Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind

MEDIEVAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF A DISABILITY

Edward Wheatley

STUMBLING BLOCKS BEFORE THE BLIND

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Non maledices surdo, nec coram caeco pones offendiculum . . .

Thou shalt not speak evil of the deaf,
nor put a stumbling block before the blind . . .

LEVITICUS 19:14

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Preface

While researching my book *Mastering Aesop: Medieval Education, Chaucer, and His Followers,* I became interested in pedagogical texts that present animals or humans with disabilities as immoral, with the "incompleteness" of their bodies often representing that of their souls. In fable literature and beyond, this connection appears in the most common anti-Semitic trope in medieval Christianity, the "blindness" of the Jews, which remained pervasive because it was reinforced by other cultural constructions of blindness. This trope led me to a broader exploration of the history of this disability.

Substantial differences in attitudes toward blindness separate France and England, related partly to the Norman use of blinding as punishment both in Normandy and in England after the Conquest. Concomitantly (and probably not coincidentally) the Normans began establishing hospices specifically for the blind, and among the founders was supposedly William the Conqueror, who often blinded his enemies. Institutions for the blind were opened in France later in the Middle Ages, the best known of which was founded by Louis IX. These practices and institutions in France resulted in attitudes that commodified human sight and resulted in inhumane satire against the blind in French secular literature. On the other hand, the English generally did not use blinding as punishment, and there were no institutions devoted exclusively to the care of the blind in England during the Middle Ages. These differences precluded the commodification of sight, leaving blindness within the realm of divine will rather than human negotiation. The less prominent position of blind people in society resulted in noticeably fewer cruel representations in English literature.

Although disability studies provides a useful vocabulary for discussing my topic, I have had to adapt it to premodern history. My first chapter, "Cripping the Middle Ages, Medievalizing Disability Theory," proposes that in medieval studies such theories must negotiate between Bakhtin's perva-

sive theory of the grotesque and the modern "social versus medical" models of disability. The social model was common in precapitalist Europe: people with disabilities remained integrated in local social structures, often among their own families. However, the modern medical model, whereby science and the medical profession dominate discourse about disability in order to keep it within their domain, generally does not apply to the Middle Ages. Instead, citing the Bible, patristic writing, and historical documents, I posit a "religious" model of disability that preceded the emerging medical model. The church exercised a good deal of control over the meaning of disability, partly because the care of the disabled (notably in religious foundations such as hospices) could be lucrative for the church, and also because almsgiving to disabled beggars showed Christian compassion as part of the economy of charity and salvation. Paramount among disabilities in Christian discourse was blindness, since Jesus himself miraculously cured the blind.

These theories of disability inform my historical survey of blindness. Chapter 2, "Leading the Blind: France versus England" examines both the practice of blinding as punishment in medieval England and France, and Louis IX's foundation in 1265 of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts in Paris (an earlier version of the section of the chapter devoted to the Quinze-Vingts appeared under the title "Blindness, Discipline, and Reward: Louis IX and the Foundation of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts" in *Disability Studies Quarterly* [Fall 2002]: 194–212). While the hospice exemplified some problematic aspects of institutionalized care, it offered its residents relative freedom in comparison to many institutions, both medieval and modern. Residents could have their families living with them, vote on some matters of governance, and hold jobs outside the hospice. Most importantly, this institution was the first of its kind not to be under church control (and the hospice's richly documented medieval history is full of conflicts with the bishops and clergy of Paris). In France, this hospice and later ones modeled on it effected a significant rupture in the social construction of blindness: the presence of royally protected blind people in Paris improved the lives of residents but also created a higher public profile for them, leading to envy and contempt. No such institutions existed in England: evidence shows that people with all kinds of disabilities except leprosy shared English hospices.

Nevertheless, England and France shared certain prejudices against blind beggars who did not have the protection of a king, a community, or a family. I explore their treatment in chapter 3, an earlier version of which appeared in *Exemplaria* (October 2002: 351–82) under the title "'Blind' Jews

and Blind Christians: The Metaphorics of Marginalization." It builds on the historical material in the previous chapter with evidence of how Jews, metaphorically "blind" in the common Pauline trope, and blind people were controlled in medieval Europe. The chapter examines stereotypes shared by these two groups, such as greed, laziness, and sexual excess, especially in Continental sources; it also examines the laws that limited the economic activities and mobility of the Jews and the blind and that created complex social structures whereby they became dependent on those in power. The chapter concludes with a focus on drama in Latin, French, and English that calls for the performance of Judaism and blindness. The "performance" of blindness by sighted actors reinforced social anxieties about nondisabled people feigning disability to avoid work.

Chapter 4, "Humoring the Sighted: The Comic Embodiment of Blindness," is devoted to the substantial corpus of literature, nearly all of which is Continental, in which blind characters are called upon to demonstrate their impairment in humiliating ways. The representations of the blind here intersect with several of the conventions and stereotypes discussed in earlier chapters, including avarice, sexual excess, and general grotesquerie.

The literary stereotype of blind people as sexually excessive or perverse leads into chapter 5, "Blinding, Blindness, and Sexual Transgression." Often the gods or other supernatural figures blind characters for sexual sin, but significantly, this type of punishment is largely absent from French literature. This motif informs such works as Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale" and "Man of Law's Tale," Thomas Chester's "Sir Launfal," Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid,* and others.

Chapter 6, "Instructive Interventions: Miraculous Chastisement and Cure," elucidates the religious model of disability in miraculous blindings and cures of the blind in hagiographic literature. The French predilection for blinding as punishment makes itself felt in French hagiographies, which feature blinding much more frequently than English ones; furthermore, after the Norman Conquest of England, blinding frequently made its way into hagiographic literature about English saints that was rewritten under the auspices of the newly installed Norman clergy. The chapter continues my reading of the two Chaucerian texts introduced in the previous chapter, "The Merchant's Tale" and "The Man of Law's Tale," analyzing the dynamics of each tale's miraculous cure of blindness.

The final chapter examines the intersection between medical treatments of blindness and blind historical figures, with special attention to the only cure that medieval medicine could effect with some success, cataract re-

moval. As well as reading accounts of Jean l'Aveugle, the blind king of Bohemia who underwent unsuccessful cataract surgery and was later killed at the battle of Crécy, I discuss the poetry of two blind medieval clerics, the Picard Gilles le Muisit and the English John Audelay. Gilles was blinded by cataracts in 1345 and had them removed six years later. His poems provide a summary of not only self-loathing attitudes about the disability but also the appropriate religious responses to his cure. Audelay, who apparently saw his blindness as punishment for a very public sin that he had committed, mentions no possibility for medical intervention and strives to come to terms with his disability.

I began this book at Hamilton College, to whose Dean and Board of Trustees I am grateful for research support between 1999 and 2005. The seed money for the project came in the form of an Emerson Grant for Student-Faculty Collaboration, which allowed me to spend three months studying disability theory with a remarkable student, Jill Allen, whose experience of disability made our reading much more immediate and compelling. Jill was instrumental in founding Hamilton's Disability Action Group, for which I served as faculty adviser, and they also contributed significantly to my education. A reading group of my colleagues at Hamilton patiently and perspicaciously read early versions of two of the chapters here, for which I thank Chris Georges, Kevin Grant, Martine Guyot-Bender, Onno Oerlemans, Kyoko Omori, Lisa Trivedi, Bonnie Urciuoli, Thomas A. Wilson, and Steve Yao. I'm also grateful to Bonnie Krueger for her interest in my work and her companionship as a medievalist.

Much of the work on this book took place during leaves made possible by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Council of Learned Societies.

My thanks go also to the many scholars and their students who hosted me during visits to lecture at their institutions: Vance Smith at Princeton University; Lynn Staley at Colgate University; Richard Firth Green, Steve Kuusisto, Alastair Minnis, and Brenda Brueggemann at Ohio State University; Paul Hyams, Andrew Galloway, and Nicole Marafioti at Cornell University; Steven Kruger at the CUNY Graduate Center; Nicholas Watson and Dan Donoghue at Harvard University; Cathy Kudlick at the University of California at Davis; Maureen Miller at the University of California at Berkeley; Christopher Baswell, Linne Mooney, Derek Pearsall, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne at the Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of York; Christopher Castiglia and Michael Berubé at the Pennsylvania State University; and Essaka Joshua at the University of Notre Dame. The De-

partment of English at Cornell also extended hospitality to me as a visiting scholar in 2004–5.

Progress on this work was happily interrupted by a move to Chicago to join the English Department at Loyola University, where my research has been generously underwritten by the Edward L. Surtz, S.J., Professorship in Medieval Literature. I have been warmly welcomed and intellectually enriched by many colleagues, including Chris Castiglia, Pamela Caughie, David Chinitz, Allen Frantzen, Suzanne Gossett, Paul Jay, Joyce Wexler, and, in the History Department, Barbara Rosenwein. I am also grateful to the graduate students who have enrolled in my seminar on disability in medieval literature; they have both challenged me and helped me to a deeper understanding of the material in this book. Among those students it has been particularly gratifying to work with Tory Vandeventer Pearman, whose dissertation on women and disability in Middle English literature makes a valuable contribution to disability studies in the Middle Ages.

During trips to libraries in the United States and abroad I have received warm hospitality from Andy, Margaret, and Isabel Mackay; Matthew Bullard and Felicity Lawrence; Bill Hamilton and Kate Parkin; Clare and Joshua McKeown; Stephanie Freedman and Darrell Halverson; and Elisabeth Delavaud.

Colleagues at several institutions have generously shared their knowledge and expertise. I am grateful to Susanna Fein for giving me prepublication access to essays that appear in her edited collection, *My Wyl and My Wrytyng: Essays on John the Blind Audelay;* Julie Singer for sharing her work on Jean L'Aveugle and early cataract surgery; Joan Cadden for her advice about medieval medicine; Christopher Baswell for a sensitive, insightful reading of the manuscript; John McKeown for his continuing interest in my work; and Todd Bauer, Mike Ervin, Sandy Shinner, and the staff and actors involved with Cripslam Sundays at Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago for inviting me to collaborate in the production of two of the French plays discussed in this book.

As always, my greatest debt is to Mary Mackay, whose love and support guided me through the writing of this book, keeping me from stumbling blocks.

CHAPTER 1

Cripping the Middle Ages, Medievalizing Disability Theory

In Paris in 1425, an anonymous bourgeois chronicler recorded the following "entertainment."

> Item, le darrenier dimenche du moys d'aoust fut fait ung esbatement de l'ostel nommé d'Arminac, en la rue Sainct-Honoré, que on mist .IIII. aveugles, tous armez, en ung parc, chascun ung baston en sa main, et en ce lieu avoit ung fort pourcel, lequel ilz devoient avoir s'ilz le povoient tuer. Ainsi fut fait, et firent celle bataille si estrange, car ilz se donnerent tant de grans colz de ces bastons que de pis leur en fust, car, quant (le mieulx) cuidoient frapper le pourcel, ilz frappoient l'un sur l'autre, car, se ilz eussent esté armez pour vray, ilz s'eussent tué l'un l'autre. Item, le sabmedi vigille du dimenche devant dit, furent menez lesditz aveugles parmi Paris tous armez, une grant banniere devant, où il avoit ung pourcel pourtraict, et devant eulx ung homme jouant du bedon.[1]
>
> *[Note, the last Sunday of the month of August there took place an amusement at the residence called d'Arminac in the Rue Saint Honoré, in which four blind people, all armed, each with a stick, were put in a park, and in that location there was a strong pig that they could have if they killed it. Thus it was done, and there was a very strange battle, because they gave themselves so many great blows with those sticks that it went worse for them, because when the stronger ones believed that they hit the pig, they hit each other, and if they had really been armed, they would have killed each other. Note, the Saturday evening before the aforementioned Sunday, the said blind people were led through Paris all armed, a large banner in front, where there was a pig portrayed, and in front of them a man playing a bass drum.]*

This event shocks modern readers with its calculated cruelty toward and humiliation of the four blind men, who are called upon to "perform" their blindness in a contest focused less on the killing of the pig than on the injuries that they will inflict on each other. And this was an expensive, carefully planned production, requiring not only a pig but a painted banner and a drum. The ritualistic procession, complete with percussion, evidently served as banns to advertise the next day's competition and draw a crowd. Equally shocking, however, is the chronicler's rather disengaged tone as he recounts the event. His strongest response to it is his implicit gratitude toward the sighted organizers for not giving the blind men more lethal weapons, because evidently he believes that the blind, being blind and not knowing any better, would have fought to the death.

Evidently such scenes had played themselves out in Europe before, because a visual representation of a nearly identical contest appears in the border of a fourteenth-century manuscript. Ms. Bodley 264, a product of Flanders, includes the Romance of Alexander, copied in 1339 and illuminated afterward by Jehan de Grise, who completed his work in 1344. Along with magnificent illuminations of the Alexander narrative, Jehan painted comic and genre scenes in many of the lower borders of the text pages. Among these are several of people with disabilities.[2] On the verso of folio 74 Jehan painted a two-part illumination (fig. 1): to the left, a boy leads four blind men in broad-brimmed hats, each man with one hand upon the shoulder of the person in front of him and the other hand bearing a club. The boy does not appear in the right-hand scene; instead, the blind men are gathered around a pig. One man, his club raised vertically, falls backward over the animal as another man hits him on the head with his club.[3] The appearance of this scene here takes on added significance when we consider it alongside analogous marginal illuminations. Several of the scenes present games that are still recognizable today such as checkers, chess, dicing, and blindman's buff, as well as a number of public spectacles, including a cockfight, a puppet show, and jugglers. Jehan de Grise expected his contemporaries to be able to recognize these games, so it is likely that the pig-beating game was equally recognizable, and perhaps even as unremarkable.

Another public spectacle based on the performance of blindness also enjoyed some popularity in medieval France, though in the short play *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle* (The Boy and the Blind Man), the blindness was performed by an actor. Written in the mid-thirteenth century (and generally thought to be the oldest surviving farce in French), the play presents a blind man whom one critic has rightly called drunk, gluttonous, coarse, cynical,

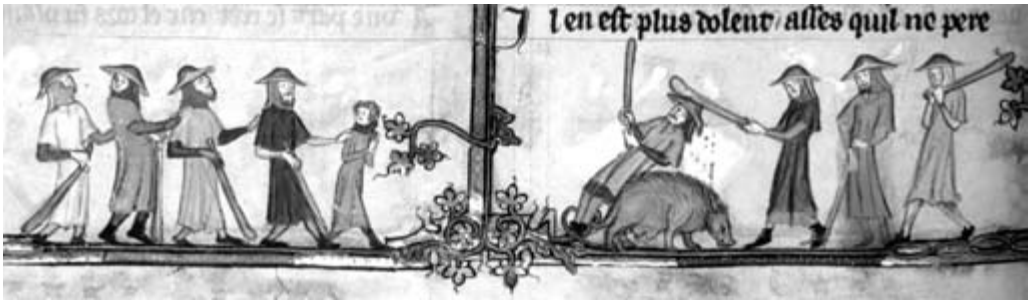

Fig. 1. A medieval "entertainment": the blind beating the blind. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS 264, *The Romance of Alexander,* Jehan de Grise, 1339–44, fol. 74v, lower marginal illustration. Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

and debauched.[4] He is also a miser who has amassed a small fortune through his begging. The plot of the drama is simple: the blind man needs a guide, and he tries to persuade a boy to take the position. However, the boy, who states his dislike of blind people in an early aside, first disguises his voice in order to slap the blind man incognito and then later steals all of his money as well as his clothes. In short, the boy's goal is to humiliate the blind man physically and to strip him of all of his possessions, presumably to the delight of an audience.

