

The Peasants' Revolt: Cock-crow in Gower and Chaucer

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Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower both responded to the tumultuous, end-threatening events of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt in the linked forms of beast-fable and dream-vision. Gower did so in his Anglo-Latin *Vox clamantis* (Book 1), and Chaucer in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* which appears at the end of Fragment VII, the so-called "Literary Group" of the *Canterbury Tales*.¹ Despite the current flourishing of Gower studies, the two works have never been compared systematically, even though Gower's work almost certainly preceded and influenced Chaucer's "tale . . . of a cok."² The marked structural similarities between them and their particular, respective use of the cock as an image of the poet serve to highlight key differences between Gower's authorial self-definition and Chaucer's.³ Gower certainly ascribed to himself as poet the role of teacher and preacher--a two-fold role that Chaucer assumed only with diffidence and out of conditional necessity. The Nun's Priest's emphasis on the homiletic "moralite" (VII.3440) of his tale marks it as yet another Chaucerian rejoinder to the "moral Gower" hailed in *Troilus and Criseyde* (5.1856)--this time, in answer to the pressing question of the court-poet's ethical responsibility in apocalyptic social circumstances.⁴

[For both Gower and Chaucer, the bloody 1381 uprising signalled not only the passing away of a familiar social order, but also a divine judgment against corruption in the various estates, against lords and churls alike, but especially against the nobles whose licentious abuse of power had prompted the rebellion of the rabble. The Peasants' Revolt, in short, was predictable, had its necessary causes, and could be expected to recur unless conditions improved. Every rank transgresses, Gower writes, but the evils proceed "from the highest stations in life," so much so "that the general collapse of our well-being is near at hand."](#)⁵

Chaucer's five Boethian ballades, written during the troubled decade

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following the revolt, point not only to "this wrecched worldes transmutacioun" ("Fortune," line 1), but also to vices especially associated with the rich and powerful: avarice, overweening ambition ("climbing tikelnesse"), self-indulgence, sloth, extortion, and general misgovernance. The "permutacioun" of a world turned "up-so-doun" results, as Chaucer says, from a moral "lak of stedfastnesse" and exposes it to view.⁶ Similarly, Gower enumerates the deadly sins current in England and applies the proverb *vox populi, Vox Dei* to the Peasants' Revolt, as well as the later deposition of Richard II.⁷ In Gower's view, God renders a temporal judgment, analogous to the final one, against bad rulers through the historic, popular, and parliamentary voice of the people, even as He issues a call for repentance and reform through the poet's *Vox clamantis*, crying out in the wilderness: "What I have set down is the voice of the people, but you will also see that where the people call out, God is often there" (p. 288).

Gower's homiletic *Vox clamantis* aims, as John Fisher observes, at "transmitting popular complaints to influential authorit[ies]," many of them clerical.⁸ It begins with a nightmarish vision of the Peasants' Revolt and then proceeds to lay bare "the causes for such outrages taking place among men" (p. 49). Chaucer, on the other hand, addressing a general court audience in English, veils those same causes in the social satire of the *Canterbury Tales*. In Gower's work, the uprising of the rabble functions as a *memento mori* that points to the corruption of the body politic, which, like the decay of a human body, offers a "mirror of death" (p. 276) especially to the nobles, reminding them of mortality, judgment, and hell, but also offering them, as R. F. Yaeger observes, an object lesson in the this-worldly "cost of continued moral obduracy."⁹ Chaucer answers Gower's somber *memento mori* with the comic tale of Chauntecleer's true dream of life-threatening danger, its realization, and his narrow escape from the jaws of death.

