of the informative or instructional *exempla*. The chronicle in particular suggests teachings on how a person ought to live, which is a factor shared by many of the courtly texts within the codex. The purpose and structure of the *sic et non* format was to provide reader-students with enough material to construct their own argument and decide for themselves which side was correct. This style presents a way to read the verse argument that is not

²⁴⁷Religious lyrics include a hymn to Mary and a prayer to Jesus (ff. 146r-v), and love lyrics and complaints include a slighted lover's complaint and a poem on the speaker's desire to serve his mistress (ff.136v-139r). Summary references are from the *DIMEV* description of the contents of the Findern manuscript.

present in the other manuscript contexts. Since “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” is not decided properly as a disputation, a *sic et non* reading would enable readers to consider the narrator-nightingale perspective against the cuckoo's, and make their own interpretation of the evidence and arguments offered.

As a physical object, Arch. Selden B.24 presents some unique challenges. Due to age and use, the manuscript has undergone multiple restorations and repairs,²⁴⁸ some of which affected the legibility and-or ordering of certain texts. In spite of the codicological problems and questions that still remain, most of the texts are intact (Boffey and Edwards 5-6). As a codex, Arch. Selden B.24 is a collection of *auctores* and anonymous verse. The manuscript concentrates on Chaucer, not unlike many other manuscripts concentrating on literary *auctores*, but does so in a unique context. As Boffey and Edwards point out, Arch. Selden B.24 is one of only two known early Chaucer-centric manuscripts from Scotland and contains the unique copy of the Scottish poem *The Kingis Quair* (18-19). Based on this background and the contents of the codex, the thematic and stylistic elements unique to this codex are together the presentation of Chaucerian works in combination with Scottish interpretations. Nine of the twenty-five texts in the codex are directly attributed to Chaucer (five incorrectly), and Boffey and Edwards point out that this percentage of error is unparalleled by other Chaucer manuscripts (21). They also contend that “some of [the misattributions] seem to have been uniquely Scottish” (21). The only other direct attribution in the manuscript is for *The Kingis Quair*, “Maid be King James of Scotland ye first” (f.191v) in potentially a later hand (Boffey and Edwards 21).²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ Barker-Benfield describes the history of repair and restoration of the manuscript (29-60).

²⁴⁹ Boffey and Edwards also point out a third possible attributed text, but as it is disputed (see p.21, note 71) I have not included it here. It is also worthy of note that there is a colophon at the end of *The Kingis Quair* which repeats the attribution to James I, “Quod Jacobus primus scotor(um) rex Illustrissimus” (f.211r).

The presentation of the text of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” in Arch. Selden B.24 is similar to the other texts in the codex with one major exception: it lacks an explicit. As with many other pieces in the manuscript, the verse argument has no title heading, uses spaces between stanzas, and the first page of the text is decorated with a pattern of colorful birds and flowers (f.138v). The final page of the poem is missing (the page after f.141), so there is no longer an explicit or authorial attribution as with other texts.²⁵⁰ *Troilus and Criseyde*, which takes up roughly the first half of the codex, contains extensive marginal commentary. *Troilus and Criseyde* is also unique in the manuscript for having running headers in the upper margin of each page which indicate the codex of the poem.

Besides “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”, Arch. Selden B.24 also contains *The Parliament of Fowls*, “Complaint of Mars” and “Complaint of Venus”. Although the manuscript is not the only one to contain these poems, its presentation of verse arguments or possible verse arguments merits some attention. The text of *The Parliament of Fowls* is imperfect in that it contains spurious lines and is missing the first fourteen lines (Boffey and Edwards 2). The missing opening is likely due to a missing leaf (following f.141), since when the text begins on f. 142r, there is no decoration to mark the opening of a new text. The two complaints that are treated as a single unit in other manuscripts are also treated as such in Arch. Selden B.24. Given that major texts in the codex are marked by a very ornate border in the left margin, “Complaint of Mars” and “Complaint of Venus” are presented as a single text with some mediating complexities. The first page of

²⁵⁰ Folia 118v- 119r present examples of how many of the texts in the codex begin and end. These pages contain the end of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, and all of Chaucer’s *Truth* and Walton’s *Boethius* (wrongly attributed to Chaucer). The reason the page is missing is probably that it was at the end of a quire (Barker-Benfield 45).

“Complaint of Mars” has the expected ornamentation (f.132r); however, so does f.134r, which indicates that a second poem titled “The compleynt of Mars” begins with the line “The ordour of compleynt inquirith skilfully”.²⁵¹ The use of the title heading is unusual for this manuscript, and a second title heading follows, “The compleynt of Ven(us) folowith” (f.136r), although the page does not have the decoration indicative of a new text. This unique presentation of a pair of poems that are elsewhere perceived as one may be another indication of the Scottish provenance of the manuscript.

The relative stability of the text of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” in a Chaucerian-Scots context suggests some new interpretive potential. In addition to paleographical evidence of Scottish heritage,²⁵² Arch Selden B.24 contains the sole surviving copy of *The Kingis Quair*, a poem with clear Chaucerian influences attributed to a Scottish author.²⁵³ Mapstone submits that, given the manuscript context, *The Kingis Quair* “reads like a Scots answer to *Troilus and Criseyde*” (504). The resulting emphasis on Scottish emulation of Chaucer implies that if not by Chaucer, then other poems in the manuscript are deliberately in a Chaucerian style. Besides some minor spelling and word order variations, the text of Arch. Selden B.24’s copy of “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” is close to the text recorded in Fairfax 16. Other texts undergo more extensive changes to fit their Scottish context. For example, Hanna points to the “revisionist Scots” conclusion of Chaucer’s *The Parliament of Fowls* (109). Mapstone argues that this alternate Scottish ending changes the thematic focus of the poem “from

²⁵¹ This line is transcribed from the facsimile, and represents line 155 in the printed text.

²⁵² See Boffey and Edwards 6-12 for analysis of the scribal hands.

²⁵³ Mooney and Arn review the influence of Chaucer and of later Chaucerians, as well as the historical context alluded to by the poem (pp.1-10, 18-19, 21-22).

amatory intrigue to the idea of the social outsider”, while preserving the Chaucerian ambiguity of the argument (504).²⁵⁴

What a Scottish perspective implies for “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” is a potential reading of the lover-narrator as being on a quest for social acceptance and happiness. A second possibility considers the notion that Fate and love can actually be helpful if appealed to and employed in the proper manner. The unity of the nightingale and the narrator, and the eventual expulsion of the cuckoo from the area, appeals to the ideas of society and outsiders presented by the altered ending of *The Parliament of Fowls*. Paired with a reading of *The Kingis Quair* as an exploration of Fate and love, the cuckoo’s arguments are further undermined. The cuckoo argues against love, claiming,

Ffor lovers ben þe folk þat bene on lyve
That most disease hanve and most unthryve,
And most endure sorrow, wo, and care,
And lest felen of welfare” (ll.141-144)

The cuckoo also claims that love only brings despair (ll.176), and is the result of “no reson, but it is wil” (ll.197). The approval of love as a remedy that is presented in *The Kingis Quair* supports the lover in “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale” as he stays true to his search for love in spite of his struggles.²⁵⁵ The manuscript context takes a verse argument that does not have a straightforward resolution, and suggests that in such cases, ambiguities of interpretation can be influenced by surrounding texts.

Surrounding the Poetic Text: How Marginalia and Annotations Inform Meaning

²⁵⁴ Mapstone blatantly disagrees with Boffey and Edward’s classification of this version of the conclusion as ‘spurious’ (504), while Hanna does so more indirectly.

²⁵⁵ Mooney and Arn summarize the narrative and major themes of *The Kingis Quair* (19-21).

The use of titles and classifications at the beginning or ending of poems shows one form of labeling a poem. Using marginal speaker labels or explanatory notes present a second set of possible sources of identification. Whether the labels name the speakers or the genre, they illustrate a need to provide extra information to the understanding of the poem beyond the text itself. Many verse arguments do not have marginal labels that provide details of speakers or intellectual and narrative situations in which they find themselves. More common for the verse arguments in their manuscripts is the presence of a genre label and-or title in either an incipit or a colophon.

The case of “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune” illustrates how differences in marginal contents and manuscript context can contribute to interpretation of a verse argument that does not provide in-text speaker cues. This poem exists in three manuscripts: BL Harley MS 7333, BL Additional MS 34360, and BL Harley MS 2251. All three manuscripts concentrate on material by literary *auctores*, and all date to the fifteenth century. Given all these similarities, the differences between the manuscripts become all the more important. Harley 2251 is the most standardized codex of the set as it does not present any major differences in its presentation of verse arguments, among themselves or the other texts in the codex.²⁵⁶ In general this codex includes some attention to authorial attributions in the concluding colophons, and an occasional title heading that appears in a different hand. “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune” is one of the last texts recorded, and presents many similar features to the other texts in the manuscript, including the use of marginal rubricated paraps to mark stanza

²⁵⁶ Harley 2251 has three verse arguments: “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune” (f.271-273), Chaucer’s “Fortune” (f.45-46), and Lydgate’s “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” (f.277-287). A fourth poem, “The Craft of Lovers” is also in dialogue, however this text consists of the lady and the lover trying to understand each other, not argue (f.52-54v).

divisions. Harley 2251 contains no other marginalia in its presentation of the verse argument, although within the text, the names of important figures are underlined in red.²⁵⁷ One feature of the record of the verse argument that distinguishes it from the rest of the codex is that, after the poem concludes on 273r, 273 v is left blank. The next text, “The ordre of foles”, begins on 274r. Such a gap between texts does not occur elsewhere in the codex.

In contrast to Harley 2251, Harley 7333 records two verse arguments, each with different marginal attributes. The manuscript is deluxe in size, and presents its texts in two columns throughout. Scattered marginal comments and notes appear throughout the codex, often to clarify the subject or to mark a new section. The first verse argument in the manuscript, “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune,” is marked by an introductory note as well as an explicit. Before the text begins, on 30V a, the following note appears in red: “next folowith a littel *tretys* by wey of compleint agenis ffortune”. This titular reference is also marked by a blue paraph. At the end of the text, the colophon reads, “Explicit compleint agen ffortune”. Like the title at the beginning of the text, the explicit is marked by a blue paraph, and the text is underlined in red. The most distinctive feature of the verse debate in Harley 7333 is the presence of speaker labels in the margins. In the left margin of f.30v, there are two labels in red ink, “The playntif” and “Ffortune”. These labels are not used throughout the poem, but only appear when each character first speaks. The second verse argument in Harley 7333 is Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls*. This poem is presented with some differences from the verse argument that preceded it. There are no colored stanza markers, and no speaker labels in

²⁵⁷For example, “Saturnus” is underlined on 271v, and the names of the three Fates are underlined on 272r.

the margins. However, as in the presentation of “Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune” the stanzas are separated by spaces. The lack of speaker labels in the second verse argument is likely be due to the use of in-text speaker cues, which are not present in “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune”. Beyond the difference in the use of marginal speaker labels, the verse arguments are presented in similar terms to the other texts in the codex.

The three manuscripts that present some variations in the text of “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune,” illustrate how important the manuscript context can be. Harley 7333 presents the poem in 21 stanzas, including one unique to this copy, while both Harley 2251 and Additional 34360 present 23 stanzas, the first three of which contain the text of Chaucer’s “Complaint to his Purse”. One possible reason that none of the surviving copies of “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune” has a title attached to it is this confusion with Chaucer's poem, that directly precedes the verse argument in both Harley 2251 and Additional 34360. Both of these manuscripts are attributed to the same scribe (Mooney and Arn 174) which provides a possible reason why they display the same copying mistake, the same concluding 'Amen', and similar stanza division markings. Although Harley 7333 is not as direct in this regard as the other two manuscripts, it too contains some evidence signaling possible confusion of the verse argument with Chaucer's poetry. Chaucer wrote a poem titled 'Balade of Fortune' or simply 'Fortune', which in Harley 2551's is labeled “The pleyntef countre fortune” (f.45r).²⁵⁸ These are the same speaker titles as Harley 7333 uses in its margins.

²⁵⁸Several other manuscripts use the same or similar title (see *DIMEV* 5803). The poem is also known as “Balade de Visage sanz Peinture”.

Marginalia and other presentation features in Additional 34360's version of "The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune" indicate that the Chaucerian poem and the anonymous verse argument were copied as a single text. At the beginning of many texts throughout Additional 34360, the first few lines are indented in anticipation of an ornamented initial that was never added. The text of "The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune" shows no indentation for a first initial, or any other sign of a new text, between the third and fourth stanzas that indicates that the two texts were regarded as a single text. A marginal note and a thin line between the two stanzas points out that the first three stanzas were known to have been recorded elsewhere and attributed to "Ocleeve" (f.19r).²⁵⁹ The poem is otherwise untitled, and has no reference to a title or author at the conclusion. The conclusion is marked by an "Amen" with a rubricated initial and red underlining. Like Harley 2251's record of "Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune", the text in Additional 34360 shows the names of important characters underlined in red, including 'Saturnus' (19v) and the three Fates (20r). Like Harley 2251, stanzas are marked by rubrication, and also like Harley 2251, Additional 34360 has the final "Amen".

Although all three manuscripts concentrate on literary *auctores*, the presentation of "The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune" in Harley 7333 stands from the other two. Harley 7333 neither has the final 'Amen' nor has anything underlined in the text of the poem. This manuscript also stands apart from the other two in that it uses two column pages, and it contains marginal speaker labels the first time each character speaks. Both

²⁵⁹ The full note reads "Thus farr is printed in Chauc. fol.320 under y^e name of Tho. Ocleeve". The catalog entry notes that the second hand belonged to John Stow, and also mentions an attribution of "The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune" to Lydgate (*Explore*, "Details: Add MS 34360").

times, the speaker's name ('The playtif' and 'Ffortune') is written in red and there is evidence of a trimmed off blue paraph marker. Harley 7333 is the only one to acknowledge the verse argument as a complete text, which it does in the incipit, whose red ink is further highlighted by brackets. Harley 7333 also is the only version to record the stanza it places as fourth in the poem.

The additional stanza that appears in Harley 7333 highlights both structural differences and thematic similarities between Chaucer's "Fortune" and "The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune". The first lines of Chaucer's poem say, "This wrecched worldes transmutacioun,/ As wele or wo, now povre and now honour,/ Withouten ordre or wys discrecioun" (ll.1-3), while the Prisoner towards the end of his contemplations concludes, "Fy on this worl; it is but fantasie!/ Swerte is none, in no degree one state" (ll.99-100).²⁶⁰ This common rejection of worldliness provides the thematic link between the two poems that is supplemented by shared references to death and friendship.²⁶¹ The key differences between the two poems are in their structural models as verse arguments and in their conclusions. The "Complaint of the Prisoner against Fortune" follows a sermon model, while Chaucer's "Fortune" follows a disputation model.

Harley 7333's stanza emphasizes both the personal nature of the complaint and the introduction the Christian theme reflected in the conclusion of "The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune". The stanza reads,

Why nad I rather died an Innocent
Or seke in bed ful ofte whan I have layn
Than had my name be paired not ne shent
Better hit had be so, than thus to have me slayn
But what to stryve with thee it may not geyn

²⁶⁰ Textual references to Chaucer's "Fortune" come from the *Riverside Chaucer*, while references to the "Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune" come from Mooney and Arn's edition.