This play will be discussed in some detail in chapter 4, but I have sketched its content here for two reasons. First, it seems to have drawn upon previously existing stereotypes of blind people, particularly drunken gluttony and avarice, because they appear as vices of the blind in other literature. Second, like the pig-beating game, it was performed repeatedly over a period of time, because even though it exists in only one manuscript, that manuscript has undergone considerable scribal emendation to make it easier to use as a script for performance. Carol Symes has identified at least four hands other than the original scribe's, and she dates their emendations from the thirteenth to the mid- to late fifteenth century.[5] These scribal modifications, which cover a period of about two centuries, provide clear evidence of the play's ongoing popularity, and therefore it is highly likely that the play existed in other copies as well (and at only 265 lines, it would have been easy to copy). The performance of the blind man's humiliation at the hands of the boy obviously had a lengthy performance history.

This book examines cultural constructions of blindness in England and France in the later Middle Ages, constructions that gave rise to responses ranging from Christian charity to violent humiliation of the type represented by the pig-beating game and *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle.* Because historical texts describing how blind people lived are relatively rare, other types of representation—religious, literary, and artistic—will flesh out our understanding of history. Indeed, the question that gave rise to this study was basically a literary one: why was French medieval literature cruel toward and satirical about blind characters while English literature was much less so? I will examine the cultural forces that gave varied meanings to blindness in these two countries, both for blind people and for the societies in which they lived. The enormous differences between France's multivalent engagement with the disability and England's relatively benign neglect of it provide a remarkable variety of responses to the impairment. Furthermore, some of the English constructions of blindness are historically related to that country's intertwined but vexed historical connections to Normandy and France.

This work owes its nascence at least in part to the field of disability studies, which grew out of the political struggle for civil rights for people with disabilities that began in the 1960s. Like gay activists' adoption and ironic reinvention of the term *queer* as a sign of power, the term *cripple,* shortened to *crip,* has been adopted by people with disabilities (and those engaged in disability studies) to represent the inversion of earlier disempowerment as they engage in both political and scholarly activism. Thus the first half of the title of this chapter indicates my intention to look at the Middle Ages through the lens of disability theory, particularly as it relates to blindness, while the second half of the title acknowledges that I cannot do so without adapting that theory, which in the humanities has been overwhelmingly "presentist" in its focus. Because the civil rights movement for people with disabilities is ongoing, it is to some degree justifiable that disability studies has tended to focus on the present and relatively recent history. Even so, some scholars in the humanities have seen the value of extending the range of disability-related scholarship beyond the last two centuries.[6]

In *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability,* historian and activist Paul Longmore encourages the study of disability history by posing a list of significant questions.

> As one would expect, many disabled activists have been asking about experiences of disability in earlier times. How did societies in previous eras regard and

> treat people with disabilities? What values underlay cultural constructions of disabled people's identities? What factors shaped their social careers? How did people with various disabilities view themselves? In what ways did disabled people embrace or resist reigning definitions of their identities? How did they attempt to influence or alter sociocultural beliefs and societal practices in order to manage their social identities and social careers? Were there communities and cultures of disability in the past? What are the connections between those many pasts and our present?[7]

Helpful though these questions are to historians of modern disability, they present insuperable problems to scholars working in premodern periods. This study attempts to answer Longmore's first two questions in relation to blind people, and it will provide some information in response to the third. Sadly, almost no historical evidence exists to answer his questions about how blind people in the Middle Ages viewed not only themselves but also the beliefs and practices that determined their place in society. The only voices of blind writers whom I have found who mention their disability in the Middle Ages are John Audelay in England, who alludes to his impairment but provides little information about his lived experience as a blind man, and Gilles le Muisit in France, whose poetry includes encomia to the miraculous cure of cataract surgery that causes him to look back on his blindness with even greater loathing. Jean l'Aveugle (John the Blind) of Luxemburg is one of a very few blind people to appear in the annals of medieval history in these two countries, and although chroniclers wrote of him, he apparently left no writing of his own about his blindness.

Integral to my discussion of blindness in the Middle Ages is the distinction often made in disability studies between impairment and disability: impairment is the particular physical condition (in the case of my work, visual impairment), while disability is constituted by the restrictive social and political practices that construct the environment of a person with an impairment. Among some disability theorists this distinction has been criticized. Some scholars believe it is too essentialist, in that impairments can create discomforts or limitations that are not purely socially constructed.[8] A Foucauldian scholar eschews the disability/impairment distinction because "the identity of the subject in the social model ('people with impairments') is actually formed in large measure by the political arrangements that the model was designed to contest,"[9] that is, in many instances the impairment is as socially constructed as the disability. However, in her book *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during*

the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400, Irina Metzler offers a defense of these terms. She writes, "It is . . . preferable to speak of 'impairment' during the medieval period rather than of 'disability,' which implies certain social and cultural connotations that medieval impaired persons may not have shared with modern impaired people."[10] The distinction between disability and impairment is useful in the present work because of distinctly medieval constructions that did not grow out of the nature of the impairment but made it a disability in ways specific to that era. Our historical distance from the Middle Ages allows us to see these constructions of blindness with greater clarity because modern ones are so different.

Disability theorists most often divide types of impairment into three groups: sensory, for blindness, deafness, and other impairments of the senses; physical or somatic, for impairments of other parts of the body; and mental, for cognitive disability and mental illness. In most writing on sensory disability the focus is on deafness, partly due to the fact that with the invention of sign language, the lives of deaf people improved to the point that we can speak of deaf culture, inasmuch as language is a defining component of culture. Indeed, many writers capitalize the word *Deaf* when it is used in this context, claiming a group identity for people with the impairment. While many ameliorative technologies for blind people have been invented and refined in the past centuries—from braille to guide dogs to computerized optical character recognition systems—these do not necessarily bring blind people together as sign language does deaf people. Thus as issues of identity among people with disabilities (integral to Longmore's set of questions) have become central to disability studies, Deaf culture can lay claim to a uniqueness that blindness cannot, as those who use sign language will always have a sense of community that does not necessarily belong to blind people.

As in any field of theoretical inquiry, disagreements about fundamental issues in disability theory abound, but out of these, useful taxonomies have emerged. The two models of disability that dominated this theoretical field in its first two decades, perhaps too neatly constructed as binaries, are the medical model and the social model. The social model, which was and perhaps still is most popular in Britain, demands redefinition of *able-bodied* and *disabled* in such a way that society can acknowledge and include the full spectrum of physical types. Disability is no longer individualized as a condition "belonging" to a person but as one of a number of possible physical states in society, "reframing disability as a designation having primarily so-

cial and political significance."[11] Carol Thomas has effectively described both the value of and challenges presented by the social model at the time of its inception as a theory in the mid-1970s.

> Disability now resided in a nexus of social relationships connecting those socially identified as impaired and those deemed non-impaired or "normal," relationships that worked to exclude and disadvantage the former while promoting the relative inclusion and privileging of the latter. The new challenge was to: i) describe this nexus of social relationships, that is, to make clear the manifestations of disability in the social world (in organisations, systems, policies, practices, ideologies, and discourses), and ii) to explain it, by employing theoretical paradigms that generate ways of understanding what gives form to and sustains these relationships.[12]

Disability theorist Lennard Davis has focused on a different aspect of the social model that he calls the "constructionist model," which highlights the artificiality of the process through which people with impairments become disabled. He writes, "The constructionist model sees disability as a social process in which no inherent meanings attach to physical difference other than those assigned by a community."[13] The construction of disabilities and the social relations that define them must be recognized and rethought before society as a whole can begin to envision disability as something other than an individualized issue. In medieval France, as blind people became more socially visible, partly due to the foundation of a hospice for them by Louis IX, social anxieties also apparently emerged that made themselves felt in literature and law. In England, on the other hand, blindness remained relatively unmarked as a disability, and such anxieties about blind people are far less obvious.

Although Robert A. Scott wrote *The Making of Blind Men: A Study of Adult Socialization* in 1969, before disability studies grew into an academic field, he implicitly understood the constructionist model as it relates to blindness.

> The disability of blindness is a learned social role. The various attitudes and patterns of behavior that characterize people who are blind are not inherent in their condition but, rather, are acquired through ordinary processes of social learning. Thus there is nothing inherent in the condition of blindness that requires a person to be docile, dependent, melancholy, or helpless; nor is there anything about it that should lead him to become independent or assertive.

> Blind men are made, and by the same processes of socialization that have made us all.[14]

Scott's ideas here apply as fruitfully to medieval Europe as they do to contemporary society, though the stereotypes of blind people that he lists differ greatly from medieval ones. So to borrow Scott's phrase, one goal of this book is to examine evidence of the processes of socialization that made blind people in the Middle Ages.

Where did people with impairments fit into medieval society? Because there were relatively few institutions for them, they tended to remain integrated in their communities, so far as we know. In *A History of Disability,* Henri-Jacques Stiker says that medieval societies extended to people with impairments "an acceptance at times awkward, at times brutal, at times compassionate, a kind of indifferent, fatalistic integration."[15] For the Middle Ages, we do not have detailed historical records of people with impairments who were integrated into their societies, because they lived lives too unexceptional to leave lasting textual evidence. Furthermore, varying degrees of visual impairment must have been so widespread as to be unremarkable, especially before the Italian invention of eyeglasses for nearsightedness in the 1280s and for farsightedness in about 1450.[16] Even so, peculiar aspects of medieval law and customs to be discussed later in the chapter made the full integration of blind people into medieval European societies problematic at best.

In contrast to the social model, the medical model constructs disability as a deficit or a pathology that requires correction or cure. One of the most persuasive voices in disability theory, Simi Linton, describes the medical model in its modern context but also in a way that will be helpful in relation to what I perceive as its analogue in the Middle Ages. In *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity,* Linton writes that much of the meaning of disability in contemporary society has been appropriated by the medical profession, with unfortunate results for people with disabilities.

> Briefly, the medicalization of disability casts human variation as deviance from the norm, as pathological condition, as deficit, and, significantly, as an individual burden and personal tragedy. Society, in agreeing to assign medical meaning to disability, colludes to keep the issue within the purview of the medical establishment, to keep it a personal matter and "treat" the condition and the person with the condition rather than "treating" the social processes and policies that constrict disabled people's lives.[17]

The medical model of disability obviously does not apply to the Middle Ages, when medicine had hardly begun to develop into the institution that it is now. Medical knowledge based in universities, monasteries, or folk practices was too decentralized to wield the institutional and discursive power that it has today. Hospices and hospitals were not the sites of medical treatment, so they occupied a very different place in the social structure than they do currently. Above all, the medical model seems inapplicable to this study because medical options for the visually impaired were very limited: cataract removal was a possibility at certain times and places in medieval Europe, but no other treatments resulted in similarly consistent success, as shown in chapter 7.

But the power dynamic whereby the church controlled—or attempted to control—not only medicine but also many other cultural practices bears further examination. Darrel W. Amundsen has both defined medicine as it was practiced in premodern times and discussed its subordinate relationship to the church.

> By "medicine" we mean (1) the substances, mechanisms, and procedures for restoring and preserving health and physical wellness; and (2) those who employed such substances and mechanisms in order to avail themselves of their expertise. So medicine's role has been like that of religion but much more limited: to restore the health of those who were beset by sickness or hampered by disfunction or injury; in some instances to succor those whose health medicine could not restore; and to preserve health through prophylaxis or regimen.[18]

Amundsen goes on to describe the relationship between medicine and religion in "a monolithic society" as one in which medicine is subsumed by religion, since "religion's all-inclusive concern with humanity's well-being provides the exclusive context for medicine's much more limited concern with the well-being of the body."[19] Part of that concern was made manifest through the church's control over discourse related to disability in a manner analogous to the way modern medicine attempts to maintain control over it now. Indeed, if institutionalized religion were substituted for institutionalized medicine in Linton's preceding analysis—if we replaced each use of the adjective *medical* with the adjective *religious*—we would have a rough picture of how the meaning of disability, including blindness, was constructed in much of Europe during the Middle Ages. I have chosen to call this institutionalized medieval construction of disability the *religious model.*

DEFINING THE RELIGIOUS MODEL OF DISABILITY

The church's control of the discursive terrain of illness and disability grew out of New Testament theology. Doctrinally the church's interest in the impaired was based on Jesus's role as miraculous healer and spiritual "physician." His most significant encounter with a blind person is described in John 9.

1. And Jesus passing by, saw a man, who was blind from his birth:
2. And his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind.
3. Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.[20]

With his saliva and dust from the ground Jesus makes clay that he applies to the blind man's eyes, and he tells the man to wash it away at the pool of Siloe. After washing, the man can see. The Jews who learn of this miracle are skeptical that the man had ever been blind (skepticism about impairment that is also typical of medieval Christians, as we will see later); ultimately they turn against the cured man, telling him to become Jesus's disciple. The disciples here allude to the conception of blindness as punishment for sin, which is a pathological condition in Judeo-Christian teaching, but Jesus negates that possibility, only to recast the impairment as a site of deficit ready for divine intervention and miraculous cure. The cure also offers the opportunity to test the faith of the community affected by the miracle. Thus disabled Christians in the Middle Ages who put themselves in the care of Jesus's institutional representative, the church, could hope more optimistically for recovery.

However, another passage from John, this one relating to Jesus's miraculous cure of a man lame for thirty-eight years, problematizes the connection between impairment and true Christian belief. Jesus's words to the formerly lame man were quoted in one of the widely reproduced canons of the influential Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which regularized the practice of confession.

> Since bodily infirmity is sometimes caused by sin, the Lord saying to the sick man whom he had healed: "Go and sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee" (John 5:14), we declare in the present decree and strictly command that when physicians of the body are called to the bedside of the sick, before all else

> they admonish them to call for the physician of souls, so that after spiritual health has been restored to them, the application of bodily medicine may be of greater benefit, for the cause being removed, the effect will pass away.[21]

Here the examination of spiritual health takes precedence over medical intervention as the Fourth Lateran Council tried to circumscribe the practice of medicine within the conventions of Christianity. It is surely not coincidental that this edict came out of the same council that required the annual confession of sins, which may be the restoration of spiritual health to which the passage refers. Confession at least temporarily removes sin, allowing the "effect" of the infirmity to pass away.

Repeatedly in medieval literature, art, and religious teaching, impairment in general and blindness in particular functioned in ways largely structured by Jesus's miracles. The impairment was the site where a saint or holy figure was to prove his or her holiness, and the religious figures were aided in that effort if the person with a impairment claimed to have immutable faith in the curer. Representations of moments of miraculous cure saturated all genres of medieval visual art, and they were also performed frequently in the living art of the drama. Aside from the Bible, such miracles filled what has been called "the only book more widely read than the Bible" in the late Middle Ages, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* or *Golden Legend,* a lengthy compilation of saints' lives and other religious texts written about 1260.[22] Indeed, proof that a potential saint had performed miracles while alive was integral to the canonization process, and paramount among those was the cure of impairments.[23]

Here we begin to see resemblances between the discursive power of religion in the Middle Ages and that of medicine in the modern world. At its most restrictive, medicine tends to view a disability as an absence of full health that requires a cure; similarly, medieval Christianity often constructed disability as a spiritually pathological site of absence of the divine where "the works of God [could] be made manifest." Modern medicine tends to retain discursive control over disability by holding out the possibility of cures through developments in research; medieval Christianity held out the possibility of cure through freedom from sin and increased personal faith, whether that of the person with the disability or a miracle worker nearby. And thus, to some extent in modern medicine and to a greater one in medieval Christianity, there is a tacit implication that somehow the disabled person himself is to blame for resisting a cure. (The religious model of miraculous cure is, of course, still alive and well at Euro-

pean holy sites such as Lourdes and Medjegorje, and in the United States it is exemplified in the faith healing of pentecostal preachers. It has also brought about legal intervention in some cases involving Christian Scientists, who abjure medicine in favor of prayer for cures of illnesses and disabilities.)

