The Robberies of Chaucer

David R. Carlson
University of Ottawa

I

Geoffrey Chaucer's assault on a friar in Fleet Street—often treated as evidence of legal qualification on the poet's part (Rickert; Hornsby)—would do nicely to sum up his position in the several class- and class-deriving struggles current in England late in the fourteenth century. As a bit of Langlandian personification allegory, the episode would represent wealth's assault on indigence, the starker since the victim of the assault was a Grey Friar, espousing the radical Franciscan abjuration of property, based on the example of Christ and the apostles, for which William Ockham suffered, faced with papal insistence that, by scholastic ratiocination, it was strictly a logical *impossible*, something unnatural and so contrary to God's purpose, to be without property (a view Ockham characterized as "heretical, erroneous, silly, ridiculous, fantastic, insane, and defamatory" [3]). Or it might also represent orthodoxy's assault on religious deviance, since friars by definition undid ecclesiastical categories, being neither secular nor regular clergy nor even always clearly clerical or lay but something of all of these categories and so finally none; or the straight world's assault on the queer, friars being notorious sodomites, when not chaste or otherwise set athwart the dominant construction of sexual normalcy.

ESC 35.2–3 (June/September 2009): 29–54

David R. Carlson is a Professor in the English Department, University of Ottawa. His book *Lancastrian Gower and State-Official Verse* will be published next year.

The only truth in the episode may be poetic, for it is poorly evidenced; most to the point, "[E]veryone who has written a biography of Chaucer," as Derek Pearsall put it, has found him "to be a decent sort of fellow" (*Life* 3).[1] If not quite the "wide-eyed, jolly, roly-poly little man" with "an immense enthusiasm for life" (and "no hint of unsteadiness"), who "loved his fellow-men" all alike, "both good and bad," then at the least, certainly, he was "very good company—a good fellow" (Donaldson 2 and 10; Kittredge 32–33 and 218).

The evidence belies. Chaucer's career in violence was extensive, no matter the veracity of the roadway anti-fraternal beating. The "Father of English Poetry" committed rape—rape, not kidnap, although he knew kidnapping otherwise. He practised extortion. And an episode of "trespass and contempt" is on record (*CLR* 343–47, 504–06, 340–42; Cannon).[2] Of course the evidence is labile; also, it was a violent age, and things happened. On the other hand, they seem not to have happened to everyone, in equal distribution. In the reasonably extensive life records of the contemporary poets John Gower, for example, and John Lydgate, there are no such episodes, although each too had his faults (Macaulay IV, vii–xxx; Pearsall *Lydgate*). A propensity for violent crime was not in them, evidently, but was in Chaucer. The violence entailed in this poet accomplishing what he did—physical force applied for doing bodily injury—was persistent.

Assault, rape, extortion, trespass, all documented in the published Chaucer life records, are violent and criminal. Recognition that other

1 "Perhaps one could adopt a differently prejudiced view of Chaucer, and represent his life, and its importance in his writings, as that of a time-serving opportunist and placeman, who pictured his own pliability in all that he saw. He might be seen as one who had outlived the idealisms of chivalry and faith but found nothing to fill the vacuum that they left; who exposed the meretriciousness of institutionalized religion, but retreated into its most inflexible dogma when his humanity was exhausted; who recognized no central social value in law and other forms of contract, but saw only what was hollow and saleable; who made many generous gestures towards women, but returned generally to a conventional misogyny; who viewed life in a spirit of pessimism interspersed with irrepressible hilarity" (Pearsall, *Life* 7–8). A significant other contribution to an antithetical view of Chaucer is in Blamires; also, Hanna. For critical analysis of the development and institutionalization of such views, see Trigg.

2 Particulars of Chaucer's trespass are not on record; Bellamy explains that "trespass included such crimes as assault, breaking into houses, taking goods, issuing threats, abduction, conspiracy, extortion, obstruction of sewers and dykes, resisting officials, forestalling, and using non-standard weights and measures" (*Crime* 33); the range of possibilities is illustrated by the documents collected and translated in Arnold, having also analysis of the various classes of cases (I, xxxi–lxxxv).

doings of Chaucer's, as a Justice of the Peace, for example, or as a functionary in the state's revenue extraction apparatus, may also have been violent in some sense or criminal would depend on how one defined terms. The genitive phrase in the title of Walford D. Selby's excellent 1875 documentary collection *The Robberies of Chaucer* might go either way, strictly speaking, either subjective or objective. As it happens, the Selby collection ignores the subjective possibilities. It does not supply documentary evidence for study of Chaucer's robberies of others, except obliquely, nor is the present paper, named after Selby's work, so broadly concerned.

There was an occasion (or a series of concatenate occasions) on which Chaucer was also a victim of violent crime: apparently, he was assaulted and robbed by highwaymen in the autumn of 1390. In the documentary evidence about the episode, there are problems: Chaucer may have been robbed once, or he may have been robbed once and then again a few days later and possibly a third time by the same persons, for example; the robbery for which Chaucer was compensated, taking place on the road between Canterbury and London, was not the same robbery of Chaucer, taking place at home, in Westminster, for which the same criminals were prosecuted; and so on. The facts of the case were (and have continued to be) all but inconsequential. What mattered at the time (and has continued to matter) is that the fundamental class distinction—between the robbers and the robbed in the first place, although this immediate distinction immediately ramifies—be enforced, by force, and respected, that such an episode might be used for publicly reasserting the value of the inequitable distribution of socially produced good that had come under attack in the robbery. The episode too implicated Chaucer in doing violence.

II

The earliest report has Chaucer being assaulted and robbed, of twenty pounds and some, of horses, and of miscellaneous goods and chattels, near Hatcham, Surrey, not very distant from London, on the same roadway that his fictional pilgrims were to travel in the *Canterbury Tales*. A subsequent description (evidently also emanating from Chaucer's side) specifies the location more narrowly, as at the Foul Oak, near Hatcham, Surrey, and it supplies a date: 3 September 1390. The terms chosen for framing these earliest accounts emphasize the violence against Chaucer's person and the threats of violence that accompanied the theft. Chaucer "estoit robbez felonousement," that is, specifically with assault; the unnamed thieves "vi et armis insultum fecerunt et ipsum [sc. Chaucer] verberaverunt, vulneraverunt, et male tractaverunt" (*CLR* 477–78).