²⁶¹ For example in Chaucer's poem see lines 6 and 50. For the example for the Prisoner, see lines 54 and 85.

And yit thou wotest I suffre and shame [sic]
ffor that / that I god wote am not to blame. (ll. 22-27 of Harley 7333 only)

The Jesus-like self-presentation of the speaker introduces the idea of Christian suffering that continues throughout the rest of the text, and enhances the speaker's conclusion that he would be best off turning to God and Jesus:

Fortune and eke thi sustres I defye,
For I wil go to Hym that me hath wrought,
To whom I pray and hath besowght
My synnes al that he wil rele; (ll.115-118)

The Prisoner gets a long speech that takes up the second half of the poem that includes a list of common Christian *exempla* to which Fortune never responds. The concentration of evidence in one voice alludes to the sermon model, which suits the poem's concluding prayer to the Virgin Mary.

In contrast, Chaucer's "Fortune" allows the character of Fortune more voice, and follows a more logic-based disputation structure. Near the end of his opening speech, the Pleyntif says,

O Socrates, thou stidfast champioun,
She never mighte be thy tormentour;
Thou never dreddest hir oppressioun,
Ne in hir chere founde thou no savour.
Thou knewe wel the deceit of hir colour (ll.17-21)

The reference to Socrates as opposed to the Fates sets up a more *auctoritas*-based argument that follows the disputation model. Chaucer's verse argument includes more exchange between the speakers, and uses direct quotations as well as references to common 'lore'.²⁶² The conclusion of the poem is not perfectly clear, as it is in the Prisoner's case.²⁶³ Although Fortune gets the last words in the poem and makes a direct

²⁶² See for example lines 14, 23, 29-32, 45-48.

²⁶³ Wong concentrates on the Boethian influence in the poem, both thematically and formally, and argues

statement of her position, her message is not as straightforward as it initially appears. All of these features are components of the disputation format, and they are supplemented by some of the presentation features in the manuscripts. In particular, the consistent use of labeling each speech with headings such as “Le Pleintif countre Fortune” (I) and “La respounse de Fortune au Pleintif” (II). The use of disputational terms such as the French version of ‘contra’ and ‘respondit’ highlights the disputational nature of the exchanges.²⁶⁴

The conclusion of Chaucer’s “Fortune” presents two endings, and the manuscripts vary on the use of the final envoy. London, British Library Lansdowne MS 699 leaves it out completely, while Fairfax 16, Bodley 638, and Harley 2251 record shortened versions.²⁶⁵ When this envoy stanza is present, the concluding lesson of the poem becomes even less clear. Fortune’s final speech ends:

Lo, th' execucion of the majestee
 That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,
 That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,
 Ye blinde bestes ful of lewednesse.
 The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,
 This world hath ever resteles travayle;
 Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse.
 In general, this reule may nat fayle. (ll.65-72)

that the Pleyntif/Chaucer finally admits that Fortune is inescapable (93-98). The ambiguity in this reading is in the identity of the Pleyntif, and when-if there is a switch in who this voice is understood to be. First the Pleyntif seems to be a standard complainer rejecting Fortune, but by the end becomes a specific individual (Chaucer). In another reading, Patch suggests that the poem is both “a pat on the shoulder and a tap on the back” (381) when it comes to Christian acceptance of both trials in life and the recognition of a benevolent deity.

²⁶⁴ There is some variation among the manuscripts with the exact phrasing of the speaker headings, but labels in some form are consistently present.

²⁶⁵ Lansdowne 699 appears to replace the envoy for *Fortune* with “Truth”. After the text of *Fortune*, there is a heading “La bon conseil de le Auctor” (82v). After the text of “Truth”, the explicit reads “Ex(plicit) optim(us) tractatus de Fortuna” (82v). Fairfax 16 and Bodley 638 have a six-line version, omitting line 76, and Harley 2251 has a five-line version, omitting lines 75-76. All three shortened versions of the envoy leave out the line mentioning Fortune’s request and numbers in the audience. This variation makes Fortune seem a little more imperious, in keeping with the characterization of the conclusion in the main body of the poem.

Fortune gets a further last word in an envoy stanza in which she asks her audience to help the Pleyntif towards a better life:²⁶⁶

Princes, I prey you of your gentillesse
 Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne,
 And I shal quyte you your businesse
 At my requeste, as three of you or tweyne,
 And but you list releve him of his peyne,
 Preyeth his beste frend of his noblesse
 That to som beter estat he may atteyne. (ll.73-78)

Without this seemingly benevolent request by Fortune, Fortune gets the last word in the argument and shows no signs of sympathy.²⁶⁷

The manuscripts preserving Chaucer's "Fortune" consistently preserve titles and marginal speaker cues to indicate who speaks when. This consistency is of interest because, although there are no direct speaker cues in the text, changes are discernible from the content of the speeches.²⁶⁸ In Harley 2251, the poem is titled as "le plyntef contre fortune", stanzas are marked with a red paraphs, and changes in speaker are shown with marginal notes indicating who is speaking and who is listening. In Lansdowne 699, the poem's title is noted in the table of contents at the beginning of the codex as well as in the incipit on the page preceding the start of the poem (f. 1r and 80v). In the table of contents the poem is labeled "De Ffortuna: {text blacked out}", and the incipit reads "Incipit queda(m) disputacio inter *conquerelatore(m)* & fortunam". The poem with which

²⁶⁶ Rudd reads the poem as concentrating on the idea of friendship, and argues that the ending of the poem is ambiguous due to the irony of Fortune asking for help on the Pleyntif's behalf (9). Bertolet also notes the importance of friendship in the poem, and he argues that it derives from the *artes dictamines* as a technique to secure an audience's goodwill (67-68).

²⁶⁷ Morse argues that although Fortune gets the last word, her word is wrong, and therefore a discerning reader of the poem realizes that the Pleyntif actually wins the argument (15).

²⁶⁸ The change in speaker is particularly notable from the beginnings of the various speeches. The refrains used are not consistently used by a single speaker. The refrains in lines 1-48, "For fynally, Fortune, I thee defye" and "And eek thou hast thy beste frend alive", are consistently used by the Prisoner and Fortune respectively. The third refrain "In general, this reule may nat fayle" is used by both speakers (see lines 56, 64, and 72).

the page begins seems to have once had a title as well, but the top margin including the title was at some point almost entirely trimmed off (81r). Both of these manuscripts also contain other verse arguments: “The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” (both mss), “The Churl and the Bird” (Lansdowne 699) and “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune” (Harley 2251).

The titles of the poem used in the manuscripts emphasize the disputational nature of the poem, and also provide some framing for interpretation. Fairfax 16 and Bodley 638 offer further evidence of how the title and speaker labels can influence a reading of the verse argument. Like Lansdowne 699, Fairfax 16 presents two variations of the title, one in the table of contents and the other heading the poem itself. Fairfax 16’s table of contents refers to the poem as “The Arguyng between a man and the qween of ffortune” (f.2r), while the heading of the text presents the poem as “Balade vilage saun3 peynture. Par Chaucer”.²⁶⁹ The reference in the table of contents provides an interpretive lens for the verse argument because it labels many other poems in the manuscript as ‘complaint’ as opposed to ‘arguing’. This designation hints at an elevation of the argumentative elements above the complaint elements. The classification as a ballad in the title heading presents the poem in terms of formal style, while the reference in the table of contents presents the poem more in terms of its thematic content. The attribution to Chaucer is unique among the manuscripts so far discussed, and presents the possibility that the poet may be the first speaker in the poem since the first speech is not labeled as by the Pleyntiff (f.191r). Bodley 638 does not include such an authorial attribution.²⁷⁰ Like

²⁶⁹Rudd offers an idea on the reason behind the French title heading in some manuscripts. He suggests that it comes from the idea of masking in relation to false vs true friendship, a theme in the poem (8).

²⁷⁰ *TCC MS R.3.20*’s record of the poem likewise has no initial speaker label.

Fairfax 16, this version uses the French title and does not label the speaker of the first segment of the argument (f.208r). Without the name in the title heading, the initial anonymity of the first speaker presents the possibility that the speaker is a third party as opposed to one of the disputants, particularly because the title heading does not name the disputants as it does in Harley 2251 and Lansdowne 699. Even though Fairfax 16 names both speakers in the table of contents, the list is a later addition to the manuscript and there is no guarantee that a reader would remember the reference when coming upon the poem in the manuscript. The guidance or freedom with interpretation provided by a title and-or authorial attribution can affect the reading of the entire text, which is a particularly important factor in the case of a verse argument.

Headings and labels of sections of a poem can have a similar effect on interpretation of the text. In addition to “The Complaint of the Prisoner Against Fortune”, Additional 34360 has a second verse argument which more clearly designates the links between sections of the text. The manuscript’s record of Lydgate’s “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” has a title header added, as well as marginal commentary providing markers describing and explaining references made in the text. The text begins with the indented opening lines as a marker for never-added decoration, and like other texts in the manuscript, stanzas are marked with a red marginal paraph. Major names mentioned in the text as well as Latin references are underlined in red and rubricated. In the margins, in addition to section descriptions, speaker labels are noted. This poem also shows special attention to authorship and interpretation, because a new section is marked on 35r. The text is indented, and the explanation given in the margins, “The moralite of the hors the goos and the sheepe translated by Dan John Lydgate”. The poem then continues with

Lydgate's explication. The importance of the indentation as a marker is further shown at the end of Lydgate's poem, where there is no separation of the text. The transition between one text and another is marked by the indentation of a few lines as well as a light line drawn between the conclusion of one text and the opening of the next. A later hand added the marginal note at the beginning of the new text "lasamble des dames".

The effects of referring to title or genre within the manuscript are illustrated in other texts as well. The texts recorded in literary manuscripts tend to refer to their verse arguments as poetic narratives. Both the incipit and explicit in Harley 7333 refer to a 'complaint'. The text of "The Churl and the Bird" appearing in BL Harley MS 116 contains an explicit referring to the verse argument as "tractatus", and the record of the same poem in Lansdowne 699 has an explicit referring to the "fabula". This reference is repeated in the table of contents in Lansdowne 699, in which both the "Churl and the Bird" and the version of "The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep" are labeled as "fabula" (1r, entries 4 and 9). Chaucer's "Fortune" is not labeled in the table of contents beyond "De fortuna", but in the incipit it is called a "disputacio" and in the explicit it is "optim(us) tractatus" (ff. 80v and 83r).

Occasionally the text of the verse argument is adapted to fit the rest of the texts in the codex, a phenomenon that occurs most notably in the manuscripts not centered around literary *auctores*. For example, the version of "The Churl and the Bird" preserved in London, British Library Harley MS 2407 is in a codex dedicated mostly to texts regarding alchemy and science. The bird's story about a magic stone provides the thematic link, and the bird advises the churl on the foolishness of putting a price on

stones (stanzas 34-40, 43-49).²⁷¹ The version of the poem in Harley 2407 presents Lydgate's entire poem, with additions which enhance the relevance of the alchemical connections. The original version contains references to magical stones and birds, both of which are elements in traditional alchemy,²⁷² and eight added stanzas which add more detail to the alchemical references.²⁷³ The overall message of the poem, based on its introductory and concluding stanzas, focuses more on the value of literature and the wisdom of preferring happiness over material goods. Fredell posits that the scribe-adaptor of the Harley 2407 version used the added verses and the illustrations to adapt the moral of greed leading to loss for alchemists (438-444). This particular version of the verse argument shows how manuscript context can influence individual texts as they are being recorded, not just after the codex is complete.

Lydgate's other verse argument, "The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep", is also recorded in varied presentations that suit individual codices. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc.598, a moral-religious concentrated manuscript, contains only the disputation section of Lydgate's "Debate of the Horse, Goose and Sheep". This manuscript is one of only two to leave off the 'moralite' or 'envoy' section of the poem.²⁷⁴ Laud misc. 598 concentrates on works that deal with speech, including "twenty-one eight-line stanzas on speaking well of others" (Coxe and Hunt 426), prayers, and other

²⁷¹Textual references are from MacCracken's printed edition of Lydgate's 'minor' poetry (v.2).

²⁷²See Fredell's explanations of the alchemical hints and relevance in Lydgate's original poem (435-436).

²⁷³Fredell presents the Harley 2407 additions in the context of the original Lydgate poem (432-434). Bowers points out the possibility that these eight stanzas represent later additions to the poem (91), and alludes to the question of how these stanzas add new meaning to the poem (91). In the notes on these extra stanzas, Bowers mentions many exempla from a range of sources including the Bible, lapidaries, and mythology (91-94). The use of both textual and folklore *auctoritas* creates a greater impression of the bird setting up a disputative argument.

²⁷⁴According to MacCracken's critical edition of the poem, both Laud misc. 598 and Lambeth 306 end with the speech by the judges (see p.563 note 539). He lists 14 manuscripts and early printings. The DIMEV lists 17 (1075).

short poems dealing with Christian speaking.²⁷⁵ Lydgate's poem in its entirety contains elements of both speaking-argumentation and morality-preaching, so the omission of the moral section of the poem suggests that the manuscript has an emphasis on speech instead of Christian morality. The manuscript context of Laud misc. 598 also implies that Lydgate's verse argument is presented as one of the few secular examples in the codex. Without the sermon-based 'moralite' section with explicit reference in some manuscripts to the author's interpretation,²⁷⁶ the meaning of the disputation-based argument section becomes more open to the reader's understanding.

Text and Context Together

One feature that runs through the various categories of manuscripts is that most have some way of designating speakers in the verse arguments. The method may vary from manuscript to manuscript, or even poem to poem, but most verse arguments do feature some form of indicating speaker changes. BL Additional MS 36983 is slightly unusual in that it shows marginal speaker labels in *The Remors of Conscyence*, ff.275r-279v.²⁷⁷ The labels "homo" and "Deus" are presented in red ink in the margins. Although there are no speaker cues in the text of the poem, each speaker has a refrain that marks the end of all of his speeches. A second record of the poem appears in Cambridge, Trinity

²⁷⁵ The catalog generalizes the contents after the initial text detailing the deeds of English bishops as "English discourse, poems, John Lydgate etc. indeed follow". The translation from the Latin is my own. The original text reads, "Sequuntur, sermone Anglico, versus, Johannis Lydgate, etc. scilicet" (Coxe and Hunt 426). The use of 'sermone' which refers to conversation or discourse provides the particular reference to speech. In addition to the verse argument and the poem discussing speaking, the manuscript also contains a poem in which Christ addresses sinners (f.50), and prayers of different kinds (see Coxe and Hunt 427).

²⁷⁶ Manuscripts that contain a reference to the author in the transition to the morality section include Lansdowne 699 and BL Add. 34360.

²⁷⁷ The poem is also referred to as "The Complaint of God". See DIMEV 4312.

