

Trouble at the Mill: Madness, Merrymaking, and Milling

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ABSTRACT: The Miller's links to festive discourse and popular celebration are well documented. Yet milling itself has often proven difficult to interpret in such terms: for most existing scholarship, the Miller's trade is the one detail in his portrait that cannot be accommodated into merrymaking. It has instead invited either political or social readings, being interpreted as a signal of active rebellion or as a confirmation of Robyn's peasant status. However, as this essay seeks to demonstrate, the mill can be securely ranked among the festive meanings Chaucer evokes through Robyn. The mill frequently serves as a symbol of carnival across northern Europe, with a wide range of sources associating it with clowning, foolishness, and general revelry. This article reviews some of the points at which milling crosses into the practices and iconography of festivity and related discourses, highlighting the prominent role the mill played in medieval and early modern celebration.

KEYWORDS: carnival, folklore, madness, popular culture, proverbial literature, technology

Why is the Miller a miller? Although Robyn's pull on the critical imagination has gone a long way to naturalize the connection, there is little obvious reason why Chaucer should have chosen to include this particular trade among his "compaignye of sondry folk."¹ As Jill Mann pointed out some time ago, the position is relatively unusual in satiric and polemic discourse: millers are "rare" or even utterly "ignored in formal estates satire," and certainly lack the wealth of conventional tropes and accusations attached to friars, monks, knights, or merchants.² Along the same lines, the meanings that have been located in milling are difficult

to tally with Robyn's role in the tale-telling game. In the authoritative discussion of George Fenwick Jones, and the more recent analyses of Robert Raymo and Laura and Robert Lambdin, millers are linked with "thievery" and "greed and wickedness" primarily, and "vulgar features, obscene behavior, and social ambition" to a lesser extent.³ But the exact connection between these features and Robyn's narrative function remains elusive: his tale, for instance, takes much greater delight in frankness and exposure than concealment or deceit.⁴ The problem, then, is still much as Derek Pearsall describes it, as the allocation of the Miller to a distinct social group seems to serve little "purpose in the economy of the Tales . . . except in the broad sense that he is a coarse fellow."⁵ Indeed, criticism has often responded to this difficulty by skirting around it: many discussions tend to overlook Robyn's stated occupation and submerge him into the peasantry as a whole, treating him as a generalized "churl" or "a model bad peasant," or approaching him as representative of "the native countryside" or "agrarian communities" rather than milling specifically.⁶

However, as this essay hopes to demonstrate, there are cogent reasons to rethink Robyn's social position, and to treat it as an element carrying more exact significance than a broad sense of rusticity. There are in fact a range of important meanings and symbolic inflections attached to milling in the medieval and early modern periods, many of which have escaped the attention of English-language scholarship almost entirely. This essay will review these wider meanings and consider how they might color our responses to Robyn: its principal aim is to alert Chaucerians to this neglected but suggestive set of conceptions, reviewing some of the ways in which mills were encoded in the later Middle Ages. It will begin by pursuing these meanings where they are most visible, tracing them across a variety of cultural forms and practices in continental Europe; it will then consider analogous images in English culture, finally moving on to the work of Chaucer himself. At the very least, recognizing these meanings should allow us to draw a more direct line between milling and

Robyn's destabilizing function in the framework of the *Canterbury Tales*; at most, they might suggest why Robyn was assigned his particular role in the first place, and even shed some light on popular attitudes towards the technology during the medieval period.

Drunk as a Mill-Tail: Milling and Carnival

While there are numerous witnesses to the symbolism of the mill across medieval and early modern culture, one of the most vivid is a manuscript now held at the Museum Meermanno in The Hague. This is a *Vastenavondgeschrift* (carnival handbook), probably produced for a confraternity based at Jutphaas in Utrecht in the middle decades of the sixteenth century.⁷ As its modern name would suggest, its contents focus on Shrovetide celebration, and it may be a compilation of material for use during festivities: it opens, for instance, with a mock-charter proclaimed by "King Marcolphus," the legendary interlocutor of Solomon, and here the temporary ruler of the merriment.⁸ Its purpose can also be discerned in the song "Daer en comen gheen kuiken" (There are no more chickens to come) which explicitly mourns the end of carnival and the displacement of feasting by Lenten fast; to drive home its dietary theme, the musical notation for the lyric is comprised of geese, fish, cooking-pots, and barrels arranged on staves.⁹ Perhaps the most elaborate statement of festive discourse in the manuscript, however, is its remarkable series of thirty-three coats of arms: these develop the conventional idiom of revelry into a full-blown heraldic system, in some ways reminiscent of Robyn's own *quiting* of the Knight and his *chivalrie* (Fig. 1).¹⁰ Many of the devices contain expected signs of foolery, with apes, caps, bells, baubles, drinking jars, excrement, and bladders on sticks all being represented. But among these typical images, several also include allusions to milling. The crests, mottoes, and escutcheons themselves repeatedly incorporate sacks of flour, mill-sails, and waterwheels into their designs: as well as including milling

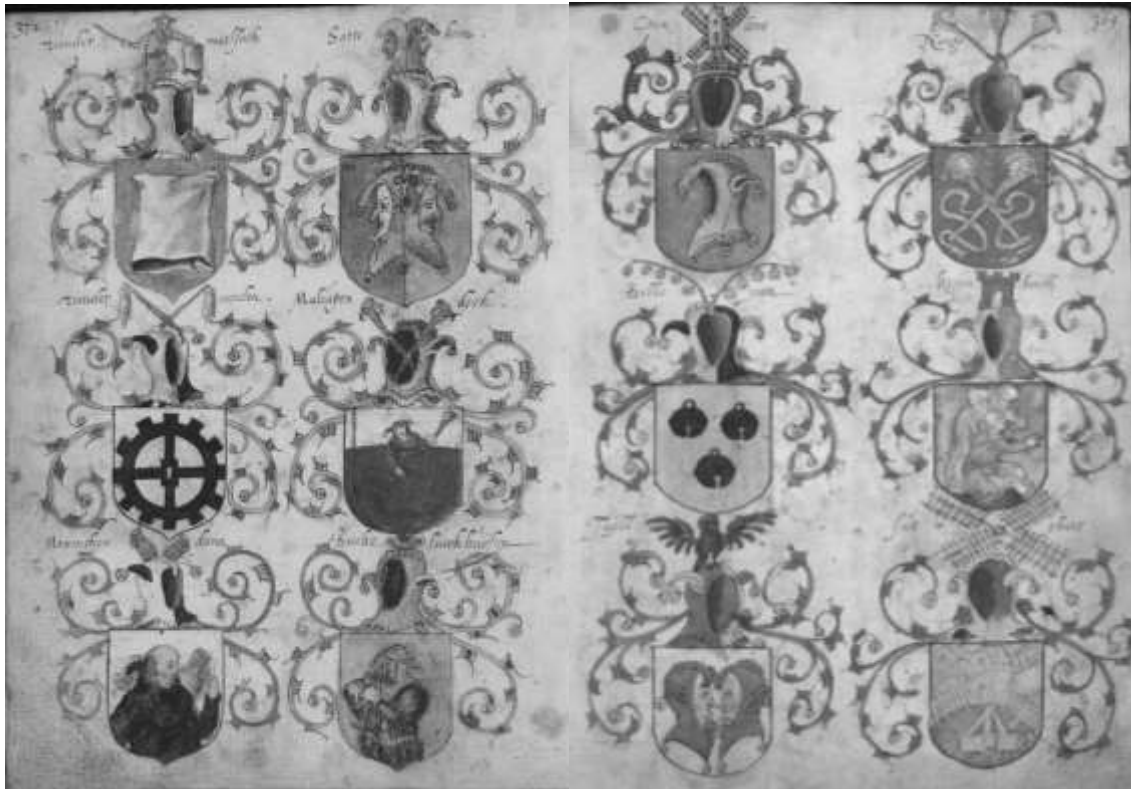


Figure 1: A burlesque armorial, incorporating flour-sacks, windmills, mill-sails and a waterwheel. Meermanno-Westreenianum MS 10 C 26, fols. 184v-86. Used with permission.



Figure 2: The seal of 'King Marcolphus', with windmill 'crown'. Meermanno-Westreenianum MS 10 C 26, fol. 174.

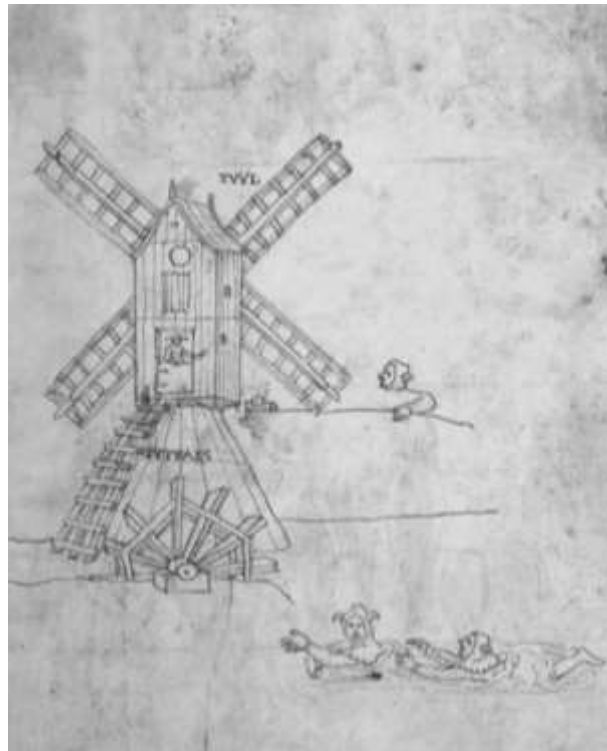


Figure 3: Fools in a windmill and mill-pond. Meermanno-Westreenianum MS 10 C 26, fol. 188.

paraphernalia among their charges and torses, they bear such legends as “vander meelsach” (of the meal sack) and “vander moelen” (from the mill).¹¹ Elsewhere the seal of King Marcolphus employs the same image: it shows a windmill perched on top of a cap and bells, surrounded with the words “stultorum numerus infinitus est” (the number of fools is infinite), a biblical verse frequently evoked in fooling literature (Fig. 2).¹² For good measure, a spare leaf in the manuscript also includes a small sketch of two fools swimming in a millpond, while a third watches from the doorway of a post-mill (Fig. 3).