While it may seem, in Fisher's words, "downright wrongheaded" to compare the *Nun's Priest's Tale* with *Vox clamantis*, the obvious differences between Chaucer's "murie tale of Chauntecleer" (VII.3449) and Gower's

lamentatious book become significant when we perceive the similarities between them.¹⁰ The Prologue to Book 1 of *Vox clamantis* announces the intent of the author "to describe how the lowly peasants violently revolted against the freemen and nobles of the realm" (p. 49) and to do so by reporting the "true dreams" (p. 50) he had in which "he saw different throngs of the rabble transformed into different kinds of domestic animals" (p. 49), all of which then assumed the ferocity of wild beasts. Gower's plan thus anticipates, admittedly in very general terms, Chaucer's use of a barnyard beast-fable, which includes a true dream of a predator, to refer explicitly to the murderous uprising in London led by "Jakke Straw and his meynee" (VII.3394).

A close reading of the two texts reveals other points of correspondence. The *Nun's Priest's Tale*, unlike its principle analogues--Marie de France's "Dou

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Coc et dou Werpil" and the Pierre de Saint Cloud's *Roman de Renart*--dwells at length upon Chauntecleer's dream at dawn of a hound-like, reddish beast who tries to seize and kill him.¹¹ Chauntecleer groans and shakes with fear in his sleep, until Pertelote wakens him, accuses him of cowardice for being "agast of swevenys" (VII.2921), and initiates a long discussion with him about the causes and veracity of dreams. Pertelote takes the commonsensical view that dreams stem from an excess of bodily humors, and Chauntecleer replies that "dremes been significaciouns" (VII.2979), marshalling multiple authoritative *exempla* to attest the prophetic import of his dream.

Chaucer's elaboration of this topic from homiletic sources, especially Robert Holkot's commentary *Super libros Sapientiae*, extends and outdoes Gower's introduction to his dream-vision in *Vox clamantis*.¹² Granting "that common opinion may hold that dreams contain no grounds for belief" (p. 49), Gower counters that view with reliable "writings from the time of the ancients," including the biblical accounts of the dreams of Daniel and Joseph. Comparing himself to John of Patmos, he invokes the divine Muse and promises to "sing of true dreams" (p. 50).

Gower then describes at length how he slept fitfully one night, depressed, fearful, groaning aloud, until finally at dawn he had a terrifying dream-vision of wild beasts (pp. 53-54). Among them he sees criminals who have been transformed into doglike, ravenous foxes (pp. 60-61) and cocks, no longer crowing but shouting hellishly (p. 62). The whole troop, moreover, is commanded by "a certain Jackdaw" (p. 65), a "Wat" who announces murder, looting, and mayhem with the words: "Now the day has come when the peasantry will triumph."

When Gower describes the actual assault of the peasants upon London, he employs a series of classical Graeco-Roman allusions and allegories for, he says, "just as Troy was once pillaged, so this city remained almost destitute of all consolation for the time being" (p. 69), standing "powerless as a widow." As Gower recalls it, beginning on Thursday, the Feast of Corpus Christi, and continuing with greater intensity on Friday, the peasant hordes raged in the city. In Gower's allusive language, "The Trojan victory was lost in defeat, and Troy became a prey to the wild beast, just like a lamb to the wolf. The peasant attacked and the knight in the city did not resist; Troy was without a Hector, Argos without its Achilles" (pp. 71-72). The powers of hell were unleashed in the form of "wild men . . . deserving of eternal fire" (p. 72), and "there was frequent wailing everywhere, and fresh sorrow" (p. 79).

Chaucer responds to Gower's Iliadic depiction of the Peasants' Revolt with the Nun's Priest's apostrophic account of "meschaunce . . . on a Friday" (see VII.3341, 3351-52). The Nun's Priest's characterization of Chauntecleer throughout the tale tends to establish the cock as a figure of the nobility brought down by a churlish enemy. "Real he was," the narrator observes, "roial, as a prince is in his halle" (VII.3176, 3184). He compares the cock to

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"Kyng Priam" (VII.3358), whose city was destroyed through the treachery of "Greek Synon" (VII.3228), and to Christ, betrayed by a "newe Scariot" (VII.3227).