The requirement of confession along with myriad exemplary stories of miraculous cures as rewards for the righteous worked together to create the kind of internalized discipline that Michel Foucault has effectively theorized, though as is often the case in his work, he initially located the concept in a period later than the Middle Ages. Thus the church's control over the hope of divine blessing became part of the complex network of cultural practices that made medieval Catholics with disabilities the "docile bodies" that Foucault describes.

> A "political anatomy," which was also a "mechanics of power," . . . defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, "docile" bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude," a "capacity," which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.[24]

The religious model of disability increases the economic utility of people with disabilities by keeping them tied to—and perhaps working for—the church as the possible source of a cure, but it also diminishes the possibility of independent agency by requiring of them the obedience to Christian teaching and clerical instruction that would keep them in the institution's good graces.

In his later writing, Foucault acknowledged the importance of the practice of confession as a form of discipline.

> Christianity is not only a salvation religion, it's a confessional religion. . . . Each person has the duty to know who he [*sic*] is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognize temptations, to locate desires, and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to oth-

> ers in the community and hence to bear public or private witness against oneself.[25]

Such practices as confession shape religious subjects, defining and controlling them through the discipline they have internalized. Because of certain medieval religious practices, confession was, surprisingly, even more necessary for visually impaired people than for the sighted.

The religious model of disability that was operative in the late Middle Ages can also explain the change in attitudes toward disabilities, and particularly blindness, that took place between the classical and Christian eras. There were no clear "models" of disability in Greece and Rome before the advent of Christianity. Martha Rose repeatedly states in her work on disability in the Hellenic world that "the story of blind people in the ancient Greek world is neither glorious nor dismal," and that insufficient evidence survives to draw conclusions that this society espoused the "negative social practices and attitudes toward blindness [that] abound in modern, developed society."[26] Robert Garland, another historian of disability in the classical world, cites the respect with which blind poets were treated, due to the renown of Homer—a stereotype, no doubt, but a relatively positive one nevertheless.[27] In the *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero cites several exemplary blind Romans, some of whom were his contemporaries, and he states, "The soul may have delight in many different ways, even without the use of sight."[28] Because the Graeco-Roman world did not operate under any kind of unified discursive system resembling orthodox Christian teaching, classical history presents an ambiguous picture in its written records about blind people.

Another aspect of the medieval religious model of disability lay in the control that the church retained over some people with disabilities through charity based on both almsgiving to individuals and institutional foundations for groups. According to Stiker, who entitled his chapter on the Middle Ages "The System(s) of Charity," Christian benevolence structured the place of the poor and the disabled in late medieval society. He notes the development of

> [a] system of foundations where, through the intermediary of the church, the generosity of the rich was transformed into the subsistence of the poor, the passage from an economic system based on gifts to a system of exchange. We should add that the ongoing discourse of the Middle Ages claimed that the rich

> assured their salvation by giving alms to the poor and it thus posited the necessity of the poor for such salvation.[29]

The care of the ill and the disabled earned generous gifts and bequests for religious institutions, particularly monasteries and convents. Hospitals founded by kings, lords, merchants, guilds, and municipalities were generally under the control of religious orders, some of which were founded specifically to care for the infirm.[30] Treatises written by and for clerics practicing medicine abjured payment from the poor but encouraged acceptance of payment from the wealthy.[31]

The structure of charity delineated by Stiker plays a part in the religious model of disability, but unlike Stiker, I do not believe that almsgiving was the primary socioreligious system controlling the lives of disabled people. Even if we assume that the majority of people with disabilities needed alms or institutional care, many would have needed neither, and therefore charity would not have constructed their experience of disability. But more importantly, those who wanted to receive the charity discussed by Stiker needed first to internalize the discipline of the doctrines of the church, including penance and perhaps even faith in the possibility of miraculous cure; in other words, they had to become "docile bodies" in the Christian community before they were eligible for its charitable outreach. Therefore the aspects of the religious model described here take precedence over acts of charity: people with disabilities had to make themselves worthy to receive the benevolence of others in order for that benevolence to strengthen the Christian community. Overemphasis on charity also deprives people with disabilities of agency. Some blind people worked in the Middle Ages, and the same would have been true of people with other disabilities; they were not all simply passive recipients of alms.

The religious model of disability neither denies medicine its place in medieval society nor asserts that medieval people always viewed impairment as the result of sin. Metzler has helpfully delineated the ways in which modern historiography rather than medieval attitudes has created the monolithic view that in medieval Europe impairment was inevitably associated with sin.[32] Rather, the religious model as a *discursive* model was the most widely available construction in medieval European culture for recasting impairment as disability. Furthermore, while the medical model may have grown in acceptance in relation to certain kinds of impairments in the later Middle Ages, medicine had very little to offer people with visual impairments.

Hitherto I have not consistently differentiated between blind people

and people with other disabilities. However, within the larger framework sketched here, the blind and visually impaired were victimized in a particular way by an important religious practice of the medieval church—in fact, perhaps its most important practice for lay people. From the twelfth century through the remainder of the Middle Ages, the laity generally partook of the Eucharist through only their sense of sight. In its earliest form, the so-called elevatio involved the priest consecrating the eucharistic bread and then raising it to make it visible to the congregants. The synodal statutes of Paris of 1205–8 mandated that the elevatio take place only after the bread was consecrated, so that the viewers would be looking not at bread but at the actual body of Christ, and the synod instructed priests to be sure to raise the Host high enough for all of the faithful to see it. As the practice became more widespread, the Host was raised higher, with the upward gaze of the congregants symbolically imitating the upward gaze to God himself.[33] According to Eamon Duffy, the elevatio became "the high point of the lay experience of the Mass,"[34] as witnessed not only in written texts but also the visual arts, in which representations of the Host generally show the moment that the priest elevates it. After the Synod of Paris, the practice of elevating the Host spread across Europe within a surprisingly short period of fifteen years,[35] and during the later Middle Ages it "almost completely replac[ed] sacramental communion."[36]

The intensity with which medieval Christians desired to see the Host made itself apparent in a number of ways. William of Auxerre wrote in about 1200, "Many prayers were heard at the sight of the body of the Lord and rich treasures of mercy were granted," an observation echoed by Alexander of Hales within the next decades.[37] Medieval documents record complaints against people walking from church to church to see the Host repeatedly on a single day. Christians under interdict were known to drill holes in the doors of churches in order to catch a glimpse of the elevatio.[38] In some churches in which wooden rood-screens blocked the view of the Host, holes called elevation squints were drilled in the wood at the eye level of kneeling congregants.[39] The fervor to see the Host at least partially contributed to the creation of Corpus Christi Day in 1264, the celebration of which sometimes involved taking the Host out of the church in a public procession.[40] By 1300, the design of *ostensoria,* reliquaries with glass windows through which people could see holy relics, had been adopted in the creation of portable monstrances that would protect the Host while leaving it visible.

The exclusion of blind and visually impaired people from the elevatio made them marginal to an observance that was central to both personal af-

fective piety and Christian community-building, but other beliefs that came to be associated with the practice disadvantaged them further in comparison to the sighted. According to Snoek, people were allowed to derive the spiritual benefits inherent in gazing upon the Host without having to confess their sins, whereas the taking of communion required confession. In other words, " 'communion with the eyes' implied no confession and no danger of receiving communion unworthily."[41] So the spiritual renewal of this common form of quasi communion was unavailable to the visually impaired, leaving them less spiritually elevated in the eyes of the sighted communities around them. Ironically, among the physical blessings that the gaze upon the consecrated Host could grant its viewers was protection for the remainder of the day from, among other inflictions, blindness.[42] Such an assurance appears in the early fifteenth-century *Instructions for Parish Priests* by John Mirk, who says that Saint Augustine teaches that those who see the Host will be protected from a remarkable range of ills: they will have sufficient meat and drink, their idle words and oaths will be forgiven by God, they will not fall prey to sudden death, and they will not go blind. ("Also þat day I the ply3te / þow schalt not lese þyn ye-sy3te.")[43] This belief highlights the circularity of the sacred power of seeing the Eucharist: those who see it will be blessed with the continuing ability to see it, at least for a day, while those who physically cannot see it are deprived of access to its beneficent power to help them see.

Texts from both sides of the Channel attest to the significance of the elevatio and connect visual impairment to it. According to an anonymous Middle English chronicle written by a London author in the late 1460s,[44] a locksmith who had helped a Lollard steal the Eucharist later went to Mass to pray for forgiveness, where he was unable to see the Host any of the times that it should have been visible: "whenn the pryste hylde uppe that hooly sacrament at the tyme of levacyon he myght se nothynge of that blessyd body of Cryste at noo tyme of the masse, not so moche at Agnus Dei." Doubting his own sanity, the man drank an entire hob of ale, attended three more masses, and experienced similar selective blindness. Then he and his accomplices were arrested, thrown in Newgate, and sentenced to death. On the day of his execution the locksmith confessed his sins and again went to mass, where now he could "see that blessyd sacrament well inowe."[45] The chronicler closes the story by saying of the condemned men that he "truste[d] that hyr soulys ben savyd." The text thus equates sinfulness with the inability to see the elevation of the Host, and spiritual rectitude with restored vision.

The locksmith's relief at his reentry into the Christian fold hours before his death must have been akin to the relief of fourteenth-century French poet Gilles le Muisit (whose work will be discussed in chapter 7) when he reentered the community of the sighted after having his cataracts removed. In a poem thanking the Virgin Mary for the miracle of his restored vision, he mentions specifically his joy in being able to see the Savior at the altar, almost certainly a reference to the elevatio ("Je voy me Sauveur al autel vrayement").[46] The cataract removal not only allowed Gilles to participate fully in this spiritual moment, but it also allowed him to rejoin the community of congregants, like the repentant English thief. Although we would call the removal of cataracts a medical procedure, for Gilles it is a miracle that exemplifies the religious model of disability.

A miracle in Jean Gobi's *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine,* written in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, shows that a blind person contemplating the elevation of the Host with the eyes of the spirit understands that his experience is inferior to seeing it with the eyes of the flesh. A Genoese man named Jacques, imprisoned by his enemies for more than seven years, became blind because of the harsh conditions of his imprisonment and the loss of blood due to the wounds inflicted on him during the ordeal. After his release, he goes to a church dedicated to Mary Magdalene in Genoa, where a priest celebrating the mass elevates the Host. Ardently venerating the Eucharist and weeping abundantly, Jacques says to Christ that he sees the savior's body with the eyes of his faithful spirit and recognizes him in the sacrament, but he also prays that Christ perform a miracle so that he can contemplate the sacrament with the eyes of his flesh. Jacques then miraculously recovers his sight.[47] The structure of this miracle strongly suggests that the elevation of the Host is experienced most intensely by the sighted. It is also significant that Jacques prays to have his vision restored specifically in order to see the Host, not necessarily in order to take part in other activities of sighted people, indicating that visual contemplation of the Host is the best possible use of physical sight.[48]

Yet another prayer from a blind man asking specifically to see the elevation of the Host is documented in *The Life and Gests of S. Thomas Cantilupe,* a bishop of Hereford who died in 1282 and was canonized in 1320. Richard Strange, who wrote the hagiography in the early 1670s, says that a man who had in his youth been a menial servant to Thomas lost his sight after the saint's canonization and remained "stark blind" for three years.[49] He prays to the Virgin "to obtayne of Alm[ighty] God a cure of his misery and restorement of his sight that he might againe to his comfort behold her

Sonn in the Consecrated Host, while it is elevated for all to adore." He sends a "measure" of himself (presumably his height) along with two wax eyes to Hambledon, Lincolnshire, where the saint was born and christened. Over the course of ten days his vision improves to the point that he no longer needs a guide, and he "could discerne, as he desyrd, the eleuated Host at a competent distance."[50]

In all of these exempla blindness, practically by necessity, functions both literally and metaphorically. Although Naomi Schor's article "Blindness as Metaphor" focuses on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, she offers more generalized ideas about why the impairment is such a powerful metaphor, quoting from nineteenth-century rhetorician Pierre Fontanier's *Les Figures de Discours* (1821–30).

> Blindness must have at first referred only to the deprivation of the sense of sight; but he who does not clearly distinguish ideas and their relationships; he whose reason is disturbed, obscured, does he not slightly resemble the blind man who does not perceive physical objects? The word blindness came naturally to hand to also express this deprivation of moral sight.[51]

Schor follows Fontanier's lead in labeling the metaphor of blindness a catachresis:

> What makes some of these metaphors so difficult to extirpate is that these metaphors are catachreses, that is, they belong to that peculiar and little understood category of figures that signifies (at least in French, for there are interesting divergences between English and French definitions of this figure) a necessary trope, and obligatory metaphor to which language offers no alternative, e.g. the leg of a table, the arm of a windmill.

Animating the idea of metaphor, Schor goes on to say that "metaphors, by their very nature, strive toward catachresis," and she adds that Paul de Man used the terms *trope* and *catachresis* interchangeably.[52]

Schor's perceptions undergird my idea of blindness in the religious model of disability. While the uses of blindness as a metaphor varied in medieval discourse as a whole, within religious discourse of the period blindness reached the status of a catachresis. Since religious discourse was a critical sociocultural determinant of the mores of medieval Europe, how did medieval people separate their perceptions of the impairment from the catachrestic meaning of the impairment as "deprivation of moral sight," to

quote Fontanier? This catachrestic synergy is nowhere more evident in Christian discourse than in the use of blindness as an epithet applied to Jews for refusing to "see" the divinity of Jesus. The metaphorical association of blind people with Jews, which resulted in remarkably similar stereotyping and marginalization for both groups, will be the subject of chapter 3.

Medieval Christian discourse included a few relatively isolated metaphorical constructions of blindness as advantageous, which is perhaps not surprising given the dominant belief that the body was essentially tainted with sin. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that a man who looks on a woman with lust has committed adultery in his heart, and therefore, "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29).[53] Inasmuch as such self-mutilation is easiest to undertake figuratively, metaphorical self-blinding in order to avoid gazing upon temptation appears in some religious texts. For example, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse,* a conduct book for anchoresses, advises the women to be "blind to the outside world."[54] However, metaphors of blindness with negative connotations are almost exclusively the norm.

The issues discussed in relation to the religious model that I am espousing show the complexity of the power structure between the church and people with impairments. The church needed people with impairments for reasons of both earthly economy, manifested in the creation of foundations and institutions, and the economy of charity and salvation of individual Christians who gave alms to disabled beggars, a practice that Stiker rightly calls a "system of exchange." Like all medieval Christians, people with impairments relied on the church to give them both an earthly community structure that would sometimes offer aid, and the hope of a spiritual community after death. People with impairments would also have had a special attraction to the church because of its discourse of miraculous cure, even though some of the church's practices were actively discriminatory against people with impairments, especially blind people.

THE SOCIAL MODEL AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF STIGMATIZATION: BLINDNESS AND BLINDING

The religious model described here overlapped with the social model of disability in medieval Europe, but in the social environment, additional practices structured the disability of blindness.

