Answerable Style

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

Grady, Frank & Galloway, Andrew.
Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England.
Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013.
Project MUSE., https://muse.jhu.edu/.

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Seigneurial Poetics, or The Poacher, the Prikasour, The Hunt, and Its Oeuvre

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If "the refocusing of literary studies on textuality itself as central to any possible adequate literary history of the Middle Ages appears to be the chief contribution that studies in medieval literature might offer to literary studies generally in the coming generation," then we have evidently still got a lot of work to do. That sentence is from Anne Middleton's contribution to the critical anthology *Redrawing the Boundaries,* published in 1992.[1] The essay is typically prescient—it predicted, for example, a productive dialogue between medieval and postcolonial studies almost a decade before a wave of publication in that area—but also a bit optimistic about the capacity of "literary studies generally" to receive its gift. In 2007, *PMLA* published an essay by Marjorie Levinson called "What Is New Formalism?" which took up specifically the "form after historicism" issue that serves as one of the organizing principles for this volume; that piece includes in its bibliography—that is, the extended bibliography of the on-line version, the one that includes three bibliographical appendices—the name of exactly one medievalist, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, cited as editor of a collection about electronic editing, in a section entitled "Alternative Solutions to Problems Raised by New

1. Anne Middleton, "Medieval Studies," in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles B. Gunn (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992), 26.

Formalism."[2] The optimism of Middleton's 1992 essay is not hard to understand, since its author has certainly done her part; reading Middleton's work has always meant attending to form and its histories, and to exploring in the fullest possible manner instances of formal innovation discovered in places where the rest of us would seldom think to look. It is a modest example of such practice that I offer in this essay.

I will advance the proposition that when Middle English writers juxtapose representations of hunting, that aristocratic amusement turned literary topos, with tales of tragedy (a term that here comprehends both stylized *de casibus* falls of fortune and a more general *ubi sunt* moralizing about the inevitable conclusion death brings to all earthly endeavor)—tales that are themselves compiled from Latin and French sources, or that are in other words translations—they are doing something more than just appealing to aristocratic tastes for recreative venery and Fortune-based historicizing. Rather, the depiction of hunting, the writing of tragedy, and the practice of translation are mutually implicated literary activities that, through their analogous imposition of form on contingent phenomena, contribute to the reproduction of what I would call the seigneurial poetics of later Middle English writing. The juxtaposition of these elements is surprisingly common in the period; in this essay I will confine myself to just two examples: the alliterative *Parlement of the Thre Ages* and Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*.

Textual Poaching in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*

The Parlement is a dream-vision/debate-poem hybrid. In the prologue, the narrator strikes out on a solitary hunting expedition one May morning, and the first hundred lines describe in fine detail his successful stalking of a hart; once he has dressed his kill, he falls asleep and dreams of a debate between three allegorical personifications, Youthe (who extols the manifold pleasures of the aristocratic life), Medill Elde or Middle Age (who is most concerned with developing a healthy real-estate-based financial portfolio), and Elde, who harangues them both for their misguided priorities and takes up the bulk of the dream—indeed, almost half the poem—with an account of the Nine Worthies, all of whom were once great but all of whom are now dead. "Ne noghte es sekire to ȝoureself in certayne bot dethe" (635), he somewhat redundantly opines: "*Vanitas vanitatum & omnia vanitas*" (639).[3] In a short

2. *PMLA* 122 (2007): 558–69; the bibliographical appendices can be found at sitemaker.umich.edu/pmla_article.

3. Quotations are drawn from *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,* ed. M. Y. Offord, EETS 246 (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), hereafter cited parenthetically by line number.

eleven-line conclusion, the dreamer wakes at the sound of a bugle and heads back to town, presumably—though this is not made explicit—chastened by his experience.

The poem's first modern editor, Sir Israel Gollancz, described the *Parlement* long ago as a summary or epitome of familiar alliterative scenes and devices, a reputation it has suffered under ever since; forty years later, Dorothy Everett called it "a mosaic of conventions."[4] Obviously—speaking of conventions—I wish to disagree. Certainly we have been correctly taught to count among the more reliable elements of alliterative practice the *chanson d'aventure* countryside prologue, the morally dubious narrator, the debate of ostensibly irresolvable issues by allegorical personifications, the hunting and hawking topos, and even the macaronic conclusion to Elde's speech, in which he quotes, in addition to Ecclesiastes, the Office of the Dead and Luke's gospel. But to leap from that observation to regarding the *Parlement* as largely a collection of alliterative poetry's greatest hits begs a number of questions, most prominently the issue of just when invention hardens into convention. For example, while the yoking of the Nine Worthies to the *ubi sunt* theme is certainly underwritten by a familiar medieval moral logic, the *memento mori* motif and its penitential reflex, the connection is hardly an inevitable one; there are numerous examples of the Worthies being used uncritically to celebrate rather than undermine aristocratic ideologies. In fact, the chief source of the Worthies passage in the *Parlement* does exactly that. In Jacques de Longuyon's French romance *Les Voeux du Paon,* "The Vows of the Peacock," a 1312 addition to the large body of medieval French Alexander literature—typically considered to be the first literary appearance of the Worthies on the same billing anywhere—the Nine are introduced only to enhance the poet's praise of Porrus, son of Clarus, king of India and Alexander the Great's antagonist. Their purpose is comparative, purely secular and purely courtly. Thus the *Parlement*-author's use of the Nine might best be regarded as a formal experiment—a fairly safe and controlled experiment, perhaps, and in the eyes of some critics a failed one—but an experiment nonetheless.[5]

4. Quoted in Anne Kernan, "Theme and Structure in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,*" *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 75 (1974): 254.