What this document serves to highlight is the curious absorption of mills into festive culture at the close of the Middle Ages. While it does not connect them with any specific set of ritual practices, milling and mills are located among the general vocabulary of symbols related to revelry. They are simply ranked among the other insignia by which carnival asserts itself, appearing as an established element in its general system of signs. Nor is the Meermann manuscript a lone example of this thinking. The incorporation of mills into urban festivity is widely attested across northern Europe. A particularly ambitious example is recorded at Nuremberg in one of the many manuscripts commemorating the yearly *Schembartlauf* (literally “beard-mask-parade”) after its suppression in 1539.¹³ According to this source, the centerpiece of the 1515 procession, known as the *Hölle*, was a gigantic tableau consisting of a mill, fool, and ass: this was raised on a sled and drawn through the streets among the participants (Fig. 4).¹⁴ The accompanying text indicates that the celebrants would be ceremonially “ground” in this structure, no doubt punning on Proverbs 27:22, “though thou shouldst bray a fool in the mortar . . . his folly would not be taken from him.”¹⁵ Mills also occur in texts written to be performed on festival occasions, where they invariably stand at the center of playful obscenity and gibberish. Typical is a piece originating from Antwerp in the 1520s, which describes a beguine by the name of Sister Alijt “stripping off her cope . . . and farting very vigorously, with a long trail, so that a miller with his mill would

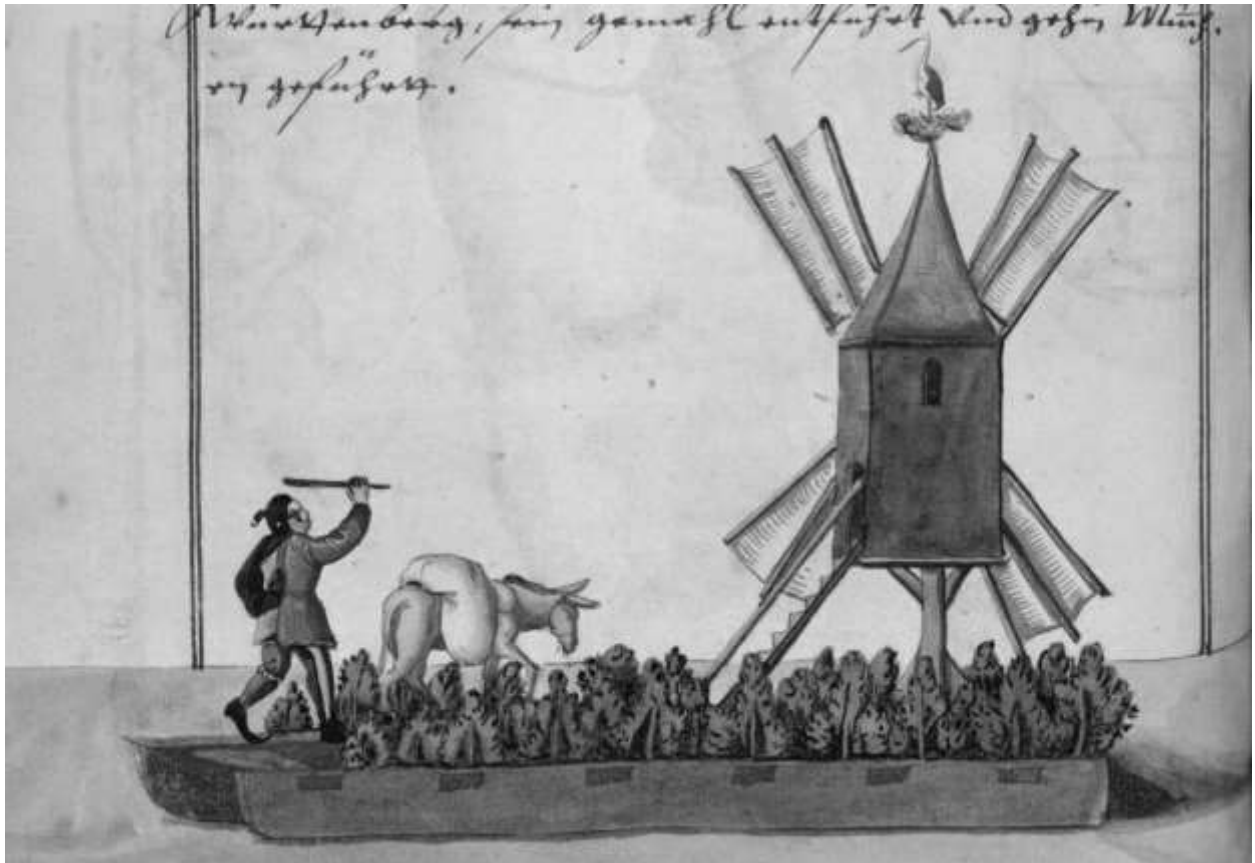


Figure 4: The centrepiece of the 1515 carnival at Nuremberg, comprising a windmill, ass and fool. UCLA Coll. 170, MS. 351, fol. 68v. Used with permission.

fly seven hundred miles above Tuil, to end up on the sun.”¹⁶ Since Tuil is a proverbial village of simpletons, akin to Gotham in England or Mols in Denmark, this passage again inserts the mill into images of foolishness. Other comparable allusions include a piece recited at Rotterdam in 1561, which advises the audience “never to approach the mill at Tuil,” and the mock-coronation oath sworn by the “Prince of fools” at Brussels in 1551, which lists “millers who grind without meal” among the ruler’s temporary subjects.¹⁷ A similar image also occurs in Rabelais, who refers to the “great giant” Bringuenarilles, described as a “swallower of windmills.”¹⁸ Bringuenarilles and his eccentric diet seem to be an established motif in popular culture: he is also found in the Rabelaisian paratext *De disciple de Pantagruel* (1538), in some editions even migrating into its title.¹⁹ Given the customary use of giants in civic celebration, and his inclusion among Rabelais’s parade of carnivalesque forms and

types, Bringuenarilles and his antics might signal another point at which mills entered into urban revelry.²⁰

The mill does not only feature in the general iconography of continental festivity, but also comes to inform celebration at a more practical, concrete level. A further point at which it imprints itself on misrule is through the ritual use of flour.²¹ In French-speaking cultures in particular, flour was one of the chief and most recognizable signifiers of clowning, as it was customarily used to color the faces of entertainers: as Konrad Schoell writes, a *visage enfariné* or *visage blanc* was sufficiently well-established by the fifteenth century to become a defining marker of comic performance.²² For a number of farces from the period, the association is so close that flour even serves as a shorthand for popular entertainers as a group: examples include Jean Molinet's *Mystère de saint Quentin* (ca. 1482), with its joust between a stock "Turque" figure and "le roy des farinaux" (the king of the floury), and the *Sottie des Béguins* (1523), in which Mere Folie addresses her followers as "all you floury ones" before ordering them to "prepare to play the farce" and fitting them with ass-eared hoods.²³ Michel de Montaigne and Pierre de Ronsard also refer to the same convention, highlighting its equal importance in both courtly and popular drama. Ronsard alludes to flour in his lavish tributes to royal entertainment at Fontainebleau, describing how "we see upon the high stage a comedian, his face full of flour or ink"; at the other end of the scale, Montaigne describes "apprentices, who are not of a high order of sophistication, needing to flour their faces, to wear outlandish clothes . . . in order to compel us to laugh."²⁴ By the early seventeenth century, flour comes to symbolize the clown even more directly. At this point it makes its way into the soubriquets of actors specializing in comic roles, such as the succession of performers at Paris who dubbed themselves "Jean Farine."²⁵ Taking a still longer view, the same practices persist in later cultural forms. The famous Pierrot of *arlequinade* most likely grew out of the convention, as he seems to have started life as a

“flour-covered simpleton . . . a blockhead, a dumb servant,” while annual celebrations at Ibi in Alicante still make ritual use of flour, involving a troupe of fools known as *Els Enfarinats* (the floured men) waging mock-war against *La Oposicio*, the agents of order.²⁶

To some extent, the use of flour in clowning seems to have arisen out of practical considerations. Like the soot used to “visor” the blackface clown, flour was obviously an inexpensive and readily available means of changing a performer’s appearance and drawing attention to his face.²⁷ Yet flour’s usage was not purely utilitarian, as its appearance in foolery was often ritualized in its own right. For instance, at times the administration of flour was treated as a burlesque religious ceremony, a transformative moment that announced the onset of carnival itself. Hence during festivals at Flanders and Brabant, flour was often cast over the gathered crowds in order to “consecrate” them as participants in foolery.²⁸ François Rabelais also alludes to a similar convention, as he portrays Bacbuc “baptizing” Panurge by “dunking him in a fountain three times before flinging into his face a fistful of flour.”²⁹ In either case, the act of becoming *enfariné* serves as an initiation into carnival, signaling the “rebirth” of the reveller into a period of merriment. But, more importantly, these customs are often presented as an extension of the larger symbolism of milling and millers, rather than comprising an entirely separate iconography. A number of sources are quite self-conscious in approaching flour as a metonym for the mill. In his *Sotise a huict personnages* (1507), for instance, André de la Vigne has the character Sot Corrompu tell a fellow clown “you look like the miller who masked himself in his own flour.”³⁰ Likewise, a contemporary engraving of Robert Guérin, the Parisian baker who achieved fame as “Gros-Guillaume” in the late sixteenth century, shows him “with his features floured like a miller.”³¹ Again, such practices lead back to milling, confirming its status as an important symbolic resource for conceptualizing comic inversion.

Beyond the bounds of festive discourse, related meanings can also be detected in other cultural forms, often at considerably earlier dates. Mills perform similar functions in a parallel strand of medieval imagery, appearing with some regularity in the marginal illustrations of manuscripts and other sources. Several of these illuminations seem to mirror the culture of merrymaking: hence a fourteenth-century manuscript of Guiart des Moulins's *La Bible hystoriaulx* shows the fool of Psalm 52:1 standing barefoot before a windmill and carrying his traditional staff or *marot*; likewise, the so-called Maastricht Hours, produced at Liege in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, incorporates a similar figure, pale with flour and riding an ass toward a post-mill, also holding a *marot* and also shoeless (Fig. 5).³² Such depictions show again how firmly milling was lodged in ritualized foolery, further attesting to a widespread connection between the two sets of activities.

However, these pictorial sources also allow a further dimension of milling symbolism to come into view. Interestingly, they show the mill participating in the grotesque constructs that often creep into the edges of didactic or religious works. One curious example is a fourteenth-century Dutch writing tablet, now held at the Iparművészeti Múzeum in Budapest: while its carvings might depict the story of Balaam, or the humiliation of the tenth-century antipope John XVI, its most eye-catching element is a monkey propelling a windmill with bellows at its topmost edge (Fig. 6).³³ Two books of hours held at the Morgan Library make similar use of mills: the rich illuminations of the Hours of Charlotte of Savoy (ca. 1400–25) include a half-man, half-lion chimera with a windmill mounted on its hindquarters and a meal sack on its head, while the Hours of Saint-Omer (1320s) show two grylles, creatures consisting of animal or human heads mounted on legs, pouring jars of fluid into a millstream.³⁴ Further images in the same vein are also testified in similar sources.³⁵ The presence of the mill among these “hilarious and disturbing inversions,” as Michael Camille memorably describes them, extends its disruptive functions still further.³⁶ By featuring



Figure 5: Two fools with windmills, taken from Guyart des Moulins' *Bible hystoriaulx* (left) and the Maastricht Hours (right). Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS français 9, fol. 293v and Stowe MS 17, fol. 89v (© British Library Board). Used with permission.