College MS R.3.21 ff.182-189. Instead of using marginal labels, this manuscript marks changes in speaker with a large initial (or space for one that was never filled). This record of the poem also includes two suggested authorial attributions. On f.189r, an attribution to Lydgate is visible but crossed out. Another hand added an attribution to “William Lichfeld, doctor of divinitis” on f.182r. After the end of the poem marked by “Explicit”, there is a note regarding Litchfield’s death (189r).²⁷⁸ The attribution to Litchfield is repeated in both tables of contents. The second table of contents reiterates Litchfield’s religious position as well as the date of his death, “The complaint between God & Man by W^m. Lycefied rector of Allhallows London: he dyed AD 1447” (f.ir).²⁷⁹

The ratio of narrative to dialogue is a stronger indicator of the use of speaker labels than the acknowledgement of a poem’s *auctor*. Among the verse arguments with known authors, Lydgate and Chaucer both produced multiple examples, and in the case of both authors, one of their verse arguments is more consistently labeled than the other.²⁸⁰ While Lydgate’s verse argument “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” is fairly consistent in the preservation of marginal speaker attribution, “The Churl and the Bird” is not.²⁸¹ While the “Debate of the Horse, Goose and Sheep” has more dialogue

²⁷⁸ The colophon continues, “q(u)d lychefeld doctor theologie/ here endith ye complaynte betuyxt god & man that was/ made by magister Willyam Lychefeld which was p(er)son of/ all hallows v* in London on whos soul god have mercy” *²⁷⁹ “Amen he deid in anno ~~1449~~ 1447 on ye/ xxiii of October and made in his time 3083/ sermons ; as apered by his own hand writinge & were found when he was dead”.

²⁷⁹ Given the similarity in text between the colophon of the poem and the attribution in the table of contents, one was likely copied from the other.

²⁸⁰ The two poems of Chaucer’s are “Fortune” and *The Parliament of Fowls*. *The Parliament of Fowls* is not discussed until Chapter 5, but is worth noting here that in a representative sample of 7 of the 14 extant manuscript copies, none have marginal section labels or speaker cues. The manuscripts examined are Bodley 638, Arch. Selden B. 24, Fairfax 16, Tanner 346, CUL Ff 1.6 (Findern); Cambridge, CUL Hh 4.12; and Harley 7333. For the full list of extant copies of the poem, see *DIMEV* 5373.

²⁸¹ Using a sample of six of the fifteen manuscripts containing “The Churl and the Bird” (*DIMEV* 4420), three have no marginal section (Harley 2407, Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Kk.1.6, and BL Cotton MS Caligula Aii) or speaker labels while the other three have some labeling (Lansdowne 699, Cambridge, Cambridge University Library Hh.4.12, Harley 116). In contrast, only one manuscript out of a sample of eight containing the “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” does not have labeling (Rawlinson

exchanges, “The Churl and the Bird” contains far more narrative. Both poems contain in-text speaker cues, but only the “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” uses section labels to separate the dialogue from narration.

A second reason why “The Churl and the Bird” is less consistent with speaker labels is that the poem contains multiple layers of argument and structure. There are two ways to consider the narrative components of the poem. First, the bird and the churl discuss the merits of releasing the bird or keeping her prisoner (stanzas 13-25). This section follows the disputation pattern of argument as each side presents its points and counterpoints in turn. The bird's key point, for which she offers several exempla and proverbs as support, is that “now I stonde in distresse/ I can-not syng, nor make no gladnesse” (ll.90-91). The churl counters with the idea that if she won't sing, then the bird will be eaten (ll.145-147), and the bird offers her reasons why eating her would be unprofitable (stanza 22), and makes her counter offer of wisdom in exchange for freedom which the churl accepts (stanzas 23-25).

The second argument is presented in the opening stanzas and explored throughout the entire poem. This version of the verse argument presentation is more complex than the first. The major claim has two parts, and the overall presentation follows the sermon format. First, there is the claim regarding the usefulness of poets and their fables, and second, there is the claim regarding the speaker's attempt to join the ranks of the laureates. The first claim is presented in the opening lines of the poem, that fables and similar stories are both useful (ll.1-2), and states as evidence the presence of such writings in scripture (ll.3-6). The second claim follows: “Poetes write wondirful

liknessis,/And undir covert kepte hem silf ful cloos;/.../And heere I cast unto my purpose” (ll.29-30, 33). The complexity arises from the subtlety of the weaknesses in the attempt to prove the second claim (acknowledged in the envoy), and the lack of a definite audience to whom the arguments are directed. The concluding stanzas direct the address of the poem to the speaker's master (presumed to be Chaucer),²⁸² yet the poet also speaks to “ye folk that shal this fable seen & rede” (ll.365). The possible distinctions in audience are important because they would require different emphases in the arguments. For example, another poet would be more easily convinced of the importance of poets, while an audience of generic readers might require more detailed persuasion.

The narrative portions of “The Churl and the Bird” become more important to the poem’s underlying structure with the lack of consistent speaker and section labels to define and separate the various voices. The emphasis on narrative story reinforces the sermonic nature of the text as a whole. The sermon format of argument presentation reflects both the bird's position in the disputation section and the speaker's position regarding his attempt at presenting a fable with a clear moral point.²⁸³ From the perspective of the poem's speaker, the entire narrative, including the short disputation, makes up a sermon on the issue of freedom from worldly concerns. The major evidence for this perspective is in the narrative enacted by the churl and the bird. The second round of dialogue between the churl and the bird confirms such a reading, as the churl fails to properly understand the bird's wisdom regarding freedom from worrying about past and

²⁸² Schirmer 37. He further discusses Chaucer’s influence on Lydgate pp.70-73.

²⁸³ Evidence of Lydgate’s sources for this text alludes to links to the verse argument tradition, the sermonic tradition, as well as folk *exempla*. Both Cartlidge and Wolfgang argue that Lydgate’s sources for the poem included a verse argument *Donnei des Amants* and *Les Trois Savoirs*, a version of the bird fable. Wolfgang further points out that, although not Lydgate’s likely direct source, the narrative of the story ultimately may derive from Petrus Alphonsi’s *Disciplina Clericalis* (19). Together these three sources present direct links to the sermon tradition, the folk tradition, and the verse argument tradition.

future. The third piece of wisdom regarding the present is likewise forgotten by the churl as he fails to exercise his freedom of thought and think for himself when tested by the bird. This section of the narrative presents both advice on what to do (the bird's initial lecture and subsequent scolding), and the consequences of failing to do it (the churl's unhappiness during and after the bird's test/taunt). Without marginalia to distract and/or inform, the reader of the poem must rely on the narrative as the unifying element of the text in respect to the moral of the sermon.

As a group, the manuscripts that appear as miscellaneous collections tend to contain works that function as *exempla* such as “The Churl and the Bird”. The miscellanies also tend to feature more narrative verse arguments, such as Lydgate's “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” or “The Churl and the Bird”. Included in this category are BL Harley MS 2407, BL Additional MS 36983, Oxford Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 754, Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson c48, Oxford Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson c813, Oxford Bodleian Library MS Laud misc.598, and BL Harley MS 2253. Very few of these manuscripts contain tables of contents, and they frequently do not use titles at the beginning of most new texts. The exceptions to these generalities are BL Additional MS 36983, which does have a table of contents, and multiple texts that do have titles presented before they begin.²⁸⁴ The table of contents is a later addition to the manuscript, dated October 7, 1876 by F. J. Furnivall, while much of the codex itself dates to the later fourteenth century. This kind of later addition is useful in tracing potential changes in perception of the verse argument based on how it is titled. The verse argument

²⁸⁴A title might be present as a heading or in an incipit. Such titles include “Here begynneth þe meditation of þe pascion of crist & of þe lamentation of oure lady Saint Mary þat sche made for her son when sche se hym torment among þe Iewis” (118r), and “Hic Incipit Gubernacio hominis” (f. 298). The Latin title translates as “Here begins the governance of mankind”. The translation is my own.

in Additional 36983 is “The Disputation between God and Man”, so labeled by Furnivall in the table of contents. Above the text itself, there is no title, although the opening is designated by a decorated red initial (f.275R b). The text concludes with the colophon, “Explicit disputatio inter deu(m) et homine(m)” (f.285V a). Together with the later title reference, the conclusion of the verse argument suggests that the understanding of the type of poem did not change much between the time verse argument was recorded and Furnivall's notation a few centuries later.

The Religious-Moral and Courtly History-Romance Manuscripts

The manuscripts concentrating on religious and moral texts tend to use more serious or academic labels, although this pattern is likely related to the nature of the poems chosen for inclusion in such codices. For example, the text of “Als I lay” recorded in BL Royal MS 18 A X is called a “disputacio” in the explicit, and the verse argument between Mary and the Cross recorded in Additional 22283 is called a “disputac(i)o” in the explicit, and a “lamentacioun” in the incipit. Those poems which concentrate on more serious philosophical questions and themes are more likely to have a more formal title. For example, in Lansdowne 699, itself a codex concentrating on literary *auctores*, “Fortune” is called a 'disputacio' and “The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” is a 'disputatio' and 'disputation', while “The Churl and the Bird” is a 'fabula'. Cotton Caligula A II contains a later table of contents in which the fourth entry is recorded simply as “Another old poeme intituled the Chorle” (1r). This manuscript concentrates on more religious texts, and the lack of particular genre label may be due to the largely secular contents of the poem.

The evidence from the use or lack of marginal speaker cues suggests that verse arguments more likely to be included in a religious or moral manuscript are more likely to have in-text speaker designations. If speakers are marked, the manuscripts emphasizing literary *auctores* have more of a tendency to use speaker labels in the margins. In Harley 7333's "The Prisoner's Complaint Against Fortune", Harley 116's record of "The Churl and the Bird", and Lansdowne 699's versions of both "The Churl and the Bird" and "The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep", changes in speaker are noted by marginal labels. The manuscripts concentrating more on religious and moral texts are more likely to underline speaker names. In Royal MS 18 A X's version of "Als I Lay" speaker names are underlined in the text, while in BL Royal MS 12 E I's version of "Dialogue between Mary and Jesus on the Cross", the speaker's names are highlighted by rubrication. This manuscript is unusual in that the verse argument is also provided with a musical score for part of the text. The pre-set interpretations carried by features external to the text suggests an element of authority unique to religious themes that guides a reader through the text instead of allowing for more active questioning and analysis.

In comparison with the literary and the moral-religious manuscripts, the manuscripts that contain more texts dealing with courtly history or romance traditions are far less uniform, both in content and physical features. As physical objects, one is a roll (Addit. 23986), another is pieced together from three different sources (Addit. 33994), and a third is shaped irregularly, measuring roughly 39.5 x 14.5 cm (Addit. 27879). The only manuscript that appears as a rectangular codex is Harley 541 (21cm X 15 ½ cm).

Part of the reason for the range in physical shapes is the span of dates that the manuscripts cover, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries.²⁸⁵

Of all the manuscripts containing verse arguments, BL Additional MS 27879 is probably the most heavily and consistently annotated. It is also one of the latest, dating to the seventeenth century. This manuscript has the distinctive feature of having two tables of contents, one organized alphabetically by title, and the other organized by order of texts in the codex.²⁸⁶ These table of contents are of particular interest because they hint at different understandings of the two verse arguments in the manuscript. In the table of contents set up by order in the codex, certain titles are distinguished by either a star, being underlined, or rubricated. “The Nut Brown Maid” has all three, while the other verse argument, “Death and Liffe” is marked only by a faint star on either side of its title (see 267 r). In the second listing, “The Nut Brown Maid” is again distinguished, this time by underlining, while “Death and Liffe” is not highlighted. One possible reason for such differentiation is that many of the other texts in the codex deal with romance or ballads, and “The Nut Brown Maid” fits into these themes more directly than “Death and Liffe” which is more of a didactic-allegorical dream poem after the fashion of *Pearl* or Chaucer's *House of Fame*.²⁸⁷ Both verse arguments are titled, both in the text and the table of contents, and in none of these cases is a generic term used to identify the type of

²⁸⁵ Add. 23986 is late thirteenth century, Add. 33994 has texts ranging from the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries, and Additional 27879 is from the seventeenth century. See ‘Explore the British Library’ for further details. Harley 541 contains texts dating from the fifteenth century through the early seventeenth. See British Museum, vol.1, p.346.

²⁸⁶ Both the amount of annotation and the amount classification material (the table of contents) are largely the result of Thomas Percy’s work with the manuscript in the mid-late eighteenth century, with additions by later scholars. See *Explore the British Library*, “Details: Add MS 27879”.

²⁸⁷ At the bottom of f. 267v, there is a comment added that is now mostly too faint to read. What is legible suggests that the commentator may have been explaining the system of underlining and starring, since the phrase “____ a black line” notes one of the several indicators used to draw attention to a given title.

poem. In both the first table of contents and the title heading the actual poem, “Death and Liffe” is referred to as having two sections.²⁸⁸ In the other table of contents, the poem is called simply “Death & Liffe” (f.268Ra). In the case of the later verse argument, it is in all three cases referred to simply as “The Nut Brown Maid”.²⁸⁹ The first table of contents is titled, “A List of Ballads” which is the only generic label provided, and in this case used to refer to a wide range of poems.

BL Additional MS 27879 (also known as the Percy manuscript) illustrates the influence that marginal commentary might have on a reader coming across one of its poems. The codex was named for Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, who owned it, annotated it, and used this collection of texts and notes to prepare his anthology *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*.²⁹⁰ The first title of contents is dated during Percy's lifetime, December 20, 1757 (f. 266r), and provides some explanation for the amount of vocabulary help provided in the margins, since the annotator was working two hundred years after the initial composition of many of the texts. This lag in time also helps explain the generic title 'ballads' given to the collection. Of the two verse arguments, “Death and Liffe” is the more heavily annotated, and many of the notes concern clarifications of vocabulary or phrases in the text which may be unclear. Many of the other pieces in the codex are annotated in this manner, and as such the verse argument does not stand out. For the

²⁸⁸In the table of contents, the title is “Death & Life: in 2 parts”, while the heading of the actual poem reads “Death & Liffe: 2 fitts” (191r).

²⁸⁹The spellings of the three names varies slightly. In the first table of contents the poem is “The Nut Browne Mayd”, in the second table of contents “Nut brown Maid” (f.268Rc) and in the header to the text, “The Nutt browne mayd” (209r).

²⁹⁰ When published, the codex included a dedicatory letter signed by Percy and a preface. In the Preface, there is a description of the process of working with the manuscripts and some discussion of the editor's (Percy's) intentions (v-x). Although the poems themselves were derived from Add. 27879, other manuscripts were also consulted (vii). The preface also acknowledges the potential difficulty of the archaic language in the poems, and points to the inclusion of expository essays included with each section (vi).

second verse argument, there are virtually no annotations in the margins of the poem itself, an unusual case for the codex as a whole, but there is one note near the title header and a second towards the conclusion which provide some interesting interpretive possibilities. The first note, in the right margin of f.209r, calls the version of the poem an “imperfect and mutilated copy” and comments that there are “50 lines left out”. This comment is in a different hand and ink than most of the commentary in the margins of other texts, suggesting that it is of later date. The same hand also makes the second notation towards the end of the poem (210r). In this note, the commentator observes that “From the chiding wordes of this part <...> it should seem q^t the author was a woman”. The later notes present concerns over *auctoritas* that suggests the interpretation of the poem can be based on authorial attributes. The initial note presents a prejudice that the text will be of lesser quality. Taken together, the first note might predispose a reader towards thinking that the lack of integrity noted at the beginning of the text might be connected to the author’s gender as noted towards the conclusion.