5. William Kuskin discusses the flexibility of the Worthies topos in "Caxton's Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture," *ELH* 66 (1999): 511–51. The creation of a rhetorical *topos* that subordinates the earthly accomplishments of the Nine to the penitential imperative of Christian eschatology is in keeping with what seems to be a general rise in vernacular *de casibus* writing in the later Middle Ages, but even if we posit, as many critics do, some intermediate tradition of wholehearted moralization, there is a clear sense in which the author of the *Parlement* reinvents this particular wheel. Nor is the connection once made an inevitable one; in the Middle English tail-rhyme romance *Sir Degrevant,* a poem roughly contemporary with the *Parlement,* the three Christian Worthies appear in

In this context of formal literary experimentation I want to consider the juxtaposition of the poem's hunting scene and its Worthies series, and the way in which they produce mutually implicated organizational strategies for a literary undertaking like the *Parlement.* Such a move cannot help but call up *Piers Plowman* and the rich accounts of its formal intelligibility that Anne Middleton has provided; one thing that the *Parlement* shares with *Piers* is that *chanson d'avanture* prologue, something that Middleton long ago taught us to recognize as "the essential paradigm of literary fictive narration in this period."[6] The dense presence of conventions like this in a text organized according one of the central dynamics of the "formal" corpus of alliterative poetry—that is, the tension between the necessity of penitential action and the celebration of aristocratic ideology—makes *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* into, as it were, a rich man's *Piers Plowman.*

When the narrator sets out "In the monethe of Maye when mirthes bene fele," he describes himself as going out to try his luck ("my werdes to dreghe") at getting a shot at a deer, "happen as it myghte"—phrases that point to both the unbound and unpredictable character of these literary springtime outings, and to the contingent nature of this particular expedition, the hunting enterprise itself. The formal aspects of hunting—both the tactics of stalking and shooting and the rituals of brittling or butchering—

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a mural decorating the chamber of Melidor, Degrevant's beloved, where they are not moralized but simply offered as one sign of Melidor's aristocratic taste and her refined sense of interior decoration. Another example would be Deschamps's 1386 *balade* "Against the Vices of the Times," which contrasts the debased state of contemporary chivalry with the lordly perfection represented by the Worthies. Finally, we can point to the entertainment presented to Queen Margaret in Coventry in 1455, in which each of the Worthies delivered a speech of praise and fealty to the Queen—hardly an occasion for *ubi sunt* moralizing. Given the difficulty of dating the *Parlement,* we could add Caxton's use of the Worthies in his 1485 preface to *Le Morte Darthur* to the "roughly contemporary" category as well. I owe the *Degrevant* citation to William Marvin, "Slaughter and Romance: Hunting Reserves in Late Medieval England," in *Medieval Crime and Social Control,* ed. Barbara Hanawalt and David Wallace (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 224–52; see also Roger Sherman Loomis, "Verses on the Nine Worthies," *Modern Philology* 15 (1917): 211–20, and Dennis V. Moran, "*The Parlement of the Thre Ages:* Meaning and Design," *Neophilologus* 62 (1978): 620–33.

6. Anne Middleton, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman,*" in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays,* ed. David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), 114. She continues: "In presenting a speaker intent on something else—usually solitary diversion and pleasure, though sometimes a routine form of devotion—who happens upon truth or transformation unawares, in a place, time, and state of mind where it was least looked for, this formula thematizes the role of the fictive and the nugatory as a method of a specifically literary didacticism. In literary fiction, it implicitly argues, truth presents itself first to peripheral vision, as it were, and remains active and visible only so long as the adventurer defers uttering a correct verdict on its nature. This mode of fictive presentation disclaims the literal historical truth, or divine or genuinely mystical origin, for the marvel disclosed, even while it appropriates the familiar narrative details of reports which do make such claims . . . the 'truth' of its discourse is purely contingent. In playing upon a wide range of discourses which command belief, it offers an exercise of affective memory and recognition for *salus anime.*"

seek to make a basically contingent undertaking into an expression of lordly ceremonial control. Hunting in the medieval aristocratic manner is always a form of organizing the world, first into groupings of predator and prey and then, with increasingly fine distinctions, into increasingly precise categories: which is the noblest beast of the chase? what is the appropriate hawk for an earl? how should the spoils be apportioned? Moreover, hunting as it is represented in English texts also involves the ongoing invention and renewal of an appropriate and specific language, a vocabulary of the chase, a phenomenon that will be familiar to anyone who can recall working through the third fitt of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* for the first time. The vernacular hunting manuals of the era, like the *Master of Game* or the *Boke of St. Albans,* are as much taxonomies as they are practical guides, and the author of the *Parlement,* who describes with technical precision both the brittling and the hawking enjoyed by Youthe, is clearly a close reader of this language too, someone who recognizes that it is the formal description of the hunt that truly establishes its capacity to bring order to the enterprise, and to the part it plays in aristocratic life.[7]

Critical attempts to explain the relevance of the hunting prologue to the body of the poem tend to hew to the moral/allegorical line, arguing that the hunt is a pride-of-life episode that looks forward to the penitential correction of the dream vision, or that it introduces the mortality theme that, according to Russell Peck, unifies the poem. "Death," writes Peck, "is the master-hunter whom none can escape,"[8] and the poem's lesson is that the hunter, too, is being stalked. Thus the portion of the poem frequently celebrated for its wealth of realistic detail, right down to the gnats pestering the narrator as he stands motionless waiting for a shot, is at the same time seen as being allegorically freighted—particularly the cutting out of the "corbyns bone," that piece of gristle from the breastbone traditionally thrown to the ravens during the brittling. To paraphrase Elde, there's nothing so certain, in accounts of the prologue, as the critics' morbid reflection on the significance of the "corbyns bone."[9]

7. I do not put any stock in the notion that the author was somehow writing entirely from personal experience; the *Parlement* is a fully bookish poem in all respects. That does not mean he was unacquainted with hunting, just that the poem is not some sort of transcription of the experience. For recent discussions of the linguistic and pedagogical work of aristocratic hunting literature, see Trevor Dodman, "Hunting to Teach: Class, Pedagogy, and Maleness in *The Master of Game* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*" *Exemplaria* 17 (Fall 2005): 413–44; and Ad Putter, "The Ways and Words of the Hunt: Notes on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Master of Game, Sir Tristrem, Pearl,* and *Saint Erkenwald,*" *Chaucer Review* 40 (2006): 354–85.