Figure 6: Ivory relief featuring a monkey blowing a windmill with bellows. Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest. Photograph by Gellért Áment. Used with permission.

among the jumbles of imagery at the fringes of texts, the mill is presented in the same terms as the bizarre formulations that surround it: it also serves to express the same confusion and collision of ideas, and perhaps even the same “subversion or escape from the authority of the text.”³⁷ Much like popular ritual, these marginal grotesques seem to regard mills as conventional symbols for the erosion of established structures; here milling does not only mark the temporary suspension of accepted standards during celebration, but shares in the absurdity and chaos that lie outside the orderly “frame” of these formal devotional works.³⁸

As these sets of witnesses make clear, by the later Middle Ages, the mill had developed into an insistent and pervasive symbol of disorder, registering equally in urban misrule and in the fanciful nonsense of marginalia. Why mills should be found in these systems of signs is in turn an interesting question. Their appearance in these contexts seems to rest on a wider association between milling and idiocy, even madness. Mills, whether powered by water or wind, seem to have developed into popular figures for mental instability or absurd behavior from a relatively early date. While it is unclear exactly why they should have attracted these values, it seems probable that their erratic whirling, their propulsion by unseen forces, and the fact that their motions are performed in a mindless, automatic fashion, might have invited the connection: each of these features recalls the standard medieval pathologies or aetiologies of madness, from the effects of “an unclean spirit” outlined by Timothy of Alexandria to the “wyld infirmytie” experienced by Thomas Hoccleve.³⁹ Whatever reasons can be advanced, the first traces of these meanings can be found in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although even here sources often gesture back to an older, more demotic level of culture. Hence Jacques de Vitry, the great collector of popular adages and anecdotes, uses the mill to suggest a mind functioning without the oversight of discretion: in his compendium of exempla, sayings, and other preaching materials, Jacques compares the motions of “a disturbed heart always moving and never at rest” to a mill that “is

swiftly spun, and refuses nothing, but grinds whatever it is given.”⁴⁰ A similar idea also occurs in a model sermon produced by William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris from 1228–49, where it is directly attributed to conventional “wisdom.” William draws parallels between the mill and “a foolish mocker who treated everything as a game while he cast away understanding,” arguing that the reasoning mind should function as “more than a mere furnace or mill.”⁴¹ A century earlier, Bernard of Clairvaux ranks the mill among a string of formulas illustrating vain or foolish pursuits: he states that one “does not search for sheep’s wool among goats, the watermill at a furnace, or the word of a wise man among the foolish.”⁴² Alongside these links between mills and imbecility, an additional level of meaning appears in Lorens d’Orléans’s influential penitential manual *La somme le roi* (1279).⁴³ At various points, Lorens uses the mill to denote unreasoning language. His lengthy section on the sins of the mouth, for instance, describes how “the mill of the tongue” is at the mercy of “the water of foolish and outrageous words” if it is not restrained by “the sluice of discretion.”⁴⁴ Elsewhere, tongues “that chatter back and forth . . . full of frivolous words” are likened to “the clack of a mill that is never at rest,” referring to the shovel-like device used to beat grain out of the hopper, a mechanism so noisy that medieval word-lists often pair it with *tarantara* (trumpet blast).⁴⁵

From these scattered references, the mill develops into one of the key visualizations of idiocy, taking its place among other popular symbols such as the ship of fools or stone of madness.⁴⁶ Once again, this process is best documented in the Low Countries, where it is probably reinforced by the fact that Middle Dutch for “foolish” and “mill” (*mallaert* and *moolen*, respectively) are partly homophonic; the peculiar concentration of milling technology in this region might also be a factor.⁴⁷ In Dutch-speaking culture, the linkage proves so commonplace that a number of proverbs grow up around it, connecting mills with obsession, confusion, or distraction. Examples include “Hij leeft een klap van de moelen”

(He has received a blow from the mill-sail), “Hij loopt met molentjes” (He walks with the windmills), “Hij heeft een molentje in het hoofd” (He has a mill in the head), “Die zaak maalt mij in het hoofd” (That issue makes me grind in the head), “De molen is door den vang” (The mill is stuck in motion), or “Hij is zoo dronken als een staartmolen” (He is as drunk as a mill-tail).⁴⁸ The same connection also registers in a range of sixteenth-century texts. In Erasmus’s *Moriae encomium*, the “madness” of schoolteachers, who “rage in every direction, arbitrarily, like the ass at Cumae,” is summarized by branding their schools *pistrina* (flour-mills). Similarly, a farce performed at Antwerp in 1561 introduces a group of simpletons on stage with the pronouncement “the wind is of good strength, the mill will turn at a fine rate.”⁴⁹ In Johannes Sambucus’s influential emblem-book, the same link is present. Sambucus pairs the motto “otium sortem expectat” (idleness waits on fate) with the image of a windmill, comparing its motion to chronic unreason: he states that a mill is like “the workshy, who are idle of heart while they place hope in fate, and are void of intelligence.”⁵⁰ The link is not confined to satirical and moral literature either, as it also appears in serious scholarly discourse. For instance, Cornelis Kiliaan’s *Etymologicum* (1599) goes so far as to derive *mallaert* (fool) directly from “mill,” defining the term as “a delusional man, who is agitated by various evil spirits and frenzies, just as a mill by wind.”⁵¹ It also spills over into the visual arts: in Bosch’s typically colorful depiction of the temptation of Saint Anthony, a windmill looms over the saint’s hallucinations, acting perhaps as a general mascot for his delirium (Fig. 7).⁵² In Bruegel’s depiction of a melancholic, the windmill plays a similar role, standing over a man so lugubrious that he does not notice as his pocket is picked.⁵³

While the Netherlands yields up the strongest connection between milling and lunacy, there are traces of the association across western Europe. In French, one of Gringore’s *sotties* features the foolish soldier General d’Enfance, a figure who begins his cavorting with a call for “my horse, my windmill, my halberd.”⁵⁴ In German, the woodcut accompanying the

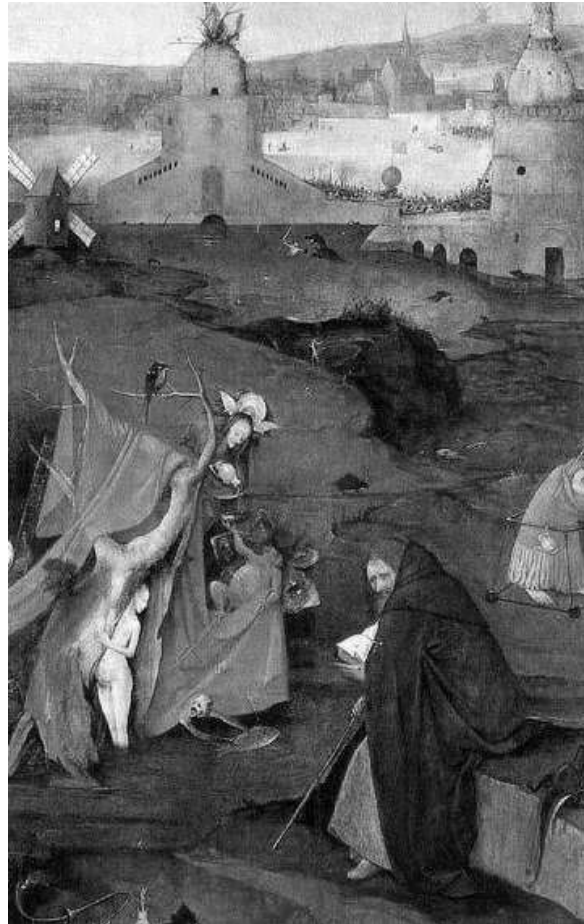


Figure 7: Panel from Bosch's *Temptation of St Anthony* (c.1500), incorporating a windmill amongst the saint's hallucinations. © Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga. Used with Permission.

section “von zwytracht machen” (on sowing discord) in Sebastien Brant's *Narrenschiff* (1499) features a fool being ground beneath a millstone.⁵⁵ But probably the most enduring iteration of the link originates from Spain, where the technology was still a comparative novelty even by the Renaissance, as windmills form a key expression of the delusions of Don Quixote.⁵⁶ Miguel de Cervantes is in fact fairly explicit in drawing on this set of conventions: after the Don has been unhorsed by a mill-sail, Sancho delivers the Spanish equivalent of one of the Dutch proverbs, telling his master that he must have “molinos de viento . . . en la cabeza” (windmills in the head).⁵⁷ This source highlights more than any other how widely the link between mills and insanity was disseminated, since the mill episode was clearly intelligible and important to early readers across Europe.⁵⁸ A fairly unambiguous reflection of its status is provided by the frontispieces of early English and French translations: these tend

to privilege the mill as an emblem of the adventure as a whole, rather than a discrete event within it, depicting mills hovering above Don Quixote and Sancho.⁵⁹ In fact, by the 1690s, the windmill manages to eclipse even the characters of the novel in visual representation, as it is the sole image decorating the editions printed for Henry Green and Nicholas Boddington at London.⁶⁰

An Asse and a Myller: Popular Images of Milling in English Culture

Edging closer to Chaucer specifically, there are sporadic hints that the association between milling and foolishness was current in England by the close of the Middle Ages. While usage of the mill as a signifier of folly is most richly documented in continental sources, the connection does nonetheless extend across the North Sea at a number of points. For instance, there are a few occasions when mills appear in English illumination in ways reminiscent of the French and Netherlandish manuscripts. One example occurs among the playful marginal motifs of the Smithfield Decretals, completed at London in the 1340s.⁶¹ Here the mill is placed at the center of some peculiar, possibly festive imagery: the English artists show a bowman attempting to shoot a cock from the sails of a tower-mill, perhaps as a participant in an archery contest, while a giant in full armor stands at his side (Fig. 8).⁶² Mills can also be found in the comparable playfulness of church carvings. The stall at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, dating from 1477–83, includes a supporter in the shape of a windmill “with three sparrows carrying sacks of corn to it,” while the benches of the Henry VII Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey depict a monkey capering on the steps of a tower-mill.⁶³ Similarly, misericords at Bristol Cathedral and at Bishop's Lydeard in Somerset represent post-mills flanked by the faces of giants and powered by flapping geese.⁶⁴ In all of these cases, scattered

though they are, mills again seem to occupy a place in the iconography of unreason, functioning much as they do in the continental sources.

In terms of literary rather than visual culture, one of the major channels for these ideas is the *Somme le roi* by Lorens de Orléans. The text was adapted into English no fewer than ten times between 1340 and 1485, beginning with Michel of Northgate's *Ayenbyte of Inwyt* and ending with Caxton's *Ryal Book*.⁶⁵ Lorens's English translators invariably retain and often elaborate his favored image for disordered or frivolous speech: they also compare empty jabbering to "a clap of a melle, þat neuere wyll be stylle," "þe clappe of a water mylle," "þe cleper of þe melle," "the clyket & the clappe of a mylle," or even simply "a mylle that maye not be stylle." Unreasoned language is also compared to "a mille wip-out scluse," "a mille that alweye torneth after the cours of the water," "þe melle wyþ-oute scluse," "a water mylle wythout skluyes," or "a milne . . . þat es withouten flode-yhate."⁶⁶ At times, the English authors even introduce mill imagery not present in the original. The fourteenth-century *Book of Vices and Virtues* refers to men with "curious & melencolious" minds hunting in vain for "a mylle ston flettyng in a little streme of water"; while this might be a misreading of



Figure 8: An archer, apparently watched by a giant, takes aim at a cockerel mounted on a windmill sail. Royal MS 10 E IV, fol. 89r. © British Library Board. Used with Permission.

