

*Beaten for a Book: Domestic and Pedagogic Violence in the Wife of Bath's Prologue*<sup>1</sup>

While education is a recurrent theme across Chaucer's work, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* contains perhaps his fullest engagement with the subject.<sup>2</sup> His portrayal of Alisoun's fifth husband Jankyn not only provides an important focus for pedagogic concerns, but develops into a complex interrogation of the larger implications of study. Jankyn himself is a virtual personification of formal instruction: as well as being characterised as "clerk of Oxenford" from the moment he appears in the text (III.527), his emphatic youthfulness at "twenty wynter oold" suggests he has little knowledge beyond the classroom (III.600), painting him as "all 'auctoritee' and no 'experience'".<sup>3</sup> But what complicates Chaucer's portrayal in particular is the way that learning infuses Jankyn's behaviour as a husband. Not only does the *Prologue* conflate wedlock with instruction at several points, most tellingly in Alisoun's boast "five husbands scoleyng am I", but Jankyn seems to call on the schoolroom to sustain dominance over the Wife (III.45c). His interactions with Alisoun invariably position him as teacher and her as pupil: his harangues from the book of "wykked wyves" are specifically intended to "teche" her, and he is evidently responsible for the detailed knowledge of classical and patristic material she displays (III.643).<sup>4</sup> Even the term Chaucer uses to denote supremacy in the household recalls education. Alisoun's desired "maistrie" evokes both *magister* and the specialist learning of clerks: hence it is used in the *Seven Sages of Rome* (c.1275) to describe "twei clerkes" who have "maistri on honde", and in *Kyng Alisaunder* (c.1300) to refer to "clerkes wel ylerede...in her maistre".<sup>5</sup> Schooling is therefore at the centre of Jankyn's marriage, both cementing and conceptualising his authority in the household.

Much of this is of course widely recognised in existing criticism, as Jankyn's reliance on pedagogy has been frequently discussed.<sup>6</sup> However, less often appreciated is the way that Jankyn's clerkliness affects the most active manifestation of his power, his use of violence. In

<sup>1</sup> An early version of this paper was given at the International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, 10 July 2014. The author would like to thank the AHRC for funding the research on which the paper is based.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Orme, "Chaucer and Education", *Chaucer Review* 16 (1981): 38-59 (55-56).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Carruthers, "The Wife of Bath and the Painting of Lions", *PMLA* 94 (1979): 209-22 (219).

<sup>4</sup> W.A. Davenport, "Fabliau, Confession, Satire", *Chaucer*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2001), 250-69 (265); Stephen A. Barney, "Chaucer's Lists", *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1982), 189-223.

<sup>5</sup> *The Seven Sages of Rome*, lines 2021-22, ed. Karl Brunner, EETS o.s. 191 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 90; *Kyng Alisaunder*, lines 41-43, ed. G.V. Smithers, EETS o.s. 227, 237, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1952-57), 1:5.

<sup>6</sup> Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 113-31; Marilynn Desmond, *Ovid's Art and the Wife of Bath: the Ethics of Eroticized Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 116-43.

fact, most interpretations of his beating tend to turn away from education altogether, instead regarding such aggression as a product of marital norms. Elisabeth Biebel, for instance, argues that he is driven to beat Alisoun as part of his role as “breadwinner” and “head of household”, while Angela Jane Weisl situates the *Prologue* within a “history of normalized violence against women” which sees “battery” as “a kind of duty for leaders of households”.<sup>7</sup> Eve Salisbury likewise treats Jankyn’s behaviour as an extension of “accepted disciplinary practices reflecting ‘natural’ social relations”, and even Sara Butler’s careful analysis sets his behaviour against a wider acceptance of “physical violence as a remedy” for “the dangers of giving a wife too free a rein”.<sup>8</sup> Such a line of reasoning therefore swerves away from the classroom in which Jankyn grounds his authority, looking to a different discourse altogether to make sense of his assaults. For all four commentators, Jankyn’s use of discipline is treated in purely matrimonial terms, as a direct outgrowth of the “violence that accompanies medieval marriage”, arising out of the implicit rules and hierarchies of the medieval home.<sup>9</sup> In short, “Jankyn oure clerk” tends to be eclipsed by “Jankyn...oure sire” in most discussions of his beating (III.595, 713).

Nevertheless, these conclusions only succeed in giving a partial account of the forms violence assumes in the text. As this essay will argue, Jankyn’s aggression is more complex in its underlying imperatives than such judgements can allow. Just as the medieval classroom penetrates the space of the household via Jankyn, so it penetrates his use of corporal discipline against the Wife. Pedagogy in fact proves to be a vital component of the beating he inflicts on Alisoun, colouring its execution, guiding the forms that it takes, and conditioning the type of authority he is able to claim over her. It is not the only mode of violence the text evokes: marital discourse is clearly at work in the *Prologue*, as the domestic setting of the piece and its focus on “wo that is in mariage” obviously place Jankyn’s actions in such a framework (III.3). Yet insisting on this discourse alone not only neglects a significant range of meanings in his violence, but also fails to identify an important conflict within the text,

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<sup>7</sup> Angela Jane Weisl, “Quiting Eve: Violence Against Women in the *Canterbury Tales*”, *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 115-36 (116-17); Elisabeth M. Biebel, “A Wife, A Batterer, A Rapist: Representations of ‘Masculinity’ in the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale*”, *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 63-76 (71).

<sup>8</sup> Eve Salisbury, “Chaucer’s Wife, the Law and Middle English Breton Lays”, *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), 71-93 (74); Sara M. Butler, *The Language of Abuse: Marital Violence in Later Medieval England* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 228, 254. See also John Davenant, “Chaucer’s View of the Proper Treatment of Women”, *Maledicta* 5 (1981): 153-61.

<sup>9</sup> Mikee Delony, “Weaving the Sermon: the Wife of Bath’s Preaching Body in the *Canterbury Tales*”, *Sex, Gender, and Christianity*, ed. Priscilla Pope-Levison and John R. Levison (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 33-57 (52).

overlooking a significant tension in his beating. As a consequence, it is only by recognising the points at which pedagogy is evoked, and the points at which it generates friction with other disciplinary practices, that Chaucer's understanding of physical correction can be fully drawn out.

*Nat of hym corrected: Pedagogic Violence and its Problems*

Chaucer aligns Jankyn's violence with the schoolroom at a number of levels. Most obvious is the simple fact that his aggression is part and parcel of his general identity. Alisoun describes it as both habitual and idiosyncratic to him: she depicts regular beating "on every bon" and "on my ribbes al by rewe" rather than isolated attacks, and suggests that he is the only man to treat her in this way, being "mooste shrewe" of all her spouses (III.511, 505, 504). Given the lack of similar mistreatment by her previous husbands, and given Jankyn's emphatic status as "clerk of Oxenford", there is already a hint here that violence stems more from the world of learning Jankyn represents than from matrimony and its structures. At a lexical level too Jankyn's violence often recalls the classroom. The same pattern of terms that identifies household authority with "maistrie" and marriage itself as "scoleiyng" also yokes together study and beating. This process is perhaps most visible in the loaded term "glose", which is treated as a complement to Jankyn's blows: Alisoun presents both as part of single pincer-movement used to manipulate her, reflecting that "so wel koude he me glose...thogh he hadde me bete...he koude wynne agayn my love" (III.509-12). As Peggy Knapp's careful unpicking of these lines has shown, the "glosing" that accompanies Jankyn's violence is as academic as it is rhetorical, encompassing the sense of "interpretive commentary" as well as "beguile and cajole".<sup>10</sup> A similar case is presented by "correct", which Alisoun uses when describing her defiance of his regime: as she says, "I sette noght an hawe/ Of his proverbes...Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be" (III.659-61). The Middle English "correcten" carries strong connotations of literacy, as it is often used to describe accuracy of transcription or translation: hence Caxton in the *Four Sons of Aymon* (c.1489) asks readers "that vnderstande the cronycle" to "correcte & amende there as they shall fynde faute", while the General Prologue of the Wycliffite Bible declares "Latyn biblis han more nede to be correctid...than hath the

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<sup>10</sup> Peggy Knapp, *Chaucer and the Social Contest* (London: Routledge, 1990), 115-16. See also Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 120-26.

English bible late translaticid".<sup>11</sup> But the term also has direct linkage to beating as well as writing. Under the influence of Ephesians 6.4, which advises that fathers educate their sons "in disciplina et correptione", "correccion" also comes to signify the physical reprimand of children. Thus Henry Watson asks that "chyl dren in theyr florysshynge youthe" receive "veretably swete correccyon and dyscyplyne" while Lydgate's version of the *Pèlerinage de vie humaine* directs Pylgrym to treat his body "as a mayster" and "hym bete,/ And correcte".<sup>12</sup> When Chaucer himself uses "correcten", the term often drifts between these literary and punitive senses. On the one hand, he complains to Adam Sciveyn that he must regularly "correcte" his sloppy work; on the other, he depicts a schoolmaster in the *Parson's Tale* threatening to "bete" a pupil "for thy correccion" (X.671). There is even some suggestion that "debaat", Alisoun's final euphemism for her running battle with Jankyn, might also recall formal classroom disputation (III.822). At least Gower may be using it in this sense when he refers to pedantic clerks staging a "gret debat" in which "this clerk seith yee, that other nay,/ And thus thei dryve forth the day".<sup>13</sup> The vocabulary surrounding Jankyn's violence mirrors the schoolmasterly posture he assumes in his household, reflecting his campaign to "teche" the Wife "of olde Romayn geestes" (III.642).