8. Russell Peck, "The Careful Hunter in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,*" *ELH* 39 (1972): 334.

9. A survey of the criticism concerning *The Parlement* quickly reveals two recurrent preoccupations that to a great extent frame, and constrain, many accounts of the poem. The first is this question

Some readers will remember that the hunting narrator of the *Parlement* is in fact a poacher, a revelation made 95 lines into the poem when he describes hiding his spoils from the "fostere [forester] of the fee." Now, poaching was an aristocratic pastime too; records of the forest eyre show that offenses against the venison—that is, the illegal taking of deer on the royal forests—were regularly committed by knights, barons, lords, abbots, and even the occasional archbishop. Such accounts help to explain why an episode of poaching might appeal to and even titillate an aristocratic audience. It also suggests why the poaching prologue is appropriate for the *Parlement,* a poem that both celebrates and condemns the aristocratic "lifestyle": poaching is both illegal and widespread, a transgressive activity that is subject to laws that were both specific in their strictures and, according to Barbara Hanawalt, laxly enforced in practice[10]—specifically designed, one might say, to advertise the license enjoyed by aristocrats who get to flout the very rules that establish and protect their privileges. The *Parlement* implies an analogy

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of relevance, and the second is the question of proportion: if the plainly penitential moral delivered by Elde at line 635 is in fact the poem's chief message, why does its chief messenger spend 283 lines—three-quarters of his speech, and almost half the poem—extolling the matchless virtues of the Nine Worthies, in language that is long on praise and surprisingly short on rhetoric of the *memento mori, contemptus mundi, de casibus,* or *ubi sunt* variety?

Typically, a successful (or at least plausible) answer to one of these questions precludes an equally successful answer to the other. An argument like Peck's must underplay the poem's efforts at a realistic representation of hunting in favor of a moral reading, while attempts to account for Elde's "diffuse," "rambling," and "allusive" speech typically have to adopt the opposite presumption—that is, that the poem is not so thoroughly saturated with prevenient penitential feeling as moral readings of the prologue suggest. Either Elde himself is a flawed and ineffective spokesman for the poem's *moralitee* (that is, because he is a realistic representation of a rambling old crank), or the digressive account of the Worthies is meant to be enjoyed for its own sake, as an indulgence of the aristocratic taste for romance heroism. This brief reverie is nevertheless recuperated by the rhetorical bracketing of Elde's succinct *memento mori* pointing—a line here, a line there, a dozen or so lines at the end. Thus this argument explains away the problem of proportion by inversion, suggesting that the solution lies in giving greater weight to fewer lines, the lines that directly articulate the penitential theme—a plausible position whose only flaw is that it is really no more plausible than its opposite. Representative examples of both approaches, largely established in the 1970s, include R. A. Waldron, "The Prologue to 'The Parlement of the Thre Ages,'" *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 786–94; Beryl Rowland, "The Three Ages of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,*" *Chaucer Review* 9 (1975): 342–52; Thorlac Turville-Petre, "The Ages of Man in the *Parlement of the Thre Ages,*" *Medium Ævum* 46 (1977): 66–76; Moran, "*The Parlement of the Thre Ages:* Meaning and Design"; Turville-Petre, "The Nine Worthies in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,*" *Poetica* 11 (1979): 28–45; David V. Harrington, "Indeterminacy in *Winner and Waster* and *The Parliament of the Three Ages,*" *Chaucer Review* 20 (1986): 246–57; and Lisa Kiser, "Elde and His Teaching in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,*" *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987): 303–14. There is a brief but characteristically incisive account of the poem in A. C. Spearing's *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 134–37.

10. Barbara Hanawalt, "*Men's Games*, King's Deer: Poaching in Medieval England," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 18 (1988): 175–83. See more generally William Perry Marvin, *Hunting Law and Ritual in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006).

between that activity, morally suspect but enthusiastically pursued, and its larger analysis of the aristocratic life in general, which Elde finds full of spiritually useless practices that are nevertheless minutely and lovingly described by Ȝouthe.

In fact there's yet another analogy operating here, one that connects poaching with the consumption and composition of poetry itself. In making this claim I follow Michel de Certeau, who himself borrows the term "poaching" to describe the kind of "playful, protesting, fugitive" (175) reading practice that can appropriate a given or authoritative text for its own contradictory or alternative or transgressive purposes. In the Worthies passage the author of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* is doing something similar with his received sources, adapting—poaching—a series of authoritative French (and sometimes Latin) texts to fit the needs of his own vernacular exercise. Jacques de Longuyon disposes of the Worthies in an economical ninety-five lines, while the *Parlement*-poet's various additions, omissions, and dilations triples that length. Hector's portrait, for example, is supplemented by material drawn from Guido delle Collonne's Latin *Historia destructionis Troiae*—a text, as James Simpson has pointed out, with a very significant presence in English literary culture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,[11] and in this case a source that is itself obscured by the *Parlement*-poet's very Chaucerian citation of "Dittes and Dares," Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius, at the end the passage. The poet's account of Alexander is a pastiche of the ancillary Alexander romance the *Fuerre de Gadres* and the *Voeux du Paon* itself—that is, the events that frame Jacques' account of the Nine Worthies are in the *Parlement* incorporated into the Worthies passage itself. The *Voeux* material on Julius Caesar and Arthur is similarly supplemented with British legends and histories, and finally Charlemagne, who merits a summary nine lines in the French poem, receives more than sixty in the *Parlement* that merge the story of *Sir Ferumbras*—perhaps I should say some version of the Ferumbras story—with the events of the *Song of Roland.* In the course of violating the integrity of his source-texts by translating, "in-eching," and (as already noted) remoralizing their words, he obviously manifests his own poetic stealth and cunning and patience; in this sense, the reconstruction of a new poem out of disparate parts mirrors inversely the deft dismembering of the deer that is one measure of the poacher's expertise. The poet is perhaps not as successful as his poacher in hiding his handiwork—at one point he has Joshua parting the Red Sea—but the analogy is hard to ignore. It's a