The implication that an "uncured" disability somehow represents shameful incompleteness is an important aspect of what sociologist Erving Goffman called "stigmatization" in his influential book *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity,* which is frequently cited by theorists of disability. Goffman traces the term to the branding or scarring that identified Greek slaves, and he adds that in the Christian era it referred to "bodily signs of physical disorder." He continues, "Today, the term is widely used in something like the original literal sense, but is applied more to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it. Furthermore, shifts have occurred in the kinds of disgrace that arouse concern."[55] Goffman wrote decades before the constructionist model of disability was delineated, but his ideas here closely resemble it: the "disgrace" that attaches itself to a stigma is more powerful than the bodily evidence that gives rise to the stigma. In other words, the disgrace constructs the disability, regardless of the impairment, and the kind of disgrace caused by particular "bodily evidence" changes over time, as do the disabilities relating to a particular impairment.

If we apply Goffman's ideas to the Christian Middle Ages, we can see that the church created a complex set of attitudes toward people with disabilities that resulted in a kind of stigmatization. The religious stigmatization of blindness represents a unique subset of the attitudes that constructed disability more broadly. However, the stigma associated with spiritual "incompleteness" or sinfulness of blind people was not limited to religious discourse alone; in France, England, and elsewhere in Europe, disability could be read as a sign of sociopolitical sinfulness, which is to say criminality. Physical mutilation as punishment, which will be discussed at length in chapter 2, would have seriously complicated the social meaning of several disabilities, particularly among the Normans and the French. At certain times and places in medieval Europe, people must have questioned the type of stigma that certain disabilities represented. Was a man without a hand born that way, or did he lose it in an accident, or did he lose it as punishment for theft? Was a blind person's impairment caused by God for spiritual reasons or by the king for criminal ones?

The intermittent use of blinding as punishment would have kept such questions alive until well into the Renaissance, particularly on the Continent. Mutilation as punishment situated blindness in the Middle Ages ambiguously between the bodily marks of shame suffered by Greek slaves and Goffman's modern concept of stigma, due to the possibility that the disability might have been a governmentally created stigma, a marked sign of

a literal judgment of criminal activity rather than a unmarked impairment. In a very real way, blinding as punishment criminalizes the impairment of blindness, thus constructing a kind of disability that has disappeared, we hope, from the world today.

Marxist disability theorist Bill Armer draws a connection between crime and disability in contemporary Western culture that is useful to my analysis of blindness in the Middle Ages: "I suggest that disabled people are socially dislocated. I derive 'dislocation' from criminology, where it has been used to refer to both [the] physical and psychological distance from home of prisoners."[56] Armer goes on to discuss the incarceration of both prisoners in jails and disabled people in institutions. In medieval literature and culture we frequently see blind people and characters in such situations of "dislocation," at the margins of society where social relations are ill-defined and ambiguous and where marginalized people tend to be viewed suspiciously. Characteristics that would naturally have been associated with morally suspect blinded criminals came to be broadly applied to visually impaired people generally, adding to the sense of social dislocation. A set of stereotypes of blind people as drunks, moral reprobates, and thieves developed during the Middle Ages, especially in France, and this stereotyping became widespread in the fourteenth century. Of this era Stiker writes,

> We may distinguish two kinds of marginality: that which challenges the social order and that, much deeper, which calls into question the organization of culture and ideology. To the former belong the robbers and rovers, to the second, the disabled or foreigners. But these two kinds of marginality are often rather confused in the general mind. Distrust, often amounting to slander, was leveled on the disabled and the ill.[57]

The practice of punitive blinding further confuses the two kinds of marginality that Stiker describes. Slanderous distrust of the disabled is represented in numerous texts discussed later, including the thirteenth-century farce *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle.* In a historical example of a putative well-poisoning episode in Chartres in 1390, it was considered material evidence that one of the four suspects had spent some days in the company of a blind man.[58]

I am not implying that the practice of blinding as punishment somehow contributed to the increasing social recognition of blind people in medieval culture; obviously, blinded criminals would have been shunned so long as they remained in locations where their criminal past was known.

However, the preponderance of literary, religious, and historical texts involving blind people, especially on the Continent, shows that in the later Middle Ages, they attracted attention as a type and were more visible in society, so the use of blinding as punishment during these centuries would certainly have influenced that attention unfavorably. This mutilation, while ostensibly undertaken for political aims, literalizes the catachrestic notion of blindness as "deprivation of moral sight" by enacting it upon the bodies of criminals as the deprivation of sensory sight, and that catachresis is central to the religious model of disability discussed earlier. So here the religious model and the social model of disability work synergistically to create a unique kind of stumbling block that no longer exists.

The distrust of blind people intersects with a common medieval anxiety about beggars who feign disability. Here we are clearly not talking about people with visual—or any other—impairment, and yet this type loomed so large in the medieval imagination that it affected the treatment of the genuinely visually impaired. (This type, too, has a biblical precedent: in the miraculous cure of the blind man in John 9, quoted earlier, the Jews respond to the miracle by asserting that the cured man had never been blind [John 9:18].) Politically, the fear of beggars feigning disabilities resulted in a number of laws limiting their movements to specified areas, either the places where they were born or areas in which they were licensed;[59] such measures kept them in a community that knew whether they were actually disabled. The effect of anxiety about feigned beggars also resulted in the marking of people who were truly visually impaired. Some wore badges that identified them as residents of particular institutions, and others wore emblems that served as recognizable licenses to beg.[60] Aside from the legal and institutional documentation of the creation of insignias for beggars, varied textual evidence about feigned disabilities among beggars comes from both France and England. In a satirical ballad from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, "De Cahymans et de Coquins" ("Of Beggars and Vagabonds"), Eustache Deschamps complains of people in church who "faignent maulx et en mainte guise" ("feign illness in many ways") and who beg so loudly that the mass can hardly be heard; they make themselves up using blood and herbs.[61] Other texts that raise the issue of feigned disability include *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne,* the plot of which is set in motion by a clerk who tests whether three men are pretending to be blind, and William Langland's *Piers Plowman,* in which the allegorical figure of Hunger miraculously "cures" beggars feigning blindness when the Black Death renders begging useless.

Blind people must have found themselves frequently accused of feigning, because, as Georgina Kleege states in her memoir *Sight Unseen,* sighted people tend to assume that people labeled "blind" cannot see anything at all. According to Kleege, among modern Americans who are designated "legally blind," only about 10 percent have "a complete absence of any visual experience."[62] Kleege recounts experiences of people who "object" that she is not *really* blind because she can read if she wears thick glasses and holds printed matter an inch from her eyes. So in both the medieval and the modern world, the sighted find it unsettling to learn that their appraisal of the blind is incorrect and that they have partial vision. In a largely preclinical period like the Middle Ages in which percentages of sightedness were not measurable, a person who was seriously visually impaired but not totally sightless could thus raise suspicions of feigning, as the three blind men in *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne* do. Furthermore, in France the most common begging cry of blind people claimed that they saw nothing at all ("ne voir goutte"), so visually impaired people with some sight were basically required by linguistic convention to lie when they used this expression.

These constructions and stereotypes of blindness were not all equally operative in England and France from the late eleventh through the fifteenth centuries. To quote Stiker, "The era of medieval Christianity never found an entirely stable position, nor an effective praxis to address disability,"[63] and this generalization holds true even for countries with histories as intertwined as England and France. However, these constructions were woven together through such a complex set of beliefs and practices that none could be fully operative without one or more of the others: the religious model of disability that I have formulated made its power felt in the social perceptions of blind people, though those perceptions might also have grown out of other practices. I hope I have demonstrated why I cannot agree with Stiker when he says that the medieval social model of disability at its most benign is "without ideology";[64] rather, it seems to me that ideologies were so thoroughly internalized in medieval Christian society that they became utterly normative. Many of the stumbling blocks before blind people in the Middle Ages were probably invisible to the sighted.

The changing institutional and cultural practices in medieval Europe, especially France, marked blindness as a special disability in a number of ways: through the creation of the first institutions specifically for the blind; through the use of blinding as punishment; and, across Europe, through the privileging of sight in the practice of the elevation of the Host. Zina Weygand sees the creation of residential institutions, the first of which ap-

peared in the Middle Ages, as giving the residents "an identity as a social group" ("une identité en tant que groupe social"),[65] but beyond wearing the visible insignia of their institution, they shared with other blind people the sign of the disability, which could be read in a number of ways. In her history of disability in medieval Europe, Irina Metzler is rightly reticent in deploying the term *identity* in relation to disabled people as a whole, not least because no overarching terms such as *disabled* or *handicapped* existed in European languages; however, terms for different disabilities were in common use,[66] and *blind* and its cognates as signifiers took on added meaning during the Middle Ages, allowing us to see the beginnings of group identity.

DISABILITY THEORY AND LITERATURE: NARRATIVE PROSTHESIS AND GROTESQUE EXCESS

While historical and cultural contexts as read through the lens of disability theory are paramount in understanding any medieval text about blindness, a recent attempt to create a literary theory relating to disability will also be helpful to this discussion. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* examines the use of disability as an aspect of characterization in literature from the Renaissance through the twentieth century. As is true of disability theory generally, their ideas are closely tied to the period covered by their study, and they focus exclusively on physical disability; however, with some modification their ideas can be fruitfully applied to medieval literature.

Mitchell and Snyder base the metaphor of narrative prosthesis on the function served by an actual prosthesis.

> In a literal sense a prosthesis seeks to accomplish an illusion. A body deemed lacking, unfunctional, or inappropriately functional needs compensation, and prosthesis helps to effect this end. . . . If disability falls too far from an acceptable norm, a prosthetic intervention seeks to accomplish an erasure of difference all together [*sic*]; yet, failing that, as is always the case with prosthesis, the minimal goal is to return to an acceptable degree of difference.[67]

According to these writers, narrative prosthesis accomplishes an analogous type of illusion that serves to alleviate readers' anxieties about disability.

> While an actual prosthesis is always somewhat discomforting, a textual prosthesis alleviates discomfort by removing the unsightly from view. . . . The era-

> sure of disability via a "quick fix" of an impaired physicality or intellect removes an audience's need for concern or continuing vigilance. . . . Narrative prosthesis is first and foremost about the ways in which the ruse of prosthesis fails in its primary objective: to return the incomplete body to the invisible status of a normative essence.[68]

This passage echoes a number of concepts mentioned earlier. In medieval representations of blindness, the most common "quick fix" whereby impairment is removed is, of course, the miraculous cure. But Mitchell and Snyder go on to say that, ironically, the texts in their analysis that attempt narrative prosthesis "expose, rather than conceal, the prosthetic relation," because disability "refuse[s] its desired cultural return to the land of the normative."[69] This assertion is not fully applicable to much of the medieval literature that I will discuss here, for reasons that have already been implied. Many of the short, exemplary texts featuring characters with disabilities do not engage in what modern readers would call "characterization" of them; they remain flat and emblematic, the site where God's work can be made manifest. And when confronting these texts the reader has no choice but to think that miraculously cured characters "return to the land of the normative," because the texts do not follow them long enough to show slippages in the characterization or role in the narrative.

Mitchell and Snyder provide a schema for the narratological structure of the deployment of disability in literature in their second chapter, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor."

> A simple schematic of narrative structure might run thus: first, a deviance or marked difference is exposed to the reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative consequences; third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story rehabilitates or fixes the deviance in some manner. This fourth step of the repair of deviance may involve an obliteration of the difference through a "cure," the rescue of the despised object from social censure, the extermination of the deviant as purification of the social body, or the revaluation of an alternative mode of being.[70]

Here Mitchell and Snyder are clearly discussing narrative structure that relies largely on psychological characterization, but the medieval paradigm for narrative structure, especially in relation to blindness, is generally dif-

ferent. Rarely do authors sketch a disability's "origins and formative consequences"; rather, they seem to assume that disability simply exists, and in that sense they anticipate one aspect of the social model. But while in some instances this assumption might seem benign and integrationist, it is often undergirded by some version of the religious model whereby punishment for sin is implied.

Mitchell and Snyder's third point about the trajectory of the disability from the periphery of the narrative to the center is problematic in this study partly because of some medieval narrative conventions, but largely because among disabilities in narratives, blindness tends to become central as soon as it is introduced. Sensory disabilities may have a greater hold on the human psyche than physical disabilities because, rightly or wrongly, people tend to think that they understand the nature of the former.

Blindness as represented in medieval texts has a uniquely medieval way of remaining central: when blind characters play actual roles in plots rather than simply symbolizing their disability, medieval writers often created situations in which blind people were called upon to "perform" their disability. In some works (e.g., *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle, Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne* and its variants), blind characters fulfill their roles in the plot by enacting physical awkwardness and/or some of the stereotypes of misrule that were associated with them. This enactment was evidently considered particularly effective in comic drama, in which actors playing blind characters presumably used a broad, slapstick style of acting in order to amuse audiences. This performance of disability relates to what sociologist Rod Michalko has called "a staging of the self," which he characterizes as "a disciplinary practice of the body."[71] Of course the degree to which a person "stages" or "performs" a disability relies on the presence of an audience, and evidently audiences tended to be both more interested in disability and more cruel toward it on the Continent than in England (as exemplified in the "game" of the blind men beating the pig to death).

What is striking about the options that Mitchell and Snyder list in their fourth step is that "the extermination of the deviant as the purification of the social body" almost never occurs in medieval literature. In both England and France, plots involving blind people tended to end in either vilification, without expulsion from the social body, or miraculous cure. The tendency to favor these two endings bespeaks the complex medieval attitude that kept blind people at the social periphery but also required their presence there in order to define the normative. This medieval phenomenon is discussed in chapter 3.

Another concept equally useful in understanding representations of the blind is complementary to narrative prosthesis. Some historical anxieties about blind people mentioned earlier made them the marginalized unruly "others," bringers of disorder, and potential (or past) criminals. This stereotype appears in Jesus's miraculous cure of a blind man in Luke: when the man hears that Jesus is about to pass by, "he cried out, saying: Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me" (Luke 18:38–39). The relatively benign raucous beggar who refuses to be silenced anticipates more malignant medieval literary representations of blind characters who frequently exemplify the vices listed by Zina Weygand: "laziness, foolishness, vanity, hypocrisy, drunkenness, a passion for gambling, lechery."[72] As chapter 3 demonstrates, blind characters share some of these stereotypes with Jews, and so I have borrowed from a discussion of representations of Jews the concept of the "trope of grotesque excess,"[73] a phrase first used by Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler. This phrase obviously traces its genealogy to Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*,[74] but it implies less extreme forms of grotesquerie than the deeply satirical, extravagant types exemplified in the work of Rabelais. It takes very little imagination to see how the performance of the pig-beating game would have exemplified this trope all too well: extravagant, misdirected blows with clubs; human shouting mingled with animalistic noise of the pig; and then the transgressions of bodily boundaries as the participants injured and drew blood from each other. Rabelaisian grotesquerie also raises the possibility of the temporary carnivalesque inversion of the social order, but the grotesque excess of blind characters is usually too delimited and powerless to pretend to significant social inversion; rather, it is simply meant to disgust and alienate its audience, justifying the marginalization of the blind but not entirely removing them from the realm of the recognizably human. And of course the imbalance of power in the relationship between the sighted and the blind here is reinforced by the fact that the sighted are using on the blind the very ability that the latter group does not have and that has put them in the position to stage their disability.