However, perhaps more striking is the way in which Chaucer evokes the established imagery of schooling through Jankyn. The two main activities Jankyn is shown to perform, reading and beating, have clear resonances with the standard iconography of instruction. The two objects invariably linked with tuition in medieval visual culture are the book and the ferula or birch, no doubt representing the two alternatives of careful study and swift retribution.<sup>14</sup> The *locus classicus* of these images is probably the south portal of Chartres cathedral, with its complex sequence of carvings depicting the liberal arts and the ancient authorities associated with them. Executed in c.1150 under the direction of Thierry of Chartres, this shows Grammatica standing over two students, one diligent and the other inattentive, with an open book in her left hand and an upright birch in her right.<sup>15</sup> While this

<sup>11</sup> William Caxton, *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, ed. Octavia Richardson, 2 vols., EETS e.s. 64, 65 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1884-85), 1:4; *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), 58.

<sup>12</sup> Henry Watson, *The Shyppe of Fooles* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1509), f.9v (STC 517); John Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, lines 9208-9, ed. F. J. Furnivall and Katharine B. Locock, 3 vols. EETS e.s. 77, 83, 92 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1899-1904), 2:254.

<sup>13</sup> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Prologue.372-74, *Complete Works*, ed. G.C. Macauley, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899-1902), 1:15.

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric, and the Classical Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral: Christ, Mary, Ecclesia* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), 20-25.

symbolism may owe something to Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis* (c.420), which gives Grammatica "a smooth chest of interlocking parts" housing several allegorical implements, the portal's choice of equipment sets the pace for later depictions.<sup>16</sup> The same pairing occurs in the illustrations for Herrad of Landsberg's *Hortus deliciarum* (c.1180), the ceiling of the west nave at Peterborough cathedral (c.1220), and the Palazzo Trinci frescoes at Foligno (c.1420), among other sources.<sup>17</sup> In fact, by the time that Chaucer is writing, the same pair of symbols have crossed from allegory to actuality, as the book and birch collectively stand as the teacher's "badge of office".<sup>18</sup> There are portrayals of masters bearing these two instruments in several manuscript illustrations, including those accompanying the copy of the *Roman d'Alexandre* in Bodley MS 264 (c.1330) and James le Palmer's *Omne Bonum* in Royal MS 6 E VII (c.1370).<sup>19</sup> The same symbolism finds its way on to the frontispieces of early printed schoolbooks: woodcuts of teachers carrying books and birches introduce Synthen's *Composita verborum* (1485), Niger's *Ars epistolam* (1477), Rodericus' *Speculum humane vite* (1488), and Hilarius' *Exposicio himnorum* (1496).<sup>20</sup> Even the official seals of schools use the same iconography, such as those founded at Höxter in 1365 and Macclesfield in 1502.<sup>21</sup> By dividing Jankyn's activity between beating and reading "gladly, nyght and day" (III.669), Chaucer aligns him decisively with these conventions, importing his main activities within the household from the classroom and its attendant imagery.

Jankyn's use of punishment is therefore redolent of the schoolroom, much like his conduct as a whole. His violence shares in the general "associations of teaching and

<sup>16</sup> "Gestabat haec autem teres quoddam ex compactis annexionibus ferculum": *Martianus Capella*, ed. James Willis, Bibliothecae Teubnerianae (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1983), 60. See Adolf Katzenellenbogen, "The Representation of the Seven Liberal Arts", *Twelfth Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, ed. M. Clagett, G. Post and R. Reynolds (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 39-55; Rudolf Wittkower, "'Grammatica': From Martianus Capella to Hogarth", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 2 (1938): 82-84; John A. Alford, "The Grammatical Metaphor: A Survey of Its Use in the Middle Ages", *Speculum* 57 (1982): 728-60.

<sup>17</sup> Herrad of Hohenburg, *Hortus deliciarum*, ed. Rosalie Green (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 104; C.J.P. Cave and Tancred Borenius, "The Painted Ceiling in the Nave of Peterborough Cathedral", *Aethaeologica* 87 (1938): 297-309; Laura Laureati and Lorenza Mochi Onori, *Gentile da Fabriano and the Other Renaissance* (Milan: Electra, 2006), 118.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 144.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Cruse, *Illuminating the Roman D'Alexandre: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264: Manuscript as Monument* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2011), 186-87; Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Omne Bonum: Fourteenth-Century Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge*, 2 vols., Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History 18 (London: Miller, 1996), 2:80.

<sup>20</sup> These and other images are reproduced in Wilhelm Ludwig Schreiber, *Die Deutschen "Accipies" und Magister cum Discipulis-Holzschnitte als Hilfsmittel zur Inkunabel-Bestimmung* [The German Accipies and Woodcuts of Master and Pupils as a Resource for Incunabula Classification] (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1908).

<sup>21</sup> Evamaria Engel and Frank-Dietrich Jacob, *Städtisches Leben im Mittelalter: Schriftquellen und Bildzeugnisse* [Urban Life in the Middle Ages: Written Sources and Pictorial Material] (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2006), 105; Nicholas Carlisle, *The Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England*, 2 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1818), 1:117.

preaching” that come from his position as “the man with the book”, engaged in an “intellectual force-feeding” of the Wife.<sup>22</sup> What Chaucer presents through him, in other words, is a portrait of a man trying to impose his accustomed power structures on to a space outside their usual compass. Jankyn functions as a conduit through which the discipline of the classroom enters into the space of the household. This might be seen as a joke on the part of Chaucer, as the inexperienced clerk attempts to deploy the rules of the school in a wholly inappropriate context: indeed, Jankyn may be designed to recall the comic stereotype of the bad-tempered schoolmaster, a stock figure already crystallising in the late Middle Ages, as “Sire Grumbald the grammier” in *Mum and the Sothsegger* (c.1409) and “mastyr grett Morell” in the *Digby Magdalen* (c.1490) can attest.<sup>23</sup> Jankyn’s attempts to govern his household as though it is a classroom might be a further level at which Chaucer ridicules his misguided performance as a husband.<sup>24</sup> But the key point here is that his violence becomes the site of a crucial discontinuity in the text. The two strands of meaning at work in his beating, the domestic and the pedagogic, are not merely comically incongruous but in direct conflict with one another. Jankyn is in effect trying to employ one set of disciplinary practices in the territory of another, and this mismatch ultimately and fatally compromises his position.

These problems become most visible at the end of the *Prologue*, in the aftermath of Alisoun’s final beating. At this point it becomes clear that Jankyn’s violence cannot achieve domestic “maistrie”, as it signally fails to sustain his authority as a husband. There are of course grounds for seeing this final fight purely as an extension of his dominance and a “capitulation” on the part of the Wife.<sup>25</sup> Her final admission “I was to hym as kynde/ As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde” (III.823-24) has struck some readers as an abandonment of the resistant position staked out in the rest of the text, a moment in which her rebellion is “feebly extinguished” or she has “merely transferred her cell”.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the fact remains that Jankyn’s own power is also rendered visibly less secure by this last “strook”. In

<sup>22</sup> Priscilla Martin, *Chaucer’s Women: Nuns, Wives and Amazons* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996), 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> *Mum and the Sothsegger*, line 330, ed. Mabel Day and Robert Steele, EETS o.s. 199 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 37; *Mary Magdalen*, line 1157, *Digby Mysteries*, ed. Frederick Furnivall, Shakespeare Society Series 8 (London: Trubner, 1882), 99.

<sup>24</sup> Kathryn Jacobs, *Marriage Contracts from Chaucer to the Renaissance Stage* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 42-43.

<sup>25</sup> Sheila Delany, “Sexual Economics, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath and *The Book of Margery Kemp*”, *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London: Routledge, 1994), 78-87 (85); Alcuin Blamires, *Canterbury Tales: The Critics Debate* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987), 33.

<sup>26</sup> S. Knight, “Chaucer and the Sociology of Literature”, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 2 (1980), 34; Hope Phyllis Weissman, “Antifeminism and Chaucer’s Characterization of Women”, *Geoffrey Chaucer: A Collection of Original Essays*, ed. George D. Economou (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 93-110 (110).

its wake, the bases on which masculine authority rests are methodically taken from him: he is compelled to relinquish economic authority, the “hous and lond” the Wife signed over to him at the point of wedlock (III.814); he loses discursive authority, as his arsenal of language and ability to deploy it are equally renounced, his book burned and Alisoun given “gouvernaunce...of his tong” (III.815); even his physical advantage dissipates, as he awards Alisoun power “of his hand”, and ends the narrative in a posture of supplication, kneeling “faire adoun” over the stricken woman (III.803). Over and above these forfeitures, however, there is also a sense that Jankyn has lost any wider social sanction for his behaviour. Any notional support he might possess from his wider community is effectively cancelled at the moment of his aggression, a point highlighted by his craven response when he believes he has killed the Wife: “whan he saugh how stille that I lay,/ He was agast and wolde han fled his way” (III.797-98). Evidently he fears retribution from his community rather than its approval, anticipating only expulsion from its bounds. In short, far from continuing to enjoy precedence through violence, Jankyn’s standing is systematically demolished once he has carried out the assault.