Lorens's "quiert le moule es roissoles" (searching for soft cake among hard pastry), it could also be an attempt to find an English proverb equivalent in meaning to the original phrase.⁶⁷ More importantly, Lorens's symbolism develops a life beyond the penitential manuals. Particularly widespread is the idea that meaningless speech is like the "clap" or "clack" of a mill. The idea that foolish or voluble speakers "clappen lyke a mylle" or are "as ful of clap as is a mylle" becomes a pervasive cliché in the work of Chaucer and his followers.⁶⁸ Beginning with the *Parson's Tale*, where the echoes of Lorens include defining "janglynge" as "whan a man speketh to muche . . . and clappeth as a mille" (X 406), it finds its way into the envoi of the *Clerk's Tale* (IV 1200), Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*, John Lydgate's *Mumming at Hertford*, and the *Tale of Beryn*, among other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sources.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the mill's value in English is not restricted to iconography or commonplace depictions of irrational speech. There is evidence of a broader association between the mill and idiocy or madness. For instance, the link between milling and folly was clearly recognizable to Geoffrey Whitney when he mined *Sambucus* for his own emblem-book in the 1580s. Whitney felt no need to suppress or explain the windmill symbol, instead expanding it into the story of a "foole" who squanders his inheritance by putting "his truste, in eache uncertaine blaste."⁷⁰ In the darker reaches of English folklore, there are also traces of mills carrying connotations of delirium: during a witchcraft trial at Bedford in 1613, witnesses reported seeing a woman provoke frenzy in her neighbor's horses by imitating a mill, turning her body "twice or thrice about as readily as a Windmill sayle at worke: And as sodainly their horses fell to starting and drawing . . . as if they had beene madde."⁷¹ But more insistent is the idea of having a windmill inside or on top of one's head, which shows the mill slotting into place among other idiomatic expressions of confusion or obsession. Although many of the standard English proverb dictionaries trace this image back to Thomas Shelton's English version of *Don Quixote* (1612), it appears with sufficient frequency before this date

to suggest preexisting usage.⁷² One early version can be found in Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557), where the unhealthy fixation of a lover is signified by a "mill within my hart"; it also appears in a mock-epitaph recorded by William Camden in 1605, which ridicules a "Caprichious" doctor with the couplet "Here lyeth willing Wills / With his head full of Windmills."⁷³ Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *Roaring Girl*, probably composed between 1607–8, yields a further instance, with Sir Davy Dapper declaring himself to have "in my brain / A windmill going."⁷⁴

Even after Shelton's translation had appeared, evidence suggests that his work reinforced rather than introduced the concept. When the symbol is used by seventeenth-century authors, it attains too great a degree of flexibility to spring from a single archetype. In drama, it usually occurs as a straightforward shorthand for lunacy: hence Fant'sy in Ben Jonson's *Vision of Delight* (1617), the "phantastick" Sir Andrew Mendicant in Richard Brome's *Court Begger* (1652), the Bonhomme sisters in Richard Flecknoe's *Damaisolles a la mode* (1667), and the "Morose Melancholy" Stanford from Thomas Shadwell's *Sullen Lovers* (1668), are all said to boast a "Wind-mill in my brain" or "A Windmill on his Head," while Distinction in Richard Zouch's university play *The Sophister* (ca. 1614) is left with "braines like the fannes of a Winde-mill" after being tricked.⁷⁵ However, the mill occupies a somewhat different relationship with insanity elsewhere. In Robert Burton's vast repository of medical lore, delusion consists of looking for windmills in the heads of others rather than having a mill in one's own brain: Burton claims that melancholics are inclined to search out "windmills in one man's head, a hornets' nest in another," perhaps echoing Lorens or one of his English translators.⁷⁶ Indeed, the mill proves so broad and adaptable in its meanings that at various points it latches onto different forms of perceived absurdity. From the mid-seventeenth century, it appears most often as a slur against religious dissidents or radicals. A particularly cruel example is a parody of Quaker visionary literature in which one "Brother

Robert” hallucinates that “a Wind-mill shewed it self on the top of my head” and “a great quantity of Meal . . . issued forth at my Nose” when in fact he has merely contracted a head cold.⁷⁷ Other comparable texts use windmill imagery to ridicule Puritan iconoclasm and to lampoon individual preachers.⁷⁸ A few decades earlier, however, mills are used instead to attack the excesses of affluent youths. Francis Lenton’s *Young Gallants Whirligigg* (1629) opens with a vision of a “giddy spirit” whose “head me thought was like a Wind-mill,” just as the younger Thomas Nash describes a gentleman in “embroydered suits” having “a wind-mill in his head, and the breese in his tayle.”⁷⁹ The versatility of the mill in these post-*Quixote* texts, as they use milling to represent various species of stupidity, illogic, or outright derangement, indicate that it must have been a long-standing element in English culture, rather than being introduced by a single text. Put simply, early modern authors use the windmill in too wide a variety of ways to be guided by a lone, originary source. Like the misericords and manuscripts, their work signals that the connection between milling and insanity was an established idea, one that Shelton’s text simply helped to crystallize.

What makes these English references all the more important is that they often cohere around the figure of the miller, treating him as a sufferer or transmitter of lunacy. A particularly rich depository of such material is the popular ballad, which contains multiple examples of millers either succumbing to madness or being reputed insane. While mad millers can be found in popular poetry from the late fifteenth century, with “My Ladyes Water Myll” (ca. 1500) and the climax of the *Mylnar of Abyngton* (ca. 1533) providing early examples, two texts printed in the seventeenth century show both sides of this coin: in *The Lusty Miller’s Recreation*, a girl tries to dissuade her mother from visiting a miller by convincing her that he is “wild” and “distracted,” while the title character of *The Unfortunate Miller* gives way to madness as soon as his adulterous scheme unravels, acting “like one distracted” and beginning “to rave, stamp and stare, / Both scratching his elbows and pulling

his hair.”⁸⁰ A Scottish satire dating from 1567 takes up the same meanings for more satirical ends: it impugns critics of the Earl of Arran by comparing them to a “Lunatyke” pleading “to be mone” before stating that they are “maist like, sum myllare of ane myll.”⁸¹ Elsewhere, millers frequently register in one of the chief folkloric contexts for celebrating foolishness, playing a prominent role among the “mad men” of Gotham. The earliest of the stories to make their way into print, those included among John Rastell’s *Hundred Mery Talys* (1526), award millers a prominent role in their narratives. Among Rastell’s tales is the story of a miller who tips his meal into a river as a lesson to his squabbling neighbors, prompting the moral “some man takyth vppon hym to shew other men wysdome when he is but a fole hym self”; elsewhere a “certayn Curat in the contrey” is made to confront “a mylner a yong man a mad fellow.”⁸² Later texts follow much the same course: hence in William Kemp’s interlude *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1595), a Gothamite miller leads a pack of rustic lunatics.⁸³ Many English texts therefore agree with John Florio that “an Asse and a Myller . . . agree well together,” treating millers themselves as living embodiments of folly.⁸⁴

More significant still is the fact that English-language sources do at points stretch this logic in the same direction as their continental contemporaries, and associate millers and mills with misrule. Although the iconography of fooling is less developed in England, owing to the lack of a native equivalent for the French or Flemish carnival, there are several points at which milling, performance, and festivity travel in one another’s company.⁸⁵ One of the most suggestive instances is the lyric “The Juggler and the Baron’s Daughter,” preserved in the commonplace book of the London merchant Richard Hill.⁸⁶ Like many other popular songs of the fifteenth century, its narrative describes the seduction and abandonment of a standoffish young woman, in this case by “a joly juggeler” who “priked & pransid both beffore þat ladis gate.” In the course of this rudimentary plot, the text places milling in a complex nexus of revelry, confusion, and clowning, with a climax that calls on flour as a

symbol of temporary madness and popular entertainment alike. After discovering that her lover is in fact “a blere-eyed chorle” and not “a duk or ellis an erle” as she believes, the woman orders that he be hanged. At this point he plays one last trick on her:

She lade hym to an hill, & hangid shuld he be;
He jugged hym self to a mele pok; þe duste fell in her eye;
Begiled she was.⁸⁷

The juggler’s transformation into a “mele pok” or sack of grain, and his simultaneous use of flour to derange the senses of his target, weaves together many of the same strands as the continental fooling texts. The lyric uses the mill as a hinge for connecting themes of insanity and popular entertainment, treating “mele” as a natural point of overlap between the two concepts. The mill and its produce, in short, provide a significant central point around which festive and foolish meanings orbit.

Even closer contact between milling and celebration occurs elsewhere, as there are a number of points at which the imagery of the mill enters English ritual drama. A particularly important instance occurs in the one surviving mock-sermon in Middle English, dating from the final decades of the fifteenth century.⁸⁸ This work uses the mill to announce its breakdown of semantic and moral convention: in place of the Holy Spirit, its speaker invokes “þe helpe and þe grace of þe grey gose that goose on the grene, and þe wysdam of þe watur wynde mylne, with þe gud grace of the galon pycher” to guide his speech. The sermon is then much like the Meermann manuscript or the marginal illuminations, as it shows the mill functioning as an accepted component in the vocabulary of nonsense and revelry: it simply draws on the “watur wynde mylne” just as it draws on other signs of comic inversion, such as the “worthi doctur, Radagundys,” “all the salt sawsegis that ben sothen in Northeholke,” or

“hennus and heryngus that huntod aftur hartus in heggys.”⁸⁹ Other examples make more complex use of milling. In the Towneley *First Shepherd’s Play* (1400–50?), a dense network of references surrounds the mill and its produce, focusing especially on the third shepherd “Slaw-pase.” This figure not only “comys” straight “ffro the myln whele” but also illustrates the idiocy of the other two “foles” in standard, self-defeating Gothamite fashion: he dumps his load of meal on the ground, presents the empty “sek,” and demands of them “is not all shakyn owte and no meyll is therin? . . . so is youre wyttys thyn / And ye look well abowte nawther more nor myn.”⁹⁰ Since, as Malcolm Jones notes, the play builds intricate wordplay around this episode, punning on “wits” and “wheats” and “sack” and “seek,” Slaw-pase’s antics clearly hint at a deeper association between milling and stupidity.⁹¹ Similar clowning appears in an even more sustained form in John Heywood’s *Play of the Wether* (ca. 1532). This interlude, evidently composed for the Yuletide entertainments at Greenwich, features not one but two foolish millers, as its centerpiece consists of a prolonged debate between a “Wynde myller” and “Water myller.” Their slanging match again elaborates a conventional association between milling and madness: at various points the two men and their arbiter declare “I think the moon be at the full,” “frantic fancies . . . springe in your head,” “your reasoning is such / That you have reasoned even enough and too much,” “help me god the knaves be more than mad.”⁹² The play also veers towards a level of scatology reminiscent of the Dutch sources, as Heywood uses milling as a basis for carnivalesque ribaldry: at one stage the Wynde myller states that “the wind is so weak it stirreth not our stones / Nor scantly can shatter the shitten sail / That hangeth shattering at a woman’s tail.” *The Play of Wether*, like the mock-sermon and *First Shepherd’s Play* before it, does not only locate the mill within seasonal revelry, but treats it as an element in its stock of idiotic and comedic images. At the very least, such sources show a loose connection between milling and comic performance in England, even if it is less formalized and self-conscious than in continental material.