The term *excess* is useful because it intersects with Mitchell and Snyder's notion of narrative prosthesis at a metaphorical level. A prosthesis is always an addition to the body, an excess. The grotesqueness of blind characters in medieval literature is excessive in the sense that it is meant to be seen and derided by sighted characters (and/or the audience). In literature, when the grotesqueness has reached a level arbitrarily deemed sufficient by the au-

thor, he dispenses with it; he tacitly acknowledges its excess by showing its prosthetic function. Mitchell and Snyder state that in modern literature the disability in narrative is generally "rehabilitated" or "fixed"; in some medieval literature (notably among French works), it is narratively sufficient that the disability of blindness simply be *proven* by being "staged," often with some type of excess. At that point the onlookers "fix" the situation, if we can use that term, by simply walking away and leaving the blind character fixed in the social margins where he has proven that he belongs. And although the margins are important for helping to define the center, they, too, are always already excessive.

CHAPTER 2

Leading the Blind: France versus England

While blind people across Europe shared certain experiences because of their disability, there were also substantial differences in its construction from country to country. Such differences separated France and England in spite of their intertwined history in the Middle Ages. This divergence is apparent in the lexicon for visual impairment in each country's language.

Through the early Middle Ages, the most common French words denoting blindness, the noun *cecité* and the adjective *cecus,* which was often used substantively to represent a blind person, were derived from the Latin *caecitas* and *caecus.*[1] The twelfth-century *Vie de Saint Alexis* contains the earliest extant written appearance of the adjective *aveugle,* derived from the Latin *ab oculis,* "deprived of or without eyes." I believe that this etymology is deeply significant because of the use of blinding as punishment in that century, which will be discussed later. In their etymological dictionary Bloch and von Wartburg speculate that *aveugle* must have reached popular French through medical Latin ("D'une locution *ab oculis,* propr. "privé d'yeux," qui a dû être créée dans le latin médical et pénétrer dans la langue commune").[2] This hypothesis seems unlikely: even the least perceptive, least analytical medical observers of blindness would have distinguished between non- or malfunctioning eyes and the complete absence thereof. Indeed, as shown in chapter 7, medical discourse about blindness described blind eyes in detail in the hope of understanding the causes of the impairment. Given the synchronism of the appearance of the word *aveugle* and the use of blinding as punishment in the eleventh century, it seems more plausible that the word would have entered the language through legal rather than medical Latin, where it would have very precisely described the condi-

tion of those who underwent this terrible mutilation. Furthermore, it is significant that the earliest appearances of the word are in a poem written within sixty years of the Norman Conquest. The oldest extant copy of the *Vie de Saint Alexis* is generally agreed to be in the Saint Albans Psalter, probably commissioned by Christina of Markyate and completed around 1123 (though the poem may have circulated earlier).[3] Given the surviving records of the Norman use of blinding as punishment soon after the Conquest, the word may have gained some currency around this time.

The entrance of *aveugle* into French as an adjective resulted in a confusing variety of nominal forms for the impairment as it came into common usage: Godefroy lists *aveuglerie, aveuglesse, aveugleté, aveugleur, aveuglissement,* and *aveugloison* as nouns that were used in the Middle Ages,[4] though *aveuglement,* the most common form, became the accepted term for blindness. However, the word *aveuglement* in both its medieval and modern forms is interestingly ambiguous, since it can mean both "blindness" and "the act of blinding," and thus for medieval speakers the word could have suggested the possibility of juridical violence even when it was used to describe a purely natural condition. And given the use of this punishment, the verbs *aveuglir* and *aveuglier* also entered the language at the time of the *Vie de Saint Alexis.*

Furthermore, a synonymous but less popular verb for "to blind," *essorber* or *assorber,* appears in Anglo-Norman in roughly 1121, very nearly the date of the composition of *La Vie de Saint Alexis.* According to Godefroy, its earliest extant use is in *La Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr* by Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, where Saint Thomas à Becket is arguing with King Henry II about appropriate punishments for lawbreaking clerics. Thomas, who favors the use of canon law rather than the king's law in such instances, says that first the miscreant clerics should be defrocked, and then if they break the law again, they can be blinded, flayed, or hanged, according to the king's will: "E se puis resunt pris, dunc seient essorbé / Escorchié u pendu, a vostre volonte."[5] So not only was blinding culturally significant enough to merit more than one term for the practice, but also it was so unquestioningly accepted that it could be recommended by a saint.

By contrast, the Middle English lexicon relating to visual impairment is impoverished if less ambiguous. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* the first written witnesses of the noun *blindness* and the adjective *blind,* both Teutonic in origin, date from about 1000.[6] The *Middle English Dictionary* cites the earliest uses of both *blind* and *blindnesse* in the Homilies in Bodleian MS 343, ca. 1175.[7] The earliest extant witness of the verb

blinden in the *Ancrene Wisse,* ca. 1250, deploys it in a figurative, spiritual sense.[8] In light of the relative scarcity of blinding as punishment in England, it is telling that the first surviving use of the verb to represent literal, physical blinding around 1325, is in the long religious poem *Cursor Mundi* in the story of Samson;[9] this is more than two centuries after the verb first appeared in Old French. Otherwise, unlike French with its Latinate *cecité* and somewhat more vernacular *aveuglement,* Middle English has no precise synonym for the noun *blindness.* (While the rather awkward modern English double compound *sightlessness* is roughly synonymous, it did not enter the language until 1847 and has different connotations.)

As these differing linguistic constructions imply, cultural practices and institutions constructed blindness differently on the two sides of the Channel, and two of the most important of these are the use of blinding as punishment and the foundation of hospices specifically for blind residents.

BLINDING AS PUNISHMENT

Blinding as a punishment in Western Europe was first documented in Rome in 303 when the emperor Diocletian began using it to punish Christians; Constantine the Great called a halt to the practice.[10] In Constantinople the punishment was first recorded in 705. It was generally enacted upon "those found guilty of high treason, those practicing oracular arts, captives, . . . whoever belonged to the vanquished side in religious controversies . . . [and] conspirators, insurgents, and above all, leaders of revolts against Byzantine emperors, or further those suspected of such a crime."[11] The punishment was carried out by destroying the eyes, often with fire, or by pulling them out.[12] Likewise, in early medieval western Europe, the penalty of blinding was generally meted out by rulers. Geneviève Bührer-Thierry has shown that any such ruler "acted within a clearly determined framework: if not a law code, at least a system of references and ideas that recognized his monopoly on this particular form of violence."[13]

Blinding as punishment was evidently very rare in Anglo-Saxon England, and extant records indicate that it was used by kings against powerful political enemies. For example, in his chronicle Simeon of Durham states that in 798 Cenwulf, king of the Mercians, invaded Kent, captured the Kentish king Eadberht, and ordered that his eyes be put out and his hands cut off.[14] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* states that in 993, King Æthelred the Unready "had Ælfgar, son of Ealdorman Ælfric, blinded,"[15] and in 1006 he ordered the same punishment for Wulfheah and Ufegeat.[16] Before 1066,

only under the early eleventh-century king Cnut is blinding mentioned as punishment in Anglo-Saxon law. There it is listed as one of many possible mutilations for a criminal's second conviction via the so-called three-fold ordeal; blinding was reserved for criminals who had committed multiple crimes, and it was to be used only after the criminal's "hands, feet, or both, in proportion to the deed, are . . . cut off."[17] And after these mutilations, blinding was only one of several options for punishment that included cutting off the criminal's nose, ears, and upper lip. The goal of these punishments was to avoid killing the criminal, thus "preserv[ing] the soul."[18] For the purposes of my argument it is significant that this law was enacted not under a native English king, but under a foreigner: Cnut was Danish.[19] I have seen no documentation suggesting that this punishment was ever actually enacted.

The death of Cnut in 1035 and the subsequent struggle for power resulted in a famous instance of blinding recorded in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Alfred, the son of King Æthelred and Emma, who later married Cnut, wanted to visit his mother at Winchester. Allies of Cnut's sons, notably Earl Godwine, intervened, variously slaying, selling, and blinding Alfred's men, and then blinding Alfred himself and delivering him to the monks of Ely. He remained there for the rest of his life, and the precision with which the chronicler locates Alfred's burial place within the cathedral (the south aisle of the west transept, near the steeple) all but recommends it as a worthy pilgrimage site.[20]

While it is difficult to extrapolate from such a small number of instances of blinding as punishment, there is some consistency among them. Those who were blinded were all nobles or men closely associated with nobles who were the political enemies of the rulers who ordered the blinding. Three of the blindings take place under King Æthelred the Unready, whom the *Chronicle* generally represents as a weak, unwise ruler. The chronicler also mourns the blinding of Alfred and his men as one of the most terrible events ever to take place on English soil. If we were to generalize from these scant historical records, we might say that blinding as punishment was kept close to the court, where it was a fairly direct representation of what Bührer-Thierry calls the ruler's "monopoly on this particular form of violence." Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe rightly asserts that the mutilated bodies of these people "became texts of their behaviour and its lawful consequences"[21] (when the king controls the law), and this observation is particularly applicable to mutilated men whose tongues are left intact and who can speak of the royal power enacted on them.

Regardless of how the evidence of blinding in Anglo-Saxon England is understood, the real significance of these incidents lies in their paucity. Even if we take into account the fact that only a small fraction of Anglo-Saxon writings have survived, and if we assume that records relating to the aristocracy and royalty will be more plentiful than those relating to other classes, chronicle literature about England before the Norman Conquest contains surprisingly few mentions of blinding. Pollock and Maitland, in their authoritative *History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I,* listed a number of forms of mutilation used as punishment in pre-Conquest England ("loss of ears, nose, upper lip, hands, feet," as well as castration),[22] but blinding is significantly absent from their list.

Blinding as punishment is recorded far more frequently in England after 1066 and during the period of Norman control of England. As the Normans exercised their power over the newly acquired territory, William the Conqueror and his successors blinded their enemies repeatedly. In 1068, the citizens of Exeter mounted an unsuccessful campaign of resistance against William when he visited the city, and to reassert his power, he blinded one of the rebels in a public display.[23] In 1075 William punished the Breton allies of the half-Breton Ralph Guader, Earl of Norfolk, who led an attempt to overthrow him; in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* this mass punishment earned a mnemonic verse at the end of the entry for the year: "Some of them were blinded, /And some banished from the land /And some were put to shame. Thus were the traitors to the king brought low.[24] Pollock and Maitland quote a statute of William the Conqueror that states, "Interdicto etiam ne quis occidatur aut suspendatur pro aliqua culpa, sed eruantur oculi, et testiculi abscidantur" (It is forbidden that anyone be killed or hanged for any crime, but his eyes may be pulled out and his testicles cut off).[25] According to *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* William made poaching a crime punishable by blinding.

> He made great protection for the game
> And imposed laws for the same
> That those who slew hart or hind
> Should be made blind.[26]

Before the end of the eleventh century, other Norman leaders began to use blinding as punishment to solidify their power. For example, in 1087, citizens of Canterbury joined the monks of St. Augustine's Abbey in opposing the installation of a Norman abbot; these members of the laity were blinded by order of the Archbishop Lanfranc.[27]

In *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry,* David Bernstein argues that blinding as punishment was well enough known among the Normans that it could be used symbolically in art, specifically in the most famous representation of the Norman Conquest. He points out that the earliest datable chronicles (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* and those by William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers) do not mention how King Harold died at the Battle of Hastings, though the tapestry's representation of Harold shot in the eye with an arrow has come to be accepted as "truth." According to Bernstein, the blinding of Harold should be read as a result of his having been crowned king after Edward the Confessor's death, thus breaking an oath to help William the Conqueror to the English throne. But as Bernstein also indicates, Harold's death is not caused by the hand of God (which could have been depicted in the tapestry); the killing was at the hand of man. In describing the meaning of blinding in the centuries around the Conquest and constructing a symbolic reading of the blinding of Harold, Bernstein cites texts and visual representations that deploy blinding as punishment; they lead him to the conclusion that "from the perspective of the native English and those who identified with their experiences since 1066, blinding was almost synonymous with Norman law enforcement."[28]

Blinding as punishment continued in England under the Norman rulers of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. William the Conqueror's son, William II, ordered the blinding and castration of William of Eu in 1095 after his public conviction of treason.[29] In 1124 the Norman Henry I blinded three noblemen in spite of the protests of Charles, marquis of Flanders, who accused the king of "doing something contrary to our custom in punishing by mutilation knights captured in war in the service of their lord." Henry responded by saying that their misplaced loyalty constituted treason, and "therefore they deserve[d] punishment by death or mutilation."[30] One of the captured men, Luke de la Barre, who had been accused of spreading scurrilous songs and jests about the king, "chose rather to die wretchedly than to live without light"; when the king's officers were trying to pinion him, he dashed his head against a wall and died.[31] Suger of St. Denis wrote that Henry had such a strong fear of being murdered that he employed a large group of guards, but when one of them was discovered to be plotting against the king, he "mercifully" ("misericorditer") ordered the guard blinded and emasculated.[32]

The Normans also took the practice of blinding as punishment with them while exercising colonial rule elsewhere. In Sicily in the mid-twelfth

century William I gained a reputation for ruthless tyranny that was chronicled by his detractor Hugo Falcandus in *Historia de rebus gestis in Siciliae rego.* In 1156 or 1157, a group of nobles that had turned against William sought refuge with a certain Matthew Bonellus. After a great deal of negotiation, the king and Bonellus agreed to allow the nobles to seek exile in royally sponsored ships, and the king also said he would "take Matthew . . . back into his friendship."[33] However, a noble counselor persuaded the king that Bonellus was likely to become a traitor, so he was arrested as he approached the palace. According to Hugo, "Matthew Bonellus's eyes were gouged out and he was hamstrung. He was utterly removed from the sight of the sun and thrust into a frightful dungeon, wrapped forever in the darkness both of his own sightlessness and that of the place. His cousin Matthew of Santa Lucia and his seneschal John the Roman were blinded and assigned to separate dungeons."[34] When the German emperor Henry VI conquered Sicily in 1197, he ordered that his rival for the throne, William III, be blinded and castrated, a punishment that is recorded in both an English and an Italian source. Van Eickels asserts that the event's absence from German chronicles was due to German disbelief that their emperor was capable of "so strange a punishment,"[35] but perhaps he knew of its recent application on Sicilian soil by the Norman colonizers. The Normans may also have introduced the double punishment of blinding and castration to Ireland, where records of the practice appear from 1194.[36]

Blinding as punishment also appears in Anglo-Norman literature in the *Fables* of Marie de France, probably written in England roughly a century after the Conquest. In Fable 23, "The Bat," Marie writes of that animal's indecision about which troop to join in the upcoming battle between the birds and the quadrupeds. Initially he decides to side with the animals because they appear to be more numerous, but he changes his mind when he sees the assembled birds. He then attempts to join them, but the animals see his feet and cry out to the Creator, who curses him by taking away his eyesight ("Tut clarte li ad tolue")[37] and depriving him of his feathers. Marie then uses the moral of the fable to discuss the nature and proper treatment of traitors.

Autresi est del traitur
Que meseire ves sun seignur,
A ki il deit honur porter
E lëauté e fei garder. . . .

Cum fu dunc la chalve suriz
Que ne deit mes par jur voler,
Ne il ne deit en curt parler.

[That traitor's case is similar
Who wrongly acts toward his seignior.
He should give honour to his lord
And should be loyal, keep his word. . . .
Our story of the bat's the same:
He cannot every fly by day
And can't at court have any say. (90–91, ll. 49–52, 64–66)]

Marie stops short of fully exploiting the plot allegorically by stating that the prerogative of blinding a traitor belongs to the betrayed lord, opting for a more general reading about disempowerment instead. However, given the established practice of blinding as punishment in Norman government, her original readers may have seen contemporary practices implied in the tale.