What makes this slippage all the more significant is that these effects have not been brought about by any response to his aggression, but from the exercise of aggression itself. It is clearly the fact that Jankyn is “aghast at the effects of his own violence” that obliges him to make the wider concessions demanded of him, not resistance he has met from any external force.<sup>27</sup> Rather than amplifying or entrenching his authority as a husband, therefore, violence has rendered it forfeit, depriving his stance of its legitimacy: as a fifteenth-century reworking of the *Prologue* puts it, “on his cheke he ys chekmate”.<sup>28</sup> Precisely why Jankyn’s authority should collapse under its own weight has proven difficult to explain using the standard interpretation of his behaviour. Readings that see his beatings as straightforward expressions of marital norms have often struggled to recognise this problem at all, preferring to see his violence as shoring up his position. For Biebel, for instance, while Jankyn is “a victim of his culture’s construction of manliness” his violence is indeed “able to maintain power and control over his wife”; likewise for Weisl, his actions only buttress his authority, as the validity of his “abuse...goes primarily unquestioned” by the text.<sup>29</sup> Assuming that Jankyn’s behaviour arises directly from marital discourse, in other words, fails to acknowledge any drawbacks to his violence at all, let alone account for them.

<sup>27</sup> Jill Mann, *Feminising Chaucer* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002), 68.

<sup>28</sup> Roman Dyboski, *Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems*, EETS e.s. 101 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1907), 110-11.

<sup>29</sup> Biebel, “A Wife, A Batterer, A Rapist”, 70-71; Weisl, “Quiting Eve”, 117.

However, recognising the disparity between Jankyn's violence and the context in which it is deployed allows his failures to be understood more fully. Both of the discourses Jankyn recalls, pedagogy and matrimony, are of course bound up with the exercise of violence: his status as husband and his status as schoolmaster license him equally to use physical discipline against his wife-cum-pupil. Both therefore share a common foundation in castigation, using it to implement and support their hierarchies. Yet closer study reveals that the classroom and household only travel together so far before parting ways. The two discourses diverge sharply in their approaches to violence, configuring it in highly distinctive ways: each makes different demands of beating, places it in the service of differing needs, and surrounds it with specific limits and functions. By tracing out the contours of these departures, a range of valuable details come into view. Most immediately, these points of separation highlight why Jankyn is ultimately unsuccessful in using pedagogic violence within the household, why his chosen mode of violence should prove so literally misplaced. But at the same time they also allow larger questions to emerge, exposing the codes and constraints medieval culture used to render violence licit, and the procedures by which discipline was keyed to particular contexts. Ultimately, the complexities within Jankyn's violence shed clear light on the cultural uses of discipline in the fourteenth century, both as a whole and within the specific discourses Chaucer evokes.

*Myself have been the whippe: Punishment and Subjectivity*

One of the clearest differences between the two discourses is the way in which they connect beating with agency. This is a concern at the centre of both uses of violence. In the case of marital discipline, subjectivity is frequently evoked by texts portraying and discussing wife-beating, as the practice is usually presented as an antidote to the reckless voices of women: as Butler writes, aggressive measures are frequently justified as a means of subduing "an overly vocal wife".<sup>30</sup> One tradition in which such views can be observed, albeit in caricatured form, is the popular antifeminist lyric. General hostility to female speech is of course crucial to this group of texts as a whole. As a string of commentators has made clear, satirical verse routinely targets "women's tongues", blaming them for using language for seditious ends, for forming speech-communities "antipathetic to men", and even for destabilising linguistic

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<sup>30</sup> Butler, *Language of Abuse*, 254.

meaning itself.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, when violence features in misogynous lyrics it is generally coloured by this preoccupation, as the “countless wife-beating scenes” offered by the literature show a strong link between beating and silencing women.<sup>32</sup> A clear example of this pattern emerges in one of the many lyrics claiming to give access a secret subculture of “gossipis”, preserved in the commonplace book of Richard Hill.<sup>33</sup> In the piece, one of the assembled women recounts how pitilessly her husband thrashes her:

For my husbond is so fell,  
He betith me lyke þe devill of hell,  
And þe more I crye,  
Þe lesse mercy.<sup>34</sup>

The function of beating here is unambiguous. With its description of a husband’s violence increasing in proportion to his wife’s “crye”, multiplying his blows as her vocalisation escalates, beating is clearly presented as a means of blotting out woman’s speech: the more the wife verbalises her resistance to the husband, the more needful his beating becomes. Comparable sentiments can be found at least two centuries earlier, as a thirteenth-century lyric included in a preaching compendium also regards beating in the same terms. In this brief dialogue, a woman asks a *sortilege* or “wist y þe brom” how to end her husband’s mistreatment of her, only to be told: “þyf þy bonde ys ylle/ Held þy tonge stille”.<sup>35</sup> Again, cruelty serves to disable the woman’s speech: the lyric’s general message is that silence can fend off further abuse because it is the objective of that abuse. A further witness is the Towneley *Play of the Flood* (c.1460). While this text is more self-conscious in its treatment of beating, it attributes much the same intent to its operation.<sup>36</sup> When Noah throws his first punch at his wife, his stated purpose is to keep her from speaking, as he vows “hold thi tong,

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<sup>31</sup> See, among other sources, Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of England 450-1500* (London: Pheonix Giant, 1999), 152, Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 35; Sarah Kay, “Women’s Body of Knowledge: Epistemology and Misogyny in the *Romance de la Rose*”, *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 219; R. Howard Bloch, “Medieval Misogyny”, *Representations* 20 (1987): 1-24.

<sup>32</sup> Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 19.

<sup>33</sup> See Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: the Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 45-57; W.P. Hills, “Richard Hill of Hillend”, *Notes and Queries* 111 (1939): 452-56.

<sup>34</sup> Dyboski, *Songs, Carols, and other Miscellaneous Poems*, 108.

<sup>35</sup> Carleton Brown, *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), 21. On the text and its variants, see Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, “Popular Song and the Middle English Lyric”, *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001), 555-80 (565-66).

<sup>36</sup> Mary P. Freier, “Woman as Termagant in the Towneley Cycle”, *Essays in Medieval Studies* 2 (1985): 154-67; Martin Stevens, “Language as Theme in the Wakefield Plays”, *Speculum* 52 (1977): 100-17; Martin Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles: Textual, Contextual, and Critical Interpretations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 170-71.

ram-skyt/ or I shall the still”; later on, he threatens to “make the still as stone, begynnar of blunder”.<sup>37</sup> The understanding of chastisement running through these texts is much as Butler writes, with beating being seen as a reliable method of cancelling troublesome female speech.

The other side of the same coin is represented by a unique piece in Bodleian MS Engl. Poet. e.1 (c.1480). In the course of its wider complaints against women, this delivers the following pronouncement:

An adamant stone it is not frangebyll  
 With no thyng but with mylke of a gett;  
 So a woman to refrayne it is not posybyll  
 With wordes, except with a staffe pou hyr intrett.<sup>38</sup>

Just as the other verses conceive beating as an antidote to female speech, this quatrain sees it increasing women’s receptivity to male language, metaphorically “softening” wives in order that they might better absorb male instruction. Indeed, there is a careful alignment of beating with male speech throughout the stanza: in the final line, the use of the word “intrett” to describe the blows of a staff renders speech and beating not merely parallel but directly interchangeable, underscoring their movement towards a common end. This affinity also appears in similar pieces. It can be seen in one of the snippets of proverbial advice collected in the English version of *Salomon and Marcolphus* (c.1492): this argues that “a rybaude she is lost/ If she be nat well beate and tost”.<sup>39</sup> Again, what is at stake is the receptivity of women to male language, as without violence women are simply “lost” in the natural unruliness and indecency of their speech. What runs through these verses, therefore, is a sense that beating is a means of disabling a woman’s language on the one hand, and of rendering her more amenable to male language on the other. In their underlying logic, these texts might be compared to Elaine Scarry’s observations on pain, as they seem to rest on the conviction that “physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it”, silencing the sufferer by replacing words with inarticulate yells.<sup>40</sup> Beating as they see it reduces women to silent, passive objects that can be accommodated into masculine language. Ultimately, wife-beating is presented in the lyrics as an assault on female subjectivity itself, a means of transforming a

<sup>37</sup> *Noah and the Ark*, lines 217, 406-7, *The Towneley Plays*, ed. George England and Arthur Pollard, EETS e.s. 71 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 29.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Leighton Green, *Early English Carols* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 241.

<sup>39</sup> *The sayenges or proverbes of King Salomon/ with the answers of Marcolphus* (London: Richard Pynson, n.d.), f.3 (STC 22899).

<sup>40</sup> Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

potentially disobedient agent into a compliant object with no means of resisting male command.

Of course, such statements cannot be taken entirely at their word, as they have passed through the exaggerating prism of comedy. Whatever expectations surrounded wives in the medieval period, they did not demand the absolute passivity and silence propounded by the lyrics. Wives were charged with authority over children and servants as a matter of course, and their role in the household asked them to implement discipline as well as receive it.<sup>41</sup> As a deportment text such as “How the Good Wiff tauzte Hir Douztir” (c.1430) makes clear, wives may have been required to be “fair of speche” and “trew in worde”, and even “meekely...answere” their husbands, but they should also “wijsli gouerne” their children and “meyne”, and not hesitate to “take a smert rodde, & bete hem on a rowe” when necessary.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the satiric discourse from which the lyrics arise often acknowledges this duty, as the stereotype of the bloodthirsty wife is as pervasive as the loquacious or unruly woman. A case in point is the widely read *Quinze ioyes de mariage* (c.1380): in De Worde’s version, this features a wife who takes a rod to her “lytell chylde that can not go but crepe”, and “upon the buttockes...dooth it bete and dyngge” purely for spite.<sup>43</sup> Chaucer himself provides another example of this commonplace, as Bailly’s wife Goodelief has a stated fondness for “grete clobbed staves” when overseeing the punishment of her “knaves” (VII.1897-98).<sup>44</sup>

The antifeminist lyrics cannot therefore be considered as straightforward witnesses to domestic norms. Not only did wives hold authority in the household rather than being objects to be defined and directed, but they were often called on to perform much the same formalised aggression as their husbands. Yet these texts also remind us that the agency of the wife was always provisional or contingent in nature. The position of wife was after all an intermediate one in the domestic hierarchy. Wives were equally subject and subaltern, and they usually functioned more as transmitters than possessors of authority: even “the Good Wiff” is clear that the wife is only ever deputising for her husband rather than acting entirely on her own initiative, as the duty to “lete not bi meyne goon ydil” comes into force when “þin husbonde be from hoome”.<sup>45</sup> This is also the larger point that the *Quinze ioyes* raises, as its implicit claim is that wives need a male arbiter to prevent their actions from giving way to

<sup>41</sup> See Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 116-134, 185-207.