Why the Foul Oak was so named is not known. The tree does not survive, nor are there reports as to its appearance. The consensus of conjecture favours an explanation from the dangers to travelers from highwaymen associated with the place: it was a favoured haunt for thieves. In fact, the egregious crime that took place there had occurred only a few years before Chaucer's robbery and was the authorities' doing, not that of thieves. The Lord Mayor of London, Nicholas Brembre—a long-time associate of Chaucer's, from the Wool Quay and the period of the Peasants' Revolt, also an associate of Thomas Usk, the Chaucerian scrivener—staged a mass summary execution at the Foul Oak in September 1384. Twenty-two prisoners were taken by night from the Newgate Gaol in the city of London, marched out of town under guard to the Foul Oak, and killed there (*CLR* 489n2; *Westminster Chronicle* 98 and 248). Brembre came under some censure later for this doing. It was an example of his tyranny as mayor, amongst others. But that is all it was, apparently. A fuller range of his motives and interests in the episode is not revealed. The choice of an extra-mural location for the executions bespeaks a recognition on Brembre's part of the extraordinary nature of what he was doing. He faced no clear threat from the twenty-two prisoners, however, who appear to have been ordinary representative inmates, picked out carelessly, impersonally, nor from the incarcerate population generally at the time. The point seems to have been to give public evidence of Brembre's mayoral and personal power, in a fairly pure form, simply for the sake of doing so, in order to build it. Brembre's mayoralty was in dispute. He proved himself powerful enough to remain mayor by acting powerful enough, and he was re-elected only days afterward.

What Chaucer was doing may be somewhat clearer. He came alone, carrying a large sum of money, about the king's business. Predictably, the sum diminishes as the documentary record unfolds. Initially, it was said to be somewhat more than twenty pounds, and then twenty pounds even; at the point where the documents begin to represent information coming from the robbers, the sum is cut in half, to ten pounds, settling subsequently to an amount just under ten pounds. In any case, it was a significant sum, and the documents specify that it was in cash. Twenty pounds or ten, such a quantity would have been too bulky to have been concealed about Chaucer's person. Nonetheless, he appears to have been traveling alone. None of the evidence yields any suggestion of other persons having been in Chaucer's party, and cognate documents, describing other work of the same highwaymen, suggest that they always attacked solitary travelers or pairs.

The documents make suggestive remarks about what Chaucer may have been doing with so much cash. The horses and "autres moebles" taken were Chaucer's, and they disappear from sight almost as soon as they left his possession. Their recovery never becomes matter for documentary attention, nor was Chaucer ever recompensed for their loss. What preoccupies the documents exclusively was the cash: it was the king's, not Chaucer's. He was carrying it about the king's business, almost certainly in his capacity as Clerk of the King's Works, Chaucer's office in the state disciplinary apparatus between July 1389 and June 1391. Buildings works, for the management of which the clerk would have been responsible, were in process at the royal palace at Eltham at the time of the robbery, further from London along the same road, and the plausible hypothesis is that Chaucer was "taking money from Westminster to Eltham to pay workers there" (*CLR* 489).

The image is of inconsiderate arrogance: a public assertion (tendentious, albeit probably unselfconscious) of privilege's faith in its own invulnerability. Although the robbers may not yet have known that their mark was about the king's business and so that, by assaulting him, they were assaulting the king, and although the robbers could not yet have known who their mark was much more precisely; still, not poverty passing by with peace following after, but a middle-aged fat man carrying bags of money came alone, past the Foul Oak. Although the thieves may not have been mindful of the full range of socially subversive implications in their doings, if Chaucer looked like an apt target to them, it was because he was. The king's works—including the road on which Chaucer traveled, including the palace to which the road led, for maintenance of both of which Chaucer was responsible as clerk—were public, palpable expressions of power. Stealing the ten or twenty pound payroll that Chaucer was carrying along the road was to attack that power.

The Chaucerian presumption was reformulated as the thieves', to teach a lesson to the error of challenging right order.

III

The immediate triumph of exclusion over privilege, want over wealth, in the robbery itself was short-lived. Immediately, the event was turned to use for asserting wealth's dominance. The Chaucerian presumption was reformulated as the thieves', to teach a lesson to the error of challenging right order. Chaucer's robbery was a good thing, from this perspective of privilege, inasmuch as it was useful in this way. By means of it, power was able to operate. Chaucer's privilege was justified and confirmed: his part in the crime was rewarded. The impulse to challenge such privilege, underlying and pervading the robbers' actions, was punished, at length,

thoroughly, publicly, and spectacularly—albeit with a variety of spectacle that seems to have been rendered nearly invisible by repetition—and so proven erroneous. Order was restored, the stronger for having been challenged.[3]

The first step was for the king to commission an inquiry into what had happened, although the terms by which the inquiry was commissioned delimited what it could discover. The fundamental *rei veritas* was already determined in advance of inquiry. Assigned by the king "ad inquirendum," so that "rei veritas melius sciri poterit, qui felones et malefactores in Galfridum Chaucer apud Hacchesham in comitatu predicto [sc. "Surreie"] vi et armis insultum fecerunt," were William Rickhill, William Brenchley, Edmund Brudenell, and John Tauke (*CLR* 477). Rickhill and Brenchley had worked with Chaucer previously, in a similar capacity, on the Kent commission of the peace to which Chaucer had been appointed from 1385 to 1389, policing that seditious county in the aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt, which had started there. Chaucer and the other commissioners had been charged by the king with controlling all "qui in conventiculis contra pacem nostram et in perturbacionem populi nostri seu vi armata ierint vel equitaverint" and all "qui in insidiis ad gentem nostram mahemiandam vel interficiandam jacuerint vel exnunc jacere presumpserint" (*CLR* 352). On the same counter-revolutionary apparatus in Kent, Walter Clopton had served too: the judge who would preside over the several trials of those who robbed Chaucer.

Chaucer's part in his robbery was formally, officially forgiven, by a writ of discharge issued in January 1391. Although the document mentions Chaucer's loses of "son cheval et autres moebles," no provision is made for their reparation; by this writ, however, it pleased the king to pardon Chaucer "vyngt livres de nostre tresor" "et lui descharger en son aconte a nostre Escheqer de les vyngt livres susdites" (*CLR* 478). It is not asserted here that Chaucer had lost twenty pounds to the thieves, nor that none of the money was Chaucer's. The king simply forgave Chaucer responsibility for a sum of royal money. The pardoning of it is reckoned in Chaucer's final, prolonged accounting of his clerkship of the works, rendered subsequently to the exchequer auditors, but no more detailed an explanation is given there either (*CLR* 456).

3 The allusion is to Thomas More's remark in *Utopia* (240), characterizing the English juridical system as *conspiratio divitum*. Also, a debt should be apparent to Michel Foucault's analysis of such legal systems, in *Discipline and Punish*, especially the "Panopticism" chapter (195–228), and to Foucault's technical sense of the term "power," most concisely explained in a few pages of the brief chapter on "Method" in volume one of the *History of Sexuality* (92–102).