Stynt thy clappe: *Chaucer and Popular Images of Milling*

As the foregoing should make clear, we can state with reasonable confidence that the mill had been integrated into the conventional language of foolery by the late Middle Ages. In medieval popular culture it occupied a definite place among moons, motley, and asses' ears as one of the stylized markers of lunacy. Indeed, milling seems to be something of a nucleus in this collection of signs, as it provides an anchor-point for a group of interrelated terms: flour, dust, millstones, mill-sails, meal sacks, and millers themselves are recurrent themes in festive and folkloric discourse across Europe, from the full-blown treatments of the Netherlands to the fainter traces in English drama, song, and symbolism. All of this leads, naturally enough, to the obvious question of what implications these ideas might carry for Chaucer's own Miller, and whether Robyn can be read in light of this set of meanings. Of course, there are a few immediate problems with inferring any connection. The bulk of the material presented here is generally late, even if a few tantalizing glimpses do predate the fourteenth century; it is also predominantly continental, albeit with occasional resonances in the British Isles. But there are a couple of reasons not to discount it out of hand. In the first place, there is some suggestion that Chaucer had at least passing familiarity with these images. Not only does he repeatedly use Lorens's comparison of a mill to unguarded speech, even dropping it into the *Miller's Prologue* when the Reeve snaps "Stynt thy clappe!" (I 3144), but he occasionally draws on milling when depicting foolish entertainment. Thus, in the *House of Fame*, the chief stunt of the conjuror "Colle tregetour" is to hide "a wynd-melle / Under a walsh-note shale" (1277, 1280–81); given that this passage describes some sort of "dinner-party illusion" along the lines of a cup-and-ball trick, it again locates the mill at the center of foolish merrymaking, especially as the feat is apparently an "uncouth thyng to

telle.”⁹³ More suggestive still, the *Miller's Tale* itself might mark a point of contact between Chaucer and the same cultures in which these ideas were circulating. Since at least the work of A. J. Barnouw at the turn of the twentieth century, and that of Frederick M. Biggs in the last decade, some connection has been drawn between the tale and *Heile van Beersele*, a Flemish comic narrative.⁹⁴ The link has been most confidently been taken up by Peter Beidler in recent years: in *Sources and Analogues*, Beidler promotes this *boerde* to the status of “hard analogue with near-source status,” and later upgrades it further to “probable source,” describing it as “the colorless Middle Dutch account . . . Chaucer transformed.”⁹⁵

Secondly, at least one of Chaucer's early readers seem to have read Robyn's milling in terms of foolery. The anonymous estates satire *Cock Lorelles Bote*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde in around 1510, not only picks up on Chaucer's characterization of the Miller, but seems to treat him as clownish by virtue of his profession. When it introduces a “myller dustypoll” among the passengers boarding the boat, it takes several cues from Chaucer: it gives the man a “golden thome” and notes that he “touled twys for forgetynge / And stele floure,” clearly expanding on Chaucer's “Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries” (I 562).⁹⁶ The text's allusions to Robyn are, however, combined with an emphasis on foolery, one that focuses directly on the mill. The very inclusion of this figure in the text marks such an alignment, since the “bote” of its title is an English version of the ship of fools. These roots are further reinforced by de Worde's woodcuts, which are recycled from his earlier edition of Watson's translation of Brant.⁹⁷ A further suggestive detail is the use of the epithet “dustypoll” to describe the miller. The word neatly brings together ideas of folly and milling, evoking both flour and absent-mindedness: it has this dual meaning in two later sources, *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (1600?) and Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (1581), where “miller, miller dustypoll” is used as a term of abuse for fools.⁹⁸ More telling still, however, are the concluding lines of the passage. Here milling itself becomes a symbol of

comically absurd or futile behavior: the section ends with the miller vowing to “grynde cherystones and peson / To make . . . brede for a season.” *Cocke Lorell* then reconstrues Robyn as a type of demented clown, readily attaching foolish meanings to his trade. Its author shows that at least one medieval reader was happy to connect him with festive madness through his milling, responding to the *General Prologue* portrait as a depiction of a miller-fool.

But perhaps the strongest reason to accept that Chaucer is tapping into these meanings is that they can resolve some of the interpretive problems the Miller otherwise poses. One of the first and most obvious issues they explain is how his trade fits into the general matrix of signs that surrounds him. As has long been recognized, the Miller is firmly situated in the sphere of ritual celebration. There are numerous points at which Chaucer associates him with various forms of misrule: his bagpiping and status as “janglere” (I 560) signal a link with popular secular entertainment; his drunkenness and “mouth as greet . . . as a greet forneys” (I 559) tie him to feasting; his success in wrestling for “the ram” (I 548) connects him with seasonal games; his use of “Pilates voys” (I 3124) evokes the popular drama of Corpus Christi.⁹⁹ Even his name might recall Robin Hood and the May Games in which he traditionally featured.¹⁰⁰ Above all, therefore, Chaucer stresses that Robyn is a “carnival type,” enmeshing him in a series of references to festive practice and performance.¹⁰¹ These links are, of course, more than purely cosmetic; as a series of critics has noted, from Jon Cook onwards, they play a vital role in the dynamics of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole, framing a narrative that in its profanation, bodiliness, and disorder is also “something like a carnival that turns the world upside down, only to restore the world as it was in the end.”¹⁰²

However, this festive program has often proven difficult to reconcile with Robyn’s stated profession, as scholarship has only managed to connect one with the other by indirect means. The usual solution has been to regard the mill as an emblem of social rather than

ritual subversion. Since the work of Lee Patterson, the fusion of misrule and milling has been seen as an echo of the Peasants' Revolt; under this view, the "disruptive energies" the Miller brings into play are not merely "a necessary alternative to the hegemonic ideology of the *Knight's Tale* but a riotous excess that threatens the social order as a whole," looking back to the chaos of 1381.¹⁰³ Milling then becomes a political rather than cultural signifier, situated in contemporary social concerns rather than traditional imagery. There are undeniable grounds for this interpretation, and it has often been echoed and elaborated, most recently by Camille Marshall.¹⁰⁴ The materials assembled by Patterson make clear the extent to which millers played an actual and symbolic role in the upheaval, with "Iakke Mylner" occurring as a shibboleth in one of John Ball's letters, and John Millere, William Grindecobbe, and John Meller being among the agitators hanged for their involvement.¹⁰⁵ The link is also strong enough to persist in later reports: subsequent chroniclers place one "Tomme Myller" with the "rulers and Capytaynys" of the rebels.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, there are several problems with this reading. Paul Freedman, for instance, has shown that millers were more often objects for peasants' wrath than emblems of their complaints: far from being a spokesman of peasant grievances, the Miller can equally be regarded as "an agent of the seigneurial regime," embodying the "at best irritating, and at worst, bitterly resented monopolistic right of the lord over milling."¹⁰⁷ More pressing still is the form of disruption that Robyn carries out. After all, as Paul Strohm writes, Robyn's "rebellion" does not prove to be particularly revolutionary in its effects, since it is in the end absorbed and legitimated by the pilgrim community. Although it might constitute an "interruption" of the hierarchical order envisioned by Harry Bailly, it is indulged and finally accepted, as Robyn is "subject to a process of conciliation and integration far more rapid and less painful than that experienced by the rebellious peasants in 1381."¹⁰⁸ The Miller's outburst is also strictly contained, as it is limited along both participatory and temporal lines.

Not only does it dissolve into a personalized “grudge match” rather than “collective act” once the Reeve enters into the contest, but the Miller does not speak again after his tale has concluded.¹⁰⁹ All of these features recall the licensed upheaval of festivity rather than the emphatically unlicensed mayhem of the 1381 Rising. They cast the Miller as rebel only within a controlled, permitted space, treating him more like a clown or comic performer than an insurgent. The point, then, is that reading the mill as an emblem of the Rising can only confuse how the Miller’s intervention should be read, lending it inflections not fully borne out by the text. Yet this difficulty can be easily avoided, since there is no real need to look to political rebellion to make sense of the Miller’s trade. As the examples collected in this paper ought to demonstrate, milling is already deeply entangled in the ritualized, sanctioned disorder that Robyn both embodies and enacts. The trade Chaucer has given him can be seen as a further reference to revelry, rather than a problematic allusion to 1381.

As well as enabling us to coordinate milling with the Miller’s subversion, thinking about the mill as a symbol of carnivalesque disorder has further implications for the *Canterbury Tales*. It also helps to account for, and even to draw out, some of the thematic choices Chaucer makes in the story he attributes to Robyn. One feature of the *Miller’s Tale* that has received comparatively little attention is its own conspicuous focus on madness. Alisoun and Nicholas’s plot against John is, in fact, bookended with two episodes of lunacy. The scheme begins with Nicholas feigning a fit in his chamber, lying “ay as stille as stoon” (I 3472), a performance that narrator and John alike are willing to interpret as an episode of insanity: the former states that the clerk “sat evere capyng upright, / As he had kiked on the newe moone” (I 3444–45), while the latter reasons that he “is falle, with his astromye, / In some woodnesse or in som agonye” (I 3451–52). Having opened with this play-acted madness, the tale then ends with John himself being accused in similar terms by his wider community: to compound the penalties of exposure, injury and cuckoldry, he is “holde wood

in al the toun” (I 3846). What is particularly interesting about these references is that they present insanity in terms not far removed from continental milling symbolism. Between these two points in the narrative, different aspects of festive culture are distributed. Nicholas’s madness is above all a performance, a fiction designed to be viewed by a particular audience, and it is comical precisely because the reader will understand its fictionality: he is, in effect, something like an “artificial fool” at this moment, using madness as an ironic theatrical tool. John’s madness, on the other hand, possesses a community-building function similar to that of ritual merrymaking.¹¹⁰ It serves to unite “al the toun” in its ridicule of him: the laughter of his neighbors reconfirms their membership of a social body, just as it rejects John and the gullibility, perhaps even the unwise ambition, he represents. Festive madness therefore permeates the *Miller’s Tale*, featuring as both a mode of performance and as a support for corporate identity through mockery and mirth. It carries out much the same function, it might be said, as does the *Miller’s Tale* itself in the sequence of the *Canterbury Tales*.

But perhaps more interesting still, recognizing this set of meanings also carries further ramifications, especially when addressing Chaucer’s attitudes toward machinery and the mechanization of labor. By exploiting a connection between milling and unreason, Chaucer might be entering into a wider debate on the nature of technology in general. Despite a wealth of commentary over the last few decades, Chaucer’s exact standpoint on this issue is difficult to pin down. On the one hand, the marvelous but squarely mechanical fantasies of the *Squire’s* and *Franklin’s Tales* seem to voice “a progressive or enlightened view of technology,” one that might recall Roger Bacon in its sense that “magical” effects “may be accounted for in rational, scientific terms”; Chaucer’s frequent tendency to offer naturalistic explanations for supernatural phenomena can also be seen as part of the same mentality, leading a few critics to see elements of proto-science fiction at work in his poetry.¹¹¹ Yet, on the other hand, a late piece such as *The Former Age*, with its sweeping condemnation of

shipping, plowing, weaponry, and other innovations, assumes a “wholly negative . . . attitude to civilization and technology,” a sense that manipulation of the elements constitutes fatal interference with an original natural order; it even seems to argue in its final stanzas that “civilised arts became the tool of the tyrant.”¹¹² Chaucer, then, seems fascinated by the possibilities for rationalizing and reconfiguring the human environment that machinery offers, even as he remains profoundly suspicious about the moral and social implications of such developments. As Joyce Lionarons writes, Chaucer’s stance toward “mechanical devices” ranges from seeing them as “merely useful” and “objects of wonder” to regarding them as “dangerous” implements that offer the illusion of “god-like control over the natural world.”¹¹³

His treatment of the mill through his characterization of Robyn might represent a further current in this tension. After all, the mill is a privileged piece of machinery, both in medieval culture at large and in scholarship. Milling would have doubtless provided the bulk of people in the Middle Ages with their most regular and immediate contact with complex machinery: this is probably why “the quern and eek the melle” heads the list of corruptive discoveries in *The Former Age* (6).¹¹⁴ Likewise, in histories of technology, especially those that have sought to accommodate the Middle Ages into a modernist narrative of progress, the mill has been elevated to a position of high importance.¹¹⁵ For such key commentators as Lewis Mumford, Marc Bloch, Lynn White Jr., and Eleanora Carus-Wilson, the development of new forms of milling in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is the point at which the Middle Ages broke decisively with the classical world, paving the way for the greater advances of modernity. Such innovations comprise a full-scale “industrial revolution” or “power revolution,” as the emergence of paper and fulling mills marks a new faith in technology and dependence on it.¹¹⁶ For Jean Gimpel in his popular history of medieval technical innovation, the mill is likewise at the center of a proto-modern sense of machinery

and its potential. Its familiarity to “the townsman or to the peasant in his fields” undergirds Gimpel’s claim that “medieval man was surrounded by machines,” that complex technology was increasingly accepted as part of everyday experience in the period.¹¹⁷ The mill is, then, taken to crystallize a greater optimism about machinery in the Middle Ages, as the spread of milling has allowed historians to draw the period into a larger narrative of rationalization and mechanization.