In spite of its unassuming appearance in comparison to other history-romance manuscripts, BL Harley MS 541 has some unique qualities that put its verse argument in perspective. Harley 541 contains the unique version of “The Debate of Nurture and Kynd”.²⁹¹ Although the poem is not perfectly preserved, most of the argument survives (f.212v-213r). Conlee suggests that only a few verses are missing, and those likely cover the context in which the argument happens (p.217, n.1). In the manuscript, there is no title or incipit (likely the result of the textual corruption noted by Conlee), and there are no speaker labels in the margins. There is little marginalia for this poem in general, with

²⁹¹According to DIMEV 1630.

the exception of a few scribbles and pen trials. There are marginal markers to indicate stanza divisions, and there is an 'explicit' as well. The explicit is interesting because of the note which surrounds it. Whether or not it refers to the verse argument or the text which follows, a version of "Aristotle's ABC", is ambiguous. The comment reads,

plesyths yt you Explicit
to understand how myche ys sayd to for *a*
other for as to bind (213 r).²⁹²

There are two other types of argument texts within the manuscript which help create different interpretive contexts for the verse argument. In addition to the verse argument, Harley 541 contains several texts relating to the accomplishments and achievements of people of varying degrees of historical fame. The codex also includes another dialogue, and an argument presented in a disputation-like style. The dialogue is "The dialogue between the Squire, Proteus, Amphitrite, and Thamesis". It is most likely a dramatic presentation, given that the text has its own title page, and some stage directions both before and after the argument dialogue.²⁹³ The title page (138r) presents only the title, although there are some additional scribbles and notes visible. The text begins on the following leaf, 139r. Characters are named and labeled clearly in the margins as would be the case in a script. The directions at the top of the page direct the participants, "After y^e Hymne song. Of Neptune's empyre & et" (139r).²⁹⁴ The second piece of stage direction regards a closing song, and includes some of the text. The directions read, "The songe at y^e ending." The lyrics then follow, although what may have been a second verse

²⁹²This representation of the explicit and surrounding note is only meant to illustrate the set-up, and not the actual scripts of either.

²⁹³The catalog entry for the manuscript suggests that the dialogue "seems part of a mask for the entertainment of Qn. Elizabeth" (British Museum, v.1, p.346).

²⁹⁴The second half of the directions are in a different hand, and the 't' in the final abbreviation is uncrossed.

is crossed out (f. 145r). The pages which contain the dialogue are clearly lined to present clarity of the text, and the copyist seems to have been very careful to stay within the lines provided. The argument contains the Squire's claim that Proteus has been unfair in a deal made with the prince whom the Squire serves. The terms were that if the Squire can convince Proteus that there is a power stronger than Proteus' adamantine iron (likely a metaphor for military strength, as there are also references to 'arms'), then Proteus has to give back the freedom of the prince and his seven knights who remained imprisoned in the rock as hostages, as well as place the rock itself where commanded. The Squire makes his argument to Proteus and the two observing sea goddesses that Cynthia's "adamant of Hartes" is in fact stronger than iron, and Proteus admits defeat.

The second argument text is more formal and theological in nature. It too has its own title page (121r), presenting "That there is a Day: *the* Externall Sacrifice of the New Testament called the masse...".²⁹⁵ The text presents a series of points which follow a pattern: "I prove", "maior", "minor", and "conclusion". This organization suggests a formal argument, in this case "defended, against a Booke of Errors" (British Museum, v.1, p.346). Because many of the other texts which make up the codex do not have title pages, both this text and the dramatic argument that follows stand out.²⁹⁶ Both of these texts precede the verse argument 'Nurture and Kynd', and so by the time a reader of Harley 541 got to the poem, he-she could have already encountered both the drama and the disputative argument. The verse argument contains elements of both a drama and an

²⁹⁵The description of the following argument continues, but I have left the title at this point as the purpose here is only to illustrate the topic at hand.

²⁹⁶ The codex is formed by a series of quartos bound together (British Museum, v. 1, 346). The title pages that accompany the longer disputation and drama texts can be attributed to their taking up their own booklets.

academic argument. There is action involved in the 'resolution' of the argument (the dramatic factor), and the argument takes place between two students (the academic factor). If a reader had one or the other of the other two arguments in mind, it could influence their perspective of the verse argument. The interpretation of this verse argument is not clear, as the narrator presents a perspective different than the conclusion of the narrative describing the argument. As such, if the reader of the poem were under the influence of either a dramatic or more academic mode, then she-he might be influenced to lean towards the corresponding viewpoint within the verse argument.

Perhaps even more than Harley 541, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61 presents a series of texts that illustrate how the overall contents of a codex might influence the reading of a single item within. Ashmole 61 contains romances, lays, hymns, and some instructional works. Like many of its history- and romance- themed counterparts, this codex is physically shaped differently than the common rectangle of many other medieval manuscripts. Much like the Percy manuscript, Ashmole 61 is oblong, measuring roughly 42x14 cm. Another slightly unusual feature of the codex is that most texts are divided not by titles, incipits, and-or explicits, but by drawings of fish and occasionally flowers. Many texts also conclude with the scribe's signature "Amen quod Rate".²⁹⁷ Along with a few lines of verse, there is a partial table of contents preserved on what used to be a flyleaf of the codex (f. iiB). Both the poetry and the list of contents on this leaf are problematic, since the 30 lines are "spoiled" and the list of contents faded and torn.²⁹⁸ Overall, the codex appears to be the work of a single scribe for

²⁹⁷This signature appears with several slight variations. 'Quod' is sometimes abbreviated in standard ways, and the name 'Rate' is spelled with some minor variations.

²⁹⁸The catalog entry presents this judgment on the opening of the text on the flyleaf (Black and Macray 106). Shuffelton points to an explanation for the incomplete verses (6-7, esp. note 30). He suggests that

personal use.²⁹⁹ Had the codex been professionally created, it likely would not have included repeated mention of the scribe himself, and the hand in which it is written, although clear, is “coarse”.³⁰⁰

This manuscript contains one verse argument, and it fits well with the codex's emphasis on instruction with some entertainment included. Ashmole 61 preserves the unique record of “The Debate of the Carpenter's Tools”. Shuffelton notes that this poem contains information regarding medieval tools that is valuable to scholars, in addition to using an usual poetic style (456).³⁰¹ Within the manuscript, the verse argument is not titled, which is not unusual for Ashmole 61, nor is there much space between texts. The beginning of a new poem is marked by the slightly ornamented initial letter to the poem, which begins with the argument right away (23r). Also consistent with the manuscript, the poem marks stanzas with brackets that illustrate the rhyme scheme. Again, as with the majority of the texts, there is very little marginalia of any sort. The conclusion of the poem is likewise observed in the same way as the rest of the texts in the codex. The concluding signature is present, although there is no drawing (26r). The lack of an illustration is not unique in the codex, but it is rare.

The possible sympathy for the carpenter's wife in the conclusion of the poem is another reason why this particular verse argument merits attention. In the context of the

Rate caught himself starting to recopy the first text in the manuscript, and cut the bifolium in half in order to reuse it for the table of contents.

²⁹⁹ Shuffelton reviews some scholarly discussion regarding the possible use of this manuscript and how the shape of the codex might offer some ideas (pp.1-2, 14-16). Shuffelton also notes that the codex is decidedly “popular”, and defines the term as meaning “the texts here could be understood and appreciated by nearly everyone in late medieval England” (16).

³⁰⁰ The ‘coarse’ reference is from Black and Macray (106).

³⁰¹ Shuffelton argues that as a ‘debate’ the poem is unusual because the speakers are arguing over a third party’s utility as opposed to their own, the humble tone matches that humility of the subject and the character of the participants, and that while there is no winner to the argument, there is definitely a loser (the carpenter).

codex in which it is recorded, there are several texts which consider the Virgin Mary. One lamentation in Mary's voice presents an interesting case in that it is recorded only in manuscripts that contain verse arguments.³⁰² In the Ashmole version, the poem is given the unusual distinction (for the manuscript) of a title (f.106r). The same page also contains some unusual illustration. Instead of the expected concluding image of a fish and flower, there is a coat of arms drawn on the page. Next to the coat of arms is the attributed title of the poem which follows “lame(n)tac(i)o be(ati) m(aria)e”. In addition to the *auctoritas* of a title, Mary as a speaker has her own undisputed authority. Together these two features present the possibility for an authoritative female speaking voice, and retroactively suggest that other female voices within the manuscript, including the previously ambiguous carpenter’s wife, have some authoritative value of their own.

In addition to Ashmole 61, “Lamentacio beati Mariae” is recorded in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson c.86.³⁰³ The manuscript overall focuses on texts with religious themes and concerns. In addition to the Marian lament, the codex also contains a complaint of God to man (“Thys is goddis avne compleynte”), and Lydgate's “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep”. The version of Lydgate's verse argument is of interest in this manuscript as it is one of the only records of the poem which does not use marginal speaker labels or section labels. Even the title is abbreviated as “The horse goos & sheepe,” with a different hand adding “From Lidgate Monke of St Edm(ond) Bury” (91v). The 'moralite' of the poem is not labeled as it is in other versions of the text, and the explicit is similarly generic to the title, “Explicit a morall tale of the horse the goose

³⁰² *DIMEV* 2442. This poem is recorded twice in the form in which it appears in Ashmole 61. The other record of this version is Rawlinson c.86. For records of this second version see *DIMEV* 4148.

³⁰³ Shuffelton points out that the two manuscripts share four texts total (p.15, note 42).

& the shepe”. Another hand added “written by John Lydgate”. While the *auctor* is acknowledged as he is in most of the other manuscripts, the lack of speaker designations or section labels makes the Rawlinson c86 version stand out. All of the other manuscripts examined have some kind type of speaker and-or section labels.³⁰⁴ More than one manuscript lacks a title or an explicit,³⁰⁵ so although it may be a rare occurrence with this poem, missing other elements is not unique. In Rawlinson 86’s version of Lydgate’s verse argument, the reliance exclusively on in-text speaker cues reliance on the reader’s powers of perception in keeping track of the progression of the argument. The assumption of *auctoritas*, both of the author and the speakers in the poem, illustrated by this copy matches that implied by the Marian text.

Although “Lamentacio beati Mariae” is not explicitly a dialogue, when considered in the context of some of the other poems in Ashmole 61, the poem presents part of a discussion throughout the codex regarding mercy and the intervention of the Virgin Mary. A second emphasis present in the series of texts is on women and family in general.³⁰⁶ For example, one text early in the manuscript illustrates “How the Good Wife Taught Her Daughter”,³⁰⁷ which could provide some interpretive possibilities for considering the carpenter’s wife in the verse argument. Another text, “The Jealous Wife,” tells the story of how thanks to a husband’s prayers and appeals to the Virgin Mary, a wife is saved from being condemned in Hell. This poem includes a section of verse argument

³⁰⁴ For this point, I am using a representative sample of 9 of the 12 manuscripts that contain “The Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” (see DIMEV 1075). The manuscripts not included are London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 306, San Marino, CA, Henry Huntington Library HM 144 [*olim* Huth 7], and Leiden, Leiden University Library Vossius Germ. Gall. Q.9.

³⁰⁵ Manuscripts with versions lacking a title include Rawlinson c.48 and CUL Hh 4.12; those missing an explicit or colophon include Harley 2251 and BL Add. 34360.

³⁰⁶ Shuffelton discusses a series of themes that he argues are present in the codex (11-14) and makes some observations regarding the sequencing of the texts (8).

³⁰⁷ The titles used here are those from Shuffelton’s edition.

in which Mary argues with the devil over whether or not the wife who killed her children and herself ought to be shown mercy. For a final example, within “The King and His Four Daughters”, the allegorical daughters, Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace, disagree over whether a prisoner ought to be shown mercy until the king’s son Wisdom intervenes. Shuffelton notes that the argument in this poem relates to both the verse argument section in “The Jealous Wife” and “The Debate of the Carpenter’s Tools” (503).³⁰⁸ The situation of the carpenter’s wife is clearly different from that of the Good Wife, the Jealous Wife, or the king’s prisoner, but the ideas of family obligation and mercy from one text could easily influence the readings of the same themes in another.

Conclusion

Because of the ambiguity inherent in the verse argument in a variety of respects, the form shows its adaptability to many contexts, physical and otherwise. The manuscript contexts in particular provides evidence of how this characteristic ambiguity can be influenced in a variety of ways through the physical presentation of the text, including comparison with other works within the same manuscript. The interpretive context derived from the relationship of the verse argument to the other texts and to the manuscript as a whole provides a more versatile kind of *auctoritas* than the traditional reliance upon name and style recognition. Just as *auctoritas* based on a recognized structure or particular author serves to provide an established context for a new work, the

³⁰⁸ Shuffelton also points to a link to the body-soul debate tradition in the scene between Mary and devils (p.487 n.289).

relationships between texts in a manuscript, intentional or not, also provide an interpretive framework.

The physical context of the verse arguments shows that the verse argument form could be adapted to pair with many themes, topics, styles, and genres. With the potential use of two different structures, as well as the possibility for combination with other forms and genres, the verse argument form has the flexibility to connect with a wide variety of other texts on an equal level. The manuscripts also reveal how the verse arguments could be interpreted depending on the context in which they were placed. The physical settings of the verse arguments also show how other forms of dialogue and argument, such as the drama or theological tract, were separate genres that share some of the formal features used by the verse argument. Overlap of features such as the use of multiple voices or the use of *auctoritas* and interpretation to support a point provides the possibility for the use of verse argument within another kind of text such as a narrative or a drama.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The Final Results

The question at the beginning of this project was: what are the definitive characteristics of the poem type most commonly known as 'debate poem'? This question arises from the lack of a formal definition that is broad enough to cover the range of themes and styles manifested in the verse arguments. One of the main reasons the verse argument form is so difficult to define is its flexibility. Formal features of the verse argument may be used in other genres, including drama, and narrative or lyric poetry; alternatively, other genres might include an argument scene. Other forms of poetry, including dream visions and romance, can include sections of argument, but are not themselves verse arguments. Conversely, a verse argument can borrow features from (among other forms) a love complaint, a didactic dialog, or narrative drama.

In order to find a set of definitive features that is broad and flexible enough to embrace the range of poems that seem to fall into the verse argument category, I used three different contextual frames: the academic commentary and disputation traditions; the mystery drama, sermon, and folk traditions; and the manuscript traditions. The most telling common element shared by all three of these different contextual situations is that they all invoke *auctoritas* in order to support an argument. Along with the requirement of *auctoritas*, other features common to verse argument poems include the use of at least two perspectives (often in different voices), an element of persuasion or disagreement, and the interpretation of evidence.