This writ of discharge is anomalous, in a possibly noteworthy way: alone of the documents to do with Chaucer's robbery, it is in French. The rest are in Latin, although with an English term or phrase butting in from time to time. Latin is the voice of authority, as intimidating and baffling as can be within the (relatively broad) spectrum of languages and idioms that would have been available; it is used in this group of documents when some intercourse occurs or might occur across the class divide, between the criminals and the authorities, thieves and justices, or, later, *probator* and coroner. By contrast, the writ of discharge is an intraclass communication, effectively, between the king and "nostre cher ami" Chaucer. They were not always on such intimate terms, except in such a circumstance, drawn closer together by the threatening proximity of persons of the radically other sort from the other side of the class divide. The John Ball letters, circulated in English, the language of crime, evidently, were also intraclass communications, albeit within the other class (Green). For this writ of discharge, French seems to serve the same function, at once giving evidence of and also fostering identity. Vernacularism was not enough: French had the specific appropriate range of historical associations.

IV

Of more immediate consequence is the information included in the writ, to the effect that particulars of the crime had been confessed, "pleinement," "par bouche dun des ditz larons [sc. the "aucuns notables larons" previously mentioned as perpetrators] en presence de nostre coroner et autres noz officiers a Westmouster en nostre gaole illoeqes" (*CLR* 478). The writ does not explain how the *laron* in question came into his jailers' custody, nor how it happened that he came to confess to robbing Chaucer there; nor does the writ name his name. Other documents strongly suggest, however, that the person in question must have been Richard Brierley, who by this time, early January 1391, had decided to turn approver and launch an appeal.[4]

The appeal was a form of gambling. Criminals—those who had to profess themselves to be criminals in order to participate—were seemingly allowed, in fact encouraged, to play against the judicial apparatus, and the judicial apparatus always won, one way or another. In the appeal proper—the actual verbal instrument—the person entering into the appeal, the *probator*, had to confess guilt, although by the time of turning *probator* this guilt would already have been so thoroughly established that an appeal

4 For proceedings by appeal, I rely on Hamil; also Bellamy, *Crime* (125–34). Other contemporary instances are analyzed in Post and in Strohm, "Trade."

might seem worthwhile. For in exchange for giving evidence of the crimes of others, who become *appellants* thereby, the *probator* might be pardoned his own part in the same crimes or at least have execution of sentence for them stayed. The *appellants* implicated in the crimes confessed by the *probator* still had to be indicted and tried for their parts, at which point *appellants* could chose trial by jury or trial by combat, against the *probator*. *Appellants* who lost, either the jury trial or the combat, were deemed to have been proven guilty and so might be executed; if *appellants* won, again at either form of trial—and *appellants* might be numerous—the *probator*'s accusations against the vindicated *appellants* were deemed to have been criminally malicious, and so the *probator* might have sentence executed on him. The guilt of any *probator* was already a matter of record in any case, by virtue of the confession that made up part of the appeal. The economies of such a procedure—whereby the criminals were set to work catching each other and then killing each other off—were appreciated at the time: by it, the criminals were themselves made to contribute, it was said, to cleansing the land of filth—*ut terram purgent* (Bartlett 113).

Best known may be the contemporary appeal of Thomas Usk, whose confessions implicated the populist London Mayor John Northampton and other adherents of his party in conspiracy and agitation, including violence, at the time of Nicholas Brembre's provocative election to the mayoralty in October 1383 (Shawver 8–26). In an interval following his appeal and the trial of Northampton and others on the basis of it, before the king at Reading in July 1384 and Usk's receipt of a royal pardon in September 1384, he occupied himself with writing an apology for his doings, in the form of the *Testament of Love* (Summers 24–59). Usk's guilt had compounded or doubled by the time of this writing, however, making exculpatory apology the more urgent for him: to the criminal sedition against Brembre's regime to which he had confessed in his appeal, he had added treachery against Northampton and his party by giving it. About three years later, the political tables having turned, Usk was arrested, for having made his appeal, in effect, giving evidence by it of his participation, with Brembre and others, in a malicious, criminal conspiracy against Northampton—the conspiracy being another aspect of Brembre's tyranny—a capital offense, for which Usk was tried and executed, with Brembre, in March 1388.

Richard Brierley's appeal of early 1391 was enthusiastic, suspiciously so, and certainly more so than would seem to have been strictly necessary. It covers rather more than the robbery of Chaucer. Brierley implicated fifteen other persons—Walter Atwater (goldsmith), Henry Barry (Irishman, whose name is homophonous with the *Canterbury Tales*'s host's),

Nicholas Bullhog (baker), Adam Clerk (servant of Thomas Talbot), John Colet, Thomas Cottingham, John Curtis (summoner), Gilbert (*clericus* of Thomas Talbot), William Hareby, John Hatfield (of York), William Huntingfield, Thomas Talbot (Irishman), Simon Taylor (of Bristol), John Verdon (Irishman), Thomas Wetham ("Travailyngeman"), and Alexander Wolf or Wolfey (of York)—and two others were additionally brought to trial on charges following from the crimes described in the appeal—Robert Paris and Richard Manston.

In the final form in which the appeal was enrolled, Brierley gave details of ten crimes, all larcenies, taking place in London or on the roadways near it, between early April and the end of November 1390. By this account, Brierley was on the job (not counting make-ready) about once every three weeks, working most often with William Huntingfield, in six of the ten robberies, although also repeatedly with Thomas Talbot and Talbot's *clericus* Gilbert, in two robberies. The victims were individuals or pairs, variably characterized—a *mercator extraneus*, *duos homines de Flandria* (who would have been merchants as well), *duos fratres* (of the religious sort, presumably), and a *capellanus ignotus* of St Albans. Most often they are described only as *homines ignoti*. Only two of the victims are named: Thomas More, described further as a servant of Robert Paris, the jailer, who, in parallel proceedings, was found guilty and fined for having played some part in one of Huntingfield's escapes from custody, and Chaucer, whose robbery the final appeal puts first, describing it as the work of four: Brierley, Talbot, Gilbert *clericus*, and Huntingfield.

The inexpungeable crime which Brierley imputes to himself in his appeal is that of being without real property. He answered the coroner Brenchley that at present he had neither goods nor chattels, although at the time when he had been committed to prison his belongings had amounted to a sword, a dagger, a cloak, two horses, and a small sum of cash. These he valued in total at just more than nine pounds. In response to the coroner's express inquiry, Brierley affirmed "quod nulla habet terras seu tenementa" (*CLR* 481).

V

Brierley's appeal and the related documents may provoke an ambition to hear, speaking through the records, the voices of the marginalized, "some so slightly audible as to stand at the very edge of silence" (Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow* 9).[5] However, the voices here would have to speak through layers of

5 Spivak criticizes "the slippage from rendering visible the mechanism to rendering vocal the individual" (285) that characterizes even as circumspect a

mediation finally impermeable. Brierley's description of himself as a *communis insidiator viarum* is amongst manifold cases in point. The phrase was a death sentence. Brierley's appeal's assertion, at the outset, to have been produced "ex spontanea voluntate," cannot be true, even if the forms of coercion brought to bear were only incorporeal (Selby 19–20).[6] The documents are in Latin in any case: what speaks through such documents, pervasively, is the voice of authority, systematically going about its business of manipulating the resistance against it.