Nevertheless, while they do not contradict these views outright, the meanings embedded in Robyn, and in medieval popular culture in general, do provide a suggestive counterpoint to them. Despite the tendency of post-Mumford criticism to tie the mill to the gradual “regularization” of the human environment, it seems to have elicited exactly the opposite response from the medieval cultural imagination. At least part of that culture saw the operation of this archetypal, pervasive machine not as the extension of human reason into the wider world, but as a mad, senseless parody of it. The abiding impression given by the sources is that the mill is a flawed simulacrum of human intelligence, a set of internal processes that work without discrimination of their own; the references to “grinding in the head” or “having a mill in the head,” or even being “as ful of clap as is a mylle,” suggest that automation can only resemble a compromised psychology, one lacking the guidance of reason or self-reflection, functioning in a purely mimetic way. The logic at work here perhaps anticipates René Descartes’s famous remarks on automata: it also sees machines as capable of replicating every aspect of human behavior except for reason, able to “resemble us in body and imitate our actions” but only offering a degraded, animalistic approximation of consciousness.¹¹⁸ Far from representing the harnessing of nature by human ingenuity, the mill, then, seems to be a bastardization of this faculty. Therefore, as well as adding an extra layer of festive subversion to the Miller, Chaucer’s carnivalized references to the mill also register a level of skepticism toward technology; the disruptive madness Robyn represents

might be mechanical as well as celebratory. Chaucer's use of these meanings implicitly sides him against complex devices like the mill: he is calling on a thread in medieval culture that regards machinery not merely as deceptive but as a degraded imitation of the human mind. Ultimately, his references to the mill make clear that the impressive spread of technology in the later Middle Ages was not necessarily accompanied by a sense of optimism over its potential, and warn against projecting modernist confidence back into the period.¹¹⁹

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¹ All quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston, 1987).

² Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge, U.K., 1973), 67–74, 160.

³ George Fenwick Jones, “Chaucer and the Medieval Miller,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 16 (1955): 3–15, at 4–5; Robert R. Raymo, “The General Prologue,” in Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, eds., *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge, U.K., 2002, 2005), 1–87, at 65; Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin, “The Millere was a Stout Carl for the Nones,” in Laura C. Lambdin and Robert T. Lambdin, eds., *Chaucer’s Pilgrims: An Historical Guide to the Pilgrims of the Canterbury Tales* (Westport, Conn., 1999), 271–80.

⁴ See for instance Thomas J. Farrell, “Privacy and the Boundaries of Fabliau in the Miller’s Tale,” *English Literary History* 56 (1989): 773–95; Peter Goodall, “‘Allone withouten any compaignye’: Privacy in the First Fragment of the Canterbury Tales,” *English Language Notes* 29 (1991): 5–15; and William F. Woods, “Private and Public Space in the Miller’s Tale,” *Chaucer Review* 29 (1995): 166–78.

⁵ Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London, 1985), 172.

⁶ D. S. Brewer, “Class Distinction in Chaucer,” *Speculum* 43 (1968): 290–305, at 298; Ralph Hanna III, “Pilate’s Voice / Shirley’s Case,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91 (1992): 793–812; and David R. Carlson, *Chaucer’s Jobs* (Basingstoke, 2004), 58. See further Donald Roy

Howard, *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley, 1976), 238; D. W. Robertson, "Chaucer and the 'Commune Profit': The Manor," *Medievalia* 6 (1980): 239–59, at 249.

⁷ See J. H. Vermeeren and A. F. Dekker, *Inventaris van de handschriften van het Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum* (The Hague, 1960), 74.

⁸ See Nancy Mason Bradbury and Scott Bradbury, eds., *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolf* (Kalamazoo, 2012); Donald Beecher and Mary Wallis, *The Dialogue of Solomon and Marcolphus* (Ottawa, 1995); and Beatrice K. Otto, *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around the World* (Chicago, 2001), 150–51.

⁹ See Lutz Röhrich and Erika Lindig, *Volksdichtung zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit* (Tübingen, 1989), 290–95. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

¹⁰ See also A. M. Koldewij, *Heilig en profaan: laatmiddeleeuwse insignes in cultuurhistorisch perspectief* (Amsterdam, 1995), 82.

¹¹ The Hague, Meermanno-Westreenianum MS 10 C 26, fol. 186v.

¹² Ecclesiastes 1:15. On the use of the verse in carnival and other celebration, see for instance Jean-Pierre Leguay, *Vivre en ville au Moyen-Âge* (Paris, 2006), 232; Robert Armin, *Nest of Ninnies*, in John Payne Collier, ed., *Fools and Jesters* (London, 1842), 57; and David Lindsay, *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, ed. Roderick Lyall (Edinburgh, 1989), 155–57.

¹³ Wilhelm Müller, "Der Nürnberger Schembartlauf. Herkunft und Deutung," *Archiv für die Geschichte von Oberfranken* 62 (1982): 63–91.

¹⁴ Hans Ulrich Roller, *Der Nürnberger Schembartlauf; Studien zum Fest- und Maskenwesen des späten Mittelalters* (Tübingen, 1965), 126. See Samuel Kinser, "Presentation and Representation: Carnival at Nuremberg, 1450–1550," *Representations* 13 (1986): 1–41.

¹⁵ Samuel L. Sumberg, *The Nuremberg Schembart Carnival* (New York, 1966), 186.

See also Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (New York, 1998), 49–53.

¹⁶ “Nv segt wie heeft den prijs gewonnen”; “doe ginc suster alijt ooc ontdecken haer koye . . . En veest wel stijf met een sloye / Dat daer af een muelener met sijnder muelen / Seuen hondert mijlen vlooch bouen tuylen / Tot inden opganc toe vander sonnen”: Jan van Doesborch, *Refreynen int sot amoureux wijs*, ed. C. Kruyskamp (Leiden, 1940), 248–49.

¹⁷ “Wilt immer die meulen van Tuijl niet ghenaken”: Henk J. Hollaar, *Spelen van sinne vol schoone allegatien; Drijderley refereynen: de Rotterdamse spelen van 1561* (Delft, 2006), 315; “Prince der dooren”; “Mulders die sonder muelen malen”: “The Oath of Master Pawnbroker” (“Eedt van Meester Oom”), in Ben Parsons and Bas Jongelen, eds., *Comic Drama in the Low Countries c.1450–1560: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, U.K., 2012), 90–91.

¹⁸ “Le grand geant Bringuenarilles . . . avalleur de moulins à vent”: François Rabelais, *Le quart livre*, 4.17, ed. Robert Marichal (Geneva, 1947), 97.

¹⁹ John Lewis, “Rabelais and the *Disciple de Pantagruel*,” *Etudes rabelaisiennes* 22 (1988): 101–22.

²⁰ William Tydeman, *The Medieval European Stage, 500–1550* (Cambridge, U.K., 2001), 536–38; and Ronald W. Vince, *A Companion to the Medieval Theatre* (New York, 1989), 273–74.

²¹ In addition to the sources cited below, see Christian Bouyer, *Folklore du boulanger* (Paris, 1984), 69–90.

²² Konrad Schoell, “L’Individu et le groupe social dans la farce,” in Wim N. M. Hüsken and Konrad Schoell, eds., *Farce and Farcical Elements* (Amsterdam, 2002), 103–20, at 110.

²³ Jean Molinet, *Mistère de saint Quentin, suivi des Invencions du corps de saint Quentin par Eusèbe et par Éloi*, ed. Henri Chatelain (Saint-Quentin, 1909); “Tous enfarinez, / Soyez prests a jouer la farce”: “Sottie des Béguins,” in Émile Picot, ed., *Recueil général des sotties*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1902–12), 2:294.

²⁴ “Quand voirrons nous sur le haut d’une scene / Quelque Janin, ayant la jouë pleine / Ou de farine ou d’ancre”: Pierre de Ronsard, “A la reine-mère Catherine de Médicis,” in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Isidore Silver and Raymond Lebègue, 20 vols. (Paris, 1914–75), 13:147; “Les apprentifs, qui ne sont de si haute leçon, avoir besoin de s’enfariner le visage, se travestir . . . pour nous apprester à rire”: Michel de Montaigne, “Des livres,” in *Les Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey, 3 vols. (Paris, 1965), 2: 412. On the context of Ronsard’s allusion, see Virginia Scott and Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Performance, Poetry and Politics on the Queen’s Day: Catherine de Médicis and Pierre de Ronsard at Fontainebleau* (Aldershot, 2007), 151–84.

²⁵ Eugène Rigal, *Le théâtre Français avant la période classique* (Geneva, 1969), 326–28.

²⁶ Charles Aubert, *The Art of Pantomime*, trans. Edith Sears (New York, 1931), 173. See also Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art*, trans. Zakir Paul (London, 2013), 85; Robert F. Storey, *Pierrots on the Stage of Desire: Nineteenth-Century French Literary Artists and the Comic Pantomime* (Princeton, 1985), 51–56; María Angeles Sánchez, *Fiestas populares: España día a día* (Madrid, 1998), 34; and Antonio Ariño, *El Teatre en la festa valenciana* (Valencia, 1999), 106.

²⁷ See Robert Hornback, *The English Clown Tradition from the Middle Ages to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, U.K., 2009), 24–62.

²⁸ Herman Pleij, *De eeuw van de zotheid* (Amsterdam, 2007), 14–15.

²⁹ “Lui baigna la face trois fois dedans la fontaine susdicte: enfin lui jecta au visage une poignée de farine”: François Rabelais, 5.43, *Le cinquième et dernier livre*, ed. Jean Plattard (Geneva, 1947), 164. See Florence M. Weinberg, *The Wine and the Will: Rabelais’s Bacchic Christianity* (Detroit, 1972), 80.

³⁰ “Mais tu ressembles le mosnier / Qui se maschure en sa farine”: André de la Vigne, “Sotise a huict personnages: Le monde et abus,” in Picot, ed., *Recueil général des sotties*, 2:94.

³¹ “Gros Guillaume avecque sa troigne, /enfariné comme un meusnier”: Eugène Bouvy, *La gravure de portraits et d’allégories*, La gravure en France au XVIIe siècle (Paris, 1929), 49. On Gros-Guillaume’s career, see Pierre Louis DuChartre, *The Italian Comedy*, trans. Randolph T. Weaver (London, 1929), 259; and Gustave Attinger, *L’esprit de la commedia dell’arte dans le théâtre français* (Geneva, 1981), 102–3. Bakhtin himself offers some comments on the significance of Guérin’s costume: M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington, 1984), 292.