11. James Simpson, "The Other Book of Troy: Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 397–423; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

potentially productive one, considering the degree to which Middle English alliterative poetry—indeed, Middle English poetry generally—comprises an extended exercise in the translation and adaptation of texts from other literary traditions, though I admit that in trying to recruit "poachers" who serve aristocratic tastes into de Certeau's realm of the playful, the protesting, and the fugitive, I make a somewhat counterintuitive claim.[12]

Let me offer another one, which will help move the discussion toward Chaucer's Monk: Elde's attempt to shoehorn all earthly events into one master narrative in the *Parlement*[13] is a gesture that paradoxically calls into question the power of this sort of formalism to produce meaning. It is typically the case that tragedies of Fortune or *ubi sunt* narratives also always *pose* the problem of form; by compelling all events to conform to the same narrative, such strategies actually call that problem to our attention, by highlighting the various mismatches of story and moralization, our divided emotional responses, and the divergence of source and text. The work of organization is inevitably foregrounded, though the text might try to obscure the problematic nature of that work by piling up instances—as indeed Elde does, by following up his account of the Worthies with a list of wise men and famous lovers who were also laid low by death. Maura Nolan would perhaps call this a species of "virtuous prolongation," and my thinking here has been strongly influenced by her recent work on Fortune in Lydgate and Langland, particularly the idea that "thinking about Fortune poses the problem of poetic function."[14] To put it another way, there is an additional operation of translation and adaption at stake in Elde's harangue: the problem of translating moralizing discourse into moral action, of deriving practical spiritual guidance from what Ralph Hanna calls, in his contribution to this volume, a rhetoric of catechesis based on iterative structure (all those Worthies, all now dead and buried).[15] The *Parlement* leaves that problem to us individual poachers, as it were—a standard maneuver, really, for the dream-vision form.

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12. For recent reflections on Middle English as "a translated and actively translating language," see Michelle R. Warren, "Translation," in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English,* ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 58.

13. Even Elde's switch from the personal to the exemplary mode is striking; after starting with a chillingly effective reminder to his interlocutors that what they are, he once was, and what he is they will be ("Makes ȝour mirours bi me, men, bi ȝoure trouthe")—lines that reveal the poem's affinity with the "Three Living and the Three Dead" tradition—he suddenly turns to the exemplary mode with the Worthies, as if his own example, or the personal mode itself, is insufficient.

14. Maura Nolan, "Lydgate's Literary History: Chaucer, Gower, and Canacee," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 27 (2005): 87. By "function" Nolan here means "role": "What, in a world governed by Fortune, is poetry *for?*" she asks. In this essay I'm more interested in how poetry works—how the motif of Fortune or the *ubi sunt* contributes to its function as poetry.

15. See chapter 6.

The *Monk's Tale,* on the other hand, is more specific in locating the resistance to its prescriptions.

Hunting, Holy Men, and *homo grammaticus*

The broad similarities between the *Parlement* and Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* should be evident; they are each ostensibly collections of lugubrious exempla, designed to convey a conventional medieval moral about the instability of earthly joys: "Lat no man truste on blynd prosperitee," as the Monk puts it.[16] Their rhetoric is slightly different; the *Parlement* applies the *ubi sunt* motif to the template of the Nine Worthies, while the *Monk's Tale,* following the model of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium,* tells tragedies of Fortune, in which the unanticipated but simultaneously inevitable interventions of that goddess cast those who once stood in high prosperity into misery, such that they endeth wretchedly. Because Fortune, like death, cannot be propitiated or avoided—"ther nas no remedie / To bring hem out of hir adversitee," laments the Monk—one is tempted to say "nine of one, seventeen of the other," and lump these poems together. Moreover, criticism of both poems has produced a similar dissensus of opinion. Just as the *Parlement* is either a poem that relentlessly drives home its straightforward *memento mori* message through its repeated exposure of worldly achievement's inevitable submission to death or a poem that undermines its own moral clarity and its penitential spokesman Elde by virtue of its indulgent celebration of the pleasures and accomplishments it is trying to disavow, so the *Monk's Tale* is either a turgid, repetitive, and reductive collection of moralizing tales that reveals its narrator's lack of philosophical sophistication, or a tale that satirizes its teller's inability to bring his stories to heel, exemplified on the one hand by his indulgent treatment of, say, the "myghty queene" Zenobia or "worthy, gentil Alisandre," and on the other by his inability to distinguish adequately between the consequences of human betrayal and the effects of divine intervention. It should be clear by now that such a difference of opinion—in fact, this exact difference of opinion—is inevitable: not only does it reproduce the great divide in twentieth-century criticism of medieval poetry between those who argue for the inescapable immanence of the penitential theme and those who want to attribute some substantive value to the celebration and representation of the secular world and its various

16. All quotations from Chaucer are drawn from *The Riverside Chaucer,* gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), here VII.1997.

inhabitants, but it also reproduces contemporary medieval anxieties about the conflict between aristocratic accomplishment in the world and penitential withdrawal from it, the seigneurial bind that routinely expresses itself textually in *de casibus* writing.[17]

The *Parlement* and the *Monk's Tale* have another thing in common: they both have hunting narrators, and hunting narrators whose pursuit of the sport is equally transgressive. The *Parlement's* dreamer is a poacher, whereas the Monk hunts—"Of prikying and of huntyng for the hare / Was al his lust, for no cost wold he spare" (I.191–92)—despite the fact that such pursuits were formally forbidden to clerics.[18] The Monk, however, "yaf nat of that text a pulled hen, / That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men."[19] It's a commonplace that the Monk's *General Prologue* portrait is heavily ironized by virtue of this pithy resistance to clerical and, elsewhere in the portrait, specifically monastic ideals. But it's worth noting that both Jill Mann's survey of the estates literature and David Knowles's review of monastic visitation records turn up a surprising small number of hunting monks[20]; what

17. Relevant here is David Wallace's reading of the *Monk's Tale* as expressing Chaucer's response to a dual (and dueling) literary inheritance: the praise of great men's lives modeled in Petrarch's *De viris illustribus,* and the focus on the fall of princes as found in Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium.* Wallace argues that Chaucer aligns himself with Boccaccio's critical focus on the falls of antisocial, tyrannical great men and against the model of Petrarchan absolutism, while characteristically mentioning Petrarch in the text (at 2326) but obscuring any indebtedness to Boccaccio. For Wallace, the tale is "energized chiefly by pressures external to its own formal constitution" (ultimately Chaucer's own Ricardian moment, which would produce its own discourse of tyranny); my argument here is that the potential for both the celebration of secular achievement and the anatomizing of a tragic fall is inherent in the *de casibus* form, available for activation in any particular literary tradition, vernacular or Humanist, medieval or modern. See David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 299–336 (quotation from 299).