Though the thieves' voices cannot be heard, something of their concrete practices remains manifest in the surviving documents, however, for their practices were of direct concern to authority. Consequently, the documents can still be "the textual site for a struggle to reclaim for history an experience buried in a forgotten crevice of our past," providing opportunity to "a critical historiography" for "bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life in its passage through time" (Guha 40 and 36; compare Panikkar). The threat the thieves posed was practical and immediate—subjective and abstract, too, presumably, albeit inconsequentially and irrecuperably so—and their practice was troublingly subversive, requiring therefore to be exposed in order that it might be expunged. Their practical opposition to authority took varying forms in the present instance, to which the documents pay varying degrees of attention.

Brierley's gang was oddly composed, perhaps discomfitingly so. The appeal notes the distant origin of some of the criminals Brierley names: two northerners, from York, one person from Bristol, and three Irishmen. The north was notoriously lawless (from the perspective of the south-central region), and it may be that Irishmen were criminal by stipulation; in any event, the singling out of these few for topographical identification probably bespeaks a fear of marginal elements on the part of the metropolitan centre of Britain. In addition to the admixture of elements of diverse local origin, the documents also note a troubling mixture of offices, or perhaps it is the still more troubling propensity on the part of some to oscillate back and forth between legitimacy and criminality. A goldsmith, a baker (the office also of the late father of the Cecily Champaigne who

---

metaphorical remark as this one in the admirable *Hochon's Arrow*: what can instead be most "useful," she argues, "is the sustained and developing work on the *mechanics* of the constitution of the Other; we can use it to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of the *authenticity* of the Other" (294).

6 Compare Bellamy, *Crime* (30 and 42), and, for the use of torture, Post (93–94).

quitclaimed Chaucer "de raptu meo"), and a labourer (the "Travailyngeman" Wetham) had become so disaffected with their legitimate prospects, evidently, that, instead of keeping to their proper places in the established order, they too would enter into this "form of individual or minority rebellion" in company of career criminals like Brierley, Huntingfield, and Cottingham. Also, the level of literacy amongst the criminals would have been alarming, as likewise the admixture of the clerical elements that raised the level. Brierley implicated a summoner, and he robbed repeatedly with the *clericus* Gilbert; when eventually apprehended, both Talbot and Huntingfield claimed clerical exemption from secular prosecution, although qualifying would have meant no more for them than demonstrating a capacity to read (Bellamy, *Crime* 151–52).

Moreover, Brierley's gang was evidently not internally stratified as thoroughgoingly as was Chaucer's. Whenever Chaucer worked in the state disciplinary apparatus, with Clopton, Rickhill, Brenchley, Brudenell, Tauke, and others—those whose names recur with Chaucer's, in shifting combinations, comprising the various state commissions and so on where he served—the degrees and vectors of authority within the apparatus are always specified. Each knew his place in the orderly, hierarchic structures through which authority worked at its own preservation and extension. Though Brierley's gang was composed similarly in a sense, of shifting and recombinant though recurring elements, there appears never to have been any leaders within it, no authoritative order, even *ad hoc*. Although one supposes that the thief described in the documents as a servant to Thomas Talbot might have been excepted, this is the only even suppositious anomaly. No hierarchy: whenever he mentions a disposition, Brierley always describes the proceeds of the gang's robberies as having been shared out equally amongst all who had contributed to the particular job.[7]

Each knew his place in the orderly, hierarchic structures through which authority worked at its own preservation and extension.

That the heterogeneous gang described in the Brierley appeal was put together in the ways it had been—lollard-like, as a series of intercommunicant, perpetually recombinant cells, involving Englishmen and non- (or semi-) Englishmen, clerics and laymen, literate and illiterate, career criminals and artisans and labourers, decentralized and levelly—should already have troubled the authorities sufficiently, albeit possibly only vaguely. These were people without much use for authority, even in the

7 Such features of the internal organizational workings of the Brierley group characterize also the grander, earlier fourteenth-century criminal conspiracy analyzed by Bellamy, "Coterel Gang": the recombinant cells (705, 713, 717); the oscillation from criminality to legitimacy (705, 709–712, 716); and the sharing of proceeds (707).

way they went about their own business, or for the established order of things. But that this destructured floating world of anti-authoritarians should have had as its purpose attacking order and authority directly, by assault and robbery of its representatives and dependents—merchants, clerks, and others, blithely using the king's highways—called for an equally direct, concrete reaction on authority's part. All of those implicated in Brierley's appeal were killed or outlawed or disappeared. Some who were outlawed were later killed. Of those who disappeared, some at least would also have been outlawed or killed too. The records have not been published so thoroughly; in the cases that can be followed, those who attacked authority by doing this sort of crime had to be killed, Brierley included. Any larceny involving an amount greater than a shilling was a capital offense (Bellamy, *Crime* 33).

Talbot, Cottingham, Gilbert *clericus*, Huntingfield, Henry Barry, and Thomas Wetham are known to have been outlawed for their parts in the criminal series associated with Chaucer's robbery, as was also Richard Manston (along with the *manucaptores* who stood surety for him), whose crime was to have aided Huntingfield's flight from London in the wake of the Brierley appeal. These men all subsequently disappear from the published records, with two exceptions. After a series of apprehensions and escapes, Huntingfield was brought to trial and convicted, thereupon pleading benefit of clergy, as did also Talbot when he was eventually convicted too, in 1393. Adam Clerk won acquittal on one of the charges brought against him in Brierley's appeal but remained in custody pending trial for another felony. He was eventually convicted of a different larceny again—a lucrative housebreaking in Tottenham, done in company of Cottingham—and was executed by hanging (Selby 33–35).

VI

Adam Clerk won the acquittal he did by electing judicial combat against his *probator*. On such occasions—theatrical spectacles of "public terrorism"[8]—staged regularly at Tothill, the weapon that the authorities supplied prisoners for use was "a special type of club," "three feet long, fashioned from green ash with the bark still on, and bearing at one end a sharp iron

8 The phrase of Shaw (20–21), albeit for a different historical context. Cohen is especially instructive on the communicative aspect of such juridical spectacles ("exceedingly expensive to stage"), finding that what was communicated was, "most of all, the authority of the government to administer justice": "The spectacle was meant as a visual enactment of implemented authority, displaying the full power of the law to all observers" (408); compare Kaeuper, making a point of the legal process's "entertainment value as ritualized violence" (755).

hook made like a ram's horn. A drawing, which represents one such combat fought after the visitation of an eyre in Henry III's reign, shows the contestants bearing weapons shaped rather like picks," with a hung man for backdrop (Bellamy, *Crime* 131; compare Bartlett 110–11).[9] As Clerk of Works, Chaucer was responsible for maintaining stocks of penal implements at various depots around the country (*CLR* 404–08, 457–58, 464–65). Also as Clerk, Chaucer built the sort of viewing stands from which such spectacles might be taken in by non-participants (Lindenbaum). Richard Brierley was the loser in the combat against Clerk, and still Brierley had to be killed at its conclusion, by hanging. Brierley's appeal was not invalidated by this turn of events. The remaining appellants were only deprived of one of their two options. Jury trials of notorious felons were believed almost always to bring convictions (Bellamy, *Crime* 42).