The solution that I propose to the problem of identifying fundamental components of the verse argument is that there are two possible models that the argument can follow: the commentary-disputation model and the sermon model. Although frequently one model dominates the poem, many verse arguments contain elements of both. As the examples of *The Debate between Mercy and Righteousness* and Henryson's "The Ressoning betuix Aige and Yowth" will demonstrate, the flexibility of the verse arguments often results in a poem combining elements from both models, but that mostly exemplifies the commentary-disputation model or the sermon model. Similarly, just as a verse argument poem rarely follows one model or form exclusively, other genres can include elements of the verse argument. A verse argument can be a stand-alone poem, but can also be a feature within a larger work. I will use Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* to illustrate the complexities of the synthesis of the two verse argument models along with other forms and genres.

Some Final Clarifications, Definitions, and Examples

The commentary-disputation tradition is marked by speakers who use other *auctores* to support interpretations of authoritative (often academic or Biblical) evidence, the combination of formal logical practices in literary applications (illustrated in the poems by the response-new claim format), and an ambiguity of authority among the speakers in the verse argument, the poet, and the reader (often represented as a master-student relationship). The sermon model can be recognized through the presence of repetition of evidence and claims (usually by the same speaker), a focus on folk authority or other popular tropes (such as humor), a lack of questioning of the sources of evidence,

the concentration of authority in one voice, and preemptive responses to assumed objections. The sermon model often contains elements similar to commentary-disputation, but establishes itself as a sermon through a greater reliance on conventional authority and evidence, and-or through the frame.¹ Some common tropes that are not exclusive to verse argument are the use of frame, and the intrusion of narrative action and-or description.

The Debate between Mercy and Righteousness illustrates many of the principles of a verse argument following the commentary-disputation model. This verse argument shows how elements of both the sermon and commentary-disputation can be present, while still comprising an argument clearly based on one model overall. After a conventional *chanson d'aventure* opening (in which the narrator goes out for a pleasant walk and overhears a conversation), the argument ensues. There is no closure to the frame once the argument concludes, and the narrator instead recites a prayer repeating Mercy's final message. Mercy says, "Þou muste suffre boþe riȝt and wrong/ If þou þi synne wolt forsake;/ In good praiers þou muste wake,/ And nevere wilne to do a-myse/.../ Merci schal passe riȝtwisnes" (ll. 171-176).² The narrator follows with, "Almiȝti God, now make us stable,/ And ȝeve us grace weel to spede,/ And to us all bee merciabe/.../And helpe us, ladi, att oure moost nede,/ To þi sone oure soulis þou wys,/ And with his mercy fulli us fede,/ There mercy passiȝ riȝtwijsnes" (ll.185-192). Although the opening frame and the conclusion are suggestive of a possible sermon-based argument, the commentary-disputation form is used in the actual argument itself.

¹ The frame in a sermon-based argument presents an interpretive lens (narrator) and the conclusion shows no change, only acceptance of the narrator's original perspective

² Text comes from Conlee's edition, pp.200-209.

Although neither side directly quotes or alludes to academic, Biblical, or literary *auctoritas* consistently, the pattern of their argument follows the trajectory of the commentary-disputation model. The evidence that both speakers use comes from common religious understandings regarding God's wrath and Jesus' mercy. For example, Righteousness states, “Seie me' quod þe synner, 'þou foonued clerk./ Þou coudist nevere rede in no spel;/ I wrou3te wilfulli nevere good werk;/ What ri3t have y in heven to dwelle?/ I have deserved to go to helle” (ll.65-69). Mercy first answers Righteousness' claims, and then suggests his own: “Merci seide, 'þou canst no good./ God schewiþ þee kyndenes many foolde,/ For þee & mee he schedde his blood/.../Ði soule is his, y my3t be bolde,/ His mercy passiþ his ry3twisnes” (ll.73-75...79-80). The other exchanges in the argument follow a similar pattern. Righteousness makes his claim that he is a worthless sinner. Mercy first counters the worthlessness claim by pointing out that Jesus' crucifixion makes that notion moot, and then presents his own claim that Jesus prefers mercy over being righteous for those who can accept it. The commentary-disputation model is also invoked by the use of interpretive evidence from Biblical representations in answer to evidence and claims of the same kind. For example, in response to Righteousness' claim “What penaunce were y worþi to have?/ Þer may no man sette me to strong/ Þou3 y were quicke doluen on grave” (ll.146-148), Mercy responds, “As þou hast often herd sayen,/ What man is founde þat was lost,/ Wiþ him is Crist plesid & fayne./ What need had Crist to suffer payne/ But for to bieoure soulis to blis?” (ll.154-158). Mercy invokes the Biblical parable of the prodigal son and interprets it to prove his point.³

³ Conlee suggests the passage Luke 15:4-7 (p.208, n. 153-156).

Of the assorted student-teacher-interpreter relationships possible in a verse argument, the one that suggests ambiguity in *The Debate between Mercy and Righteousness* is that of the narrator to the reader. The relationship between the two characters is stable as that of instructor and student, as Righteousness admits defeat in the argument and Mercy tells him what he needs to do next. First Mercy tells his opponent, “Telle me þi liif heere al playn,/ Þat mercy may passe ri3twisnes” (158-160), and later, “Merci 3af him penaunce stronge,/ And seide, 'Man, wolt þou þis take?/ Þou muste suffre boþe ri3t and wrong,/ If þou þi sinne wolt forsake...”(ll.169-172)⁴ The narrator is the voice which presents an interpretive challenge to the reader. In the introductory frame, the narrator tells the reader, “I thou3te to wite what Þei wolde seie.” (ll. 4) However, the narrator eventually deviates from that role of reporting, and takes on a more omniscient role, telling the reader what happened to Righteousness after the argument with Mercy, “Þe synner took penaunce wiþ good entent,/ And lefte al his wickid synne;/.../In greet penaunce he putte him inne,/ And nevere aftir wilfulli dide mys;” (ll.175-176...181-182). After finishing with telling story outside what he initially promised, the narrator switches functions again, concluding with a general prayer, “Almi3ti God, now make us stable,/ And 3eve us grace weel to spede” (ll.185-186). The narrator picks up Mercy's refrain, suggesting that the narrator might have merged with the voice of Mercy: “Þere mercy passiþ ri3twiisnes” (ll.192).⁵ This use of the refrain creates a narrative discontinuity, since the narrator stated that he is a third party observer at the beginning of the poem. Although the prayer at the end of the verse argument is conventional, as is the extra narrative

⁴The assigned penance continues through lines 172-177.

⁵This same line is repeated from the omniscient narrative stanza at line 184, and mirrors Mercy's final line, “Merci schal passe ri3twisnes” (ll.176).

concluding the initial frame, the reader has to contend with a narrator whose function is unstable.

In contrast, Robert Henryson's "The Ressoning betuix Aige and Yowth" demonstrates an emphasis on the sermon model with a few elements of the commentary-disputation model. The poem opens with a frame establishing a conventional pastoral setting in which, "Movand allone in mornyng myld I mete/ A mirry man, that all of mirth cowth mene/.../I lukit futh a littil me before:/ I saw acativ on a club cumand" (ll.5-6...9-10).⁶ The narrator then observes the argument between the two men he sees. Both the appearances of the disputants and the initial quotation of their respective refrains, "O Ȝowth, be glaid in to thi flouris grene!" and "O Ȝowth, thi flouris fedis ferly sone!", reflect a strong basis in folk traditions. The refrains in particular illustrate the elements of repetition and conventional authority that most clearly define the sermon model.

Both the old man and the young man repeat their claims and evidence. The young man repeatedly names his appearance as evidence of his perspective of enjoying life. He claims, "'Waldin I am', quod he, 'and windir wycht,/ With bran as bair, and breist burly and braid" (ll.19-20), "In court to cramp clenely in my clething" (ll.35) and, "My cors is clene without corruptioun,/ My self is sound, but seiknes and but soir," (ll.50-51). The old man continuously refers to loss and grief. He claims, "Bot now that day is ourdrevin and done;/ Luk thow my laythly lycome gif I le;" (ll.30-31), "For thi crampyn thow sall bayth cruk and cowl;/.../Quhen thin manheid sall mynnis as the mone;/ Thow sall assay gif that my sang be sour;" (ll.42...46-47), and "This breif thow sall obey, sone, be thow bald;/ Thy stait, thi strenth, thocht it be stark and sterne,/ The feviris fell and eild sall gar the

⁶Textual references are from Fox's edition.

fald;” (ll.58-60). A second element of repetition in the old man's arguments is that he consistently addresses the young man, while the young man never clearly demonstrates engagement with his opponent. This element of the argument is particularly sermon-like as it suggests that only one speaker is presenting an argument, while the second speaker is presenting the most likely objections.

Throughout their argument, both the old and young man make allusions to folk traditions and to literature, but make no attempt to interpret either their own evidence or that of their opponent.⁷ The two characters overall are conventional, and their argument has many manifestations in literature (Fox 458).⁸ Youth's refrain echoes language and imagery from the Bible, as 'be glaid in' means 'rejoice' (n.8),⁹ and the old man's age has connections to the Psalmist (n27). There are scattered parallels to the *Parlement of Thre Ages* throughout, as both poems use similar conventional formulae. For example “with bran and bair” in Henryson’s poem (ll.20) suggests the similar phrase describing Youth “breist buryl and braid” in *Parlement of Thre Ages* (n20), and the description “als zung, als zaith as ze” (ll.29) parallels “zonge and zathe” (n.29). The tradition of 'five wittes' is mentioned (n.52, n.63), and the *Proverbs of Alfred* are alluded to in the phrase “The bevir hair” (ll.57, n.57). The lack of interpretation within the speakers’ arguments is clear from the narrator’s parting words, “Of the cedullis the suth quhen I had sene,/ On trewth, me thoct thai trevist in thair tone:/ “O zowth, be glaid into thi flouris grene!”/ “O zowth, thi flouris fedis ferlie sone!” (ll.69-73).

⁷Unless otherwise noted, these allusions and parallels come from Fox's commentary notes, pp.458-465.

⁸ Fox argues that this verse argument belongs to a “special genre of debate poems which have stanzas rhymed ababbcbc with alternating refrains, and which often have the form of a chanson d'aventure” (458).

⁹Fox lists several Biblical passages which illustrate the point, including Job 14:2, Isa. 28:1-4, 40: 6-8, and Psalm 103:15.

A sermon-modeled verse argument does not strictly require mere compliance, but can invite thoughtful contemplation of the argument so long as the verdict remains clear and unquestioned. The final stanza of the verse argument presents the return of the narrator as well as cements the sermon model of the poem. The narrator observes, “This galȝart grutchit and began to greif,/ And on his wayis wrethly he went but wene;/ This lene man luche na thing bot tuk his leif,/ And I abaid ondir the levis grene” (ll.65-68). Although the argument never reaches a verbal conclusion, the reactions of the two disputants suggests that Youth has conceded to Age's perspective. This sort of conclusion appears in the disputation-commentary model as well (“Als I Lay” for example), while the narrator's reaction that follows is more suggestive of a sermon: “Off the cedullis the suth quen I had sene,/ On trewth, me thocht thai trevist thair tone:/ 'O Ȝowth, be glaid in to thi flouris grene!/' 'O Ȝowth, thi flouris fedis ferlie sone!” (ll.69-72). Although the narrator perceives the argument as a disputation (the word 'trevist' has this meaning),¹⁰ he also appears to accept the lesson without question. Instead of questioning openly, requiring more investigation, or cowering in fear, he simply acknowledges what he has seen.

Neither the disputation-commentary model nor the sermon model must be a stand-alone structure. When the two models are interwoven or combined, one is generally elevated through its use by the winner of the argument as dictated by the participants, the narrative outcome, or convention. Another factor that can help define which model is used is the direct presence of a winner. Disputation-commentary based arguments frequently do not present a definite winner, while the sermon model usually suggests an

¹⁰ Fox explains the etymology and definition of “trevist”, citing the *OED* entry for “traverse, v” (p.465, n.70).

obvious victor. These features represent general trends and are by no means strictly observed. Poems that combine features from both models make this idea clear. Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* represents a text which presents multiple dialogues and examples of both argument models within the same poem. Other verse arguments, such as “Robene and Makyne” and “Jesus and the Masters of the Jews”, include features of both models within the same argument.

Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls* as a Debate on Debate

Through the lens of my proposed dual frameworks for verse argument, *The Parliament of Fowls* reads like a commentary on the commentary-disputation and sermon traditions of argumentation. This reading illustrates how a poem that is sometimes called a ‘debate’ benefits from my broader definition of the poetic form. My reading allows for the coexistence of multiple literary and other textual features that are all covered under the formal definition “verse argument”, as opposed to the patchwork of traditions required by many previous generic definitions.¹¹ Chaucer's poem opens in a manner that suggests a disputation-commentary argument to come. The dreamer-complainer's focus on books and commentary is evident from his pre-dream troubles. He states his belief in

¹¹ While Chaucer may have had in mind a patchwork combination of genres and styles, discussing them as such often results in a fragmented definition that presents the poem as lacking clarity or unity of style and theme. Some scholars consider more strictly literary forms while others consider argumentative forms derived from academic or legal practices. In the “Explanatory Notes” for *The Parliament of Fowls*, Muscantine considers several literary traditions in the poem. Although he does not explicitly look at ‘debate’ as a genre, he does note features of *demandes d’amours* and “parliament of birds” (994). Reed does explicitly discuss Chaucer’s poem in terms of a ‘debate poem’. He observes qualities of the *quodlibet* disputation (61), and the political parliament (88-94), as well as the *débat amoureux* (33). He also analyzes the complexities of theme, structure, and genre within the poem in detail (294-362). Skeat discusses the poem in terms of *auctores*. He suggests that the poem is divided into four sections, concentrating on Cicero, Dante, Boccaccio, and Alanus d’Insulis (Alan of Lille) respectively. (v.1, 67).

the *auctores* and commentary practices: “Of usage-what for lust and what for lore-/ On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde././Agon it happede me for to behold/ Upon a bok, was write with lettres olde,/ And theupon a certyne thing to lerne,/ The longe day ful faste I redde and yerne./ For out of olde felde, as men seyth,/ Cometh al this new corn from yer to yere,/ And out of olde bokes, in good fayth/ Cometh al this neewe science that men lere” (ll.15-25).¹² The appreciation of commentary is further enhanced when the speaker reveals that the book which inspired him is itself a commentary: “This bok of which I make mencion/ Entitled was al ther, as I shal telle:/ 'Tullyus of the Drem Scipioun” (ll.29-31).¹³

The first segment (of three) in the dream continues to set up anticipation for a dialogue which follows the disputation-commentary format. The first person in the dream that the narrator meets, Scipio, tells him that interpretation of a text is a good thing, and offers to present the narrator with his own: “Thow hast the so wel born/ In lokynge of myn olde bok totorn,/ Of which Macrobye roughete nat a lyte,/ That sumdel of thy labour wolde I quyte” (ll.109-112). Scipio presents the two gates, and tells the narrator, “It stondesth writen in thy face,/ Thyn errour, though thow telle it not to me;” (ll.155-156). Scipio is responding to the narrator, who had just expressed the thought, “Right as betwixen adamauntes two/ Of evene myght, a pece of yren set/ Ne hath no myght to meve to ne from-/ For what that oon may hale, that other let-/ Ferd I, that nyste whether was bet/ To entre or leve...” (ll.148-152). This scene suggests that the narrator is afraid of trying to form his own claims and arguments about the questions he had before falling

¹²Citations of Chaucer come from Benson's edition.