Chauntecleer's violent abduction by the fox bestirs a general hubbub that recalls the havoc and outcry at the Fall of Troy: "Certes, swich cry ne lamentacion, / Was nevere of ladyes maad whan Ylion / Was wonne" (VII.3355-57). Earlier, at the conclusion of his discussion of true dreams, Chauntecleer told the story of Andromache's premonition of Hector's death to encourage Pertelote to take a similarly sympathetic, wifely stance (VII.3141-48). Now Chaucer's mock-heroic rendition compares the tumult in the barnyard to the confusion at the burnings of Troy, Carthage, and Rome. The swarming, cackling, squeaking, bellowing, barking, and honking, of the bees, hens, hogs, dogs, cow, calf,

ducks, and geese, combined with the running and "shoutyng of the men and wommen eeke" (VII.3387), resembles the yelling of "feendes . . . in helle" (VII.3389) and the shrill "shoutes" of "Jakke Straw and his meynee" (VII.3394-95) as they attacked and killed the Flemish merchants.¹³

Like the kings, nobles, and generals whose tragedies the Monk relates in a tale carefully paired with the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, Chauntecleer is, in the words of P. M. Kean, "at the top of Fortune's wheel, both as King of his farmyard and as successful lover," until the sudden attack of the fox leaves him (temporarily) "yfallen out of heigh degree" (VII.1976).¹⁴ Chauntecleer's loss of "greet prosperitee" (VII.1975) does not, therefore, simply provide a universally applicable *exemplum* of false felicity; it also reflects in particular "the dedes of Fortune, that with unwar Strook overturneth the realmes of greet nobleye" (*Boece* II, pr. 2: 68-70) and thus highlights what Larry Scanlon has called, in another context, the traditional, "specifically political" operation of Fortune in "the overthrowing of lords." Here and elsewhere, Chaucer, approaching Boethius through Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*, associates the turning of Fortune's wheel directly with political revolution and thus forces us to recover the "figure's political dimension" and "rhetorical complexity."¹⁵

The headlink encourages us to read the *Nun's Priest's Tale* from this political perspective. The Knight cuts short the Monk's "hevynesse" (VII.2769) with the remark that it is a "greet disese" (VII.2771) for him to hear of the "sodeyn fal" (VII.2773) of men who have enjoyed "greet welthe and ese" (VII.2772). The same-word rhyming of "ese" with "disese" and the Knight's pointed reference to himself ("I seye for me") make unmistakeable the social grounding of his distaste for the Monk's tragedies.

As Kean observes, "'The Nun's Priest's Tale' is closely linked to these [knightly] reactions to the Monk's anecdotes of ill fortune, since it is to the Nun's Priest that the Host turns . . . to provide the desired contrast."¹⁶ Because the Knight objects not to the imagery of Fortune's wheel per se, but rather to the emphasis placed on the overturning of those on top, the *Nun's Priest's Tale*

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comforts the Knight by offering a contrasting narrative that maintains the Monk's central image, while giving it a "contrarie" expression: "As whan a man hath been in povre estaat, / And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunat, / And there abideth in prosperitee" (VII.2774-2777).

As an ideological figure, the image of Fortune's wheel insures that *someone* will always be on top and thus, as Scanlon observes, allows an aristocratic class at once to "recognize the flux of historical existence and affirm its own privilege as a locus of stability beyond such flux."¹⁷ Accordingly, the fall and rise of a Chauntecleer represent, in a single protagonist, the survival of the nobility as such. If a Richard falls, there is always a Henry to take his place. Or, as Gower phrases it, "It is a work done in Christ to depose haughty men from the throne and exalt the humble. God did this. He cast the hateful Richard from his throne, and He decided upon the glorious elevation of the pious Henry" (p. 289).¹⁸