18. By the Council of Vienne in 1312; David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England,* vol. 2: *The End of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 246–47. Coincidentally, the date of *Les Voeux du Paon is 1312.*

19. Probably a reference to Gratian, says the Riverside (807).

20. Jill Mann has traced the contribution that the "hunting cleric" stereotype makes to the *General Prologue*'s irony, and it is true that in the satiric tradition there are plenty of such accusations; close at hand we have the example of Langland's Sloth, who is better at hare-hunting than understanding the Psalms:

> "I have be preest and person passynge thritty wynter,
> Yet kan I neyther solve ne synge ne seintes lyves rede,
> But I kan fynden in a feld or in a furlang an hare
> Bettre than in *Beatus vir* or in *Beati omnes*
> Construe clausemele and kenne it to my parisshens."
> (*The Vision of Piers Plowman* B 5.416–20; ed. A. V. C. Schmidt, 2nd ed. [London: Dent, 1995])

But it turns out that among the ranks of the hunting clerics there really *aren't* that many monks, something that Mann admits when she suggests that Chaucer "derives this feature from the general

we see in the Monk's portrait may be not so much the deployment of a stereotype as the invention or at least stabilization of one. If we think of the Monk's hunting habit as not so much enjoined upon Chaucer by satiric tradition as bequeathed by him to subsequent generations of poets and critics, then perhaps we are freed to look again at his opinion of the text "That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men," and to find in it not just the perspective of a newfangled "outridere" but a pithy expression of Youthe's take on Elde's moralizing. That is, the Monk's comment suggests that hunting should be treated contingently rather than morally, as a seigneurial pastime rather than as an eschatologically freighted undertaking. It's not just a rejection of a monastic rule, but also a rejection of a moralizing perspective on worldly activity as such.

Of course that moralizing perspective is exactly the one embodied in his tale, a fact that is often seen as something of a surprise. The Monk may be an "outridere," but his *Tale* comes straight out of the scriptorium, and we learn in the prologue to his tale why it is that he doesn't spend too much time in his cell—it's apparently crammed floor-to-ceiling with tragedies. In addressing the question of why Chaucer saddles his hunting monk with a series of *de casibus* anecdotes, though, I am going to suppress the impulse to discover some irrefutable psychological continuity between portrait and tale, and instead champion the Monk's formalism as a token of a thoroughgoing if not entirely consistent attention to problems of literary form. This formalism inheres in all aspects of his appearances in the *Canterbury Tales,*[21] not only the formally constraining narrative pattern of *de casibus* tragedy, and in the Monk's devotion to hunting, which seeks to make a entirely contingent

stereotype of the cleric" (*Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 24). There is certainly one well-known monk, the Leicester abbot William de Cloune (d. 1378), "the most famous and notable hunter of hares among all the lords of the realm," according to Knighton's *Chronicon* and subject of a 1939 essay by Ramona Bressie that is now memorialized in the notes to the *Riverside Chaucer,* and in which she suggests that Cloune might have been a model for the Monk. What's most interesting about Bressie's essay is the way in which its opening assertion—"Hunting monks seem to have been common in Chaucer's time" ("A Governour Wily and Wys," *Modern Language Notes* 54 [1939]: 477)—cites as evidence the work of Chaucer, Langland, and Gower, drawing what seems to me a rather tightly knit hermeneutic circle. Knowles, writing in the second volume of his survey of the religious orders in England, makes a similar observation: "Hunting has often been regarded as a common monastic diversion of the Middle Ages. Chaucer and Langland are no doubt primarily responsible for this impression, but it must be acknowledged that neither in visitation records nor in the decrees of chapter does it appear as one of the most formidable causes of laxity" (*The Religious Orders in England,* 2:246–47). See also Nicholas Orme, "Medieval Hunting: Fact and Fancy," in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context,* ed. Barbara Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), esp. 134–36.

21. And it is often derided as a character flaw, a sign of his "failed sociality or failed participation in the spiritual body," as Aranye Fradenburg puts it: Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 139.

undertaking into a routinized expression of lordly privilege, but also in the strict requirements of translation and versification, to which he pays unusually close attention.[22]

The *Prologue* to the *Monk's Tale* is in fact rich in the language and gestures of the academic prologues or *accessus ad auctores* characteristic of scholastic and university texts, as they have been described by Alastair Minnis and Rita Copeland, a fact that perhaps deserves more attention than it has received. Indeed, it takes the general form of an accessus, complete with a *nomen auctoris* provided by the Host: "But, by my trouthe, I knowe nat youre name. / Wher shal I calle yow my lord daun John, / Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?" (VII.3119–20). There is also an implicit *vita auctoris* embedded here, as the Host goes on to speculate that "Upon my feith, thou art some officer, / Som worthy sexteyn, or some celerer, / For by my fader soule, as to my doom, / Thou art a maister whan thou art at hoom; / No pover cloysterer, ne no novys, / But a governour, wily and wys . . . " (VII.3125–30). Additionally, we find in the Monk's own words not only an account of his other *opera auctoris* ("I wol doon al my diligence, / As fer as sowneth into honestee, / To telle yow a tale, or two, or three. / And if you list to herkne hyderward, / I wol yow seyn the lyf of Seint Edward; / Or ellis, first, tragedies wol I telle, / Of which I have an hundred in my celle"; VII.3159–62), but also a vocabulary that draws upon Latinate aca-