VII

A salient oddity of the Chaucer robbery records is that the crime for which Brierley and the others were prosecuted and punished was not the same robbery of Chaucer of which Chaucer complained and for which he was pardoned in January 1391, that the authorities had set about to investigate in October 1390. That robbery of Chaucer took place at the Foul Oak, near Hatcham, Surrey, 3 September 1390, involving about twenty pounds of the royal money. The robbery of Chaucer described by Brierley and prosecuted to conclusion—with Brierley's appellate description of it repeated throughout the cognate documents of process—took place at Westminster, 6 September 1390, involving only ten pounds, evidently Chaucer's money, not the king's. The evidentiary and procedural mismatch is compounded further by the mention elsewhere in the records of a robbery of Chaucer that took place at Hatcham, Surrey, on 6 September 1390, the stolen goods going undisclosed. It is just conceivable that there was not one robbery of Chaucer but two robberies, or three—that Chaucer was singled out and pursued, robbed serially by the same persons, about the several places, at home and on the road, possibly twice at about the same place on the same road, over a period of days; in other words, that Chaucer was the victim of intent malevolence.

Serial robbery of the sort envisaged here would have been a deviation from the *modus operandi* of the thieves, however, as attested consistently by Brierley's appeal and the other documents. They robbed *homines ignoti*

9 The illustration mentioned is reproduced as the frontispiece in Maitland, with analysis (xxix–xxx); a verbal account of the same procedure is in Davis.

over and over again, but each time a different *homo ignotus*. Brierley's recollections of some particulars about some of his gang's victims—the *duos homines de Flandria*, for example—may suggest that occasionally, at least, the thieves took some human interest in them, if only transiently, perhaps by way of making their business go the more smoothly. Nevertheless, Brierley and the others with whom he worked seem not to have paid their victims the sort of sustained, provident attention that the serial robbery hypothesis would require.

Additionally, such sustained terror would have been noteworthy to authority, presumably, and it was not so noted. An escalation of crime—from one robbery to two and possibly to three—would make sense as self-justification on the authorities' part: the more monstrous the crime, the more justified the reprisal. Such an escalation never takes place, however. No concatenate crime was prosecuted, none of the documents dealing with more than one robbery at a time. Instead of accumulating, the evidence drifts: from the greater amount, of royal money, to a lesser amount, of personal resource, and from the countryside into the metropolis. It might be argued that these drifts cancel one another out, the diminution of the amount and the importance of the money recompensed with crime's approach nearer home, the result being terrifying in an equal degree, albeit by means of differing fears. But this evidence is that, wherever, whenever, there was just the one robbery of Chaucer.

The earliest report—that in the October 1390 commission of inquiry—would seem to be fundamental. Although it too is probably as prone to exaggeration and confusion in detail as any of the evidence, it is still nearest in time to the alleged event, its priority investing it with a kind of authority, if only the authority of being first in a series against which the rest compare. The documents' proliferation of dates would be amenable to the most mechanical of explanations: minims were devious notational devices in the best of conditions, not to mention the vagaries of oral transmission, criminal desperation, and so on (stunning evidence of the sorts of things that might go wrong is in Hunnisett). Most likely, only one of the dates is correct but not both; 6 September is repeated more often, while 3 September occurs first. But one of the points here is that the facts of the matter do not matter much, or may only have mattered at the outset, and then only vaguely.

It seems most plausible to take it that these documentary discrepancies were the product of carelessness on the part of authority, a kind of carelessness that may not have been altogether aimless or without purpose, however. The purpose served by the authorities' carelessness was the

insinuation into the proceedings of the appearance, if only an appearance, of an element of arbitrariness on their part. As a byproduct of its workings, the judicial apparatus made little chaos: justice might be done but sometimes, at least, by means mismatched to the end in view. Brierley and the others appear to have been punished for a crime (a robbery at Westminster) other than the crime (a robbery in Surrey) which the apparatus had originally named *rei veritas*. In this respect, the judicial apparatus worked arbitrarily on them, in a self-serving way. The criminals' lives were of little account from the apparatus's perspective. Even the criminals' crimes were of little account. What the thieves had or had not done was more or less inconsequential to it. They could be and were still subject to punishment, for no unequivocal reason, or for reasons that might shift and never be amenable to simple statement. The arbitrariness, which might appear to be waste, accidentally or incidentally generated by the system, was in fact the best, most potent instrument the judicial apparatus disposed, inasmuch as it gave best evidence of the point of greatest import: truth did not matter, being only a product of power's operations, existing only as produced in exercise of power.

Brembre's summary executions at the Foul Oak is another case in point. Power is the greater when it is the more arbitrary, the less bound by reasons. Richard II's tyranny late in his reign was widely known too. Regarding the law as being in his own mouth licensed him to do anything he wanted, most widely noted being his cruelties and capricious malfeasance. In a note devoted to repairing Richard's bad odour in these respects, called "King Richard II of England: A Fresh Look," G.O. Sayles cites the monarch's spontaneous pardon of a petty palace thief as an instance of his mansuetude, to be set against contemporary episodes of cruelty:

> A thief was caught red-handed in Westminster Hall and sentenced to be hanged. And while the deputy marshal of the King's Bench "was in the process of executing the judgment, the king happened to pass by and he ordered him by word of mouth to delay execution." Shortly afterwards the culprit received a royal pardon. (31 n19)

The anecdote bespeaks the greater danger about Richard: in such "arbitrary gestures of grace," as Andrew Galloway has said, "preferred through and as sheer power," Richard's "pity" too becomes "an expression of power" (92–96). By being kind as much as or more than by being cruel, the king made manifest the absoluteness of his power. He might do anything he

wanted, the greater the range of his doings—the more unpredictable and arbitrary they were—the more absolute his power was.