When Chaucer has the Nun's Priest, "sir John" (VII.2820), answer to the Monk, "daun John" (VII.1929), he recalls in the competition between paired clerics his own poetic competition with his friend and fellow poet, John Gower. Gower's *Vox clamantis* shares with the *Monk's Tale* a gloomy "hevynesse" (VII.2769) and a bemoaning "in manere of tragedie" (VII.1991), in contrast to Chaucer's light-hearted *Nun's Priest's Tale*. The Monk, however, as Rodney K. Delasanta observes, "fails . . . to make his tales function as doomsday evangelism," because he "ascribes the fall of all his characters to Fortune without emphasizing their fall as a consequence of divine retribution or divine testing, or even as the operation of an inscrutable fate."¹⁹ Gower's overall perspective, on the other hand, like Chaucer's, resists the Monk's pessimistic lesson-to-be-learned (VII.1993: "ther nas no remedie") and rejects his explanation of royal misfortune as an inevitable consequence of uncontrollable forces in the universe: "Whan that Fortune list to flee, / Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde" (VII.1995-96). As Gower writes, "Such things are reputedly brought about throughout the land by the law of fate, but I do not think it stands thus. It is not Fortune nor fate which causes us to endure such things, but our just deserts for evil deeds" (p. 286).

In *Vox clamantis* Gower stresses heavily the link between political misfortune and personal and collective wrongdoing, while admitting the possibility of conversion and salvation. As he himself acknowledges at the end of the

work, a one-sided vision of sin, guilt, and punishment, tends to induce despair and paralysis, rather than energetic reform and resourceful action (see pp. 279-80). The *Nun's Priest's Tale*, which also addresses the questions of misfortune, fate, and free will (see especially VII.3234-50) "comes down bluntly," as Kean puts it, "on the side of personal responsibility"--responsibility, for both the misfortune in which one finds oneself and how one deals with it.²⁰ Whereas Gower emphasizes that misfortune stems from sin, Chaucer stresses the correlative principle that fortune helps those who help themselves. "The alert," as Charles

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S. Watson remarks, "need not remain fallen from prosperity."²¹ The foolish Chauntecleer is, to be sure, deservedly seized by the Fox, but in the end his quick-witted words to his captor enable his escape, and "Lo, how Fortune turneth so deynly / The hope and pryde eek of hir enemy!" (VII.3403-04).

Gower's nightmarish dream-vision of the Peasants' Revolt focusses in its final chapters on the attack on the Tower of London, which he envisages as a storm-tossed ship that ultimately carries him back to England in the present. A celestial voice then commands him to be cautious in his speech, but "to write down whatever [he has] seen and heard in this dream" (p. 93), because "dreams often furnish an indication of the future." The voice falls silent at the very moment that "the cock sang in its usual way at the dawn of day." Awakened at cock-crow, Gower first offers "canticles of praise to the Lord" (p. 94). Then, reflecting that "Satan's power . . . lurked in hiding among the ungovernable peasantry," who "always lay in wait to see whether [they] by chance could bring the noble class to destruction" (pp. 94-95), Gower takes up his pen to warn his still-slumbering, fellow nobles of the continued threat by recounting his "wakeful sleep" and the "real dreams in which every man of the future will find a moral" (p. 95).²²

Gower's imagistic sequence, in which the celestial voice first merges with cock-crow, and cock-crow then informs the poet's morning prayers and didactic writings, harkens back to a well-established allegorical tradition, according to which the cry of the cock at dawn signifies not only the coming of Christ as Light and Logos and the preacher's call to repentance and conversion, but also the prophetic singing of the Christian poet. The morning hymns of Ambrose ("Aeterne rerum conditor") and Prudentius ("Ales diei nuntius") bear early witness to this pattern of correspondence, which was subsequently elaborated in scriptural commentaries on Job 38:36 and Proverbs 30:31, discussions of ecclesiastical symbolism (such as the twelfth-century *Speculum de misteriis ecclesiae* of Hugh of St. Victor, and the thirteenth-century *Rationale divinorum officium* of William Durandus), popular mnemonic poems (such as "Multi sunt presbyteri"), bestiaries, and encyclopedias (such as Alexander Neckham's *De naturis rerum*, the *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomew the Englishman, and the *Speculum naturale* of Vincent of Beauvais).²³