<sup>42</sup> *The Babees Book*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 32 (London: N. Trübner, 1869), 36-47.

<sup>43</sup> *The fyftene joyes of maryage* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1509), sig. Ei-Ei v (STC 15258).

<sup>44</sup> See Laura Kendrick, *Chaucerian Play: Comedy and Control in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 111.

<sup>45</sup> *Babees Book*, 41.

vindictiveness. The wife's authority was then clearly not autonomy, as she should ideally be a vehicle for her husband's will. The lyrics should be read in this light. Although they overstate the power of violence, as the outright cancellation of a wife's agency was not desirable in reality, their depiction of beating as a reduction of subjectivity seems to have at least a grain of truth. Despite their hyperbole, their characterisation of beating suggests its importance in maintaining the secondary role demanded of wives, in reinforcing the cap on their subjectivity; although it might not neutralise a wife's authority altogether, beating would still ensure that she remained beneath the husband's command, counteracting any excessive wilfulness. In short, the husband's violence is best seen as repressive in its overall purpose, keeping action and speech within designated limits, even if it cannot be quite as dictatorial as the lyrics suggest.

Returning to the *Prologue*, one thing immediately apparent is the outright lack of these results. Despite having been beaten extensively by her husband, the Wife is clearly not presented as a dependent or second-tier subject: in fact a central manoeuvre of the *Prologue*, whether the reader is asked to endorse it or not, is to grant her the "male prerogative" of "public speech", as Alisoun comes to speak for herself and in her own terms.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, she hardly suffers the restriction on language that the lyrics associate with violence. She is after all the most voluble and uncontrollable of Chaucer's speakers, as she seems to possess, in the words of one early reader, a "Tongue...like a River,/ Set it once going, it will go for ever".<sup>47</sup> What makes this all the more striking is that this agency does not seem to develop out of her status as wife, and the limited subjectivity it allows. There is a remarkable absence in the *Prologue* of any figures over whom a wife's power might be exerted: despite her appeal to the directive "wexe and multiplie", no reference is made to any children, and she is similarly silent on the issue of servants (III.28).<sup>48</sup> Chaucer therefore does not equip Alisoun with any of the bases of authority ordinarily granted to wives, suggesting that her agency is founded elsewhere. Where it seems to be located is in the violence that Jankyn employs against her. The text makes clear that Jankyn has not merely been unsuccessful in containing the Wife's subjectivity, but has actively contributed to its development. The most enduring repercussion of his violence is also instrumental in the creation of Alisoun's forthright

<sup>46</sup> Margaret Hallissy, *Clean Maids, True Wives, and Steadfast Widows: Chaucer's Women and Medieval Codes of Conduct* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 173.

<sup>47</sup> Richard Brathwait, *A Comment Upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr Jeffray Chaucer, Knight* (London: W. Godbid, 1665), 140 (STC B4260).

<sup>48</sup> See for instance E. Talbot Donaldson, "Designing a Camel: Or, Generalizing the Middle Ages", *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 22 (1977): 1-16 (8); Bernard Huppé, *A Reading of the Canterbury Tales* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1967), 110.

speech. As becomes explicit at the end of the Wife's account, the deafness which opens her portrait in the *General Prologue* is the result of Jankyn striking her: the fact that she was "somedel deaf, and that was scathe" (I.447) is the direct outcome of the blow which concludes the *Prologue*, as this final "strook" is responsible for making "myn ere wax al deaf" (III.637). That the main result of this blow is the first detail reported about Alisoun, even preceding her "cloth-making" and number of "husbands at chirche door", is extremely telling (I.460). Through being assigned this privileged place, it effectively becomes the platform on which Alisoun's entire performance is played out, serving to introduce the prolonged act of self-assertion that constitutes the *Prologue*. This point is further borne out by the role her deafness plays in this performance. Since at least the work of John Alford on Alisoun's use of rhetoric, the centrality of deafness to her peculiar voice has been clear.<sup>49</sup> More recently Edna Sayers has given a detailed account of the role her deafness plays in her speech, noting that it not only causes her "to pursue a monologue from which she cannot be budged", but becomes an inbuilt means of resisting masculine control and the discourses which support it: the fact she cannot hear what men say to or about her becomes a wholesale "resistance to antifeminism" in practice.<sup>50</sup> Deafness, by sealing her off from the language of others, is the wellspring of the eccentricity and resistance to prescriptive discourses Chaucer places at the centre of her voice. In the course of the *Prologue*, therefore, violence becomes nothing short of an enabling rather than suppressive factor. The Wife's entire performance as a speaker is facilitated and informed by the violence she has undergone: this experience, and the physical trace it has left on her, has lead directly to the transference of Jankyn's "heigh maistrie" to her (IV.1172). The end result of the violence Alisoun undergoes is not subservience but subjectivity, as its effects do not limit her activity, but carve out a space from which her linguistic agency can be displayed in its own right.

These results can be attributed to the mode of violence Jankyn employs, with its strongly educational inflection. When medieval sources engage with the beating carried out in instruction, they often present it as a necessary step in the formation of adult subjectivity. This tendency is already in evidence among the monastic and cathedral schools of the early medieval period. Hence in a letter to his former community at York, Alcuin discusses punishment as an entry-point into maturity and the full level of agency it entails,

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<sup>49</sup> John A. Alford, "The Wife of Bath versus the Clerk of Oxford: What their Rivalry Means", *Chaucer Review* 21 (1986): 108-32 (110).

<sup>50</sup> Edna Edith Sayers, "Experience, Authority and the Mediation of Deafness: Chaucer's Wife of Bath", *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations*, ed. Joshua R Eyler (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 81-104 (88-89).

commending the monks for helping him transcend “the frivolous time of childhood” and reach “the perfect age of manhood” by means of their “fatherly chastisements”.<sup>51</sup> Sigebert of Gembloux presents discipline in similar terms in his *vita* of St Lambert of Maastricht, describing how his subject “became a perfect man of vigour under the rod of the master”.<sup>52</sup> More pointed still is another letter written by Everaclus of Liège to his former master Ratherius of Verona in the tenth century: for Everaclus, discipline becomes not only the key to manhood but a necessary admission into literate culture itself. As part of his tribute to the older man, Everaclus tells him that “everything of ours is in your hands, according to what your intellect decided, dear Ratherius. You have conducted all, foreseen, arranged, established, as it pleases you. Under your thumb, learned and skilful, I do not blush to flinch my hand from the rod”.<sup>53</sup> Since Everaclus is in fact quoting Juvenal here, adapting lines from the first and seventh satires, beating represents not merely his debt to the master but his own latinity, marking his ability to access ancient texts.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the Juvenalian phrase “flinch my hand from the rod” almost becomes a shibboleth when referring to formal instruction. Writers such as Alan of Lille, Heriger of Lobbes and others frequently use it to signal membership of the educated elite, commemorating literacy in both the author it echoes and the experience it reflects.<sup>55</sup>

These attitudes towards beating not only persist into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries but grow increasingly institutionalised. In his own remarks on education, Froissart likewise sees punishment at school as a factor increasing agency rather than suppressing it. In the quasi-autobiographical segments of *L'espinette amoureuse* (c.1372), Froissart's narrator describes the beatings he received for “deviating when making my lessons” having a salutary effect on his general sophistication, “changing me much for the better” and rendering him

<sup>51</sup> “Lascivum pueritiae tempus pia sustinuitis patientia, et paternae castigationis disciplinis ad perfectam viri edocuitis aetatem, et sacrarum eruditione disciplinarum roborastis”: Alcuin, “Epistolae VI”, *B. Flacci Albini seu Alcuini: Opera Omnia*, Patrologiae cursus completus, series secunda 100 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1855), col. 145.

<sup>52</sup> “Et puer quidem strenuus iam tunc nitens totis uiribus fieri uir perfectus quantum sub ferula sancti magistri”: Sigebertis Gemblacensis, *Vita prior Sancti Lamberti Episcopi Traiectensis et Martyris Leodii in Belgio*, 3, Patrologiae cursus completus, series secunda 160 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1854), col. 762.

<sup>53</sup> “Omnia nostra erunt in manu vestra, secundum quod animo vestro insederit, o dilecte Ratheri. Cuncta praevideate, disponite, constituite, et ut libuerit, in omnibus agite. Sb vestro pollice docto et artifice manum ferulae non erubescam subducere”: H. Silvestre, “Comment on rédigeait une lettre au Xe siècle. L'épître d'Eracle de Liège à Rathier de Vérone [How one composed a letter in the tenth century. The epistle of Everaclus of Liège to Ratherius of Verona]”, *Le Moyen-Âge* 58 (1952): 1-30 (8).