To an attenuated degree, a similar arbitrariness was produced in the judicial proceedings against those who robbed Chaucer—against those punished for robbing Chaucer, amongst their other crimes. Moreover, the arbitrariness about the judicial proceedings served similarly, too, again to an attenuated degree, to aggrandize the manifest power of the judicial apparatus. One robbery, or two, or three; a robbery in Surrey or a robbery at Westminster; twenty pounds or ten, the king's money or Chaucer's; confessed or proven at trial, by jury or by combat; exonerated by appeal or by clerical privilege—nothing mattered, except that the criminal were criminal and the authorities were the authorities, the difference between them asserted and strengthened by exercise of the greater power that the one group could wield over the other. "To be subaltern is not to be powerless," of course, and these criminals were not without resources: they attacked and robbed Chaucer, as well as others, from time to time (Hobsbawm, "Peasants" 13). The authorities' resources were of another order of magnitude, however: sufficiently great to be arbitrarily disposed.

The authorities' resources were of another order of magnitude, however: sufficiently great to be arbitrarily disposed.

VIII

Pilgrimage was controversial, and the *Canterbury Tales* is a polemic: Chaucer's extended, tendentious apology for the orthodox view of it. Pilgrimage was part of the sacrament of penance—a variety of the bodily suffering that could constitute fulfilment of the obligations of *satisfactio operis*—while also being equated symbolically with the whole penitential process, made up of a lifelong, iterable, journey-like series of *gradus* or *passus*. In Chaucer's Parson's terms, penance/pilgrimage is the only efficacious *via in deum*, "a ful noble wey and a ful convenable, which may nat fayle," "that leden folk to oure lord Jhesu Crist and to the regne of glorie": all Christians alike were bound to go along it, one way and another, for their salvation depended on it (*ParsT* 79–80; Lawton 12; Patterson). Moreover, the kind of official ecclesiastical sanction for the Canterbury pilgrimage and its like that Chaucer's Parson articulates was corroborated with varieties of state sanction. Richard II supported the Canterbury pilgrimage publicly and extensively. The king made the pilgrimage himself repeatedly, and he gave generously to support buildings works in the cathedral, by which the shrine's magnificence might be enhanced—on a single occasion giving a thousand pounds, at a time when a human life might be worth a shilling or so (Saul 317–18).

Pilgrimage was not set at such high value in all circles nor in all its particulars. William Thorpe, for example, who was persistently persecuted for heretical sedition in the decade 1397–1407 (Jurkowski; Copeland), had no quarrel with the life-as-a-pilgrimage metaphor that Chaucer's Parson develops. Under interrogation, Thorpe still voiced support for what he called "true pilgrimage": "I clepe hem trewe pilgrymes travelynge toward the blis of hevene whiche, in the staat, degree or ordre that God clepith hem to, bisien hem feithfulli for to occupie alle her wittis, bodili and goostli, to knowe treweli and to kepe feithfulli the heestis of God." Of such pilgrims in truth, Thorpe has it, "whatever good thought that thei ony tyme thenken, what vertues worde that thei speken, and what fructuouse werk that thei worchen, every such thought, word, and werke is a stap noumbrid of God toward him into hevene" (62–63).

About the actual, institutionalized practice of pilgrimage, however, Thorpe had reservations of a sort that, while not yet straightforwardly criminalized, were already culpable. Thorpe argued, on the one hand, that pilgrimage as actually practised encouraged idolatry—worship of something or things other than god in place of god: "Manye men and wymmen now gon hidir and thidir on pilgrymage" "more for the helthe of her bodies than for the helthe of her soulis," "more for to have richessis and prosperite of this world," "more for to have here worldli or fleischli frendschip": "thei have siche fleischli willis" (63–64). In specification of this broader category of misdirected worship of bodily goods, Thorpe also argued that pilgrimage as actually practised produced sinful defects of charity. When pilgrims spent, incidentally, along the pilgrimage road, on shelter, food, drink, and other entertainment, often enough in socially destructive ways—"upon vicious hosteleris and upon tapsters, whiche ben ofte unclene wymmen of her bodies," upon "men and wymmen that kunnen wel synge rowtinge songis," some of whom even "wolen have with hem baggepipis"—"these renners aboute," as Thorpe terms them, were spending moneys that ought rather to have been put to charitable good works, "with the whiche thei schulden helpe and releeven aftir Goddis wille her pore and nedi neighebores at home." Moreover, Thorpe asserts, the donatives pilgrims gave at their pilgrimages' ends enriched already wealthy institutions still further, again effectively at the expense of persons in greater real need of scripturally enjoined charitable sustenance: "[A]t the laste tho goodis, of the whiche thei schulden to pore nedi men and wymmen, these pore men goodis and her lyflode [thei] offren to riche preestis, whiche have moche moore lyfelode than thei neden" (64).

Thorpe's views were not idiosyncratic, occurring also in the widely circulated "Twelve Conclusions" of circa 1395, for example, and in other lollard writings (*Selections* 27). By this evidence, the critical view of pilgrimage current was that it was a tool for building and corroborating social division. In pilgrimage, income from predominantly middling social strata—the acquisitive peasantry, mercantile and artisanal elements, and professionals—that had ultimately been extracted from productive elements labouring in agriculture, was being redistributed more or less laterally to the parasitic mercantile elements serving the pilgrimage road or, still higher up, to already scandalously wealthy ecclesiastical establishments, reduplicating in the religious sphere the rapacity by extra-economic means of coercion that characterized feudal economy in general (Anderson 147; Amin 7–48).

The fictional pilgrimage in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* conforms to the dissidents' critical representations. Rather than some figure of spiritual authority (like Truth's familiar, Piers Plowman, in the pilgrimage section of Langland's visions), the guide on Chaucer's pilgrimage is a businessperson, the innkeeper Harry Bailey, whose venal motive is to get the group of nine and twenty to buy another lavish dinner at his inn, once the storytelling competition with which they occupy their journey is ended. Along the way, Chaucer's pilgrims eat and drink and make a good deal of noise, shouting sometimes and coming nearly to riot, the drunken Miller leading the way with his bagpipe (*Piers Plowman* B V–VII, esp. V 537–38; *GP* 796–801 and 565–66).

Most open to the dissident criticism, however, would have been the social dimension of Chaucer's fiction. The Chaucerian pilgrimage is not an all-embracing human comedy. It excludes both the tiny fraction of the population that disposed all the landed wealth and the vast mass doing the productive labour (Strohm, *Social Chaucer* 67 and 172–74). These two fictional exclusions respond to different real-world social exigencies. Aristocrats did go on pilgrimage, although not in the sort of group on which Chaucer concentrated. Peasants did not. Nonetheless and howbeit obliquely, Chaucer's fictional pilgrimage still avers the fundamental social division that was the object of the dissident critique. Only persons enjoying a certain level of resources and leisure were able to go.