The Angevin kings followed the example of their predecessors. In 1184, Richard Coeur de Lion, having won a battle at Gorre near Limoges, drowned some captives, beheaded others, and blinded eighty of them.[38] In 1188 Count Raymond of Toulouse blinded and castrated some Poitevin merchants and executed others when he entered the conflict against Richard and Henry II, according to chronicler Roger of Howden.[39] Richard had recourse to the blinding of his enemies again in 1198 while defending Normandy against the French king Philip Augustus; Richard had fifteen French prisoners blinded and sent three back to the king, led by a one-eyed man.[40] (These are instances in which blinded French veterans would presumably have been accorded respect for suffering this punishment at the hands of their enemies.) Chronicler Ralph of Coggeshall tells of how King John's advisers suggested that he order the blinding and castration of his nephew, Arthur of Britanny, because of the young man's treasonous claim to be legitimate heir to Richard Coeur de Lion.[41]

Under the Angevins, the use of blinding in England extended beyond warfare and poaching. The Pleas at Shrewsbury in 1203, during the reign of King John, include an instance of a woman who was sentenced to have her eyes torn out for taking part in a murder, stealing some of the victim's chattels, and then lying about how she had acquired them. According to the account of the Hundred at Bradford, for these deeds Alice Crithecreche "has

deserved death, but by way of dispensation [the sentence is mitigated so] let her eyes be torn out."[42]

I have been unable to find any examples of blinding as punishment in England after 1223,[43] but it evidently existed as a possible punishment in at least one area of the country until later in the century. In *Borough Customs,* an extensive compendium of local customary laws, Mary Bateson includes a law from Portsmouth from around 1272: "And also if we take a thef he shall be scalde and his eyen put owte, and if there be any woman her tetys shall be kyt of at Chalcrosse."[44] In her introduction, Bateson singles out Portsmouth as having punishments that are "singularly barbarous," and the horrifying uniqueness of this mention of blinding—as well as the mutilation reserved for female thieves—in the two-volume collection bears out her evaluation. (But Bateson herself doubts the reliability of the text that she consulted, a nineteenth-century copy of a lost copy of the laws from 1727 that claimed to be from a medieval exemplar; she admits that the extant manuscript "gives but an imperfect idea of the contents of the lost original.")[45] As late as 1285 it was evidently still possible for English people to assume that a blind person's disability was punishment for crime. The Calendar of the Patent Rolls for that year includes notification that one Peter Peverer of the county of Essex lost his eyes through disease, not because of a judicial sentence.[46] Presumably Peverer himself sought this official statement in order to deflect the stigmatization inherent in real or potential accusations of past criminal activity.

On the other hand, during the thirteenth century some laws that allowed the use of blinding as punishment were rescinded. The 1224 forest laws associated with the Magna Carta did away with the Norman custom of blinding poachers of royal deer,[47] and in 1285, the Second Statutes of Westminster ruled that rape was to be punished by the execution of the rapist, whereas earlier, blinding and castration were evidently permissible (though unrecorded) in some boroughs. In the late 1280s, Andrew Horn wrote in *The Mirror of Justices* that "until the time of King Edward II, [rape] was punished by tearing out the eyes and loss of testicles, because of the appetite which entered through the eyes and the heat of fornication which came into the reins of the lechers."[48] In their *History of English Law,* Pollock and Maitland sketch a decline in mutilation as punishment for felons as it was replaced "very slowly" during the thirteenth century by the death penalty.[49]

Such was not the case in France. Blinding as punishment was used by the French against subjects within the territories of the French king when

Simon de Montfort attempted to destroy the heretical Cathars in the so-called Albigensian Crusade. Interestingly, although most of de Montfort's feudal estates were in the Ile de France region near Paris, in the previous generations the family's estates straddled the border between that region and Normandy, so he may have known that the practice of blinding had Norman precedents.[50] Or de Montfort could have learned of the practice from his enemies. According to the *Historia Albigensis,* de Montfort was not the first French nobleman to use blinding as punishment in the campaign against the Cathars; rather, it was a traitor against him named Giraud de Pépieux. In 1209 he and some of his knights turned against de Montfort for reasons that remain unclear, but to show their displeasure with their commander, they captured two of his knights who had been left to guard the settlement of Puisserguier and then blinded them and subjected them to other forms of mutilation.[51] De Pépieux's cruelty was on quite a small scale compared to that of de Montfort against the village of Bram, between Carcassonne and Castelnaudary. In 1210, de Montfort and his troops captured the village after a three-day siege and exacted a terrible toll on its defenders, according to chronicler Pierre de Vaux-de-Cernay, a supporter of de Montfort.

> They put out the eyes of the defenders, over a hundred in number, and cut off their noses. One man was spared one eye so that, as a demonstration of our contempt for our enemies, he could lead the others to Cabaret. The Count [de Montfort] had this punishment carried out not because the mutilation gave him any pleasure but because his opponents had been the first to indulge in atrocities and, cruel executioners that they were, were given to butchering any of our men they might capture by dismembering them. . . . The Count never took delight in cruelty or in the torture of his enemies.[52]

The chronicler here implies that the mutilation was a response to either Giraud de Pépieux's actions or others undertaken by the Cathars against their orthodox enemies. Pierre's carefully formulated justification for de Montfort's cruelty gives added credence to this horrifying event, apparently the episode in which the largest number of people were blinded in all of the European Middle Ages. Although the Cathars' heresy was a religious crime, it was handled by a rough-and-ready social justice that was meant to provide an example to those around them, and Simon's flouting of Pope Innocent III's orders about establishing control in the area shows that his concerns in the region were at least as political as they were religious.[53]

In light of this history, perhaps it is no coincidence that Toulouse, the urban center closest to Cathar territory, was the site of production in 1296 of a remarkable manuscript that includes illustrations of tortures and punishments, including blinding. The text of Bibliothèque Nationale MS Lat 9187 is the *Coutumes de Toulouse,* a legal text probably written by local jurist Arnaud Arpadelle and approved by King Philippe le Hardi in 1283.[54] Among representations of punishments ranging from public humiliation to amputation of limbs, ears, and genitals, one of the ink drawings in the lower margin of the manuscript shows an executioner thrusting a rod into the eye of the bound prisoner (fig. 2).[55] The tortures and punishments in the margins do not correspond at all to the text of the *Coutumes;* it includes judicial guidelines and procedures relating to such issues as dowries and wills, but it does not mention specific crimes and appropriate punishments—and certainly not blinding.[56] However, this punishment obviously remained in the public consciousness in the late thirteenth century, since either the artist or the commissioner of the manuscript chose to include it.[57]

Juridical blinding continued in France through the fourteenth and into the second half of the fifteenth century. In 1334 the knight Guillermet Bertrand bore witness at Lyon that he had seen a criminal undergo blinding and the amputation of a foot.[58] The chronicler Philippe de Vigneulles recounts a case in 1466 in Metz in which a foreigner, found guilty of blinding a priest, was sentenced to be blinded himself. Philippe describes the special platform built for the occasion so that the public could see the sentence carried out.[59] Ten years later, Jean de Roye wrote in his journal of a case in which the Duke of Burgundy persuaded a Welshman to kidnap the dauphin Charles, who would later become Charles VIII. After the attempted kidnapping failed, the criminal was offered the choice of decapitation or blinding as his punishment, the latter having been proposed as an alternative by a provost in the king's household. When the Welshman chose blinding, the provost himself carried out the punishment, and the blind man was then delivered to his wife.[60] The last two incidents suggest a troubling connection between xenophobia and blinding as punishment: the "otherness" of being foreign is compounded by the "othering" of disabling mutilation.

No doubt there were other instances of blinding as punishment in France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but historical evidence of them is difficult to trace for several reasons. French customary law, which varied markedly from region to region, does not always survive in written records. According to the eminent historian of medieval French law André Gouron, even where records survive, there is evidence of significant dis-

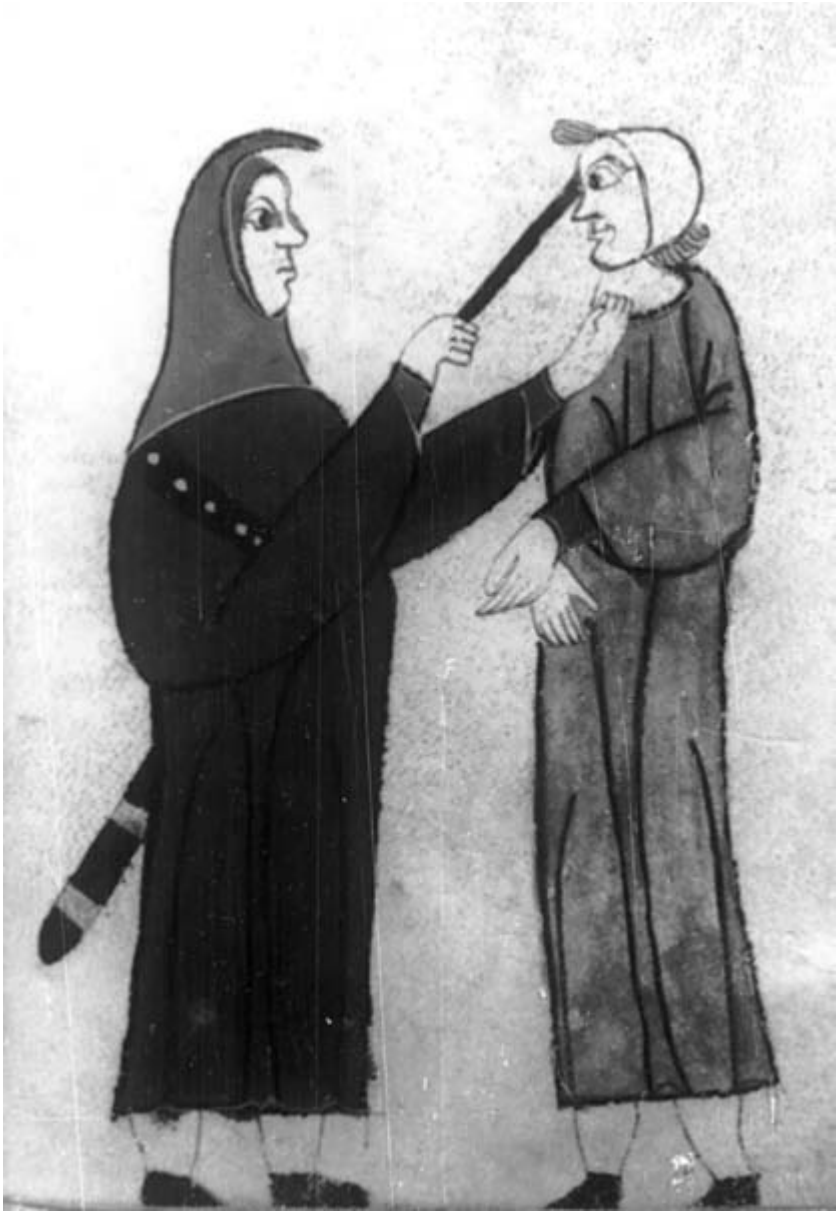

Fig. 2. Blinding as punishment. Bibliothèque National MS Lat 9187, *Les coutumes de Toulouse,* 1296, fol. 24. Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque National, Paris.

crepancies between "coutumes" and "usages," that is, what was written and what was practiced.[61] (These discrepancies explain the absence of any connection between the text and the illuminations in the manuscript of the *Coutumes de Toulouse* mentioned previously: the text lists the customary laws while the illuminations probably show the punishments that were commonly practiced.) Furthermore, an act of mutilation such as blinding was not always ritualized in public ceremonies as executions were. Contrasting mutilation with public execution, Esther Cohen writes that marking and maiming "were carried out with very little ceremony or effect. . . . Nor were the mutilations embedded within any kind of symbolic ritual. There was no need, for the message was simple, explicit, and carried lifelong by the culprit."[62] These practices seem to be exemplified in the secondhand reportage of the incident described by Guillermet Bertrand in 1344: he may have been one of only a few witnesses to the mutilation of the criminal, whereas a public execution would have attracted witnesses galore.

An instance of blinding in which an aristocrat inflicts the punishment on people of lower rank appears in the tale of the outlaw Eustache the Monk, written between 1223 and 1284. This quasi romance is partly based on the life of a real historical figure, Eustache Busquet, who lived from about 1170 to 1217.[63] Eustache's nemesis is the Count of Boulogne, who has angered the monk by refusing to mete out justice to the murderer of Eustache's father.[64] Eustache takes revenge by destroying some of the count's property, after which he is outlawed and goes into hiding in Hardelot Forest. At one point in the back-and-forth raids and attacks between the men, the count and his troops capture two of Eustache's sergeants, and "their first reaction, in a fit of anger, was to put out the two men's eyes" (76). Eustache swears to avenge the mutilation by cutting off a foot of each of four of the count's retainers, revenge that he ultimately accomplishes. Eustache's choice of a different form of mutilation for the count's retainers may be the poet's indication that blinding was the prerogative of the upper classes.

I have found two allusions to blinding as physical punishment in late Middle English literature, and both are unrealized threats. The late fourteenth-century alliterative poem *Patience,* probably written by the poet responsible for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* artistically embellishes the biblical story of Jonah and the whale. After God tells him to go to Ninevah, the recalcitrant Jonah imagines being tortured by the Ninevites, who will "wrast out [his] yȝen"[65] (tear out his eyes), though this never comes to pass. In "The Buffeting" in the Towneley Cycle of mystery plays, the Jewish high priest Caiaphas threatens to tear Jesus's eyes out as part of his torture ("Nay,

bot I shall out-thrist / Both his een on a raw").[66] Both the poet and the playwright raise the issue of blinding as a particularly exotic, foreign form of cruelty administered by the barbaric "other."

INSTITUTIONS FOR THE BLIND

During the centuries when blinding was used as punishment, an equally important and probably not unrelated historical development was occurring in France: the foundation of hospices for the blind. And perhaps not coincidentally, some of them were founded by William the Conqueror. According to a medieval verse chronicle, William founded hospices either entirely or partially reserved for blind inhabitants in Cherbourg, Rouen, Bayeux, and Caen.[67] In her research on these institutions, Brigitte Gauthier found conclusive evidence of the existence of only the Bayeux hospice and inconclusive evidence of the one at Rouen; she could find no proof that Caen or Cherbourg had eleventh-century hospices.[68] Nevertheless, it is significant in the economies of sin and salvation that William the Conqueror, who may have already used blinding as punishment and who would later deploy it in England, was involved during his lifetime in both creating and aiding blind people.

In 1256, a watershed moment occurred in the history of blindness in Europe: Louis IX, better known today as Saint Louis, founded a residential hospice for the blind called the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts (literally, the Hospice of Fifteen Twenties, signifying the 300 residents whom it was meant to house). Associated with the National Center for Ophthalmology in Paris, this institution still survives today. For the residents the hospice offered basic care and some protection on the streets of Paris; for medieval Parisians the hospice became the subject of some social anxiety, partly associated with the stereotypes of blind people but partly relating to the hospice's unique institutional identity as largely separate from the church, which had previously laid claim to the institutionalized care of the disabled.