<sup>54</sup> “Nos ergo manum ferulae subduximus”; “ceu pollice ducat/ ut si quis cera uoltum facit”: Juvenal, *Satires*, 1.15, 7.237-38, ed. J.D. Duff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 1, 53.

<sup>55</sup> See Alanus ab Insulis, *De planctu naturae*, *Opera Omnia* 1, Patrologiae cursus completus, series secunda 210 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1855), col. 452; Herigerus Lobbiensis, *Gesta pontificum Tungrensium et Leodiensium*, ed. R. Koepke, Monumenta Germaniae Historica s.s. 1 (Hanover: Impensis Bibliopolii Avlici Hahniani, 1844), 178; *Commentaria in Rvth*, ed. Gerard Martel (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 137.

*plus assagis* and *plus sougis*. But at the same time he also uses beating to symbolise his growing subjectivity: when outlining his education, his relationship with *batus* fluctuates continually from recipient to performer, as he describes himself treating the other children as his master treats him, stating “I took beatings, and so I beat them”.<sup>56</sup> Beating at school is also seen in similar, fluctuating terms by Christan of Lilienfeld, writing in the Cistercian abbey of Basse-Autriche in the first quarter of the fourteenth century.<sup>57</sup> As well as arguing that the rod is a necessary means of “taming” children along with “the spur of vigilance”, Christan argues that it serves to increase their own will and discretion: he specifically argues that “their flaming spirit is not smothered in the heat of the flesh” before adding that “constancy is strengthened by mortification, as by means of the rod of discipline they cast away the pangs of greed with temperance”.<sup>58</sup> The same appreciation may also underpin Dante’s meeting with Brunetto Latini in hell, as he tells his old teacher that their lessons together are “stamped into my mind” (*la mente m’è fitta*).<sup>59</sup>

However, perhaps the most powerful witness to these sentiments is the medieval classroom itself, and the texts generated out of its activities. Such thinking is especially visible in the *latinities* or *vulgaria*, collections of brief translation exercises which begin to appear in the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>60</sup> The surviving texts refer to flogging liberally: they include such phrases as “some children will be well ruled for loue: some for fere/ some nat without bettynge or correction,” “Do not so that thou be betyne,” “thou arte worthy to be bette,” and “what meanys shall I use to lurne withoute betyng”.<sup>61</sup> While these statements might at first glance seem to serve a repressive function, reminding pupils of the

<sup>56</sup> “Et se je varioie au rendre/ Mes liçons, j’estoie batus./ Siques, quant je fui embatus/ En cognissance et en cremeur,/ Si se chagierent moult mi meur./ Nom-pour-quant ensus de mon mestre/ Je ne pooie à repos estre,/ Car aux enfans me combatoie;/ J’ère batus et je batoie”: Jean Froissart, *L’epinette amoureuse*, lines 249-67, ed. Anthime Fourrier (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1963), 54-55.

<sup>57</sup> Myriam Despineux, “Les miracles mariaux de Christan de Lilienfeld d’après la Légende dorée: Procédés et finalités d’un abrégiateur [The Marian miracles of Christan of Lilienfeld after the Golden Legend: the procedures and objectives of an abbreviator]”, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 67 (1989): 257-71.

<sup>58</sup> “Et ne ignescens eorum spiritus socie carnis incendio suffocaretur, verum potius eius assidua mortificatione fortificaretur, ipsam proiecta castrimargia nexibus parsymonie, ferula discipline, vigiliarum calcaribus domuerunt”: Christanus Campililiensis, “Officia officium”, 10.34, *Opera Poetica*, Corpus Christianorum 72, ed. Walter Zechmeister (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 62.

<sup>59</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* 15.82, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. Tommaso Casini (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1903), 112.

<sup>60</sup> The surviving texts have been recently edited in Nicholas Orme, *English School Exercises, c.1420-c.1530*, Studies and Texts 181 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). On the texts and their purpose, see Nicholas Orme, *Education and Society in Medieval and Renaissance England* (London: Hambledon, 1989), 76-98; David William Sylvester, *Education Documents, England and Wales 800 to 1816* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 91-94.

<sup>61</sup> William Horman, *Vulgaria uiri doctissimi* (London: Richard Pynson, 1519), ff.84v-85 (STC 13811); John Anwykyll, *Vulgaria quedam abs Terencio in Anglicam linguam traducta, Compendium totius grammaticae* (Oxford: Theodorick Rood and Thomas Hunte, 1483), f.65 (STC 696); Beatrice White, *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton*, EETS o.s. 187 (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), 28.

master's authority over them and his right to chastise them, this is not always the case. In a number of instances the *latinitates* encourage students to regard themselves as potential performers of violence as well as its targets. For example, in a collection compiled by the London schoolmaster Robert Whittinton, there are several sentences which position the translator as the subject rather than object of blows: Whittinton asks his students to render such phrases as "If euer I be a man/ I wyll revenge his malyce", "wordes I may suffre/ but strypes I may not withall", and simply "I bete or punysse".<sup>62</sup> What is more, these particular exercises were evidently used by at least one early educator, as a copy of Whittinton's text once held at Sion College singles out these particular sentences with marginal notations.<sup>63</sup> Nor is Whittinton the only teacher to take such an approach. An anonymous collection of exercises compiled at Magdalen school in the late fifteenth century goes even further, asking students to assume the voice of the chastising master himself: it includes such statements as "now, sithe the mater lieth all in my handes, aske me mercy and take it" and "there is nothyng that I desire more than to use softe and easy correccioun unto the scholars...but sum wolde never lurne lerne yf thei wer sure thei sholde never be bett".<sup>64</sup> Through these sentences, students are invited to regard themselves as prospective performers of violence in the course of performing literacy. As they draw such statements into their own written language, they insert themselves into the subject position each text sketches out for them, becoming the beating "I" as they acquire command over letters. In effect, discipline in the schoolroom becomes a symbolic pivot around which pupils shift from object to subject, moving from the recipient to agent of learning. Put simply, it serves as an initiation into the community of the educated: in the words of Anthony Burgess, "to have beaten, been beaten, witnessed the same beatings" serves as "a red badge of something" shared by members of this elite.<sup>65</sup>

The constructive effects of Jankyn's violence can be attributed to this function, as his abuse also gives Alisoun passage into literate culture, even despite his own intentions. Although his beating and reading might be designed to disenfranchise the Wife, placing her in the role of submissive pupil, they succeed in creating an agent capable of contending with his authority and authorities, who uses her voice to dispute with him and the texts on which his power rests. In other words, the resistance Jankyn encounters directly emerges out of the

<sup>62</sup> White, *Vulgaria*, 102, 107.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Whittinton, *Vulgaria Roberti VWhitintoni Lichfeldiensis, et de institutione grammaticulorum opusculum: libello suo de concinnitate grammatices accommodatum: et in quattuor partes digestum* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1529), ff.32v, 34v (British Library shelf-mark C.143.a.26).

<sup>64</sup> William Nelson, *A Fifteenth Century School Book* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 34-35.

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Burgess, "The Whip", *Homage to Qwert Yuiop* (London: Abacus, 1987), 109-11 (111).

form of violence he has chosen to deploy, as its results inevitably turn against him by the end of the *Prologue*. While Alisoun's deafness is the clearest symbol of this process, it leaves other traces within the narrative. For instance, it might also account for the puzzling ambivalence Alisoun expresses towards her beatings, as her accounts of Jankyn's mistreatment often seem to hover "between pleasure and danger" to a degree little short of "masochistic".<sup>66</sup> Such uncertainty might again reflect the role violence plays in instructing her. Chaucer makes her both value and resent Jankyn's blows because they perform a dual role, simultaneously victimising the Wife and empowering her to speak in the terms she does: Alisoun's combination of affection and impatience towards Jankyn is, in effect, the mixture of indebtedness and rivalry implicit in every teacher-pupil relationship, as tutelage raises the student to the level of the master. The same conditions also colour the vocabulary Alisoun uses to reflect on her own subjectivity. As she boasts at the beginning of the text, she has both been whipped and "myself have been the whippe", undergoing the same movement from object to subject that didactic violence is intended to produce, and describing her transition in the same terms used by the *latinitates* (III.175). At the very least, these factors signal why Jankyn's violence should prove resoundingly ineffective within the immediate context of the household. It cannot subordinate the Wife to his command, being designed to promote the very subjectivity domestic discipline should counter.

*Wood al outrelly: Reason and the Limits of Punishment*

Agency is not the only point at which pedagogy intrudes into the *Prologue*, or the only distinction between the two types of violence Chaucer's text serves to highlight. Closely related to the functions pedagogic and marital discipline perform are the limits they are compelled to observe. The notion that violence occupies implicit parameters again arises at the climax of the *Prologue*. In the lines immediately following his final assault, there is a clear sense that Jankyn has overstepped some unspoken limit, that his violence has broken free of the confines that ought to govern it. His breach can be seen in the care Chaucer takes to differentiate this blow from the regular abuse Jankyn inflicts on Alisoun: she specifies "he smoot me ones on the lyst", expressly describing this assault and the form it takes as something that happened only on a single occasion, as a departure from her husband's usual

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<sup>66</sup> Elaine Tuttle Hansen, "'Of his love daungerous to me': Liberation, Subversion, and Domestic Violence in the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale", *The Wife of Bath*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Bedford: St Martin's, 1996), 273-89 (278).

habits (III.634). While the final attack is therefore an extension of Jankyn's established conduct, it also seems to possess a new and unprecedented element, setting it apart from the routine violence to which he subjects the Wife when beating her "on my ribbes al by rewe" (III.506). Violence of this particular variety occurs only "ones" and not in the daily course of things, as it has in some way slipped free of conventional patterns.