22. What do we gain by thinking of the *Monk's Tale* as an exercise in translation? That it is one is beyond question, as it draws on a number of sources: Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De claris mulieribus,* Boethius's *Consolation,* Dante's *Comedy,* Ovid, possibly Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum historiale,* and—cited within the tale—Lucan, Suetonius, Valerius Maximus, and the Vulgate Old Testament. Despite this range of sources, though, we have not been accustomed to think of the tale in terms of translation. One reason for this is the fact that the *Monk's Tale* is narrated in the shadow of a tale that we *do* think of in that way—indeed, almost exclusively as a translation—the *Tale of Melibee.* Moreover, given that Melibee is a close rendering of a single source, Renaud de Louens's *Livre de Melibee et de Dame Prudence,* and thanks to the fact that it is assigned in the *Canterbury Tales* to the pilgrim Chaucer, we have been encouraged to think of it as an exemplary instance of Chaucer's practice of translation, the rendering of a single text in whatever language into Middle English: the *Boece* from Latin, *Melibee* or the *Roman* from French, *Troilus* or the *Knight's Tale* from Italian. Finally, the correspondence of modes—Renaud's prose translated into Chaucer's—tends oddly enough to obscure the considerably more impressive feat of translation in the *Monk's Tale,* where a variety of different sources (for the most part prose) are reduced (an advisedly chosen word) to the eight-line ababbcbc stanza that Chaucer uses in only two other places, in "An ABC" (a translation from Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*) and in the short poem "The Former Age" (in large part a translation of *Consolation* 2m5). The appearance of this "early" stanza form can foreground for us the fact of translation, paradoxically through the way it obscures the differences among the *Tale*'s sources. Wallace, commenting on the stylistic aims of this translation project, observes that "The *Monk's Tale* falls, or moves uncertainly, between its attempt to develop and sustain an elevated 'heigh style' that approximates humanist Latin and the pull of a native vernacular" (*Chaucerian Polity,* 313).

demic discourse and that is most expressive and connotative in that context: "declaryng" (3172), "mateere" (3174), and "manere" (3181).[23]

Taking the *Monk's Tale* as an example of what Copeland calls "secondary translation"[24] provides the Monk's opening definition of tragedy with a new intelligibility, as insofar as it prospectively seeks to govern the import of his little tales it represents the imposition of an *intentio auctoris* through which the vernacular translator becomes vernacular *auctor.* "Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie, / As olde bookes maken us memorie, / Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee, / And is yfallen out of heigh degree / Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly. / And they ben versified communely / Of six feet, which men

23. Kurt Olsson has made a similar suggestion in "Grammar, Manhood, and Tears: The Curiosity of Chaucer's Monk," *Modern Philology* 76 (1978): 1–17. For the academic vocabulary see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 189ff.

24. "Secondary translation" is the process through which a vernacular writer uses "the techniques of exegetical translation to produce, not a supplement to the original, but a vernacular substitute for that original" (Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation,* 179). In secondary translation—and here I oversimplify Copeland's work—the vernacular author borrows from the scholarly *accessus* (especially the *accessus Ovidiani*) the hermeneutical procedure by which a later academic reader of, say, Ovid's *Heroides* would try to establish a unifying *intentio auctoris* to make sense of a heterogeneous collection of tales, and uses this method, as Copeland says, "as the point of invention for his own text" (190). It's akin to—and here I *really* oversimplify Copeland's claims—that moment when students ask if maybe we could just tell them what they should be looking for in the new poem or novel we've just assigned. One of Copeland's examples is the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women,* and perhaps it would be most useful to observe how she describes it: "But in Chaucer's Prologue, that single, unifying *intentio* . . . constitutes a *prospectus* to the *Legend;* it represents the *prospective* reasoning of the poet himself that brought the collection into being. But Chaucer's prospective stance is also curiously akin to the stance of the exegetes: in identifying Ovid's *intentio* from their own historically belated position, the exegetes arrogated to their perceptions a certain prospective power" (189). Though Copeland's argument insofar as it attends to Chaucer is largely confined to the *Legend,* we can substitute "Monk's Prologue" for "Legend of Good Women Prologue" here without producing any significant misrepresentation of what's going on in the former, as the *Legend* and *Monk's Tale* have a lot in common—both are univocal, inorganic tale collections that hew to a single reiterated narrative line, and both are offered in some kind of spirit of resistance to an external demand: it may be a bit counterintuitive to suggest that the *Legend's* God of Love, who demands stories of good women, and the *Tales'* Harry Bailly, who inadvertently tells us more than he wants to about a woman named Goodelief, are similar kinds of readers (and certainly they have different degrees of influence over the tellers whose tales they solicit), but I think that on one level they are; they are both confined within a fairly narrow horizon of expectation, however much their individual horizons may differ. Moreover, both poems are highly rhetorical; Copeland cites the use of *occupatio* and *abbreviatio* that characterize the narration of the *Legend's* various chapters, while the *Monk's Tale,* full of *repetitio, exclamatio, apostrophatio, superlatio, oppositio,* and other figures, was long ago judged by Manly to be the most rhetorical of the *Tales,* "with nearly 100 percent. of rhetoric" (in second place is the *Manciple's Tale,* with a measly 61 percent). Jahan Ramazani, "Chaucer's Monk: The Poetics of Abbreviation, Aggression, and Tragedy," *Chaucer Review* 27 (1993): 263, quoting J. M. Manly, "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," repr. in *Chaucer Criticism: The Canterbury Tales, ed.* Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960), 268–90.

clepen exametrron. / In prose eek been endited many oon, / And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse. / Lo, this declaryng oghte ynogh suffise"—these lines have often occasioned critical comment due to the Monk's unusually close attention to matters of prosody as well as content, and if we think about this attention in the context of academic translation as described by Copeland, we can see how the prospective application of *intentio* is, from the perspective of medieval rhetorical practice, what we have come to (mis) recognize as the "reductiveness" of the Monk's formulaic tragedies.