The foundation of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts revised the discourse surrounding blindness by challenging the religious model and in some ways moving toward a social one; although the institution included a chapel under the control of at least one chaplain, and residents had license to beg at the doors of Parisian churches, the general raison d'être of the organization was not religious but social. It was not a hospital in which clerics took care of residents, but rather a community in which the blind and

their sighted relatives lived and worked together on every aspect of communal life, from agriculture to governance. And the archives of the institution from its first centuries do not suggest that it held before its residents either the implication that their blindness was punishment for sin or the false hope of miraculous cure (though a heroic but false legend that it was founded for blinded crusaders, to be discussed later, showed the institution's subsequent need to raise the status of its original residents retrospectively since it could revise neither their disability nor its related stereotypes). In one sense the foundation of the Quinze-Vingts substituted one type of institution for another, but nevertheless it granted its blind residents greater autonomy and self-governance than they would have had in religious institutions. The irony of the direction that the hospice ultimately followed lies in its economic exploitation of the very institution against which it defined itself—the local church—and thus tensions arose between them that may have contributed to the need to "revise" the foundational history.

The late medieval revision of Louis IX's motivation for founding the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts was facilitated by the fact that the ordinances of its foundation were lost, but descriptions of Louis' charitable impulses toward the poor and disabled survive in chronicles. An episode showing Louis' concern for the blind appears in the hagiographical biography by Guillaume de St. Pathus, who was also confessor of Louis' wife, Marguerite de Provence. Guillaume writes of a meal to which the king invited the poor.

> Et se il y avoit entre ces povres aucuns ou mal voianz, li benoiez rois li metoit le morsel de pain en la main a ses propres mains, ou il menoit la main du povre jusques a l'escuele. Et encore plus quant il y avoit un mal voiant ou non puissant et il avoit poissons devant lui, li benoiez rois prenoit le morsel du poisson et en treoit les arestes diligaument a ses propres mains, et le metoit en la saune, et lors le metoit en la bouche du malade.[69]
>
> *[And if there was any visually impaired person among these poor people, with his own hands the blessed king would put a morsel of bread into (the poor man's) hand, or he would guide the hand of the poor man to the plate. And furthermore, when there was a visually impaired or weak person there and he had fish before him, the blessed king would take the piece of fish, carefully remove the bones from it with his own hands, dip it in the salt, and then put it in the mouth of the ill person.]*

The quasi-eucharistic nature of this scene reinforces Louis' holiness while highlighting a group in which he was particularly interested. In Guillaume's sequel to Louis' biography, *The Miracles of Saint Louis,* the writer describes four episodes in which the saint's relics cure the blind, though here blindness is only one of a number of disabilities and illnesses cured by the king's body.[70]

In Guillaume's authorized version of both the quick and the dead Louis' interest in the blind, the biographer elides a different concern: control of the population of marginalized people in Paris.[71] In 1254, only two years before the foundation of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, Louis IX expelled beggars from the city, ostensibly because of their perceived dishonesty and unruliness.[72] While some of these exiles would have been blind, other beggars were perceived as a far greater social threat: those feigning disabilities, including blindness.[73] Anxieties about able-bodied beggars tricking unwitting almsgivers would have contributed to Louis' motivation to establish the hospice, whose residents wore institutional uniforms identifying them as fully licensed, genuinely disabled members of a royally sanctioned institution. And the sites of their mendicancy would have given them added legitimacy: the privilege of begging at churches both within and outside of Paris was first granted to the residents of Quinze-Vingts by Pope Clement IV in 1265 and then confirmed by three subsequent popes and the Council of Trent. From 1312, the privilege of licensed begging at Parisian churches belonged exclusively to the residents of Louis' hospice, causing ongoing friction between the institutions.[74] But along with the privileges granted to the residents of the Quinze-Vingts, the differentiation of officially licensed blind beggars from unlicensed ones exemplified new forms of discipline for the blind. Early twentieth-century sociologist Pierre Villey, in what remains one of the few books to examine the construction of blindness in the sighted world, describes the goal of early European hospitals for the blind: "le but est de réglementer la mendicité en répartissant les zones et en imposant une discipline" ("the goal is to regulate begging by dividing up zones and imposing discipline").[75]

INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE AT THE HOSPICE DES QUINZE-VINGTS

Although Louis IX's original hospice functioned under defined rules of operation, the first generations of administrators left them undocumented. The almoner of the Quinze-Vingts from 1351 to 1355, Michel de Brache,

wrote during his administration that numerous statutes and ordinances had been observed since the foundation of the hospice, but they had never been written down or committed to reliable memory; furthermore, some rules had been added during the first century of the institution's existence. So de Brache took it upon himself to transcribe the rules,[76] codifying them so strictly that the reading of the ordinances became central to the induction ceremony for new residents.[77] They were also carved into a large wooden plaque that hung in the pediment of the chapter house,[78] a perpetual reminder to sighted residents and visitors of the discipline in the hospice.

As described by de Brache, most of the duties of administration were shared by the almoner, appointed by the king whose authority he represents, and the master of the Quinze-Vingts, also officially appointed by the king but nominated by the almoner.[79] The almoner served as general director, setting rules, determining the daily schedule of the residents, serving as judge in disagreements among them, and meting out penalties for rule breakers. The master attended to some matters external to the hospice, such as commercial transactions and court cases, and also presided over the meeting of the chapter. Third in the chain of command was the minister, elected for life by the residents of the hospice (although his term of office was reduced to one year after 1493). The minister was responsible for receiving the alms collected by the residents and dispensing them for use within the community. All three of these men had to be sighted, and although the almoner could be a cleric, the master and minister needed to be married men, because their wives were also assigned specific duties. Also elected from and by the community were so-called jury members, who were to counsel residents; as was the case with the election of the minister, both male and female residents voted for the jury. In 1321 there were six jury members, though the number was reduced to four in 1362. Jury members earned a small stipend, and their spouses held a special status as well.[80]

Once a week, all residents held ordinary chapter meetings chaired by the master: the group heard financial reports, fielded questions from residents, heard requests for admission, and judged such issues as engagement to marry and distribution of inheritances. General chapter meetings were held once a year to discuss larger issues of governance and finance.[81]

As part of the daily schedule, residents were awakened by a ringing bell and were to begin their day with five Paternosters and five Ave Marias for the king, the almoner, and donors to the hospice; each day ended with the same series of prayers. (Although special privileges to the hospice were

granted by several popes, they are not named specifically in this list, a further indication of the basically secular nature of the institution.) De Brache exhorted residents not to miss the regular fasts of the church unless poor health prevented them. They were to attend masses in the chapel belonging to the Quinze-Vingts, services under the officiation of the hospice's chaplain. De Brache understood that mass would not be said more than once a day there.[82]

One of the important differences between the Quinze-Vingts and monastic institutions was the fact that residents of Louis' foundation were generally allowed to marry and have their families with them while in residence. However, it was easier for male residents to bring their wives than for female residents to bring their husbands: "[The blind man's] wife will be a non-sister, and can be received quite soon after (his admission) and if she is worthy, as much for herself as in consideration of her husband, and to help him. But no sighted man will be given residency except by election, as it is said, unless it is by a very urgent command of the king or the well-informed almoner."[83] The suspicion of sighted men as residents grew out of the fear that they might victimize the blind residents, particularly through sexual violence toward blind women. De Brache forbids marriage between two blind residents or between two sighted residents. Young sighted widows were encouraged to marry blind male residents, but they were not expelled from the community if they refused. All marital engagements had to be announced to the master and minister or to the community as a whole; fiancés who failed to do so would be expelled from the community.[84]

The hospice drew funds from several different sources beyond gifts and bequests of nonmembers. A payment of half of a resident's goods was exacted if he opted to move out of the hospice after living there for more than a year and a day. Residents whose stay had been shorter were to give "une petite portion" to the organization, with the exact amount to be determined by the almoner, the master, and the minister.[85] However, the primary sources of revenue for the Quinze-Vingts were monies collected through begging and levies upon the estates of residents. The licensed beggars from the hospice were generally blind, each accompanied by a sighted resident; the pair would position themselves at church doors next to alms boxes, the contents of which were designated for the needs of the parish. All alms given to the hospice's residents had to be turned over to the minister at the end of each day (though the archives show that residents occasionally tried to keep a portion for themselves, and one master was dismissed in 1521 for stealing hospice funds).[86] Michel de Brache also devotes a good deal of en-

ergy to describing a complex system of division of inheritances between residents and the hospice. Residents with children who are older than fourteen or married must leave all of their goods to the hospice, unless the three chief administrators deem that the children are so poor that some of the inheritance should go to them. In the case of a childless couple, when one spouse dies the surviving spouse has full rights to all of the inheritance during the remainder of her or his life if the survivor remains in residence; if the survivor leaves, she or he must forfeit half of the inheritance.[87]

In spite of the multilayered bureaucracy's ability to take care of misconduct among the residents, de Brache's rules define personal comportment in a strongly disciplinary tone: seventeen of them (numbers 55–71) begin with the words "Nul ne" (No one [may]), and they forbid villainous speech, talking back to administrators, drinking in excess, fornication, and leaving the enclosure without permission. As summarized by Brigitte Gauthier, "in accepting the regulation of the hospice, [the blind person] gave up part of his liberty to the community. All the acts of his life, even the most important, would be subordinated to the will of the community."[88] The clearest evidence that the impoverished blind people of Paris may have resented the strictures of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts lies in the fact that it rarely housed as many as 300 residents. While some may have been begging for lengthy periods outside of Paris, it seems significant that there were only 159 residents at the Quinze-Vingts in 1302,[89] 99 boarders in 1502, and only 84 two years later.[90]

THE QUINZE-VINGTS VERSUS LOCAL AND REGIONAL CLERGY

While popes in faraway Rome could afford to be generous to the Quinze-Vingts, first in cooperation with and then in memory of the crusader king Louis IX, the papal indulgences and privileges granted to the hospice evidently rankled clerics in Paris. When the Quinze-Vingts was founded, the Bishop of Paris agreed that the curate of the parish of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois would officiate at mass in the institution. However, at the request of Philippe V in 1320, Pope John XXII officially granted the institution the right to have its own chaplain serve as curate of a parish comprising the institution alone; the chaplain was more answerable to the almoner—the king's representative, and not always a cleric—than to the Bishop of Paris. In 1387 Pope Clement VII compensated the Chapter of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois with three pounds for the removal of the Quinze-Vingts from their administrative control. However, the curate of Saint-Germain-l'Aux-

errois found the sum insufficient, and after a trial, in 1399 Parliament judged that the parish should be compensated eighteen pounds per year.[91] In a sense the clerical isolation of the hospice from its parish further secularized the Quinze-Vingts by removing it (and its revenues) from the hierarchy of the Parisian church; in tandem with the nascent idea of a social model of disability, the institution thus threatened the church in two important ways.

Two incidents documented in the archives of the Quinze-Vingts serve to show how tensions between Parisian church officials and the institution flared in the first half of the fifteenth century, forcing the throne to intervene on behalf of the institution. On December 13, 1414, the abbot of Saint Germain des Prés called before him representatives of the Bishop of Paris to explain why they had imprisoned one of the chaplains of the Quinze-Vingts who resided in the abbey. (Aside from the head chaplain, others were employed to recite masses for the souls of benefactors.)[92] This caused the Bishop of Paris to send a summons for a representative of the Quinze-Vingts to appear before the pope.[93] In January 1415 the abbot of St. Germain, perhaps cognizant of the special privileges that the papacy generally granted the hospice, agreed to turn the entire affair over to the papal court.[94] In the same month, King Charles VI sent patent letters to one of his highest officials ordering him to protect the Quinze-Vingts from the bishop and to prevent any further annoyances from him.[95] Later in the month a session of Parliament ordered that the imprisoned chaplain be sent to la Conciergerie, a prison in Paris;[96] this document suggests that the chaplain may have been guilty of wrongdoing, but nevertheless the decision removed him from the power of the bishop. Only in June 1415 did three official representatives of the Quinze-Vingts visit Rome in response to the bishop's summons;[97] the tardiness of their trip suggests that they did not feel unduly pressed to respond to the bishop, once the immediate cause of the conflict was no longer at issue. There are no records of the final decision in the case.

In early 1445 letters patent from Charles VII to the Bishop of Paris state that church officers had arrested a chaplain of the Quinze-Vingts; the king appointed arbitrators who would report to an officer of Parliament.[98] The Quinze-Vingts' archives include nothing more about that event, but in July 1445 the bishop's men again imprisoned a member of the hospice, this time one of the brothers. Charles sent patent letters reiterating the privileges of the residents of the hospice.[99] An officer of the king reported on the inci-

dent on July 2, 1445,[100] and on August 23, the king ordered the brother released from the bishop's control. Significantly, this letter exists in the archives in two contemporaneous copies.[101]

The documents preserved in the archives describe only the most litigious altercations between the Parisian church and the Quinze-Vingts, nearly all of which were initiated by the bishop. Guillaumat and Bailliart describe the ongoing tensions as follows: "Episcopal petitions were difficult to deliver for bishops desiring to have themselves paid. Of the seventy trials between bishops and the Quinze-Vingts, the latter always ended up winning."[102] The last trial that the historians mention, dating from 1553, resulted in the bishop of Saintes paying back the 300 pounds that he had demanded for delivering petitions for alms for the Quinze-Vingts within his diocese, again an example of parish funding skimmed off by the hospice.[103] The fact that Saintes is more than 400 kilometers from Paris shows the distance that the hospice's power reached.

The altercations between French bishops and the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts must have been familiar to priests in the parishes of Paris and beyond. Therefore, more tensions are likely to have played themselves out in individual churches where the blind begged, especially since the position of the beggars next to the parish alms box necessarily created competition between the church as dispenser of charity and the apparently self-interested blind people. Furthermore, devout laypeople and receivers of alms might have questioned why royally protected blind people needed to compete with the church, whose alms were not reserved only for the blind but were distributed more widely among all poor people.

A LEGEND AND ITS LONGEVITY: THE QUINZE-VINGTS AND THE CRUSADERS

In the late Middle Ages, a legend arose to give definition not only to Louis' motivation for founding the hospice but also to the number in its name, which represents nothing more than a system of counting by twenties, widely used in Old French and exemplified in the modern language by the term for eighty, "quatre vingts." A version of the legend first appears in written form in a letter from Pope Sixtus IV, dated October 7, 1483. The letter describes Jean d'Aigle (Johannis de Aquila), master of the Quinze-Vingts, presenting a petition on behalf of the hospice and provides this rather sketchy synopsis of the legendary incident.

> Sanctus Ludovicus etiam Francorum rex, postquam cum magna militum et armigerorum multudine ad partes infidelium, ut ab eorum manibus, adjuvante Altissimo, Terram Sanctam eripere posset, se transtulerat, et inimici crucis Christo multos ex eisdem militibus captivos detinuerant, et eos diversorum tormentorum generibus afflixerant, ac a tricentis ex militibus hujusmodi oculos eruerant, et totaliter excecaverant.[104]
>
> *[After Louis, saint and king of France, conveyed himself with a great multitude of soldiers and arms-bearers to lands of the infidels in order to rescue the Holy Land from their hands, with the help of the Most High, the enemies of the Cross of Christ detained many captives from those soldiers and afflicted them with types of diverse tortures, and they tore out the eyes of three hundred of those soldiers and totally blinded them.]*

According to the letter Louis returned to France and erected the hospice (which Sixtus wrongly says is named for him) in order to receive three hundred blind people of both sexes. This abbreviated form of the legend was reproduced in a papal bull granting indulgences to donors to the hospice, written by Alexander VI in 1500 and sent to all the bishops and prelates of France in order to obtain authorization for begging in all dioceses. Thus it was read in all the parishes of the country, and le Grand notes that if the indulgences were renewed annually, the legend would have received further repetition.[105]

Le Grand raised the possibility that d'Aigle, the first knight to serve as minister of the Quinze-Vingts, may have invented the legend in order to ennoble the foundation of the hospice; however, le Grand believed that d'Aigle's other charitable work, which was unaccompanied by stories of martial sacrifice, argues against this hypothesis. But regardless of d'Aigle's motivation, the story clearly resulted in a glorification of the institution's history that came to be commonly accepted as truth. For the purposes of this study, the legend is also interesting because it retrieves a largely French and Norman form of punishment but distances it by having it deployed by a barbarous heathen ruler. And the legend also shows that blinding as punishment was still alive in the imagination of the French, in whose country a punitive blinding had taken place as recently as seventeen years before d'Aigle's petition.