¹³Benson points out that the text of Cicero's work was preserved in the medieval period through a commentary by Macrobius (p.385 n.31).

asleep, and that Scipio is trying to let him know that it is good to take a stance and choose a side.

Between the narrator's passage through the gate and the beginning of the actual argument, the use of narrative is consistent with either a sermon or commentary-based argument. Following the second scene, the extended description of the temple and gardens of Cupid and Venus, the narrator makes a comment which suggests that instead of a commentary-based disputation, he will encounter a sermon based argument. He states: "As right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde,/ Devyseth Nature of aray and face" (ll. 316-317). By invoking the authority of Alan of Lille, who was known for his sermon guide and his *De Planctu Naturae* (among other texts), the narrator now sets up the possibility for a sermon. When Nature convenes the assembly, her first words leave little room for interpretation as might be expected of a sermonic argument. She says, "Ye knowe wek how, Seynt Valentynes day,/ By my statut and thorgh my governaunce,/ Ye come for to cheese-and fle youre wey-" (ll.386-387). But Nature soon amends her initial instruction to hint at the potential for a disputation rather than a sermon: "But natheles, in this condicioun/ Mot be the choys of everich that is heere,/ That she agre to his eleccioun" (ll.407-409).

The first round of argument regarding the formel's marriage is suggestive of a sermon as each of her three suitors makes the same argument in his own favor, indicating that the tradition of courtly romance will be presented in a sermon style argument. Each of the three tercels claims that he loves her the most and will serve her the best. The royal tercel argues, "And syn that non loveth hire so wel as I,/ Al be she nevere of love me behette,/ Thanne oughte she be myn thourgh hrie mercy,/ For other bond can I non on hire

knette./ Ne nevere for no wo ne shal I lette/ To serven hiee, how fer so that she wende” (ll.435-440). The second tercel claims, “And, but I bere me in hire servyse/ As wel as that my wit can me suffyse,/ From poynt in poynt, hyre honour for to save,/ Take she my lif and al the good I have!” (ll. 459-462). The third tercel asserts, “I seye not this by me, for I ne can/ Don no servyse that may my lady plese;/ But I dar seyn, I am hir trewest man/ As to my dom, and faynest wolde hire ese” (ll. 477-480). They each point to promises of fidelity and to their own suffering without the formel's love. The same claim is made three times, using the same tradition as evidence, and overall sets up the argument for reason over emotion as the basis of the formel's decision.

From the issues that the birds bring up, the problem of love according to feeling as opposed to reason takes the foreground, and the argument includes some commentary regarding class distinctions. The noble birds appear to support the idea of reason-based choice, while the lower classes support emotion-based choice. Once each group of birds has chosen their representative speaker, the first speaker, the tercelet, claims, “Ful hard were I to preve by resoun/ Who loveth best this gentil formel heere;/ For everych hath swich replicacioun/ That non by skilles may be brought adoun.” (ll.534-537). He further claims that the formel should base her choice on who is the most noble and worthy, and that she knows who that is (ll.548-553). The goose responds with, “I seye I rede hym, though he were my brother,/ But she wol love hym, lat hym love another!” (ll.566-567). The binary nature of the argument established by these initial statements of position reflects the complications in the models of argument that follow.

The actual exchanges that follow are structured as an argument of the disputation-commentary model, yet in content they are more reminiscent of the sermon model. The

‘sperhawk’ (sparrow-hawk) responds for the noble side, first answering the goose's claim, then adding one of his own. His rebuttal of the goose's claim that “My wit is sharp; I love no tarrying” (ll.565) counters, “Lo, here is a parfit resoun of a goos!'/ ...'Nevere mot she thee!'/ Lo, swich it is to have a tonge loos!” (ll.568-570). His own claim follows, “It lyth nat in his wit, ne in his wille,/ But soth is seyde, 'a fol can not be stille” (ll.573-574). The sparrow-hawk relies on an assumed interpretation of the goose (that she is foolish and talkative) suggestive of folk convention, and his quotation of a proverbial saying is likewise conventional, especially since he does not attribute it to a particular source. In keeping with the sermon model, the sparrow-hawk also tries to cut off potential objection from the goose by advising, “Han holde thy pes, yit were it bet for the/ Han holde thy pes than shewed thy nycete.” (ll.571-572). The sparrow-hawk’s responses show the beginning of an exploration of the flexibility of the verse argument form with the first of three combinations of theme and model of argument.

The second exchange also uses a combination of commentary and sermon models, but the speeches concentrate more on the initial question of reason versus feeling. The noble birds are represented by the turtle dove, and the commoners by the duck and goose. The turtle dove claims, “Nay, God forbede a lovere shulde change!” (ll.582), and supports the claim with ideas from courtly tradition, “Forsoth, I preyse nat the goeses red;/ 'For though she deyde, I wolde non other make;/ I wol ben hires, til that deth me take” (ll.586-588). The duck responds by rebutting the turtle dove, and the goose steps in with a new piece of evidence in support of the duck. The duck rejects the claims of the nobles by using a conventional saying, “Daunceth he murye that is myrtheles?” (ll.592). The goose presents the new evidence, “There been mo sterres, God wot, than a payre!”

(ll.595). The intervention by the goose turns the pattern of the argument more towards the sermon model as she adds another piece of folk wisdom that supports the claim of the duck instead of making a new claim in support of their side.

The final exchanges continue to build the confusion regarding which question and style of argument the birds are trying to explore. The tercelet rejects the claims of the duck and goose on that basis that, “Thy kynde is of so low a wrechednesse/ That what love is, thow canst nouter seen ne gesse.” (ll.601-601), and uses the comparison of the lower birds' mating habits with the folk-tradition of the owl as his evidence (ll.599-600). His attempt at using the disputation model is rebutted by the cuckoo, who responds, “I reche nat how longe that ye stryve./ Lat ech of hem be soleyn al here lyve!/ This is my red, syn they may nat acorde;/ This shorte lessoun nedeth nat recorde!” (ll.606-609). The reference to repetition in the cuckoo's response suggests that the tercelet is starting to preach a sermon, and one that is unnecessary. The final speech of the argument, given by the merlin in support of the nobles, shows that as a result of the confusion, the argument has degenerated into little more than a flyting: “Thow motherere of the heysoge on the braunche/ That broughte the forth, thow reufullest glotoun!/ Lyve thow soleyne, wormes corrupcioun,/ For no fors is of lak of thy nature!/ Go, lewed be thow whil the world may dure!” (ll.611-616).

Much like the combination and confusion of models during the arguments, the content of Nature's comments suggests the opposite model as the structure regarding the two questions. Nature's final speech provides an answer to the question of love based on reason versus emotion, but leaves open the problem of formel's mate. In doing so, she creates the impression that, in retrospect, all previous discussion of love versus reason

has been a sermon, while the problem of the formel's mate has been a disputation-commentary based argument. Nature's conclusion as to the usefulness of the exchanges is "And in effect yit be we nevere the neer" (ll.619). Her verdict on the question of the formel's mate does not change from her initial speech opening the dialogue: "That she hirsself shal han hir eleccioun" (ll.621). In respect to the question of the formel, the lack of change in Nature's notion regarding this question now suggests a sermon, since the argumentation has done nothing but provide a possible range of objections to the various options. Regarding reason versus emotion, she states, "If I were Resoun, thanne wolde I/ Conseyle yow the royal tercel take" (ll. 632-633). The hypothetical Reason provides a direct answer, while the formel gives an ambiguous answer in the tradition of feeling: "I axe respit for to advise me,/ And after that ti have my choyse al fre" (ll. 648-649). The narrator makes a point in noting her emotional state when the formel is speaking: "With dredful vois" (ll. 637), and Nature who characterizes herself as different from Reason, affirms the formel's decision not to decide: "'Now, syn it may non otherwise betyde'./ Quod Nature, 'heere is no more to seye'" (ll. 654-655).

The narrator's concluding interpretation of the variations and combinations of commentary-disputation and sermon-based arguments hints at the possibility that the methods of argument and interpretation he saw at work are of use to him. Upon being woken by the noise of the birds, he proclaims, "I wok, and othere bokes tok me to,/ To reede upon, and yit I rede alwey./ I hope, ywis, to rede so som day/ That I shal mete som thyng for to fare/ The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare" (ll. 695-699). What he has dreamed has given him hope to find an answer, but has not shown what or where exactly that answer might be. The narrator explored various combinations throughout the poem,

and expressed in the beginning that he was struggling to find the utility of the commentary tradition in particular at finding an answer. His conclusion provides an answer that there is hope in looking to and interpreting the *auctores*, but at the same time, he still has no solution for his particular conventional problem. The result of reading *The Parliament of Fowls* as a discussion on the disputation- commentary and sermon styles of argument is that, even for problems with a traditional ‘no answer’ solution,¹⁴ using argument as a basis for analysis can at least lead to a better understanding of the nature of the problem.

The *Auctoritas* of Manuscripts

Beyond the internal textual invocations of *auctoritas*, the interpretive and authoritative contexts suggested by the manuscript context offers a third set of features that helps further explore the verse argument. Two features in particular emerge: first, the verse argument is flexible in respect to interpretation,¹⁵ and second, *auctoritas* can be external to the poetic text. Using the authority of speaker cues, author attributions, and marginal comments, manuscripts offer clues as to how the poem was perceived, and how those perceptions changed over time. If the use of speaker designations external to the text of the poem are a marker of the importance that an annotator attached to the knowledge of who said what, the parallel arises that the two poems with the most consistent labeling of speakers in the margins are both by major *auctores*. Chaucer's

¹⁴ Poems that consider similar questions regarding love ending without a definitive answer include “The Thrush and the Nightingale”, “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”, “The Clerk and the Nightingale”, “The Merle and the Nightingale”, and “A Parliament of Birds”. Titles come from Conlee’s edition.

¹⁵ “Interpretation” here refers to how a verse argument can be interpreted, how a verse argument interprets sources, and/or how as a genre verse argument might interpreted.

“Fortune” and Lydgate's “Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep” are the only two verse arguments examined with consistent manuscript histories of marginal speaker labeling. Lydgate's poem contains in-text cues towards the beginnings of each speech. For example, the horse's initial speech is preceded by, “For his partie thus first the hors began” (ll.35), and the next speaker is introduced, “Yes', said the goos, 'for the I nyl not spare” (ll.160). The verse argument is also referred to by a title more consistently than many verse arguments, often at the conclusion.¹⁶ In contrast, Chaucer's “Fortune” contains refrains at the end of a stanza which help designate the speakers through the first half of the verse argument, but the second half is less direct about who speaks which verse. The speaker may be determined based on other textual clues, but the text is less explicit. For example, after the Plaintiff uses the refrain “In general, this reule may nat fayle” (ll.56) for the first time, the following stanzas that also use it are attributed to Fortune. The opening of the next stanza claims, “Thou pinchest at my mutabilitee/ For I thee lente a drope of my richesse,/ And now me lyketh to withdrawe me.” (ll.57-59). These lines are clearly Fortune's because they reflect points that Fortune has made previously in the argument, and they present a response to what the Plaintiff just finished arguing. Of the ten manuscripts that record “Fortune”, eight preserve some form of title or incipit, and four name Chaucer as the author.¹⁷ In this poem, the speaker labels

¹⁶Of the twelve manuscripts recoding the verse argument, six preserve a titular reference: San Marino, CA, Henry Huntington Library HM 144 [*olim* Huth 7], London, Lambeth Palace Library 306, London, British Library Lansdowne 699, Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C.86, Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud misc. 598, and Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 50. Information is from *DIMEV* 1075.

¹⁷The eight manuscripts are Oxford, Bodleian Library Arch. Selden. B. 10, Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole 59, Oxford, Bodleian Library Bodley 638, Oxford, Bodleian Library Fairfax 16, Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Library Ii.3.21, Cambridge UK, Magdalene College Pepys 2006, Cambridge UK, Trinity College R.3.20, and London, British Library Harley 2251. The other manuscripts containing the poem are London, British Library Lansdowne 699 and Leiden, Leiden University Library Vossius Germ. Gall. Q.9. Information is from *DIMEV* 5803. The four manuscripts attributing the text to Chaucer are Ashmole 59, Fairfax 16, TCC R.3.21, and CUL Ii.3.21 (Skeat, v.I, 79-80).

external to the main text are not in the margins but in the columns of text as dividers between stanzas that contain the speaker changes.¹⁸ In the cases of both verse arguments, the speakers are generally made clear within the text of the poems, but the additional clarity of marginal labels and titles imply further, physical, *auctoritas*.

Interpretive emphasis derived from surrounding texts also presents possibilities regarding how the compilers and copiers of the verse arguments themselves interpreted the poems, and how a reader might be expected to approach the verse arguments. For example, *Wynnere and Wastoure* survives in a single manuscript: London, British Library, Additional MS 31042. The meaning of the argument and its “conclusion” remains a topic for discussion among scholars, including Bestul, Reed, Stephanie Trigg, and Cara Hersh.¹⁹ The manuscript context provides the potential for several different perspectives. Many of the pieces in Addit. 31042 follow the romance traditions, while others consider religious or moral themes. Religious themed texts include *Cursor Mundi*, a dialogue

¹⁸ Skeat points out that the poem consists of a series of three ballads (v.I, 542-543), which may account for the format of the speaker cues. For the first exchange, each side presents their argument in a single ballad that has its own title (the speaker cue). The Third ballad is divided into one stanza assigned to the Plaintiff, and the following two to Fortune’s reply.

¹⁹ Bestul argued, in 1974, that “the king cannot choose favorably between either, but the king as failed to realize the truth about Winner and Waster. It is true that he banishes them, but his judgment of them is really no judgment at all” (78-79). In 1989, Trigg suggested, “These competing representations of both characters generate a number of contradictions, and the situation is further compounded by the text’s appeal to a variety of different historical contexts and material conditions. It is impossible for the king (and us) to resolve the debate...because they cannot be weighed against one another: the rhetorical, literary, and historical contexts which give content and meaning...keep shifting” (93). She proposes that the poet experienced a change in circumstances that rendered “him unable to maintain objective, authoritative perspective to which the genre of debate and the tradition of complaint would encourage him to aspire” (94). In 1994, Reed pointed out that the manuscript cuts the king’s speech off before he has the chance to render full determination, and argues, “He shows himself to be tolerantly, even ‘lovingly’, disinclined to censure either disputant, intending rather to provide for their mutual contentment and continued welfare by sending them both to the places they are loved best” (261). Reed also suggested a possible reading of the conclusion that it may be an analogy to the Divine Judgment (290-291). Hersh argued in 2010 that while the debate may not be conclusive, the poem itself does present a conclusive argument, “by establishing the binary between outside and inside as reflected in these two major allegorical characters and by focusing on their disagreement about whether to traverse the lines constitutive of interior and exterior spaces, the narrator insists on the very existence of a dividing line that separates inside from outside” (519). She noted that the one point on which *Wynnere and Wastoure* agree is demarcated property (519-520).

between Christ and Man, and a paraphrase of *Psalm 51*.²⁰ The romance texts include *The Sege of Melayne, Duke Rowlande and Sir Ottuell of Spayne*, and *Richard Coer de Lion*. The manuscript also contains two other verse arguments: *The Parlement of the thre Ages* and *The Debate between Mercy and Righteousness*.²¹ The variety of texts in the manuscript illustrates how many different ideas and themes that readers could have in mind when they reached *Wynnere and Wastoure*, the last text in the codex. A focus of the romance conventions could lead a reader to be predisposed to focus on the narrative elements which frame the argument. Readers might also be prone to overlook the ambiguous conclusion as part of that narrative as opposed to the presentation of a serious argument. A focus on the moral-religious concerns has the opposite effect. Instead of concentrating on the frame and the narrative action, a reader might instead focus on the moral implications that are the concern of the argument itself. Third and lastly, if readers had in mind the previous verse arguments, they might be prone to either the commentary-disputation model of the argument between Mercy and Righteousness, or the sermonic argument of *The Parlement of the thre Ages*. Any one of these possibilities or a combination thereof results in a different interpretation of *Wynnere and Wastoure*.