Modern critics are not the only ones to have found the iterative structure of the tale more than they could bear; in a sense the history of its reception begins even before the tale can come to a proper end. In the *Parlement of the Thre Ages,* the debate about the best way to characterize the exigencies of the aristocratic life concludes, if imperfectly, with Elde's *ubi sunt* series; in the *Monk's Tale* this order is reversed, and his series of tragedies is what prompts the dispute. It is disguised as an interruption:

> "Hoo!" quod the Knyght, "good sire, namoore of this!
> That ye han seyd is right ynough, ywis,
> And muchel moore; for litel hevynesse
> Is right ynough to muche folk, I gesse.
> I seye for me, it is a greet disese,
> Whereas men han been in greet welthe and ese,
> To heeren of hire sodeyn fal, allas!
> And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,
> As whan a man hath been in povre estaat,
> And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunat,
> And there abideth in prosperitee.
> Swich thyng is gladsom, as it thynketh me,
> And of swich thyng were goodly for to telle."
> "Ye," quod oure hooste, "by seint poules belle!
> Ye seye right sooth; this Monk he clappeth lowde.
> He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde
> I noot nevere what; and als of a tragedie
> Right now ye herde, and, pardee, no remedie
> It is for to biwaille ne compleyne
> That that is doon, and als it is a peyne,
> As ye han seyd, to heere of hevynesse.
> Sire Monk, namoore of this, so God yow blesse!
> Youre tale anoyeth al this compaignye."
> (2767–89)

This outburst expresses in narrative form exactly the philosophical stand-off captured in the *Parlement,* and indeed expresses it as a problem of the form of narrative: which way do you want your story arc to go? In one sense it is as if Youth and Medill Elde, rather than letting Elde have the last word, get to speak again at the end of the *Parlement*'s dream, the one praising once more the attraction of tales of aristocratic accomplishment and the other decrying the irrelevancy of *ubi sunt* episodes to the bourgeois values he would presumably share with that fair burgess, the Host. The Knight, in fact, seems to belong to exactly the same interpretive community as Youthe, as both extol the recreative payoff of a happy ending; at the end of a hard day's hawking, Youthe likes to retire "Riche romance to rede and rekken the soothe / Of kempes and of conquerours, of kynges full noblee, / How thay wirchipe and welthe wanne in thaire lyves" (250–52).

It is of course conventional to see in this incident an expression of estate antagonism; we don't have to subscribe to R. E. Kaske's characterization of the Monk as a parody of the Knight, here receiving his comeuppance,[25] to appreciate the animus unleashed when a Knight speaks directly (if politely) to a Monk about the content of a clerical discourse that he assumes is directed at him, or at least at his class. For all that's conventional about the Monk's *de casibus* moralizing, it's still a rather pointed reminder of the "brotelnesse" of aristocratic privilege, and we could certainly see Chaucer—by having the Knight's interruption precede the more prosaic objections of the Host—as engaged in restoring some life to a conflict that the Monk's performance has rather drained of its vitality.

But in fact what is chiefly represented here is an intramural conflict of the seigneurial classes, one from which the bourgeois host is excluded in a fundamental way (just as Medill Elde gets the fewest lines in the *Parlement*).[26] The Monk is, indeed, an antitype of the Knight, both in the *General Prologue* and in the epilogue to his tale, but the Knight is also an avatar of the Monk, because they both face, from different angles, the same choice between worldliness and withdrawal. Larry Scanlon expresses the Monk's choice in these useful terms:

> When Chaucer makes his Monk both moralist and outrider, he articulates the Church's dilemma in its broadest terms. The Monk combines in one

25. Robert E. Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption of the Monk's Tale," *ELH* 24 (1957): 249–68.

26. Note that his objection to the *Tale* derives from ignorance rather than class anxiety—"He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde / I noot nevere what"—and of course both Knight and Monk are lords from the perspective of the Host, the former "Sire Knyght . . . my mayster and my lord" (*GP* 837) and the latter "My lord, the Monk" (VII.1924).

> character two forms of confrontation between the Church and the world: the legitimate role of moral correction, and the less legitimate role of self-interested proprietor that inevitably accompanies it. If the Church stays cloistered it remains morally pure, but fails in its obligation to correct society at large. And yet spiritual authority differs so radically from the secular political power it must correct, that as soon as the Church moves into the world, chances are it will be contaminated.[27]

But this formulation, seen once again in the context of the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* and the Knight's "Hoo! . . . Good sire, namoore of this!," invites us I think to reverse the terms for a moment, and to consider the two forms of confrontation between the world and the Church: between, that is, the imperative of the noble life in which defense of Christendom—one of the abiding ideological justifications for aristocratic privilege—is inevitably accompanied by various threats to the soul of the individual defender (e.g., *surquidrie,* as Malory might put it), and on the other hand a penitential withdrawal from such activity that, for all the good it can do for the soul, would necessarily abrogate the individual knight's obligation to fight "in his lordes were" and "for oure feith."[28]

Rather than seeing the Knight and the Monk purely as antagonists at this moment, then, we would do better to see them as mutually implicated in and dialectically articulating an *agon* characteristic of the lordly class to which they both belong (and to which the Host stands in a kind of double, or better, parallel subordination): "How shall the Church in the World be served by its *gouvernours?*," that is, by that class of actors who are always both "outridere" and *viator?* This is the question, I think, that *de casibus* texts not

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27. Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 221. We can find confirmation of this latter point in the work of Gower and Langland, who in the *Confessio* and *Piers Plowman,* respectively, decry the Donation of Constantine as "venym schad / In holy cherche of temporal/ Which medleth with the spirital" (Gower, *Confessio Amantis,* in *The Complete Works of John Gower: The English Works,* ed. G. C. Macaulay [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899–1901], 2.3490–92); for them the Donation is the typological, foundational instance of clerical worldliness, imagined not in individual terms—a worldly monk, a venal friar, a courtly prioress—but institutionally. Moreover, in England the last quarter of the fourteenth century witnessed an ongoing debate about the participation of clerics and specifically monks in secular administration, with the Benedictine Uthred de Boldon arguing in favor and both the friars and the Lollards condemning the practice. See Alan Fletcher, "Chaucer the Heretic," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003): 97–98.