As several scholars have noted, Chaucer's portrait of Chauntecleer is indebted to this same tradition and contains many salient features that liken the cock, albeit ironically, to a preacher and cleric.²⁴ His voice, the narrator assures us, "was murier than the murie orgon / On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon" (VII.2851-52), and his regular cock-crow marks the canonical hours better than an "abbey orlogge" (VII.2854). Not only is Chauntecleer's own story a familiar homiletic *exemplum* oft-depicted in the church art of the period;²⁵ the cock himself dreams an inspired dream, incorporates multiple homiletic *exempla* into his instruction of Pertelote, quotes Latin learnedly to

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her (VII.3163-64: "In principio, / Mulier est hominis confusio"), rules in authoritative fashion over her and her sisters, and figures as an alter-ego and scapegoat for the misogynist Nun's Priest: "Thise been the cokkes wordes, and nat myne" (VII.3265).²⁶

Indeed, Chauntecleer in many ways resembles the pilgrim-narrator, the "sweete preest" (VII.2820), who tells his tale. But Chauntecleer, like the cock whose crowing awakens Gower from his sleep, is an image of not only the preacher, but also the poet, and as such enables Chaucer to formulate an authorial self-definition in contradistinction to Gower's. Chauntecleer's very name recalls Chaucer's own.²⁷ The Nun's Priest introduces him, moreover, in ways that emphasize his capacity as a singer: "In al the land, of crowyng nas his peer" (VII.2850). His voice, we are told, is "murie" (VII.2851) and musical. At dawn he not only crows but also sings in "sweete accord" (VII.2879) with Pertelote English love songs like "My lief is faren in londe." Indeed, the initial picture of Chauntecleer's blissful existence in the poor widow's enclosure parallels Gower's description of the paradisiac, springtime garden where he wandered on the day before his terrible dream-vision, delighting to hear the thousands of birds who "sounded their melodies like organs" (p.

53).

Like Gower, however, who discovers that "sadness often comes after joys, clouds after Phoebus, and sickness after health" (p. 53), Chauntecleer experiences a sudden reversal of his good fortune in accord with the Boethian adage: "For evere the latter ende of joye is wo" (VII.3205). He dreams a true dream in which a wild beast attacks him and "wolde han had [hym] deed" (VII.2901). Like Gower, Chauntecleer groans aloud in his sleep, and when he awakens, "yet [his] herte is soore afright" (VII.2895) with foreboding. Like Gower, too, Chauntecleer reports his dream and recognizes it to be a "significacioun," a "warnynge of thynges that shul after falle" (VII.3132).

Unlike Gower, however, whose *Vox clamantis* becomes an insistent cock-crow that continues to issue a warning in the form of extended social commentary in the books following the dawn dream-vision, Chauntecleer decides to "diffye bothe sweven and drem" (VII.3171), deny the truth of his vision, and forget what he has seen. He feathers and treads Pertelote and briefly enjoys an Edenic springtime that recalls once again the singing of "blisful briddes" (VII.3201) and the sight of "fresshe floures" (VII.3202) in Gower's original "second Paradise" (p. 52).[28](#)

Rejecting his prophetic mission as a singer of truth, Chauntecleer chooses instead the seductive courtly route of self-deceit that pleases and consoles Pertelote, singing a siren-song "murier" than that of "the mermayde in the see" (VII.3270).[29](#) In joy and in misfortune, his inspiring muse belongs not to Lady Philosophy but to the Boethian company of strumpet muses, the "mermaydenes, whiche that ben swete til it be at the laste" (*Boece* I, pr. 1: 69-70). His eyes riveted on "the beautee" (VII.3160) of Pertelote's face and limbs, Chauntecleer fails to see the fox, who, like Gower's treacherous peasantry, lurks in hiding, "waitynge his tyme on Chauntecleer to falle" (VII.3223).