As such a public demonstration of inequitable distribution of wealth, pilgrimage was subjected to attack—various kinds of attack, from various kinds of persons. The lollard attack on pilgrimage, in Thorpe's "Examination," for example, was abstract, theological, or broadly ideological: the express issue was a personal, spiritual one—the Christian's obligation to do

well—although it had implications for social justice, as well as the practical consequence of justifying abstention from pilgrimage. There were thieves, too, who attacked pilgrimage, but for them the matter was more directly material. Poverty, said Langland's Patience, "is a path of pees —

> ye, thorough the paas of Aulton
> Poverte myghte passe withouten peril of robbyng!
> For there that Poverte passeth pees folweth after.
> And ever the lasse that he ledeth, the lighter he is of herte —
> *Cantabit paupertas coram latrone viator* [When poverty
> travels, even by thieves, she goes singingly] —
> And an hardy man of herte among an heep of theves;
> Forthi seith Seneca *Paupertas est absque sollicitudine semita*
> [The carefree path is poverty].
> (*Piers Plowman* B XIV 301–06)

The rich are different. Thieves working the Canterbury Road—having been excluded from enjoyment of the kind of wealth that pilgrims as pilgrims gave public manifestation of enjoying, along with other well-to-do travelers—attacked concentration of wealth directly in practice rather than abstractly in argument.

Coeval with the Canterbury Road's elaboration, for the benefit of pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Saint Thomas and others, had occurred also the elaboration of a parallel apparatus for victimizing them. The system of way stations, watering holes, hostelries, and inns that grew up for servicing the traffic's needs, not to mention constant improvement of the road itself, was matched by the development of a system for preying on the traffic in a different sense: companies of thieves, with varying degrees of organization, notorious haunts, and favoured points of attack. Harry Bailey warns against the thievery (perhaps instantiating the principle *furemque fur cognoscit et lupum lupus*);[10] the criminal apparatus was still sufficiently vivid that Shakespeare could use it in *1 Henry IV* for characterizing Prince Hal and his gang, who plan and carry out a robbery on the Canterbury Road not unlike the one involving Chaucer, and for characterizing indirectly relations between the wayward son and his father Henry IV, whose ambition at the outset is to go on pilgrimage. The one set of institutions matched with the other, the one practice calling up the other, symbiotically: no pilgrimage without a condign thievery.

10 The Host's warning is at *MancT* 8; the proverb is Erasmus, *Adagia* 2.3.63.

Pilgrimage was a system (if not exclusively then at least also) for asserting prerogative.

It may be felt difficult to distinguish common robbery from the form of "individual or minority rebellion within peasant societies" that Eric Hobsbawm named "banditry" (*Bandits* 17). Practically, such a distinction is not worth making in the present case.[11] Pilgrimage was a system (if not exclusively then at least also) for asserting prerogative. It involved an exercise of privileges distributed unevenly, on the basis of class (not religion), to some social sectors but not to others nor to all equitably. Pilgrimage had also its religious and spiritual determinants, as well as serving recreational purposes—as the spring-evoking first sentence of the *Canterbury Tales* and Thorpe's censures of wayfaring riot make clear—and it had immediate economic impact, too, in local, national, and international production and consumption. Always also, however, pilgrimage served the broader ideological purpose of advertising social dominance. In robbing pilgrims and other travelers, the thieves of the Canterbury Road were doing dissident work. At issue was the redistribution of wealth. The rich get richer, the poor poorer: Thorpe's point about pilgrimage was that it worked as a Robin Hood scheme in reverse, by which wealth was redistributed upward. The solution, proposed by dissidents and thieves alike, was some redistribution in the other direction, from rich to poor. Lollardy had its disendowment bill (*Selections* 135–37). The thieves had their own differing approach.

These are the determinants—the physical, institutional, social, and ideological setting—of the situation in which Chaucer was robbed in 1390, the same human-geographical context, so to speak, in which he wrote the *Canterbury Tales*. The Canterbury Road was a theatre, in effect, built cooperatively, carefully if not always self-consciously, over a long period, for staging confrontations between privilege and exclusion, wealth and want, on various levels, ranging from the material to the abstractly ideological. Chaucer contributed to the construction variously: by the ideological mystifications of the *Canterbury Tales*, by maintenance of the road itself, in his capacity as Clerk of the King's Works, and by his robbery there and the judicial sequels that followed from it. The obverse face, of Chaucer's apologies for pilgrimage in the *Canterbury Tales*, had always this reverse attaching, of his and like others' experience: disagreeable, dissident attacks on pilgrimage, pilgrims, and other rich people. Chaucer's praise, for the

11 The analyses of Scott (especially 289–303) show the futility of attempts to distinguish rebellion, or self-consciously revolutionary forms of resistance, from simpler acts of opportunistic self-indulgence, in such contexts as the present one; also, the exchange of Blok and Hobsbawm, "Social Bandits," where Blok (495) allows that the several varieties of thievery he would distinguish more rigorously than Hobsbawm still all "have in common the fact that they voice popular discontent."

religious-economic practices of orthodox pilgrimage in the *Canterbury Tales*, is also blame, of these unco-operative, insubordinate elements, going about to upset rectitude.

IX

The import of the robberies of Chaucer does not reside in the twenty pounds, or ten, that may have been taken, nor in anything so simply concrete as a quantity of cash. No one at the time behaved as if it did. At no point was the money's recovery a concern. The money was forgiven Chaucer, immediately, and forgotten, along with his horses and sundry stuff. The crime was political: affronting order. The punishment was thorough, designed to discourage such affronts, if not to end them then to reassert order against them by exercise of power. The import of Chaucer's robbery, then as now, is in the demonstrations it made of the basic class division, with the variety of the forms that the division's enforcement might take.

There was class division in Chaucer's England, evident in social forms of all sorts, economic and cultural. The division was conflictual (rather than a matter of "quiet hierarchies … without dynamically interacting polarities" [Robertson 51]), and the conflict often, although not exclusively, took the form of violence, in which persons suffered injuries. The forms of the struggle that were physically violent were continuous with the forms that were not: thievery with lollardy, on the one hand; on the other, feudal exploitation with courtly literature and "public poetry" (Middleton; Carlson 389–91)—the judicial apparatus being pitched between the extremes of force, the ideological and the corporal, capable of disposing either, at need, or both.

Chaucer, pilgrims, the various *mercatores* and *ignoti* going about their orderly business, Rickhill, Brenchley, Brudenell, Clopton, the rest of the judicial apparatus charged with order maintenance, ultimately the aristocratic and monarchic beneficiaries of this dependent system, deriving from their monopoly ownership of the land itself, the means of agricultural production, on the one side; on the other, Brierley, Huntingfield, Cottingham, and the rest, the whole decentralized, disorderly apparatus of banditry, ultimately the disaffected, excluded mass of people, occasionally resisting, normally compelled to assent; lying between, the Canterbury Road. Each side used it, albeit each for a different end. Which side of this street Chaucer was on may sometimes seem a difficult question. The thieves thought they could tell, and the workings of the judicial apparatus

after the fact, on behalf of Chaucer and the class interests he bore about with him, corroborated the thieves' insight.