Some Final Questions and Speculations

Some relevant questions that I have not addressed in depth through the body of my exploration include 'who authored the verse arguments and why?' and 'what happened

²⁰References to texts use the titles given in the *DIMEV* description of the manuscript contents unless otherwise stated.

²¹The verse argument between Mercy and Righteousness is here referred to by Conlee's title. The manuscript uses the title "A Song how þat Mercy passeth Rightwisnes" (see *DIMEV* 923).

to the verse argument after 1500?'. Answering these questions involves a good deal of conjecture, and as such, I have left them until now. Speculative as the answers may be, I submit that the possibilities only serve to enhance the arguments I have made for the two models a verse argument might follow. More often than not, it is impossible to recognize an individual author of many of the verse arguments based on the textual and manuscript evidence which has survived. No records from the known authors survive detailing their reasons for penning verse arguments, and similarly, no first-hand records survive which discuss the verse argument falling out of use in later centuries. Among the known attributed authors of verse arguments, many are regarded as *auctores*, including Chaucer, Lydgate, and Henryson. Others, such as Litchfield and Clanvowe, may not have the same status as writers but are still recognized by virtue of having their name recorded and explained in association with a verse argument. Using the known authors as a base, I will speculate on some of the attributes that the writers of the many anonymous or contested verse arguments likely had. All of the writers named above have some things in common: first, they are all educated, they have connections to the government, nobility, and/or Church, and all are known to have written instructional texts, or at least texts with direct contemporary advice and application.²² For example, Chaucer wrote (among others) *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, Lydgate wrote the *Siege of Thebes*, Henryson authored his *Fables*, and Litchfield wrote sermons.

²²Lydgate and Litchfield were members of Church organizations, Chaucer worked for a government office, and there is evidence that Henryson was a schoolmaster (Parkinson, np). Clanvowe's situation is more complex given the uncertainty regarding which Clanvowe may have been the author of "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale". If Scattergood is correct in assigning the poem to Sir John Clanvowe (18-22), then he was also the author of *The Two Ways*. If Skeat is correct in assigning the poem to Sir Thomas Clanvowe, then he was a knight in the royal court (v.7, p.lvii-lviii).

The connections with official corporate entities of the contemporary Church and secular governments present one possible reason why the authors of verse arguments may have composed such poems. Their knowledge and experience of official organizations suggests that these writers had an appreciation as well as concerns for the official structures governing their lives. By virtue of education, all of these writers would have had a similar exposure to various *auctores*, both academic and folk-conventions. The verse argument would have provided them with an avenue with which to express and explore concerns without too much fear of persecution, thanks to the flexibility of interpretation and formal style that the form offers.²³

The associations with education and learning hint at some other potential reasons for the popularity of verse arguments, and the continuation of some verse argument techniques in modern poetry. Teaching through dialogue and humor are recognized in the handbooks and style guides of the medieval period, and most verse arguments can potentially be read as having some serious lesson implied. Even if the lesson includes ideas such as “you don’t have to decide” or “fun is good sometimes”, nearly every verse argument contains potential for some moral or at least proverbial *exempla*.²⁴ As the example of the mystery plays suggests, even the official bodies like the Church recognized the use of humor and fictional narratives to teach serious lessons. These

²³ For example, both Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and David Wallace offer arguments on how medieval writers used poetry to explore disconcerting or dangerous questions. Wallace analyzes associational ideologies and manifestations in Chaucer through Chaucer’s political imaginings and explorations of power relationships (particularly those of economics and gender), both in conventional presentations and questioning ones. Kerby-Fulton considers how writers such as Langland and Chaucer dealt with some of the religious controversies of their times in their poetry.

²⁴ Olson considers the medieval understanding and practices of using literature for aesthetic, mental, and physical enjoyment. Reed makes the argument for “recreational irresolution” as an element of verse argument in general (14-19), and considers specific examples in Henryson’s *Ressoning betuix Aige and Yowth* (6-20), *Wynnere and Wastoure* (274-278), *The Parliament of Fowls* (323-327), and *Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep* (374-375) among others.

techniques are still in use today. For example, Shel Silverstein wrote a dialogue poem which uses humor to teach a serious lesson, "The Little Boy and the Old Man". This poem hints at the tradition of *The Parlement of Thre Ages* and similar verse arguments, and, although the poem is not an argument, Silverstein uses dialogue and humor to illustrate a more serious lesson. I cannot prove that the twentieth-century Silverstein was invoking medieval poetic traditions, or was even aware of their existence, but the presence of the mutual convention of presenting something engaging like a fable to instill moral values is difficult to deny.

Although the Middle English verse argument form may no longer be a popular poetic form, many of the conventions it brought into English poetry remain. Silverstein's poem invokes the contrast and the discussion between the extremes of youth and age, and, although they are subtle, many of the conventions of the medieval verse argument are also present. The youth in the modern version is around 4 years old based on his speech, and not a young man as is the case in the medieval tradition. There is no direct argument, only agreement. The connection to verse argument appears in the implicit distinctions between old age and youth, and how each character perceives their shared problems:

Said the little boy, "Sometimes I drop my spoon."
 Said the old man, "I do that too."
 The little boy whispered, "I wet my pants."
 "I do that too," laughed the little old man.
 Said the little boy, "I often cry."
 The old man nodded, "So do I."
 "But worst of all," said the boy, "it seems
 Grown-ups don't pay attention to me."
 And he felt the warmth of a wrinkled old hand.
 "I know what you mean," said the little old man.²⁵

²⁵ This is the text of the entire poem.

The little boy appears to be ashamed of each difficulty, while the old man accepts them all. The poem could be read as an implicit argument, as the old man tries to convince the child that he is not alone in his concerns. As previously argued, persuasion is a required characteristic of a verse argument. Evidence is only offered directly by the boy, and interpretation is only consistently offered by the old man through his reactions of laughter and his action of taking the boy's hand. The boy's interpretive moment comes when he labels the last difficulty as 'worst of all'. As for the question of model, Silverstein's poem suggests a disputation-commentary argument because the discussion consists of a series of statements and accompanying interpretations with an open-ended conclusion. The ambiguity often found in medieval verse argument is present in the apparent lack of argument in the poem. The student-teacher relationship commonly found in the disputation-commentary model is also included, but is complicated by the lack of a clear lesson or question being covered.

Beyond educational impetus, a further reason verse arguments may have been so popular, and even now leave traces on English language poetic traditions, was for entertainment and amusement. Given the struggles inherent in the daily lives of the officials of academic, civic, and religious organizations, an avenue through which they could gain a sense of personal *auctoritas*, or at least some comic relief, was likely attractive to the authors of verse arguments. By controlling and constructing their own problems and solutions (or lack thereof), narratives, and manipulation of convention and *auctores*, the writers of verse arguments may have been seeking an outlet through which to assert a sense of personal *auctoritas*, even if only on the level of a single verse argument. The wide-scale anonymity of the poems suggests that the authors need not

necessarily have been strictly men of the noble and/or educated classes. For example, a woman of a merchant or knightly family may have been educated and tied to the Church as the resident of a convent. Such a woman may well have felt the need not only to explore her education but also her self-worth, and a verse argument may well have given her such an opportunity.

As the example of Shel Silverstein suggests, many features of the Middle English verse arguments survive, often in altered forms. The use of dialogue in poetry seems to have declined as drama and narrative fiction in prose gained momentum. What remains of the verse argument in English is now largely internalized, implicit ‘debates’, such as Elizabeth Bishop's “Argument”.²⁶ This poem invokes the tradition of two allegorical figures arguing their respective merits, such as *The Debate between Mercy and Righteousness*, and includes some textual cues indicative of dialogue:

Distance: Remember all that land
beneath the plane;
that coastline
of dim beaches deep in sand
stretching indistinguishably
all the way,
all the way to where my reasons end?

Days: And think
of all those cluttered instruments,
one to a fact,
canceling each other's experience;
how they were
like some hideous calendar
"Compliments of Never & Forever, Inc." (ll.8-21)

The poem also includes a frame spoken by a narrator who appears to be struggling with a philosophical issue related to the arguing characters:

²⁶ This poem was originally published in Bishop's 1946 collection *North & South*.

Days that cannot bring you near
 or will not,
 Distance trying to appear
 something more obstinate,
 argue argue argue with me
 endlessly
 neither proving you less wanted nor less dear.
 {...}
 The intimidating sound
 of these voices
 we must separately find
 can and shall be vanquished:
 Days and Distance disarrayed again
 and gone... (ll.1-7...22-27).

The ambiguity that helps define a medieval verse argument takes the form of a question considering the actual dialogue in "Argument". The question is whether or not the dialogue exists, or if the poem is actually a compare-contrast list, since the punctuation used can indicate either. If the poem is taken as a dialogue, then the verse argument element is present in the contrast between the two characters, and the introduction of potential evidence. Distance refers to physical areas, while Days points to experience. The authority of both is set in the frame as personal, when the narrator speaks of 'me' and 'you'. This poem also follows more of a disputation-commentary model, since the dialogue presents a claim, evidence, and question, followed by response, interpretation, and further evidence. As with Silverstein's poem, there is virtually no way to prove that Bishop was intentionally invoking the medieval traditions. What can be said is that the similarities suggest continuity of features of the verse argument.

The physical aspect of adding to authority is more complicated in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because poems and the means of passing them on are no longer purely physical objects. The advent of digital texts and Internet allows for a greater dissemination of a given text, while they render the possibility of using marginal

commentary and attributions based on *auctoritas* largely obsolete. What does remain is an expanded potential for commentary and discussion of the texts. Authority can still be considered through the sorts of website which present the texts as well as any interpretations and commentaries that might be posted on a blog or other site dedicated to poetry. Much of the commentary and interpretation is still anonymous and/or amateur, and still presents the possibility of exploring how perception of the poetry might have changed over time. The digital era also presents authors with a platform to explain their work, thus providing records for questions that may never be answered with certainty concerning medieval texts such as those concerning authorial intent.

The commentary-disputation and sermon models I have illustrated as a new way of considering the Middle English traditions have much potential for further use. Exploration of what happened to the traditions and conventions after the medieval era, for example drama and novels, present arenas which might benefit from this new way of considering the use of dialogue and argument and authority. What I have attempted to do in this project is provide a new method for reading and analyzing Middle English poems that rely on dialogue and argument. In the spirit of the dialogue and debate traditions that I have explored throughout this project, I would encourage anyone to use the method and models I propose to explore and interpret the Middle English verse argument tradition, or any other dialogue-based text.

Appendix 1: An initial survey of possible verse arguments

Adventure on Wednesday

“Als I lay in a winteris nyt” (Body and Soul)

Ballad of a Tyrannical Husband

The Boke of Cupide or the Cuckoo and the Nightingale

The Buke of the Howlat

The Chorle and the Birde

The Clerk and the Nightingale I

The Clerk and the Nightingale II

Complaint of a Prisoner Against Fortune

De Clerico et Puella (My death I love my life I hate for a lady sheen)

De tribus regibus mortuis

Death and Life

The Debate Between Mercy and Righteousness

The Debate between Nurture and Kynd

Debate of the Carpenter's Tools

Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep

Dialogue between a courtier and a soldier (Mede and moche thank)

Dialogue between Mary and Jesus on the Cross

A Dialogue between the Part Sensitive and the Part Intellective

Dialogue betwene Clerk and Husbandman

Disputation between Body and Worms

Dispute between Mary and the Cross

Disputison bittwene a god aman and the devel

Disputisoun bitwene Child Ihesu and Maistres of the Lawe

A Disputisoun Bytwene a Cristenmon and a Iew

Dysputacyon Or Co[m]Playnt of the Herte Thorughe Perced with the Lokynge of the Eye

The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie

The Harrowing of Hell

A Holy Meditation

“In a thestri stude I stod” (Body&Soul)

Interludium de Clerico et Puella

Meeting in the Wood

The Merle and the Nightingale

Mumming at Hertford

The Nut Brown Maid

The Owl and the Nightingale

Parliament of the thre ages

Ressoning Betwix Aige and Yowth

Ressoning Betwix Deth and Man

Remors of Conscience, or Complaint of God Or Christ

Robene and Makyne

“Throughe a forest as I can ryde” (Crow and Pie)

The Thrush and Nightingale

Tretis of the Twa Maritt Wemen and the Wedo

Wynnere and Wastoure

Total number of titles: 45

Appendix 2: Manuscripts containing verse arguments cited above

London, British Library Additional MS 2251
 London, British Library Additional MS 22283 (Simeon)
 London, British Library Additional MS 23986
 London, British Library Additional MS 27879
 London, British Library Additional MS 29729
 London, British Library Additional MS 31042 (Thornton)
 London, British Library Additional MS 33994
 London, British Library Additional MS 34360
 London, British Library Additional MS 36983
 London, British Library Additional MS 37049
 London, British Library Additional MS 37787
 London, British Library Additional MS 38666
 London, British Library Cotton MS Caligula Aii
 London, British Library Cotton MS Caligula A.ix
 London, British Library Harley MS 116
 London, British Library Harley MS 541
 London, British Library Harley MS 2251
 London, British Library Harley MS 2253
 London, British Library Harley MS 2339
 London, British Library Harley MS 2407
 London, British Library Harley MS 3954
 London, British Library Harley MS 7333
 London, British Library Lansdowne MS 699
 London, British Library Royal MS 8FII
 London, British Library Royal MS 12 EI
 London, British Library Royal MS 18 Ax
 London, British Library Royal MS 18 Dii

London, Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth MS 306
 London, Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth MS 853

Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng. Poet. A1 (Vernon)
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 50
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 59
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 754
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 638
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 86
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 102
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16

- Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 108
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 598
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.813
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson poet. 34
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C. 48
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C. 86
 Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Tanner 346
- Oxford, Jesus College, Jesus College MS 29
- Oxford, Balliol College, Balliol MS 354
- Oxford, Christ Church College, Christ Church MS 152
- Oxford, Corpus Christi College, Corpus Christi MS 237
- Cambridge, Gonville & Caius College, Gonville & Caius MS 174
- Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6 (Findern)
 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38
 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff 5.48
 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Hh. 4.12
 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Kk 1.6
 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ll.v.10 (Reidpeth)
- Cambridge, Magdalen College Pepys MS 2553 (Maitland Folio)
 Cambridge, Magdalen College Pepys MS 1584
- Cambridge, St Johns College MS 111 (E8)
- Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.39
 Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19
 Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.20
 Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.21
- Dublin, Trinity College MS 301
- Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.2.1 (Auchinleck W4I)
 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.3.1
 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 1.1.6 (Bannatyne)
 Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland MS 16500 (Asloan)
 Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Library MS 205
- Manchester, Chetham's Library, Chetham's MS 8009
- Wiltshire, Marquess of Bath (Longleat) MS 258

Lincolnshire, Lincoln Cathedral MS 129

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales Harlech MS 10 (aka Porkington 10)

Chichester, West Sussex Public Record Office, Cowfold Parish Account book

San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 144

Leiden, Leiden University Library MS Vossius Germ. Gall.Q. 9

Austin, University of Texas Austin MS 143 (olim Cardigan)

Boston, Boston Public Library MS f. med. 92

Boston, (Harvard) Houghton Library MS Eng. 530

Total Number of Manuscripts: 82

Appendix 3i: Manuscripts with multiple verse arguments

Shelfmark	Number of Verse Arguments
National Library of Scotland Advocates 1.1.6 (Bannatyne)	7
London, British Library Harley MS 2253	5
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng. Poet. A1 (Vernon)	5
Cambridge, Pepys Library, Magdalene College MS 2553 (Maitland Folio)	4
London, British Library Additional MS 22283 (Simeon)	4
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 86	4
London, British Library Additional MS 31042 (Thornton)	3
Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Hh. 4.12	2
Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Kk 1.6	2
Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.20	2
Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.2.1 (Auchinleck)	2
Leiden, Leiden University Library MS Vossius Germ. Gall.Q. 9	2
London, Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth MS 853	2
London, Lambeth Palace Library, Lambeth MS 306	2
London, British Library Additional MS 27879	2
London, British Library Additional MS 34360	2
London, British Library Harley MS 2251	2
London, British Library Lansdowne MS 699	2
Oxford, Balliol College, Balliol MS 354	2
Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 102	2
San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 144	2
Wiltshire, Marquess of Bath (Longleat) MS 258	2
Total Number of Manuscripts: 22	

Appendix 3ii: Verse arguments surviving in a single copy

Ballad of a Tyrannical Husband (Chetham's 8009)

Meeting in the Wood (Harley 2253)

Adventure on Wednesday (Bannatyne)

Disputation between Body and Worms (BL Addit. 37049)

De tribus regibus mortuis (Douce 302)

De Clerico et Puella (BL Harley 2253)

Thrush and Nightingale (Digby 86)

Death and Life (BL Addit. 27879)

Dysputacyon Or Co[m]Playnt of the Herte Thorughe Perced with the Lokynge of the Eye
(Longleat 258)

“Throughe a forest as I can ryde” (Rawlinson Poetry 813)

Dialogue between a courtier and a soldier (Digby 102)

Dialogue betwene Clerk and Husbandman (BL Addit. 38666)

Debate between Nurture and Kynd (BL Harley 541)

Clerk and Nightingale I (CUL Ff 5.48)

Clerk and Nightingale II (Rawlinson pot. 34)

Dialogue between the Part Sensitive and the Part Intellective (BL Royal 18 Dii)

Wynnere and Wastoure (Thornton)

Tretis of the Twa Maritt Wemen and the Wedo (Maitland Folio)

Interludium de Clerico et Puella (BL Addit 23986)

Debate of the Carpenter's Tools (Ashmole 61)

Ressoning Betwix Deth and Man (Bannatyne)

Robene and Makyne (Bannatyne)

A Disputisoun Bytwene a Cristenmon and a Iew (Vernon)

Total Number of Poems: 23

Appendix 4: Contents of MSS containing “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”

*All information and reference numbers are from the *DIMEV*.

Oxford, Bodleian Library Tanner 346 (SC 10173)

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. ff. 1-40v <i>Legend of Good Women</i> | Number 177 |
| 3. ff. 48v-59 <i>The Complaint of the Black Knight (Lydgate)</i> | Number 2541 |
| 4. ff. 59v-65 Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Anelida and Arcite</i> | Number 5823 |
| 5. ff. 65-69v <i>Gladeth ye fowls of the morwe gray</i>
' <i>Compleynt of Mars</i> ' | Number 1518 |
| 6. ff. 69v-71 <i>There nis so high comfort to my pleasance</i>
' <i>Complaint of Venus</i> ' | Number 5590 |
| 10. ff. 76-97 John Lydgate, <i>The Temple of Glas</i> | Number 1403 |
| 11. ff. 97-101 Clanvowe, <i>The Book of Cupid, or The Cuckoo and the Nightingale</i> | Number 5299 |
| 12. ff. 101-101v <i>O lewd book with the fool rudeness</i>
Balade with Envoy to Alison | Number 3954 |
| 13. ff. 102-119v Chaucer, <i>The Book of the Duchesse</i> | Number 2181 |
| 14. ff. 120-131 Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Parlement of Foules</i> | Number 5373 |

Oxford, Bodleian Library Fairfax 16 (SC 3896)

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. ff. 15-19 <i>Gladeth ye fowls of the morwe gray</i>
' <i>Compleynt of Mars</i> ' | Number 1518 |
| 2. ff. 19-20v <i>There nis so high comfort to my pleasance</i>
' <i>Complaint of Venus</i> ' | Number 5590 |
| 3. ff. 20-30 <i>The Complaint of the Black Knight (Lydgate)</i> | Number 2541 |

4. ff. 30-35 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite* **Number 5823**
5. ff. 35v-39v Clanvowe, *The Book of Cupid, or The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* **Number 5299**
6. f. 40 *Flee from the press and dwell with sothfastness*
'Truth' **Number 1326**
8. ff. 47-50 *My ladies and my mistresses each one*
Ragmanys Rolle **Number 3618**
9. ff. 50v-62v *Half in a dream not fully awaked*
'La Belle Dame sans Mercy' **Number 1761**
10. ff. 63-82v John Lydgate, *The Temple of Glas* **Number 1403**
11. ff. 83-119v *Legend of Good Women* **Number 177**
12. ff. 120-129v Geoffrey Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules* **Number 5373**
13. ff. 130-147v Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchesse* **Number 2181**
14. ff. 147v-148 *O lewd book with the fool rudeness*
Balade with Envoy to Alison **Number 3954**
15. ff. 148v-154 *First mine uncunning and my rudeness*
On the chaunse of the dyse **Number 1318**
16. ff. 154v-183v Chaucer's *Hous of Fame* (ends incomplete) **Number 1620**
18. ff. 187-188v *Pity that I have sought so yore ago*
'The Complaynt unto Pite' **Number 4375**
20. ff. 191-192v Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Balade of Fortune' **Number 5803**
21. ff. 192v-193 *To-broken been the statutes high in heaven*
'Lenvoy de Chaucer à Scogan' — seven stanzas rhyme royal, including Envoy **Number 5965**
22. ff. 193-193v Chaucer's 'Complaynt to his Empty Purse' **Number 6044**
25. ff. 194-194v Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Lak of Stedfastnesse' **Number 4990**

- Number 6798**
27. f. 195 *Worship women wine and unwieldy age*
Four things that make a man fall from Reason, perhaps by Lydgate — one stanza rhyme royal
- Number 6251**
31. f. 195v *What shall these clothes thus many fold*
Two proverbial riddles with questions and answers, sometimes attributed to Chaucer — four couplets
- Number 1326**
37. f. 201 *Flee from the press and dwell with sothfastness*
'Truth'
- Number 5964**
38. ff. 202-300 *To all folks virtuous*
Reson and Sensuallyte, attributed to Lydgate
- Number 6455**
39. ff. 306-312v *When the sun the lamp of heaven full light*
'How a louer prayseth hys lady' — 467 lines in rough doggerel couplets
- Number 6716**
40. ff. 314-316v *With all mine Whole Heart entire*
A parody of the mass (the 'Venus Mass' perhaps by Lydgate), a series of love lyrics in varying forms for *Introibo*, *Confiteor*, *Misereatur*, *Officium*, *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, and *Oryson*
- Number 3780**
44. ff. 319-319v *Now list Fortune thus for me to purvey*
A Complaynt against Fortune, possibly by the Duke of Suffolk
- Number 3007**
45. ff. 319v-320 *Kneeling alone right thus I make my will*
A Complaynt, a testament bequeathing the lover's heart and will
- Number 4095**
47. ff. 320v-321 *O woeful heart prisoned in great duress*
A Complaynt, possibly by the Duke of Suffolk
- Number 4071**
48. ff. 321-321v *O thou Fortune which hast the governance*
Charles d'Orléans, a Complaynt — four stanzas rhyme royal with refrain, 'Why wyltow not wythstand myn heuynesse'

1. ff. 1-118v *The double sorrow of Troilus to tellen Troilus and Criseyde* **Number 5248**
3. f. 119 *Flee from the press and dwell with sothfastness 'Truth'* **Number 1326**
6. ff. 120v-129v *The Complaint of the Black Knight (Lydgate)* **Number 2541**
8. ff. 132-136 *Gladeth ye fowls of the morwe gray 'Compleynt of Mars'* **Number 1518**
9. ff. 136-137 *There nis so high comfort to my pleasance 'Complaint of Venus'* **Number 5590**
12. ff. 138v-141v *The double sorrow of Troilus to tellen Troilus and Criseyde* **Number 5248**
13. ff. 138v-141v *Clanvowe, The Book of Cupid, or The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* **Number 5299**
14. ff. 142-152 *The life so short the craft so long to learn*
Geoffrey Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules* — 98 stanzas rhyme royal **Number 5373**
15. ff. 152v-191v *Legend of Good Women* **Number 177**
16. ff. 192-211 *The Kingis Quair*, ascribed to James I of Scotland **Number 2024**
19. ff. 219-221v *By cause that tears waymenting and plaint*
'The Lufaris Complaynt', a letter with a Prologue of nine stanzas rhyme royal and text of twelve stanzas, generally of 9-lines **Number 927**
20. ff. 221v-228v *This lusty may the which all tender flowers*
'Quare of Ielusy' — 607 lines mainly in couplets, but partly in stanzas of varying length **Number 5729.3**
24. f. 230 *Your servant madam*
A dialogue of the night visit — ten irregular stanzas with burden: 'Go fro my vindow go...'
Number 6884

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. ff. 1-4v <i>The Complaint of the Black Knight (Lydgate)</i> | Number 2541 |
| 2. ff. 5-7; ff. 7v-11 Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Anelida and Arcite</i> | Number 5823 |
| 3. ff. 11v-16 Clanvowe, <i>The Book of Cupid, or The Cuckoo and the Nightingale</i> | Number 5299 |
| 4. ff. 16v-38 John Lydgate, <i>The Temple of Glas</i> | Number 1403 |
| 6. ff. 46-47v <i>Pity that I have sought so yore ago</i>
<i>'The Compleynt unto Pite'</i> | Number 4375 |
| 7. ff. 48-95v <i>Legend of Good Women</i> | Number 177 |
| 8. ff. 96-110 Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Parlement of Foules</i> | Number 5373 |
| 9. ff. 110v-141 Chaucer, <i>The Book of the Duchesse</i> | Number 2181 |
| 10. ff. 141v-193v Chaucer's <i>Hous of Fame</i> (ends incomplete) | Number 1620 |
| 11. ff. 195-203v <i>First mine uncunning and my rudeness</i>
<i>On the chaunse of the dyse</i> | Number 1318 |
| 13. ff. 208-209v Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Balade of Fortune' | Number 5803 |
| 14. ff. 209v-212 <i>As I stood in studying alone</i>
<i>'The complaynte ageyne Hope'</i> | Number 627 |
| 16. ff. 214v-218v <i>My ladies and my mistresses each one</i>
<i>Ragmanys Rolle</i> | Number 3618 |
| 17. ff. 219-219v <i>The order of fools full yore agone begun</i>
John Lydgate, <i>The Order of Fools</i> | Number 5428 |

Cambridge UK, Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6 [Findern MS]

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. ff. 3-5; ff. 45-51; ff. 81-95 <i>Of them that written us tofore</i>
<i>Confessio Amantis</i> | Number 4229 |
| 2. ff. 15-17 <i>Pity that I have sought so yore ago</i> | Number 4375 |

'The Complaynt unto Pite'

- Number 5299**
8. ff. 22-28 *Clanvowe, The Book of Cupid, or The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*
Number 5373
10. ff. 29-42v *Geoffrey Chaucer, Parlement of Foules*
Number 3824
11. ff. 51-53 *Now ye will of love hear*
The Parliament of Love
Number 6044
16. f. 59 *Chaucer's 'Complaynt to his Empty Purse'*
Number 4949
17. ff. 61-63v *So thirled with the point of remembrance*
'The Complaynt of Anelida the quene upon fals Arcite', included in Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, but here occurring separately — twelve 9-line stanzas and two 16-line stanzas, including Proem and Conclusion
Number 177
18. ff. 64-67v *Legend of Good Women*
Number 5590
19. ff. 68-69v *There nis so high comfort to my plesance*
'Complaint of Venus'
Number 3668
20. f. 69v *My woeful heart thus clad in pain*
 A Love song of a mistress for her absent lover — seven 3-line stanzas, aab, with the same rhyme throughout
Number 3197
22. ff. 96-109vb *Lord God in Trinity / Give them heaven for to see*
Sir Degrevant
Number 3197
23. f. 109vb *Lord God in Trinity / Give them heaven for to see*
Sir Degrevant
Number 1761
24. ff. 117-134v *Half in a dream not fully awaked*
'La Belle Dame sans Mercy'
Number 4884
27. f. 137 *Sith fortune hath me set thus in this wise*
 Verses expressing desire to serve his mistress — four lines
Number 3673
32. f. 139 *Myself walking all alone / full of thought of joy desperate*
 A Complaint against Fortune — three stanzas rhyme royal
Number 3545
36. f. 146 *Most glorious queen reigning in heaven*

- A hymn to the Virgin Mary — three stanzas rhyme royal
Number 5249
40. f. 150 Extracts from Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*
Number 1667
43. ff. 152v-153 *Greater matter of dole and heaviness*
A Complaint for lack of mercy
Number 3666
45. ff. 153-153v *My woeful heart plunged in heaviness*
A complaint against his mistress — two stanzas rhyme royal with refrain, ‘Alas
vnkyndenesse þus haith my herte slayne’
Number 4072
52. f. 159v *O thou fortune why art thou so inconstant*
A complaint against Fortune — in rhyme royal stanzas with refrain, ‘He holdyth ryght
naught of clene conscience’, and headings in Latin above six stanzas
Number 121
56. f. 178 *A mercy fortune have pity on me*
A complaint against Fortune
Number 1418
57. ff. 181-185v *For why that God is inwardly the wit / Of man*
‘Cato Major’

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