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The essential link between Chauntecleer's pleasant, self-indulgent singing and his moral blindness gains outward expression in the encounter with the fox, who praises Chauntecleer for his merry, angelic "stevene" (VII.3291) and attributes to his music "moore feelynge" (VII.3293) and "herte" (VII.3303) than the music of Boethius. Urging Chauntecleer to imitate the example of his father, who used to "wynke, so loude he wolde cryen" (VII.3306), and who had no rival "in song or wisdom" (VII.3311), the fox tricks the foolish cock, who "heeld his eyen cloos, / And gan to crowe loude for the nones" (VII.3332-33), stretching out his neck so that the fox could easily grab him "by the gargat" (VII.3335) and thus initiate the barnyard chase.[30](#)

The Nun's Priest interrupts his tale-telling at this point to apostrophize a courtly audience: "Allas! ye lordes" (VII.3325, 3330) and issue a warning against foxlike flatterers who substitute pleasing lies for "soothfastnesse" (VII.3328). Given the emphasis on Chauntecleer's sirenlike singing, however, the moral applies equally well to courtly poets like Chaucer himself, who cultivate an ironic, self-protective stance, insulate themselves as entertainers, and speak more in "gamen" than in earnest.

Clearly, Chauntecleer's song is not the preacher-poet's cockcrow; Chaucer's "goodly man sir John" (VII.2820) is not John of Patmos; nor is Chaucer "moral Gower" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, 5.1856). In dramatizing the cock's failure to combine poetry effectively with prophecy, merry singing with social responsibility, sweetness with "soothfastnesse," however, Chaucer manages to achieve a poetic truth-telling that rivals and excels Gower's own.

Just as Chauntecleer, defeated and helpless in the fox's grip, turns the tables on his captor through a final word, so too Chaucer's representation of his own shortcomings as a moral teacher enables him at the end of his tale to succeed in offering a "moralite" (VII.3440) that is, in its social imperatives and Boethian perspective, remarkably similar to Gower's in *Vox clamantis*. As a true allegory, however, it remains disturbingly unstated, playfully hidden, and therefore possibly ineffectual. Unlike the multiple, proverbial *sententiae* furnished outright by the Nun's Priest, Chaucer's actual "moralite" is not and cannot be given by the poet. Rather, it must be taken by his auditors, drawn out by personal identification and application, and based on their own memory of the apocalyptic events of 1381.[31](#)

To the extent that Chaucer in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* becomes a poet-preacher through his very failure to be one, the figure of the crowing cock contributes to his authorial self-definition. Indeed, at the end of Fragment VII Chaucer the poet has paradoxically become everything in sum that he is not in isolation: a sophistic craftsman, like the narrator of the *Shipman's Tale*; an inspired mouthpiece, like the Prioress; a minstrel, like the pilgrim-Chaucer of *Sir Thopas*; a

princely counsellor, like the Chaucer of *Melibeus*; a compiler of stories, like the Monk; and finally, a teacher of "moralite" like John Gower and Sir John, the Nun's Priest.

Notes

1. The phrase "Literary Group" is taken from Alan T. Gaylord, "Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII of the *Canterbury Tales*: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor," *PMLA* 82 (1967), 226. See also my "Chaucer's 'Literary Group' and the Medieval Causes of Books," *English Literary History* 59 (1992), 269-287.
2. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987), VII.3438-39. I use this edition of Chaucer's works throughout, giving references to *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Boece*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* parenthetically. Although Gower studies are enjoying new popularity, John Fisher's observation that "the special resemblances between [Chaucer's] works and Gower's have occasioned little comment" still holds true. Indeed, although both *Vox clamantis* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale* deal explicitly with the Peasant's Revolt, critics (including Fisher) have failed to compare the two, perhaps because, as Fisher notes, "To modern readers, Chaucer's and Gower's treatments of the same material are so different that comparison appears fruitless, if not downright wrongheaded" (*John Gower, Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* [New York, 1964], p. 206). Among the more recent books on Gower, see Russell A. Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's "Confessio Amantis"* (Carbondale, 1978); R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge, 1990); and R. F. Yeager, ed., *John Gower: Recent Readings* (Kalamazoo, 1989).
3. On the question of authorial self-definition in Fragment VII, see Lee Patterson, "'What Man Artow?': Authorial Self-Definition in *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and *The Tale of Melibee*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 11 (1989), 117-75; C. David Benson, "Their Telling Difference: Chaucer the

Pilgrim and His Two Contrasting Tales," *Chaucer Review* 18 (1983-84), 61-76.