³² See Christian Cannuyer and Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *Les Bibles en français: histoire illustrée du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Turnhout, 1991), 27, 44; and Judith H. Oliver, *Gothic Manuscript Illumination in the Diocese of Liège (c. 1250–c. 1330)*, 2 vols. (Leuven, 1988), 1:269.

³³ R. Koechlin, *Les Ivoires gothiques français*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1924), 2:421.

³⁴ New York, Pierpont Morgan MS M. 1004, fol. 156r, and MS M. 754, fol. 63r. On these manuscripts, see J. Steinhoff, “Pregnant Pages: Marginalia in a Book of Hours (Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 754/British Library Ms Add. 36684),” in C. Hourihane, ed., *Between the Picture and the Word: Manuscript Studies from the Index of Christian Art* (Princeton, 2005), 180–86; John Plummer, *The Last Flowering: French Painting in*

Manuscripts, 1420–1530 (New York, 1982), 8–9; and Roger S. Wieck, *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art* (New York, 1997), 75.

³⁵ See Lilian M. C. Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley, 1966), 60–61; Elaine C. Block, *Corpus of Medieval Misericords in France: XIII–XVI century* (Turnhout, 2003), 28; H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London, 1952), 191; and Jean Wirth, *Les marges à drôleries dans les manuscrits gothiques (1250–1350)* (Geneva, 2008), 90.

³⁶ Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London, 1992), 95, 126.

³⁷ Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia, 2002), 159. Compare Christopher De Hamel, *Manuscript Illumination: History and Techniques* (London, 2001), 33.

³⁸ Jeremy Lowe, *Desiring Truth: The Process of Judgment in Fourteenth-Century Art and Literature* (New York, 2005), 79.

³⁹ Margaret Trenchard-Smith, “Insanity, Exculpation and Disempowerment,” in Wendy J. Turner, ed., *Madness in Medieval Law and Custom* (Leiden, 2010), 39–55, at 44; and Anne M. Scott, “Thomas Hoccleve’s Selves Apart,” in Ronald Bedford, ed., *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices* (Ann Arbor, 2006), 89–103. Among the extensive literature on madness in the Middle Ages, see R. Neubegauer, “Medieval and Early Modern Theories of Mental Illness,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 36 (1979): 477–83; Allen Thiher, *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 44–72; and Judith S. Neaman, *Suggestion of the Devil* (Garden City, NY, 1975), 42–45.

⁴⁰ “Sicut autem molendinum uelociter uoluitur et nichil respuit, sed quicquid imponitur molit, sic cor curiosum semper est in motu et nunquam quiescit”: Iacobus de Vitriaco, *Sermones uulgares uel ad status*, ed. Jean Longère (Turnhout, 2013), 466.

⁴¹ “Narra de stulto lusore qui quicquid ponebat in ludo cum sapiente amittebat; unde sapiens dicebat quod plus ualebat ei quam furnus uel molendinum”: Guillelmus Alvernus, *Sermones de tempore* 103, ed. Franco Morenzoni, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 2010–11), 1:404.

⁴² “Ita ne lanam quaerit ovis a capra, aquam molendinum a furno, verbum sapiens a stulto?”: Bernard de Clairvaux, *Lettres*, 87, ed. J. LeClercq and H. Rochais, 3 vols. (Paris, 1997–2012), 2:452.

⁴³ See Leo M. Carruthers, “Lorens of Orleans and *The Somme le roi* or *The Book of Vices and Virtues*,” *Vox Benedictina* 5.2–3 (1988): 190–200; and Frédéric Duval, *Lectures françaises de la fin du Moyen Âge* (Geneva, 2007), 56–65.

⁴⁴ “Mes il sage metent l’escluse de discrecion pour retenir l’eau de foles paroles et outraigeuses, que eles ne passent par le molin de la langue”: Frere Laurent, *La somme le roi*, ed. Édith Brayer and Anne-Françoise Leurquin Labie (Paris, 2008), 388.

⁴⁵ “Quer il sont unes paroles vaines dont ces langues sont si plaines, qui parlent avant et arrière, qui sont comme le batel du molin qui ne se puet taire”: Frere Laurent, *La somme le roi*, ed. Brayer and Labie, 39. A fifteenth-century vocabulary defines the clack as “an pounding instrument by which grain is made to flow between the stones of the mill” (“est instrumentum cujus percussione granum defluit inter molas molendini, anglice a clacke”): Thomas Wright and Richard Paul Wülcker, eds., *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies* (London, 1884), cccxxx. See also *Promptorium parvulorum sive clericorum, lexicon anglo-latinum princeps*, ed. Albert Way, 2 vols. (London, 1843–53), 1:79. The term *tarantara* itself seems to have been taken from a fragment of Quintus Ennius, “at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit”: see Ennius, *The Annals*, ed. Otto Skutsch (Oxford, 1985), 112.

⁴⁶ See Sander S. Gilman, *Seeing the Insane* (Lincoln, 1982), 52–132; Irina Metzler, *Fools and Idiots?: Intellectual Disability in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2016), 184–220; and

D. J. Gifford, "Iconographical Notes towards a Definition of the Medieval Fool," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 37 (1974): 336–42.

⁴⁷ J. J. Mak, *Rhetoricaal glossarium* (Assen, 1959), 247; and Petra J. E. M. van Dam, "Harnessing the Wind: the History of Windmills in Holland," in P. Galetti and P. Racine, eds., *I Mulini Nell'Europa Medievale* (Bologna, 2003), 34–53.

⁴⁸ J. Harrebomée, *Spreekwoordenboek der Nederlandsche taal*, 3 vols. (Hoevelaken, 1990), 2:94–95; F. A. Stoett, *Nederlandse Spreekwoorden en Gezegden verklaard en vergeleken met die in het Frans, Duits en Engels* (Zutphen, 1981), 224–25; and Jean Des Roches, *Nederduytsch-Fransch woórd-boek* (Paris, 1820), 343.

⁴⁹ "Den Windt of hy goet is / Sal die Muelen we draeyen al fijn van passe": Jacob Jacobz Cassiere, *Factie in Antwerpen*, in C. Kruyskamp, ed., *Het Antwerpse landjuweel van 1561: een keuze uit de vertoonde stukken* (Antwerp, 1962), 2; "Miserrimae professionis incommoda dulci quodam insaniae genere mitigarem . . . modis omnibus suo arbitratu saeviunt, asinum illum Cumanum imitantes": Erasmus. *Stultitiae Laus*, ed. John F. Collins (Indianapolis, 1991), 138.

⁵⁰ Joannis Sambucus, *Emblemata, com aliquot nummis antiqui* (Antwerp, 1564), 107.

⁵¹ "Homo phantasticus: qui variis phantasmatis & deliriis agitur, *tanquam mola ventis*": C. Kiliaen, *Etymologicum teutonicae linguae*, ed. F. Claes (The Hague, 1972), 321.

⁵² On Saint Anthony's association with madness, especially via the disease which takes his name, see F. Clifford Rose, "The Neurology of Art," in F. Clifford Rose, ed., *Neurology of the Arts: Painting, Music, Literature* (London, 2004), 43–76, at 50–53. On Bosch's depiction of this theme, see C. Vander Kooi, "Hieronymus Bosch and Ergotism," *Wisconsin Medical Journal* 111 (2012): 1–4, at 4; and Laurinda Dixon, "Bosch's St. Anthony Triptych—An Apothecary's Apotheosis," *Art Journal* 44 (1984): 119–31, at 119.

⁵³ Philippe Roberts-Jones and Françoise Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel* (New York, 2002), 234–37.

⁵⁴ “Mon cheval, / Mon moulinet, ma hallebarde”: Pierre Gringore, “Sottie du Prince des sotz,” in *Œuvres complètes de Gringore*, ed. Ch. d’Héricault and A. de Montaiglon, 2 vols. (Paris, 1858), 1:210. See Alan Hindley, “Pierre Gringore, Satire and Carnival,” in Sarah Alyn Stacey and Pauline M. Smith, eds., *Court and Humour in the French Renaissance: Essays in Honour of Professor Pauline Smith* (Oxford, 2009), 189.

⁵⁵ Sebastian Brant, *Das Narrenschiff*, ed. Franz Schulz (Berlin, 1913), 22.

⁵⁶ See Frederick A. De Armas, *Quixotic Frescoes: Cervantes and Italian Renaissance Art* (Toronto, 2006), 145–46.

⁵⁷ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, ed. R. M. Flores, 2 vols. (Vancouver, 1988), 1:71.

⁵⁸ See Manuel Duran and Fay R. Ragg, *Fighting Windmills: Encounters with Don Quixote* (New Haven, 2006), 165–90; Dale B. J. Randall and Jackson C. Boswell, *Cervantes in Seventeenth-Century England: The Tapestry Turned* (Oxford, 2009), xl passim; and Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbs Speak Louder Than Words* (Oxford, 2008), 277–316, esp. 286–89.

⁵⁹ Miguel de Cervantes, *The History of Don Quichote*, trans. Thomas Shelton (London, 1620); and *Les aventures du fameux Chevalier Dom Quixot de la Manche et de Sancho Pansa son escuyer* (Paris, n.d.).

⁶⁰ Miguel de Cervantes, *The history of the ever-renowned knight Don Quixote de la Mancha* (London, 1695): Wing C1773; and Miguel de Cervantes, *The much-esteemed history of the ever-famous knight Don Quixote de la Mancha* (London, 1699): Wing C1778.

⁶¹ Alixe Bovey, “The Smithfield Decretals,” in Scot McKendrick, John Lowden, and Kathleen Doyle, eds., *Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination* (London, 2011), 324–25.

⁶² On the inclusion of popular material in the manuscript illuminations, see Kenneth K. Varty, “Reynard the Fox and the Smithfield Decretals,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963): 347–54.

⁶³ G. L. Remnant, *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain* (Oxford, 1998), 10; and Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London: Westminster Abbey* (London, 1924), 134.

⁶⁴ Mary Désirée Anderson, *The Medieval Carver* (Cambridge, U.K., 1935), 29; and Edward G. Tasker, *Encyclopedia of Medieval Church Art* (London, 1993), 289.

⁶⁵ See Leo Carruthers, *La Somme le Roi de Lorens d’Orléans et ses Traductions Anglaises* (Paris, 1980), 19–22; and Richard Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular* (Turnhout, 1993).

⁶⁶ *Jacob’s Well, an Englisht Treatise on the Cleansing of Man’s Conscience*, ed. Arthur Brandeis, EETS o.s. 115 (London, 1900), 148; *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS o.s. 217 (London, 1942), 55, 282–83; *Speculum vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna, 2 vols., EETS o.s. 331, 332 (Oxford, 2008), 2:451, 510; *The Mirroure of the Worlde: A Middle English Translation of the Miroir du Monde*, ed. Robert R. Raymo, Ruth E. Sternglantz, and Elaine E. Whitaker (Toronto, 2003), 195, 376; Dan Michel, *Ayenbite of Inwyte: Or, Remorse of Conscience*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS o.s. 23 (London, 1866), 58, 255; and William Caxton, *The ryal book. or a book for a kyng* (London, 1485), fols. 21v, 79r (STC 21429). See also Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge, U.K., 1997), 51–52.

⁶⁷ *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 280; Frere Laurent, *La somme le roi*, 385. This passage seems to have proven unusually difficult for English translators: while Dan Michel has “þe crammeles ine þe russoles” (Dan Michel, *Ayenbyte of Inwyt*, 253), Caxton has “muskles emonge frosshes” (*The Ryal book*, fol. 78r), and *The Mirroure of the Worlde* has “þe molle in mollehilles” (374). Other authors, such as the author of the *Speculum vitae*, simply ignore the metaphor altogether, referring more literally to “þis curyous men . . . þat of þe Trouthe ouermykill wil muse” (2:504).