Works Cited

Amin, Samir. *Le développement inégal: Essai sur les formations sociales du capitalisme périphérique*. Paris: Minuit, 1973.

Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. London: NLB, 1974.

Arnold, Morris S. *Select Cases of Trespass from the King's Courts 1307–1399*. Selden Society 100 and 103. 2 vols. London: Selden Society, 1985 and 1987.

Bartlett, Robert. *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1986.

Bellamy, John G. "The Coterel Gang: An Anatomy of a Band of Fourteenth-Century Criminals." *English Historical Review* 79 (1964): 698–717.

———. *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages*. London: Routledge, 1973.

Blamires, Alcuin. "Chaucer the Reactionary: Ideology and the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*." *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 51 (2000): 523–39.

Blok, Anton. "The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (1972): 494–503.

Cannon, Christopher. "*Raptus* in the Chaumpaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer." *Speculum* 68 (1993): 74–94.

Carlson, David R. "The Invention of the Anglo-Latin Public Poetry (*circa* 1367–1402) and its Prosody, esp. in John Gower." *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 39 (2004): 389–406.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Riverside Chaucer*. Gen. ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

CLR = *Chaucer Life-Records*. Eds. Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, from materials compiled by John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, with the assistance of Lilian J. Redstone and others. Oxford: Clarendon, 1966.

Cohen, Esther. "Symbols of Culpability and the Universal Language of Justice: The Ritual of Public Executions in Late Medieval Europe." *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989): 407–16.

Copeland, Rita. "William Thorpe and his Lollard Community: Intellectual Labor and the Representation of Dissent." In *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England*. Eds. Barbara A. Hanawalt and David Wallace. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 199–221.

Davis, H.W.C. "'Baculi Cornuti.'" *English Historical Review* 16 (1901): 730.

Donaldson, E. Talbot. *Speaking of Chaucer*. New York: Norton, 1970.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *Adages II i 1 to II vi 100*. Ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors. Collected Works of Erasmus 33. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 1977; New York: Vintage, 1995.

———. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. 1978; New York: Vintage, 1990.

Galloway, Andrew. "The Literature of 1388 and the Politics of Pity in Gower's *Confessio amantis*." In *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*. Eds. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002. 67–104.

Green, Richard Firth. "John Ball's Letters: Literary History and Historical Literature." In *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*. Ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992. 176–200.

Guha, Ranajit. "Chandra's Death." *Subaltern Studies* 5 (1987): 135–65.

Hamil, Frederick C. "The King's Approvers: A Chapter in the History of English Criminal Law." *Speculum* 11 (1936): 238–58.

Hanna, Ralph, III. "Pilate's Voice / Shirley's Case." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91 (1992): 793–812.

Hobsbawm, Eric J.E. "Social Bandits: Reply." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14 (1972): 503–05.

———. "Peasants and Politics." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1 (1973): 3–22.

———. *Bandits*. 2nd ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Hornsby, Joseph Allen. "Was Chaucer Educated at the Inns of Court?" *Chaucer Review* 22 (1988): 255–68.

Hunnisett, R. F. "The Reliability of Inquisitions as Historical Evidence." In *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major*. Eds. D.A. Bullough and R.L. Storey. Oxford: Clarendon, 1971. 206–35.

Jurkowski, Maureen. "The Arrest of William Thorpe in Shrewsbury and the Anti-Lollard Statute of 1406." *Historical Research* 75 (2002): 273–95.

Kaeuper, Richard W. "Law and Order in Fourteenth-Century England: The Evidence of Special Commissions of Oyer and Terminer." *Speculum* 54 (1979): 734–84.

Kittredge, George Lyman. *Chaucer and his Poetry*. 1915; Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1939.

Langland, William. *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. Ed. A.V.C. Schmidt. 2nd ed. London: Dent, 1995.

Lawton, David. "Chaucer's Two Ways: The Pilgrimage Frame of *The Canterbury Tales*." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 (1987): 3–40.

Lindenbaum, Sheila. "The Smithfield Tournament of 1390." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 20 (1990): 1–20.

Macaulay, G.C., ed. *The Complete Works of John Gower*. 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1899–1902.

Maitland, F.W. *Select Pleas of the Crown A.D. 1200–1225*. Selden Society 1. London: Quaritch, 1888.

Middleton, Anne. "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II." *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94–114.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*. Eds. Edward Surtz and J.H. Hexter. Complete Works of St Thomas More 4. New Haven: Yale UP, 1965.

Ockham, William. "Letter to the Friars Minor." In *A Letter to the Friars Minor and Other Writings*. Eds. Arthur Stephen McGrade and John Kilcullen. Trans. John Kilcullen. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Panikkar, K.N. "Culture as a Site of Struggle." *Economic and Political Weekly* 44.7 (14 February 2009): 34–41.

Patterson, Lee W. "The 'Parson's Tale' and the Quitting of the 'Canterbury Tales.'" *Traditio* 34 (1978): 331–80.

Pearsall, Derek Albert. *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

———. *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-bibliography*. English Literary Studies Monograph Series 71. Victoria: University of Victoria, 1997.

Post, J.B. "The Evidential Value of Approvers' Appeals: The Case of William Rose, 1389." *Law and History Review* 3 (1985): 91–100.

Rickert, Edith. "Was Chaucer a Student at the Inner Temple?" In *The Manly Anniversary Studies in Language and Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923. 20–31.

Robertson Jr., D.W. *A Preface to Chaucer*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962.

Saul, Nigel. *Richard II*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.

Sayles, G.O. "King Richard II of England: A Fresh Look." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 115 (1971): 28–31.

Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1985.

Selby, Walford D. "The Robberies of Chaucer by Richard Brerelay and Others at Westminster, and at Hatcham, Surrey, on Tuesday, Sept. 6, 1390." In *Life-Records of Chaucer*. Vol. I. Chaucer Society Second Series 12. London: Trübner, 1875.

Selections from English Wycliffite Writings. Ed. Anne Hudson. 1978; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Shaw, Brent D. "Bandits in the Roman Empire." *Past and Present* 105 (1984): 3–52.

Shawver, Gary W., ed. *Thomas Usk: Testament of Love Based on the Edition of John F. Leyerle*. Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations 13. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 271–315.

Strohm, Paul. *Social Chaucer*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

———. *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992.

———. "Trade, Treason, and the Murder of Janus Imperial." *Journal of British Studies* 35 (1996): 5–15.

Summers, Joanna. *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004.

"Thorpe's Examination." In *Two Wycliffite Texts*. Ed. Anne Hudson. Early English Text Society Original Series 301. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.

Trigg, Stephanie. *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern*. Medieval Cultures [Series] 30. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394. Eds. L.C. Hector and Barbara F. Harvey. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.