4. The Prologue to the *Man of Law's Tale* is generally regarded as some kind of Chaucerian comment on Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. See Patricia J. Eberle's discussion of the scholarship in Benson, ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 854. Fisher (*John Gower*, pp. 204-302) devotes a chapter to the personal relationship between Chaucer and Gower and their mutual literary influence, noting that "as the 14th century drew to a close, their literary interests grew further and further apart," as Gower "grew more and more absorbed in political pamphleteering for the Lancastrian cause" (p. 302).

5 John Gower, *Vox clamantis*, in *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*, trans. Eric W. Stockton (Seattle, 1962), p. 282. I use this translation throughout, giving page references parenthetically. For the Latin text, see G. C. Macaulay, *The Latin Works*, in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1902).

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6. See "The Former Age," "Fortune," "Truth," "Gentilesse," and "Lak of Stedfastnesse," in Benson, ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 650-654. I quote from "Lak of Stedfastnesse," lines 5, 7, 14, 19, 21, 28.

7. See Fisher, *John Gower*, pp. 104-05. Fisher refers to Walsingham's report that the Archbishop of Canterbury preached on the text *Vox populi, vox Dei* "when Edward II replaced the deposed Edward II on the throne" (p. 105).

8. Fisher, *John Gower*, p. 105. Fisher mentions William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester; William Courtenay, Bishop of London; Simon Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury; Thomas Brunton, Bishop of Rochester and royal confessor; Ralph Erghum, Bishop of Salisbury; and others of the "Caesarian" clergy.

9. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, p. 205.

10. See n.2 above.

11. For a treatment of Chaucer's sources, see Robert A. Pratt, "Three Old French Sources of the *Nonnes Preestes Tale*," *Speculum* 47 (1972), 422-44, 646-68.

12. For Chaucer's use of Wisdom materials, see Kate O. Petersen's classic study, *On the Sources of the Nonne Preestes Tale*, Radcliffe College Monograph No. 10 (Boston, 1898; repr. New York, 1966); Robert A. Pratt, "Some Latin Sources of the Nonnes Preest on Dreams," *Speculum* 52 (1977), 538-70. For Gower's knowledge of dream lore, see George C. Fox, *The Medieval Sciences in the Works of John Gower* (New York, 1966), pp. 95-113.

13. For a treatment of the attack on the Flemish, see Rodney Hilton, *Bondmen Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London, 1973), pp. 195-98.

14. P. M. Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, 2 vols. (London, 1972), 2: 133.

15. Larry Scanlon, "Sweet Persuasion: The Subject of Fortune in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: "Subgit to Alle Poesye"*, ed. R. A. Shoaf (Binghamton, 1992), p. 212.

16. Kean, *Chaucer and Poetry*, 2: 131.

17. Scanlon, "Sweet Persuasion," p. 217.

18. This passage, translated by Stockton, appears in Gower's Preface to *Cronica Tripertita*. As Fisher notes, Gower revised the *Vox clamantis* and the *Cronica Tripertita* to "become a unified commentary on the tragic course of Richard's rule from 1381-1400, with a prologue (the *Visio*), a midpoint (the Epistle) and an epilogue (the *Cronica*)" (p. 114).

19. Rodney K. Delasanta, "'Namooore of This': Chaucer's Priest and Monk," *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 13 (1968), 123, 120.

20. Kean, *Chaucer and Poetry*, 2: 135.

21. Charles S. Watson, "The Relationship of the 'Monk's Tale' and the 'Nun's Priest's Tale'," *Studies in Short Fiction* 1 (1964), p. 287.