The question this detail provokes, however, is exactly what form of limit Jankyn has transgressed here. In terms of their broader social currency, each of the discourses evoked by the *Prologue* places firm boundaries around beating, having a particular set of standards to determine acceptability and excess. Both subscribe to "a rhetoric of rationality", using "the concept of reason...to proscribe excessive violence", even if their sense of "reasonableness" differs in fundamental ways.<sup>67</sup> It is clear, for instance, that violence in the household was made to operate within specific channels. Although some commentators have argued that husbands could injure or kill their wives with impunity, a position which authors like Geoffrey la Tour-Landry or Boccaccio appear to voice, in practice wife-beating was strictly regulated.<sup>68</sup> The pressure on husbands to limit their violence emanated from several centres. Thus Barbara Hanawalt has found evidence of "social norms...calling attention to responsibility, restraint, and good judgment" in forensic and folkloric sources, while Martha Brozyna and Larissa Taylor identify similar proscriptions in canon law and popular preaching.<sup>69</sup> What is more, husbands faced material as well as social disincentives, as improper levels of violence might be penalised by fines, the pillory, or enforced separation.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, despite these wide calls for moderation, the parameters around matrimonial discipline tended to be fluid and even negotiable: often "the limits are difficult to define" in general terms, beyond a loose intolerance for "murder or maiming" women.<sup>71</sup> Such limits

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<sup>67</sup> Emma Hawkes, "The 'Reasonable' Laws of Domestic Violence in Late Medieval England", *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, ed. Salisbury, Donavin and Price, 57-70 (57-58).

<sup>68</sup> See Georges Duby, "The Aristocratic Households of Feudal France", *A History of Private Life*, ed. Phillipe Ariès and others, 3 vols (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987-90), 2: 35-155 (77); Del Martin, *Battered Wives* (San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1981), 29; Frances Gies and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 155; Marilyn Miriel, *A Rhetoric of the Decameron* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2003), 147-59; Tory Vandeventer Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45-72.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Violence in the Domestic Milieu of Late Medieval England", *Violence in Medieval Society*, ed. Richard W. Kaeuper (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), 197-214 (214); Martha A. Brozyna, "Not Just a Family Affair: Domestic Violence and the Ecclesiastical Courts in Late Medieval Poland", *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Isabel Davis and others, International Medieval Research 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 299-311 (301); Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 169.

<sup>70</sup> See Sandy Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), 139.

<sup>71</sup> Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 80.

were also inconsistently applied, as they tended to vary substantially from region to region, and even differed widely within single communities at different points in time. The standards Robin Stacy identifies in Wales, for instance, differ considerably from those Hannah Skoda sees at work in Paris and S.D. Goitein sees among Jewish communities in the Mediterranean.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, the materials examined by Karen Jones from the church courts at Kent suggest that willingness to prosecute ill-treatment of wives was at best sporadic, appearing “on the agenda of the court” at certain times “and only then”, rather than being a pervasive or on-going concern.<sup>73</sup>

Nonetheless, despite such mutability, what does emerge is a sense that wife-beating is to be judged by its effects on the woman’s body above all. Death, miscarriage, broken bones, attempted murder, bloodshed, and assault on sacred ground, usually mark the end-points of its legitimacy, opening up the husband to prosecution or at least intervention by community and court.<sup>74</sup> In effect, inappropriate wife-beating seems to be conceptualised along the same lines as sexual assault, as an offence that needs to be provably “written on the body”, requiring the traces of “visible injuries...bleeding wounds and torn clothing” to be identified and condemned.<sup>75</sup> Thus in legal discourse, there is often a high degree of emphasis on physical damage when wives plead against their husbands. A vivid illustration of this tendency is a plea brought before the Star Chamber by Agnes Lewys of Ospringe against her husband Thomas, a “servyngman” in the royal garrison at Calais. The appeal can be dated tentatively to 1532, as Lewys appears on a register of soldiery drawn up in this year; it may however date from up to nine years later, as Agnes places Sir John Wallop at the “Castell of Guynes” or Guînes, where he was made lieutenant in April 1541.<sup>76</sup> However, what makes

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<sup>72</sup> Robin Chapman Stacy, “Wales”, *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. Margaret Schaus (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 825-26; Hannah Skoda, *Medieval Violence: Physical Brutality in Northern France, 1270-1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 193-231; S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 394-95.

<sup>73</sup> Karen Jones, *Gender and Petty Crime in Late Medieval England: The Local Courts in Kent 1460-1560* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 87.

<sup>74</sup> See Wolfgang Müller, *The Criminalization of Abortion in the West: its Origins in Medieval Law* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 45-76; Roderick Phillips, *Untying the Knot: A Short History of Divorce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 97-98. See also the cases discussed in Sara M. Butler, “The Law as a Weapon in Marital Disputes: Evidence from the Late Medieval Court of Chancery, 1424-1529”, *Journal of British Studies* 43 (2004): 291-316 (291-92); Susan Stewart, “Outlawry as an Instrument of Justice in the Thirteenth Century”, *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society c.1066-c.1600*, ed. Paul Dalton and John C. Appleby (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 37-54 (51); Peter Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England, 1000-1500* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), 160.

<sup>75</sup> Kim M. Philips, “Written on the Body: Reading Rape from the Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries”, *Medieval Women and the Law*, ed. Noël James Menuge (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 125-44 (129).

<sup>76</sup> See P.T.J. Morgan, “The Welsh at Calais”, *Welsh History Review/ Cylchgrawn Hanes Cymru* 2 (1964-65): 181-85 (183); David Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436-1558* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), 108-10.

the complaint important is the long, highly specific catalogue of injuries Agnes feels obliged to recount. She not only describes Lewys “drawing of wepons, thretenyng, and beating contynually” but periodically assaulting her so severely that she was “constrayned monthely and quarterly to kepe her bedde”, being “so brosyd and sore with beatyng and treading upon her leggs and armes, wherby she ys skant able to move”. The plea goes on to claim that Thomas had also “givon unto your sayd Oratrice poyson” and still “intendyth utterly to distroy” her, although dwells most extensively on an episode before his departure for France: immediately before leaving, Lewys apparently “threatened to slay her and drewe his wepon, ranne at her, and so if she hadde not made the better shifte she hadde bene slayne, and then and ther he toke a pewter potte and toke your sayd Oratryce withe the same potte under the lyst of the eare that she fell downe...and wast nye ded onlesse the socour wast nyghe hand of good ffrendes and neyghbores”.<sup>77</sup>

This vivid account of a married life “as hevy...as curseth any honest poor woman” encapsulates a common rhetorical strategy in legal discourse. Other records also appeal to the wounded body of the woman in order to signal when husbands have departed from the bounds of reason. Hence in a petition made to parliament between c.1366 and c.1382, Thomasina de Fornivall pleads for financial recompense from her estranged husband William, describing “the cruelty and harshness” of their marriage, the “total humiliation and grievous censures” she has suffered at his hands, and the impossibility of “living with him for fear of her life”.<sup>78</sup> This last phrase is also echoed in a petition to the Common Bench of c.1533-38, in which Margaret Robens of Cromer is said to go in “ffering of her lyff” after rumours of infidelity sparked “stryff debate and variaunce” between herself and her husband Stephen Sheppard.<sup>79</sup> These two cases are particularly interesting because the reported cruelty is incidental to the main objective of each suit. Thomasina is actually seeking “sufficient guarantee of peace and suitable income to sustain herself”, while Margaret is only mentioned in the course of a larger complaint against Sheppard and his rumour-mongering.<sup>80</sup> The inclusion of such details therefore seems designed to discredit the husband in the eyes of the court, again underscoring how reports or threats of injury are indicators of a lack of reason. That plaintiffs were driven to such measures is perhaps due to the problems legal discourse faced when confronted with female deponents and witnesses: when dealing with violence

<sup>77</sup> National Archives, STAC 2/21/62, f.1.

<sup>78</sup> “La quele Thomasine pur cruelte et duresce de son dit marage ne poer cohabiter ad luy pur doute de on mort on ele...tote humilitee ne so grevouses censures”: National Archives, SC 8/46/2291.

<sup>79</sup> National Archives, C1/845/38.

<sup>80</sup> “La dite Thomsine...avoir suffisante suretee de la pees et covenable susteintuer ses”: National Archives, SC 8/46/2291.

against women medieval law tended to operate on the assumption “that men were inherently rational and women naturally less rational”, which not merely “contributed to the alienation of women from the courts” but enabled men to be the final arbiters of “the boundaries of reasonable chastisement”.<sup>81</sup> Appealing to the body could be seen as a response to these beliefs by the courts and women alike, a means of circumventing the supposed faultiness of female testimony by looking to the more objective record provided by their flesh. At any rate, whatever the mechanics underpinning it, the point remains that domestic violence is directly tied to its effects on the wife’s body: the standards separating reasonable from unreasonable force are emphatically corporeal.