⁶⁸ Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Chaucer’s Use of Proverbs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), 168.

⁶⁹ Thomas Hoccleve, *Regement of Princes*, 171, in *Hoccleve’s Works*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London, 1892–1925), 7; John Lydgate, “Mumming at Hertford,” 177, in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Part II*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, EETS o.s. 192 (London, 1961), 680; and *Tale of Beryn*, in John Bowers, ed., *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions* (Kalamazoo, 1992), 138 (line 3003). Compare Peter Ideley, *Instructions to his Son*, 50–51, ed. Charlotte D’Evelyn (Boston, 1935), 82, and the “litill gaist” that “clok lyk a corn myll,” in “Ane Interlude Of The Laying Of A Gaist” (1540?), in Walter Scott, ed., *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, 3 vols. (Kelso, 1802–3), 1:cxxxiii. See further Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), C276, M556; and Richard Newhauser, “The Parson’s Tale and its Generic Affiliations,” in David Raybin and Linda Tarte Holley, eds., *Closure in the Canterbury Tales: the Role of The Parson’s Tale* (Kalamazoo, 2000), 45–76.

⁷⁰ Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems, Newly Devised* (Leiden, 1586), 26 (STC 25438).

⁷¹ *Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed* (London, 1613), fols. B–Bv (STC 25872).

⁷² S.v. *windmill*, in Jennifer Speake, *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, 6th edn. (Oxford, 2015); Emanuel Strauss, *Concise Dictionary of European Proverbs* (London, 1998); George B. Bryan and Wolfgang Mieder, *A Dictionary of Anglo-American Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (New York, 2005); Harold V. Cordry, *The Multicultural Dictionary of Proverbs* (Jefferson, NC, 1997); and M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor, 1950), 730.

⁷³ William Camden, *Remains Concerning Britain*, ed. R. D. Dunn (Toronto, 1984), 57; and “The louer shewing of the continuall paines that abide within his brest,” in Amanda Holton and Tom MacFaul, eds., *Tottel’s Miscellany: Songs and Sonnets* (London, 2011), 228.

⁷⁴ Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *Roaring Girl*, 3.7.72–73, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), 753. On the date of the play, see David J. Lake, *The Canon of Thomas Middleton’s Plays* (London, 1975), 36–37.

⁷⁵ Ben Jonson, “Vision of Delight,” in *Ben Jonson: Selected Masques*, ed. Philip Whalen and Stephen Orgel (New Haven, 1975), 152; Richard Brome, *The Court Begger* (London, 1653), fol. 25 (Wing B4867); Richard Flecknoe, *The Damoiselles a la mode: A Comedy* (London, 1667), 26 (Wing F1211); Thomas Shadwell, *The Sullen Lovers*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Montague Summers (New York, 1968), 22; and Richard Zouch, *The Sophister: A Comedy* (London, 1639), D2v (STC 26133).

⁷⁶ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York, 2001), 69.

⁷⁷ *The Quakers art of courtship, or, The Yea-and-nay academy of complements* (London, 1689), 140–42 (Wing Q14).

⁷⁸ See especially *A nev vwind-mil, a new* (London, 1643), 1 (Wing N792). Windmills appear in contemporary caricatures of the commissioner Adoniram Byfield and the regicide

Hugh Peter, the latter being published on the day of its subject's execution: see Craig Ashley Hanson, *The English Virtuoso: Art, Medicine, and Antiquarianism in the Age of Empiricism* (Chicago, 2009), 130; and Henry Lancaster, "Byfield, Adoniram (d.1658x60)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, gen. ed. Colin Matthew, 60 vols. (Oxford, 2004), 9:303–4. For a later example by Hogarth, see Misty G. Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Baltimore, 2012), 150–55.

⁷⁹ Francis Lenton, *The young gallants whirligig; or Youths reakes* (London, 1629), 1 (STC 15467); and Thomas Nash, *Quaternio or A fourefold vway to a happie life* (London, 1633), 173 (STC 18382).

⁸⁰ "My ladyes water myll," in Richard Leighton Greene, ed., *The Early English Carols*, rev. edn. (Oxford, 1977), 280; *The lusty miller's recreation* (London, n.d.) Wing L3507; and "The Unfortunate Miller," in V. de Sola Pinto and A. E. Rodway, eds., *The Common Muse: Popular British Ballad Poetry from the 15th to the 20th Century* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 555–58.

⁸¹ "Ane Ansr maid to ye Sklanderaris yt blasphemis ye Regent," in James Cranstoun, ed., *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1891–93), 1:66.

⁸² *Shakespeare Jest-books: A hundred merry talys*, ed. William Carew Hazlitt (London, 1864), 43, 11.

⁸³ *A knack to know a knave*, ed. James Farmer (London, 1911).

⁸⁴ John Florio, *Firste fruites which yeelde familiar speech* (London, 1578), fol. 25 (STC 11096).

⁸⁵ Chris Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival: Festive Misrule in Medieval England* (Manchester, 2001), 3.

⁸⁶ See David R. Parker, *The Commonplace Book in Tudor London* (Lanham, Md., 1998), 37–80; and W. P. Hills, “Richard Hill of Hillend,” *Notes and Queries* 177 (1939): 452–56.

⁸⁷ Roman Dyboski, ed., *Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems from Balliol MS. 354*, EETS e.s. 101 (London, 1908), 115.

⁸⁸ See Sander L. Gilman, *Parodic Sermon in European Perspective: Aspects of Liturgical Parody from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia, 1974), 31–50.

⁸⁹ Malcolm Jones, “The Parodic Sermon in Medieval and Early Modern England,” *Medium Ævum* 66 (1997): 94–114, at 100.

⁹⁰ *The Towneley Plays*, ed. G. England and A. Pollard, EETS e.s. 71 (London, 1966), 105.

⁹¹ See the discussion in Malcolm Jones, “‘Slawpase fro the myln-whele’: Seeing Between the Lines,” in Meg Twycross, ed., *Festive Drama: Papers from the Sixth Triennial Colloquium of the International Society for the Study of Medieval Theatre* (Woodbridge, 1996), 242–58.

⁹² John Heywood, “Play of the Weather,” in Greg Walker, ed., *Oxford Anthology of Tudor Drama* (Oxford, 2014), 118–43.

⁹³ Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Woodbridge, 2010), 146; and William Sayers, “Tregetours in ‘The Franklin’s Tale’: Stage Magic and Siege Machines,” *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 56 (2009): 341–46, at 346.

⁹⁴ A. J. Barnouw, “Chaucer’s ‘Miller’s Tale,’” *Modern Language Review* 7 (1912): 145–48; and Frederick M. Biggs, “The Miller’s Tale and ‘Heilevan Beersele,’” *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 56 (2005): 497–523.

⁹⁵ Peter G. Beidler, “The Miller’s Tale,” in Correale and Hamel, eds., *Sources and Analogues*, 2:249–75; and Peter G. Beidler, *The Lives of the Miller’s Tale: The Roots, Composition and Retellings of Chaucer’s Bawdy Story* (Jefferson, N.C., 2015), 253n3.

⁹⁶ See Robert William Dent, *Proverbial Language in English Drama Exclusive of Shakespeare 1495–1616* (Berkeley, 1984), 524–25.

⁹⁷ Bryan Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, 2003), 33–36. See Inke Gunia, “Del Pícaro Espanol al English Rogue,” in Klaus Meyer-Minnemann and Sabine Schlickers, eds., *La novela picaresca: concepto genérico y evolución del género (siglos XVI y XVII)* (Pamplona, 2008), 545–68, at 547.

⁹⁸ *Grim the Collier of Croydon*, in John S. Farmer, ed., *Five Anonymous Plays* (London, 1908), 157; and Robert Wilson, *Three Ladies of London*, in Lloyd Edward Kermode, ed., *Three Renaissance Usury Plays* (Manchester, 2009), 85.

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¹⁰¹ Douglas Duncan, "Gammer Gurton's Needle and the Concept of Humanist Parody," *Studies in English Literature* 27 (1987): 177–96, at 180.

¹⁰² Jon Cook, "Carnival and the *Canterbury Tales*: 'Only Equals May Laugh,'" in David Aers, ed., *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology and History* (New York, 1986), 169–91; and Stewart Justman, *The Springs of Liberty* (Evanston, 1999), 109.

¹⁰³ Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, 1991), 278.

¹⁰⁴ Camille Marshall, "Figuring the Dangers of the 'Greet Fornys': Chaucer and Gower's Timely (Mis)Reporting of the Peasant Voice," *Comitatus* 46 (2015): 75–97.

¹⁰⁵ Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 246. See also Andrew James Johnston, "The Exegetics of Laughter: Religious Parody in Chaucer's 'Miller's Tale,'" in Manfred Pfister, ed., *A History of English Laughter: Laughter from Beowulf to Beckett and Beyond* (Amsterdam, 2002), 17–33.

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¹⁰⁸ Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 154.

¹⁰⁹ Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994), 230.

¹¹⁰ See Charles Phythian-Adams, “Ceremony and the Citizen: The Communal Year at Coventry, 1450–1550,” in Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns* (Toronto, 1972), 57–85; and Mervyn James, “Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Town,” *Past and Present* 98 (1983): 3–29.

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¹¹² A. V. C. Schmidt, “Chaucer and the Golden Age,” *Essays in Criticism* 26 (1976): 99–115, at 110, repr. in A. V. C. Schmidt, *Passion and Precision: Collected Essays* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2015), 2–24; and Donald Howard, *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley, 1976), 126.

¹¹³ Joyce Tally Lionarons, “Magic, Machines, and Deception: Technology in the *Canterbury Tales*,” *Chaucer Review* 27 (1994): 377–386, at 384.

¹¹⁴ Dyer estimates that over ten thousand mills existed in England by the first decade of the fourteenth century: see Chris Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 2002), 131. See further John Langdon, *Mills in the Medieval Economy: England 1300–1540* (Oxford, 2004).

¹¹⁵ For a critical overview of this position, see Adam Robert Lucas, “Industrial Milling in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: A Survey of the Evidence for an Industrial Revolution in Medieval Europe,” *Technology and Culture* 46 (2005): 1–30; Adam Lucas, *Ecclesiastical Lordship, Seigneurial Power and the Commercialization of Milling in Medieval England* (Abingdon, 2014), 67–85; and Adam Lucas, “Narratives of Technological Revolution,” in Albrecht Classen, ed., *Handbook of Medieval Studies* (Berlin, 2010), 967–90.

¹¹⁶ Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilisation* (London, 1934), 112–13; Marc Bloch, “Avènement et conquêtes du moulin à eau,” *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale* 7 (1935): 538–63; Eleanora Carus-Wilson, “An Industrial Revolution of the Thirteenth Century,” *Economic History Review* 11 (1941): 39–60; and Lynn White Jr., “Technology and Invention in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 15 (1940): 141–59.

¹¹⁷ Jean Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine: The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages* (London, 1977), 15.

¹¹⁸ René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, trans. Ian Maclean (Oxford, 2006), 46–47. See also the discussion in Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York, 2008), 75–76, 82–83.

¹¹⁹ On this point, see further Patricia Clare Ingham, *The Medieval New: Ambivalence in an Age of Innovation* (Philadelphia, 2015), 143–66.