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22.. Books 2-7 of *Vox clamantis*, which contain a critique of the three estates, were begun about 1378, shortly after Gower completed his *Mirour*. Book 1 was added later, presumably not long after the Revolt in 1381. See Stockton, *Major Latin Works*, pp. 11-12; Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, p. 204.

23. For an excellent survey of this tradition, see the references under "cock" in Francis Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, ed. Evelyn Antal and John Harthan (Cambridge, 1971). See also William Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments*, trans. Rev. John Mason Neale and Rev. Benjamin Webb (London, 1893), pp. 22-23. The text of "Multi sunt presbyteri," which explicates the cock-allegory in popular terms, appears in *The Oxford Book of Medieval Latin Verse*, ed. Stephen Gaselee (Oxford, 1946), pp. 178-80. For other sources, see n. 24 below.

24. See Donald N. Yates, "Chanticleer's Latin Ancestors," *Chaucer Review* 18.2 (1983), 116-26; Charles Dahlberg, "Chaucer's Cock and Fox," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 53 (1954), 277-90; Lorraine Y. Baird, "Christus Gallinaceus: A Chaucerian Enigma; or the Cock as Symbol of Christ," *Studies in Iconography* (1983), 19-30; Judson B. Allen, "The Ironic Fruyt: Chaunticleer as Figura," *Studies in Philology* 66 (1969), 25-35. According to Susan Gallick, "it is the cock as preacher that Chaucer was most interested in developing" ("A Look at Chaucer and His Preachers," *Speculum* 50 (1975), 475).

25. Kenneth Varty points to a "considerable gap of about 225 years from Marie de France's fable to Chaucer's 'Nun's Priest's Tale'," which was bridged on the continent by numerous imitations and translations of Pierre de St. Cloud's 1175 *Roman*; in England, by an oral tradition evidenced in numerous drawings and carvings, especially in churches. See Varty, *Reynard the Fox: A Study of the Fox in Medieval English Art* (Leicester, 1967), esp. pp. 31-42, 51-59.

26. For instances in which medieval preachers compare themselves to cocks, see G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period, c.1350-1450* (New York, 1965), pp. 6-7, 30. For general references to the homiletic use of *exempla*, bestiaries,

fables, and marvels, see esp. pp. 299-302, 313. See also Stephen Manning, "The Nun's Priest's Morality and the Medieval Attitude Toward Fables," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 59 (1960), 403-16.

27. See Dolores W. Frese, "The Nun's Priest's Tale: Chaucer's Identified Masterpiece?" *Chaucer Review* 16 (1982), 330-43. Gower introduces his own name in *Vox clamantis* via an anagram that may be similar to Chaucer's own. See Gower's Latin signature in the Prologue to Book 1, lines 21-24.

28. For a treatment of Edenic imagery in the tale, see Bernard S. Levy and George R. Adams, "Chauntecleer's Paradise Lost and Regained," *Mediaeval Studies* 29 (1967), 178-92.

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29. For a study of Chauntecleer's self-seduction, see John Block Friedman, "The Nun's Priest's Tale: The Preacher and the Mermaid's Song," *Chaucer Review* 7 (1973), 250-66. As a comment on Chauntecleer's relationship with Pertelote, consider Book 7.1 of *Vox clamantis*, where Gower singles out two main causes "for which this world has now ceased to be good." The second cause is avarice, which spawns envy and warfare; the first is the lust of women "of the very first rank" who inspire "laziness and dull repose" in knights and clerics alike, rendering "sluggish in arms" the knights whom they caress with love in their bedrooms (p. 255).

30. In his almost fatal attempt to "countrefete" (VII.3321) the singing of his father, Chauntecleer, as an allegory of the poet, may be said to reflect on Chaucer's own self-conscious efforts to emulate and excel poets like Virgil, Ovid, Statius, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

31. This sort of historical allegory is, of course, considerably different from that proposed by J. Leslie Hotson in his "Colfox vs. Chauntecleer," *PMLA* 39 (1924), 762-81.