Pedagogic discourse, on the other hand, functions along different lines and within different limits. Here the emphasis falls more on the psychological motivation driving the teacher to punish rather than the outcome of that punishment, physical or otherwise. Writers on education repeatedly stress that, since his role is to cultivate systematic thought in his charges, the teacher should not step beyond these bounds himself in implementing beating; he certainly should not allow irrationality to intrude into the classroom by striking out rashly or furiously. One of the most striking illustrations of this conviction is the elaborate set of provisions laid down in Vincent de Beauvais’ *De Eruditione Filiorum Nobilium* (c.1261), a handbook written at the request of Marguerite of Provence for the tutors of her son, the future Philip the Bold.<sup>82</sup> While Vincent makes discipline one of his central concerns, dedicating no fewer than three full chapters to the questions surrounding punishment and the circumstances that make it necessary, his emphasis throughout is on subordinating punishment to balance and calculation. As he explicitly states in the course of his discussion, “in the practice of coercion three things are required, rigour, gentleness and discernment (*discretio*) or self-control (*modestia*)...the harshness or severity obliged by teaching should not exceed correct measure in form”.<sup>83</sup> In his comments, Vincent not only seeks to ensure that *discretio* governs the teacher’s blows in principle, but even attempts to embed calm reflection in their actual execution. In particular, he advises waiting to inflict any punishment rather than lashing out immediately, urging that “time is to be observed, so you do not bring about disgrace by

<sup>81</sup> Hawkes, “‘Reasonable’ Laws of Domestic Violence”, 66.

<sup>82</sup> See Robert J. Schneider, “Vincent of Beauvais’ *Opus universale de statu principis*: a Reconstruction of its History and Contents”, *Vincent de Beauvais: intentions et receptions d’une œuvre encyclopédique au Moyen Âge*, ed. Monique Paulmier-Foucart, Serge Lusignan and Alain Nadeau (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1990), 285-300 (289-98).

<sup>83</sup> “In disciplina coercionis requiruntur tria, sc. austeritas et mansuetudo et discretio siue modestia...austeritas ergo uel asperitas esse debet in disciplina, ne sit ultra modum remissa”: Vincent of Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, ed. Arpad Steiner, Medieval Academy of North America (Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1938), 90, 95.

attacking as though with fury straight away, but always wait at length for an opportune time”.<sup>84</sup> Such circumspection enables a series of further checks to be performed. With such a delay observed, all “discipline of the rod” can be accompanied by a *conminacio*, a “denunciation” or “formal warning”, “much like the admonishment in the sentence of excommunication”.<sup>85</sup> It can also be varied in accordance with the offence, since “if the sin in truth is open then correction should be made openly”, and allow time for the character of the offender to be considered, so that discipline can occur “in different ways according to the disposition or ability of each pupil”.<sup>86</sup> The *tempus* Vincent places between offense and beating therefore allows a whole raft of further refinements to be put into place. Above all, violence in the classroom must be stringently calibrated, requiring the master to banish emotion and impetuosity alike in favour of sober *discretio*.

While Vincent’s thinking is unique in some respects, his proposals are echoed by a range of further commentators. In the fourteenth century, the English Dominican John Bromyard reiterates many of his key ideas in the mammoth preaching compendium *Summa Praedicatorum* (c.1352). Although Bromyard also believes that discipline is essential during education, observing that attaining “knowledge of God” requires “physical correction of errors” as much as any other factor, he maintains that any penalty must be governed exactly. In his eyes “proportionality” is a key feature in “the just execution of punishment”, as he asks that masters carefully “consider the circumstances and conditions” of each transgression.<sup>87</sup> In the 1430s the Beccles schoolmaster John Dury lays out similar provisions in his rule for teachers. Although he also confesses that “it is necessary to flog out irregularity”, he adds the stipulation that only offences of a “substantial kind” (*genus substantinati*) should receive such treatment, urging that masters always be attentive of the distinction between minor and major lapses.<sup>88</sup> As well as echoing his abstract standards for punishment, pedagogy also follows Vincent in insisting that its exercise be divorced from unruly emotion. Such a sentiment appears in the work of Dirck Valcooch, a schoolmaster in

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<sup>84</sup> “Observandum est etiam tempus, ut non statim quasi cum furore correptio delinquenti adhibeatur, sed usque ad tempus oportunum aliquando differatur”: *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> “At uirge disciplinam precedere debet conminacio, sicut excommunicationis sententiam admonicio. Que sc. conminacio plerumque plus quam flagellacio ualet uel minus nocet”: *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>86</sup> “Si uero sit manifesta et correpcio in manifesto est facienda”; “Per disciplinam occurrere...diuersimode secundum dispositionem uel habilitatem uniuscuiusque”: *ibid.*, 95, 89.

<sup>87</sup> “Scientia Dei consistit in tribus, in bonitate scientis, in disciplina delinquentis, et in medulla latentis”; “In quo tertius intratur articulus iusta uidelicet poenarum executio, quae tria necessario requirit...secundo proportionalitatem”; “ubi maior est culpae deformitas: durior poenae infligatur acerbitas, pensatis circumstantiis et conditionibus”: John Bromyard, *Summa Praedicatorum*, 2 vols. (Venice: Dominicum Nicolinum, 1586), 2: 347, 232.

<sup>88</sup> “Necessarium est discolum verberari”: Cambridge University Library MS Add. 2830, f.6.

North Holland in the mid sixteenth century.<sup>89</sup> Valcooch echoes Vincent's counsel that discipline should be implemented with caution and calculation rather than impulsive passion: he specifically advises masters to "beware of slapping and punching;/ Be cool in mind, not heated in temperament (*gemoeden*)".<sup>90</sup> Again the foundation of proper violence in the classroom is psychological, as medieval pedagogues not only seek to contain and systematise its forms, but demand that it be implemented with the correct *gemoeden* or level of *discretio*.

This more internalised means of judging violence and its propriety is not confined to prescriptive handbooks and manuals. In poetic discourse, the same attitudes towards beating often emerge. One example is Henry Bradshaw's life of St Ermengild, told as part of his *Holy Lyfe and History of Saynt Werburge* (c.1513). Among Ermengild's miracles, Bradshaw includes an episode relating to a "scole-mayster of Innocentes" who is crippled by the saint after mistreating his pupils. Bradshaw presents this offence as a transgression against balanced thought above all, as he refers to the teacher acting with "hastynes and enuy", and striking out "without dyscrecyon".<sup>91</sup> Langland also seems to share in the same logic, pointedly placing the imperative "to chastisen...children" in the mouth of Reson.<sup>92</sup> Likewise when questions arise over teachers' use of discipline in the field of law, they are usually conceptualised along similar lines, with calm rationality providing the benchmark of permissibility. One example is a dispute over fees in 1485 between Thomas Fosse "Scholemaster of Bristoll" and John Peers, father to one of his pupils. While Fosse argued that he ought to receive his "competent rewarde" for having taught Peers' son "perfecte congruete" in grammar, Peers maintained that he "unressenable shuld bete and intrete his seid sone", and as a result merited punishment rather than payment.<sup>93</sup> Comparable charges appear at Nottingham a few decades later, where John Depupp was dismissed from his post at the Free School for having "abussed his skollers with suche unressonable correccion".<sup>94</sup> In both of these cases, the same focus on motivation is in evidence, as the teacher's ability to exercise

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<sup>89</sup> See G. Stuiveling and P.J. Verkruijsse, "Valcoogh, Dirk Adriaensz", *De Nederlandse en Vlaamse auteurs van middeleeuwen tot heden met inbegrip van de Friese auteurs*, ed. G.J. van Bork and P.J. Verkruijsse (The Hague: Weesp 1985), 577-78.

<sup>90</sup> "Dus Schoolmeester houdt maet in slaen en stuypen;/ Weest coel ghesint, niet hittigh van gemoeden": Dirck Adriaensz Valcooch, *Den reghel der Duytsche schoolmeesters. Eene bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van het schoolwezen in het laatst der XVIe en het begin der XVIIe eeuw*, ed. G.D.J. Schotel (The Hague: Ykema, 1875), 10.

<sup>91</sup> Henry Bradshaw, *The Life of Saint Werburge of Chester*, lines 2241-43, ed. Carl Horstmann, EETS o.s. 88 (London: Trübner, 1887), 83-84.

<sup>92</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B-text*, 5.34-40, ed. A.V.C. Schmidt (London: Dent, 1978), 43.

<sup>93</sup> National Archives, C1/61/390.

<sup>94</sup> A.F. Leach and F. Fletcher, "Schools", *Victoria History of the County of Nottingham*, ed. William Page, 2 vols. (London: Constable, 1910), 2:179-264 (225).

reason when carrying out punishment is the only guarantee of its legitimacy. Therefore, in sum, the cluster of terms around pedagogic violence directs attention inwards: *discretio*, *modestia*, *gemoeden*, “dyscrecyon”, and above all “resson” all situate its proper origin within the mental processes of the master, rather than looking to its results on the student’s body.