28. And as Scanlon goes on to observe, in this particular exchange it is the Knight who is much more the fantasist in his taste for upward rather than downward story arcs: "The accession of a poor man to rich estate only further confirms the essential instability that the Monk has argued defines human history. On this point, the cultural authorities, medieval and humanist alike, are on the Monk's side, and not the Knight's" (*Narrative, Authority, and Power,* 226).

only pose, but in fact only *ever* pose, or only ever *pose* and can never answer, because of the form of lamentable exemplarity (or exemplary lamentation) in which they are bound to pose it: "O worthy, gentil Alisandre, allas, / That evere sholde fallen swich a cas!"

This observation about the "common social location" of Knight and Monk harks back appropriately enough to "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*"; for Anne Middleton the lay and clerical readers of *Piers* also formed a single audience, one devoted to the pursuit of "those tasks and offices where spiritual and temporal governance meet."[29] *Piers* addresses the needs of that audience in a form that, whatever its own dead ends and *aporias,* manages largely to avoid the double bind of *de casibus* writing. Not so the Monk and the Knight, who are caught in the snare and are inevitably of two minds about it. The *Monk's Tale* may say "no no" to the value of earthly activity, but his portrait says "yes yes," and tells a story of attachment rather than ascesis: "of hunting for the hare / Was al his lust." And when the Knight expresses a dislike of stories that end with a *sodeyn* fall, he's implicitly disavowing his own tale, which, while it contains within itself multiple iterations of his preferred plot—the wretched Arcite certainly waxes fortunate, and his cousin Palamon ultimately abides in prosperity—also features the sudden, mortal fall of someone who had risen from a certain kind of misery up to *solas.* One need not fully subscribe to the "crisis of chivalry" reading of the *Knight's Tale* (though I do) to admit that the Knight here resembles not the Neoplatonist Theseus of the end of his tale, making virtue of necessity, but the devastated Theseus of a few dozen lines earlier, who can only be consoled by his elderly father Egeus, and his sunny observation that "This world nis but a thurghfare ful of wo." Indeed, at the end of the *Monk's Tale* the Knight seems to reject the philosophical perspective altogether, articulating instead an affective preference for one genre over another. This is characteristically Chaucerian; as the Miller's *Prologue* indicates, questions of genre and form are where questions of class typically go to hide in the *Canterbury Tales.*

In fact the epilogue to the *Monk's Tale* is not the first place we have witnessed the Knight interrupting some conventional activity with a "Hoo! Namoore of this." This is exactly the phrase that Theseus uses when he comes across Palamon and Arcite fighting in the grove, up to their ankles in blood:

> This duc his courser with his spores smoot,
> And at a stert he was bitwix hem two,

29. Middleton, "Audience and Public," 104.

> And pulled out a swerd and cride, “Hoo!
> Namoore, up peyne of lesynge of youre heed!
> By myghty Mars, he shal anon be deed
> That smyteth any strook that I may seen.
> But telleth me what myster men ye been,
> That been so hardy for to fighten heere
> Withouten juge or oother officere,
> As it were in a lystes roially.”
> (1704–13)

It’s at this point that Theseus learns of the cousins’ feud, and conceives of his plan to give it some order, to channel its volatile energies into the proper chivalric forms—a plan that ends with Arcite suffering his fatal fall. What is it that explains his coincidental arrival, the kind of unlikely event that, as the Knight says, might not happen once in a thousand years? What was Theseus doing in the grove at that particular time? Why, he was hunting, of course; mighty Theseus

> . . . for to hunten is so desirus,
> And namely at the grete hert in May,
> That in his bed ther daweth hym no day
> That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
> With hunte and horn and houndes hym bisyde.
> For in his huntyng hath he swich delit
> That it is al his joye and appetit
> To been hymself the grete hertes bane,
> For after Mars he serveth now Dyane.
> (1673–82)

Like the poacher of the *Parlement,* Theseus is up and out early to seek his *avanture;* like the author of the *Parlement,* the Knight links this aristocratic recreation by analogy (but not by allegory) with a larger project of trying to address through a carefully constructed narrative the unresolved problems of the lordly life in this world, what has been famously described as “the struggle between noble designs and chaos.”[30]

Literary representations of the hunt can certainly provide diverting episodes in the midst of siegneurial fictions that have, ultimately, more serious

30. The phrase is Charles Muscatine’s, from “Form, Texture, and Meaning in Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale,” *PMLA* 65 (1950): 929.

designs. But the constructed nature of the literary hunt—its formal elaboration in terms of process, ritual, and diction—also makes it a useful and flexible mechanism for the redirection of anxieties about the contingency and precariousness of lordly advantage in a world that sometimes seems to be ruled by Fortune, and about the construction of vernacular fictions in the shadow of more authoritative traditions. The *Parlement of the Thre Ages* and the *Monk's Tale* are particularly rich examples of the collocation of venery, tragedy, and translation, but we also find it in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* both of which advertise their indebtedness to "olde bookes" and use hunting scenes as oblique preludes to episodes of aristocratic loss; in *The Awyntrs off Arthur,* where the hunt is literally haunted by the spectre of the end of noble privilege, a queen (Guenevere's mother) now "couched in clay" and advertising herself as a mirror for princesses; and in the *Siege of Jerusalem,* which raises the stakes to the cultural level by adding a recreational hunting and hawking expedition to its ambitiously violent *translatio imperii* narrative.[31] The fictional hunt, at least, can succeed, and can bring a formally satisfying if temporary sense of order and control to parallel narratives in which history, though also represented in conventional forms, tends not to cooperate with the aims of seigneurial self-regard.

31. On this theme in the *Siege,* see, e.g., David Lawton, "Titus Goes Hunting and Hawking: The Poetics of Recreation and Revenge in *The Siege of Jerusalem,*" in *Individuality and Achievement in Middle English Poetry,* ed. O. S. Pickering (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 105–17. An additional if somewhat contrary example of the phenomenon can be found in the alliterative *Morte Arthure,* where Arthur's dream of Fortune's wheel begins in a wood full of "wolves and wild swine and wicked bestes" (3232) that instead of submitting to the chase are doing the chasing.