Most importantly, these convictions extend directly into the work of Chaucer himself. They receive their most explicit articulation in the section of the *Parson’s Tale* dealing with patience. When outlining the “*remedium contra peccatum Ire*”, the Parson includes a brief exemplum that directly addresses schooling: although lacking an identifiable source, his narrative has clear resonances with the proposals of Vincent de Beauvais and the other authorities.<sup>95</sup> In the course of this episode, the Parson recounts how “a philosopre upon a tyme” was provoked into beating a young pupil. The man, it is reported, “wolde have beten his disciple for his grete trespas, for which he was greetly amoeved, and broghte a yerde to scoure with the child” (X.670). His threats and anger dissipate, however, when he is rebuked by the boy: “For sothe, quod the child, ye oghten first correcte youreself, that han lost al youre pacience for the gilt of a child./ For sothe, quod the maister al wepyng, thow seyst sooth. Have thow the yerde, my deere sone, and correcte me for myn inpacience” (X.672-73). Although the story ends with a larger moral generalisation, as the Parson comments “of pacience comth obedience, thurgh which a man is obedient to Crist”, it remains grounded in the specific requirements of the classroom (X.674). Like pedagogic discourse in general, the focus falls squarely on the impulses underlying the desire to punish. Chaucer leaves the reader in no doubt that the philosopher was fundamentally right to chastise the child, describing his pupil as committing a “grete trespas” which self-evidently warrants correction. Where the philosopher appears to be at fault is his abandonment of sober calculation in favour of emotion, the fact that he is “greetly amoeved” and “han lost al...pacience”: he is directly comparable, in effect, to Fosse, Depupp, or Bradshaw’s “scole-mayster of Innocentes”. But the Parson’s exemplum also goes further than these sources, as it shows a keener sense of the dangers of unreasoning violence. Unlike the hagiographic and legal records, Chaucer shows the master’s transgressions being answered within the framework of the school itself, rather than by outside intervention from supernatural or legal agency. In his account, the master’s wish to “scoure” the child in anger is enough to invert the proper hierarchy of the classroom. After giving way to unthinking rage, the master becomes the receiver rather than performer of lesson and punishment alike, not only taking instruction

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<sup>95</sup> See Wenzel’s discussion in his edition of the *Summa Virtutum de Remediis Anime* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 28.

from his “disciple” but authorising him to “correcte me”. He is effectively demoted to the level of an unreasoning child through his exhibition of immoderate anger, as losing his grip on cool reasoning costs him his status as master. Ultimately, the exemplum sees heedless correction as contravening the rules of the classroom so completely that it disrupts the structures of learning: a teacher acting in such a way can simply no longer be thought a teacher.

These differing standards are clearly tied to the functions described earlier, as the distinct methods of calculating reason that emerge from the school and the household reflect the different demands that the two contexts make on violence. The emphasis on the teacher’s mentality when carrying out punishment, for instance, can be linked to the sense that he is transmitting his own mature subject-position to the pupil, a project which calls for him to uphold the adult values of self-restraint while doing so; by contrast, the fact that marital discipline seeks to make an abstract hierarchy material obliges it to take a more concrete form when reckoning its own legitimacy.<sup>96</sup> Such specific concerns also feed into the conclusion of the *Prologue*, as they explain many of the details Chaucer includes in its final sequence. After the climactic beating of Alisoun and the fatal collapse of authority it precipitates, both benchmarks for measuring violence are clearly brought into play. The marital system of measuring violence is of course a significant element in this collapse, as Chaucer specifically acknowledges the effects of Jankyn’s blow on Alisoun’s body. By detailing her wounds, and even raising the possibility that Jankyn has “mordred” her, Chaucer makes clear that the Wife’s body has contributed towards the husband’s loss of standing. However, alongside these corporeal traces, this moment in the text also veers more decisively towards pedagogic discourse and its ideas on the proper deployment of violence. Chaucer takes care to show that Jankyn is driven by the same emotive, impulsive stimulus pedagogues repeatedly warn against. In the first place, the final blow is presented as a kneejerk response lacking in any form of consideration or meditation. Jankyn is shown to “up stirt” directly after Alisoun shreds “three leves” out of his book, delivering his blow immediately after the offence, without any pause for reflection of the kind advocated by Vincent de Beauvais (III.794, 790). But more importantly, Jankyn is emphatically placed beyond reason during the attack. His stated resemblance to “a wood leoun” not only identifies him with insanity but animalises him, situating him beyond the compass of human rationality (III.794). Indeed, this simile

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<sup>96</sup> On this point, see for instance Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formation of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 67-108; Walter J. Ong, “Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite”, *Studies in Philology* 56 (1959): 103-24.

connects his assault to other outbursts of temporary mania in Chaucer's work, as the same idiom is used to denote Palamoun's frenzied struggle against Arcite in the *Knight's Tale* (I.1656), and the friar's wrathful response after his humiliation in the *Summoner's Tale* (III.2152). To press home the point still further, Chaucer describes Jankyn leaping from "oure fyr" in order to lash out at Alisoun, a detail with obvious connotations of rage and ferocity (III.793). The fact that these details receive such attention in the *Prologue* can again be attributed to the presence of pedagogic discourse in the text. Since Jankyn founds his authority on education, using his knowledge to cement his standing in the household, he is also compelled to adhere to the implicit standards schooling carries with it. When he acts without the thoughtful deliberation this position requires, he immediately sacrifices that position, ending the text in much the same position as the Parson's "philosophre upon a tyme". In other words, pedagogy does not merely supply him with power but also a threshold beyond which he and his violence will cease to enjoy the mandate of authority. The tipping point Jankyn and the text recognise, in short, comes from the clerkliness he wields over the Wife, as he is undone by an intrinsic part of his chosen basis of authority.

#### *Diverse pracky: Conclusions*

The *Prologue* is a record of Jankyn's failure to reconcile two models of violence. His is a failure occurring at two levels simultaneously. On the one hand, it is caused by overstepping the implicit limits of his violence, by his incorrect performance of aggression; on the other it stems from the nature of that violence itself, its eventual production of an educated and fully authoritative subject. Trying to play at both husband and teacher, drawing one disciplinary mode into the domain of another, Jankyn ends up being and exploiting neither. The two modes may converge to a certain extent, allowing him to govern his Wife by these means for a time: indeed, the distance between the forms of violence is perhaps not as acute as Chaucer makes it appear, as both household and school would ordinarily be venues for training children. But they inevitably part ways at a certain reach, and in so doing pull the legs from beneath his "maistrie", as Jankyn's chosen form of punishment cannot sustain his position in this foreign framework. Nevertheless, Jankyn's failures are our gain. Through them, the *Prologue* shines revealing light on the mechanics of sanctioned violence in the fourteenth century. In the first place, it serves as a reminder not merely of the regulation of violence in medieval culture but of the rigour with which such codification was staged. As a host of recent commentators has made clear, far from promoting an unthinkingly "violent tenor of

life”, medieval institutions tended to situate violence within strictly regimented channels, with full awareness of its disruptive effects if left unchecked.<sup>97</sup> Such management has been discussed across a range of discourses: in the field of chivalry by Kaeuper and Haidu, in the application of judicial torture by Guthrie and Tracey, in the doctrine of just war by Contamine and Benham, and in ascetic practice by Georgianna and Hughes-Edwards, to name but a few examples.<sup>98</sup> Chaucer’s treatment of Jankyn not only confirms that violence was tailored to specific institutional needs, but suggest that he was fully conscious of its resulting division into numerous disjunctive patterns. By bringing two disciplinary modes into close proximity, the *Prologue* sees violence as specialised to the point of fragmentation: Jankyn’s behaviour indicates that one set of punitive measures cannot simply be transplanted into the territory of another, as each is so firmly anchored in a particular set of conditions that uprooting it strips away its meaning and efficacy. Chaucer therefore sees licit violence in much the same terms that modern scholarship presents it when taken as a whole, regarding it as discontinuous and localised. He does not understand violence in general, indiscriminate terms, as something that is everywhere and always the same: since his culture demands that discipline submit to a host of specific channels in order to gain sanction, its performance is for him split into several scattered and mutually incompatible forms.

But alongside this general point, the *Prologue* also allows us to mark out some of the specific points at which these disparate systems of violence might diverge. The inability of didactic violence to support a marital hierarchy shows exactly how two discourses can differ in the demands they make on beating. Perhaps most obvious is their discrete methods of reckoning legitimacy. While each calls for the moderation of violence, the ways in which they separate moderate from immoderate activity is markedly different, with one appealing to the body and the other to the mind to determine acceptability. The metric by which reasonable punishment is calculated is clearly different in either case. Along the same lines, each differs in the type of subjectivity it seeks to construct. One attempts to fix its sufferer to

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<sup>97</sup> John Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. Frederick Jan Hopman (London: Penguin, 1924), 1-21.

<sup>98</sup> Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Richard W. Kaeuper, “Chivalry and the ‘Civilising Process’”, *Violence in Medieval Society*, ed. Richard W. Kaeuper (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 21-38; Peter Haidu, *The Subject of Violence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Steve Guthrie, “Torture, Inquisition, Medievalism, Reality, TV”, *Cultural Studies of the Modern Middle Ages*, ed. Eileen A. Joy, Myra J. Seaman, Kimberly K. Bell and Mary K. Ramsey (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Larissa Tracy, *Torture And Brutality In Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012); Jenny Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages: Principles and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. M. Jones (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 279-301; Linda Georgianna, *The Solitary Self* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Mari Hughes-Edwards, *Reading Medieval Anchoritism: Ideology and Spiritual Practices* (Cardiff: University Of Wales Press, 2012).

a limited and dependent position, while the other serves to create a fully literate and autonomous subject. Each in effect serves to accommodate its recipient into a particular system: discipline in the household seeks to maintain a subordinate in her secondary position, ensuring that the allocation of power between beater and beaten remains stable, while school punishment assumes a more dynamic framework, one in which the beaten party will in time move into the position of the beater. Ultimately, therefore, the contradictory nature of violence in the *Prologue* traces out some of the larger frontiers that stand between forms of sanctioned violence, as it contrasts two criteria of acceptability and two sets of subject positions. The collapse of Jankyn's authority does not merely highlight the profound division of medieval violence into multiple, irreconcilable practices, but flags up some of the points of departure between forms of discipline, mapping the points at which they part company.