The legend received its first literary treatment in 1499 in Pierre Desrey's *Généalogie de Godefroy de Bouillon,* a self-styled chronicle that also partakes of motifs from chansons de geste and romance; because it has not appeared

in a modern edition, I will reproduce the story at length here. Louis, who has been captured by the Sultan of Babylon, has sent to France for his ransom. Although the sultan has not allowed the emissaries sufficient time to reach such a distant country, he is nevertheless angered by a delay in the arrival of the money.

> Par faute de payer au terme qui luy estoit assigne: dist le soudan au roy saint loys: que pour chascun iour quil seroit deffaillant de la en avant: quil feroit crever les deux yeulx a vingt de ses chevaliers estant en prison auecques luy. Et tellement fist le dict souldan par la crudelite que lespace de quinze iours durant fist chascun iour crever les yeulx a XX chevaliers: quilz furent durant les dictz quinze jours: quinze vingts chevaliers: mais au chef de quinze jours luy survint aultre chose comme il sera dict. Porquoy il cessa de sa crudelite. Et quant le bon roy sainct loys veit la pitie de ses poures chevaliers ainsi privez de lumiere corpor[e]lle: il fut moult dolent: combien que toujours louoit dieu en son adversite. Mais il luy estoit advis quilz estoient cheuz en cest occident par sa faute et coulpe: par quoy il voua et promist a dieu denfaire satisfacion se son plaisir estoit de luy donner espace de vie. Et pour ceste cause fist il fonder lostel et hospital des quinze vingts aveuglez de Paris quant il fut retourne en france.[106]
>
> *[For lack of payment in the term that had been given to him, the sultan said to the holy king Louis that for every day that he defaulted from then on, he would put out the two eyes of twenty of his knights in prison with him. And thus did the said sultan in his cruelty, so that over the space of fifteen days, he had the eyes of twenty knights put out every day, and there were during the said fifteen days three hundred [fifteen twenties] knights. But at the end of fifteen days something else happened to him as it is said, because of which he ceased his cruelty. And when the good holy king Louis saw the woe of his poor knights thus deprived of corporal light, he was very sad—so much so that he constantly praised God in his adversity. But he was advised that this accident had befallen them because of his fault and blame, for which he vowed and promised to God to do satisfaction for this if it were His pleasure to give him time in his life. And for this reason he caused the hostel and hospice of the Quinze-Vingts to be founded when he had returned to France.]*

Desrey goes on to describe the pardons and indulgences granted to the institution by popes, and he concludes by stating that the institution is a daily reminder of the three hundred knights blinded "to sustain the honor of God and the holy Catholic faith."

In his *Fleur des Antiquitez* (1532), Gilles Corrozet does not include the elements of the ransom and the two-week delay, but his account states that the Quinze-Vingts was founded "to feed and house three hundred knights that [Louis] brought back from overseas, whose eyes had been put out by the Saracens" [pour nourir et loger trois cens chevaliers qu'il ramena d'oultre-mer, ausquelz les Sarrazins avoient crevé les yeux].[107] Whether indebted to Desrey's account or another source, Corrozet's version eschews the lower-class "milites" of the papal bull in favor of higher-class "chevaliers."

Paintings relating to Louis in the chapel of the hospice attest to the complicity of the administration of the Quinze-Vingts in perpetuating the legend of the crusaders. When the hospice was moved from the rue Saint-Honoré to its current location in the rue Charenton, the paintings were cleaned and restored by a certain Le Brun, who left a description of the works in a document dated August 4, 1780, and housed in the archives of the hospice.[108]

> Quatre tableaux de Person, représentant saint Louis qui rachète des prisonniers; le sacre de saint Louis; saint Louis recevant la couronne d'épine de l'Empereur Baudoin; représentant Soliman qui fait crever les yeux aux Captifs.[109]
>
> *[Four paintings by Person, representing Saint Louis who buys back the prisoners; the coronation of Saint Louis; Saint Louis receiving the crown of thorns from Emperor Baudoin; (a painting) representing Suleiman who had the eyes of the captives put out.]*

Also in the archives, an undated description of the paintings lists the same subjects;[110] this document was written by one Poincelot, who was probably Le Brun's workman in charge of the project, according to one historian.[111] For sighted visitors to the Quinze-Vingts, the paintings would have reinforced the validity of the legend, and the blind residents attending mass in the chapel would have learned of them from their sighted counterparts or from the sermons of the clerics assigned to the hospice, who would certainly have mentioned the hospice's sainted founder from time to time.

Le Grand cites historians who repeated the legend of the blinded crusaders from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth; the story became a part of institutional history.[112] Its longevity is attested by Abbot J. H. R. Prompsault, chaplain of the Quinze-Vingts from 1829 to 1855 and author of *Les Quinze-Vingts: notes et documents recuellis par feu l'abbé J. H. R. Prompsault.* As late as the 1860s he asserted that in spite of the protests of some histori-

ans, the Quinze-Vingts was founded in honor of three hundred blinded crusaders, though not as a residence for them.[113]

There are numerous reasons why the legend of the blinded crusaders cannot be true. In relation to the historical record of the sixth crusade, an incident of these proportions would not have escaped the attention of the French chronicler and eyewitness Geoffrey of Joinville, whose description of Louis' captivity is quite detailed.[114] None of the early documents housed in the archives of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts mentions crusaders, but several use the phrase "pauvres aveugles" [poor blind people].[115] And most convincingly, papal bulls allowing the residents of the Quinze-Vingts to beg are among the earliest extant documents in the archives; however, it seems very unlikely that a large group of knights would have engaged in this activity.

The longevity of the legend shows that it was ideally suited to nearly every party interested in the Quinze-Vingts in the fifteenth century and later. Its dissemination can largely be credited to the popes, whose willingness to repeat the legend must have grown from its inclusion of the crusades in the foundational history of the Quinze-Vingts. Although Louis was the military leader of the crusaders, they were soldiers of the Cross, serving the Pope and the Church Militant; in the papal bulls the infidels are described not as Louis' enemies but as enemies of the Cross. Thus if the generosity of successive popes to the institution needed justification (perhaps before bishops and parish priests), the legend offered it.

In relation to Louis' original intentions for the hospice, the legend functions ambivalently. While it undergirds the foundation with religion, it remains relatively true to Louis' negation of the religious model of disability. The crusaders' blindness was clearly not due to their sinfulness—indeed, they were doing God's work—but rather due to the sinful sultan, an agent of heathenism. And the tale obviates not only the need for but the possibility of miraculous cure: the crusaders' blindness would have been a badge of Christian martyrdom that promised a greater reward in the afterlife than mere sight during their earthly life. The social attitudes toward subsequent generations of residents of the Quinze-Vingts, the metonymic replacements of the crusaders, would have been at least partially structured by the narrative: they were good, deserving blind people, inheritors of largesse initially earned by crusading martyrs. On the other hand, the legend contravenes Louis' vision by erasing female residents from the institution's early history, replacing them with not simply men but disabled veterans, a category that throughout history has brought about outpourings of public sympathy and support.[116] This gendering of the putative foundational

group probably accorded with what Parisians and French people saw of residents in later centuries—that is, more men than women, especially since blind married women were not consistently welcome in the Quinze-Vingts if they had sighted husbands.

For the residents and administrators of the Quinze-Vingts, the legend displaced an aspect of the social model of disability—that impairment is simply a fact of life that requires no elaboration or justification—with a narrative that recasts disability as personal tragedy for each crusader. However, the story of group sacrifice in time of holy war demands a social response: the crusaders' blindness (and that of the later residents of the Quinze-Vingts) becomes a social responsibility, and inasmuch as any alms given to individual blind residents went to the collective of the hospice, only social responses were possible.

Guillaumat and Bailliart see the legend as valuable primarily for the residents of the hospice: the story is "an instrument of propaganda—today we would say a publicity coup—to increase the yield of begging."[117] However, they do not describe why the story should have this effect. While the legend "ennobles" the first generation of Quinze-Vingts residents, it concomitantly erases the history of impoverished disabled people from the foundation of the Quinze-Vingts by transforming the residents from a potentially unruly minority to privileged but maimed nobility. Instead of creating social discipline, the institution commemorates martial sacrifice and, in Corrozet's version, rewards it directly. People familiar with the hospice's unique self-government would presumably have understood it to have resulted from the high status of the original residents. Thus the legend exemplifies Mitchell and Snyder's idea of narrative prosthesis; the legend is a "textual prosthesis [that] alleviates discomfort by removing the unsightly from view,"[118] replacing the banality of poor blind residents with the romance of brave crusaders.

Inasmuch as the Crusades represented colonizing forays into Palestine, the narrative of the crusaders justified the project in light of the savagery of the Sultan of Babylon. It is noteworthy that the first secular publication of the legend took place at the beginning of the age of French expansion. During that period and the centuries when the legend was repeated, it gave the implicit message that the ruler would care for those who undertook the work of colonization. The legend's link between nobility and France's martial prowess was exploited as late as the eighteenth century by aristocrats led by a Monsieur Duvernay who wanted to establish a military school for five hundred young nobles. Marquis René-Louis d'Argenson, Minister of For-

eign Affairs under Louis XV, wrote in his journal entry for January 12, 1751, of how the tale was deployed in order to justify military education based on class.

> On parle aussi d'y appliquer la fondation des Quinze-Vingts, disant que Saint Louis ne l'avoit faite que pour des gentilshommes aveuglés par les Sarrasins pendant la croisade, et qu'on l'a très-mal appliquée à des pauvres aveugles roturiers.[119]
>
> *[They also talk about applying there the foundation of the Quinze-Vingts, saying that Saint Louis had done it only for the gentlemen blinded by the Saracens during the crusade, and that it was very poorly applied to poor blind commoners.]*

For d'Argenson's contemporaries the supposed motivation for founding the Quinze-Vingts had to be rescued from its current debased redaction in order to serve as a model for future aristocratic institutions. D'Argenson's passing mention of the legend suggests that it was known to Parisians with no ostensible connection to the hospice.

This brief history shows some of the ways that Louis IX's innovative foundation, l'Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, made itself appear less innovative, and thus a less clear challenge to the religious model of disability. The codification of de Brache's rules within a century of the foundation imposed a discipline within the institution that was carried by the residents into Paris and farther afield in France; if the rules of the institution were in some ways surprisingly liberal, the residents nevertheless generally showed themselves to be fully disciplined subjects, a fact doubtless appreciated by donors. And Louis' reasons for founding the institution also acquired the veneer of religiosity through a legend with remarkable staying power. The tale aligns the institution more closely with the church, making a gesture toward giving the church discursive control over the meaning of blindness yet again. Thus an institution serving a particular set of social needs gains power by acquiring both social and religious significance well beyond its original history.[120]

Louis' hospice effected a significant rupture in the social construction of blindness: the royal protection of blind people must have improved their lives in certain ways, but it also created a higher public profile for them that apparently led to envy and contempt. We have already seen evidence of the tensions between the institutions and the church, but secular suspicion of

the institution also arose. In a poem by Rutebeuf the residents of the Quinze-Vingts became the objects of scorn within a few years of the institution's foundation, well before Louis' death.

> Li roi a mis en un repaire
> (Més je ne sai pas por qoi faire)
> Trois cens aveugles route a route.
> Parmi Paris en va trois paire;
> Tote jor ne finent de braire:
> "Aus trois cens qui ne voient goute!"
> Li uns sache, li autres boute,
> Si se donent mainte çacoute,
> Qu'il n'i a nul qui lor esclaire.
> Si feus i prent, ce n'est pas doute,
> L'ordre sera brullee toute,
> S'avra li rois plus a refaire.[121]
>
> *[The king has assembled in a residence (although I don't know what for) three hundred blind people, troop after troop. Across Paris they go three by three; all day long they do not stop braying, "Give to the three hundred who don't see anything." One pulls, another pushes, they often give each other jolts because there is no one to guide them. If the fire took it, there is no doubt that the house of their order would be entirely burnt down, and the king will again have more to do.]*

By raising the specter of a conflagration that could move beyond the hospice, Rutebeuf would certainly have kindled the anxieties of his Parisian readers.

It is noteworthy that the 1425 "amusement" involving four blind men and a pig that opens chapter 1 took place in the rue St. Honoré, the location of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts. This coincidence suggests that the location of the event was chosen precisely because of this proximity, and perhaps the participants were themselves residents of the hospice. Even if they were not, word of the event and its calculated endangerment and degradation of the blind men must have reached the hospice nearby.

Like Rutebeuf, François Villon also turned his barbed quill on the residents of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts in his *Testament* (ca. 1461), basing his satire partly on the anxiety about feigning beggars.

Item, je donne aux .XV. Vings
—Qu'autant vauldroit nommer Troys Cens—[122]
De Paris, non pas de Provins,
Car a eulx tenu je me sens;
Ilz auront, et je m'y consens,
Sans les estuiz mes grans lunectes,
Pour mectre a part, aux Innocens,
Les gens de bien des deshonnestes.[123]

[Item, I give the Fifteen Score
(Three Hundred, one might say as well)
Of Paris, and not of Provins
(For it's to them I feel obliged) . . .
They'll have, with my fullest consent,
Without the case, my spectacles,
To sort out, at the Innocents,
Good people from dishonest ones.][124]

The satirical force of Villon's will to leave his glasses to the residents of the hospice is augmented by the "seeing" that he wants them to do. His desire that they use the spectacles to differentiate between good and dishonest people is partly a continuation of what Villon himself has done as a social critic, but the phrase also alludes to how Villon's eyes and those of the society around him scrutinized the residents of the Quinze-Vingts and other blind people to determine whether they were "good" (i.e., truly blind) or dishonestly feigning blindness. Villon compounds the satire further by naming the group whom the blind people should inspect, the people "at the [Cemetery of the] Innocents." In his edition of *Le Testament* Champion points out that the residents of the Quinze-Vingts had the right to beg in this important cemetery,[125] but the next stanzas of the poem reflect on the inevitability of death for the rich and the poor, suggesting that the blind people can see nothing valuable among the graves; in other words, when attempting to distinguish between honest and dishonest people, we are all blind. (And Villon then adds that in the charnel house, where all the skulls look the same, he cannot tell the difference between lords and servants.) But the complexities of the stanza should not distract us from the fact that Villon is very literally associating blind people with dead people.

The effects of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, both positive and nega-

tive, were palpable across France. For example, in the stanza from Villon's *Testament* quoted here, the poet states that he is not leaving his spectacles to the Quinze-Vingts residents in Provins, where, according to Champion, the prior of Saint-Aioul gave the residents of the hospice a house and garden in 1413, probably as a residential base from which to do their begging in the area.[126] More important, the institution also inspired the foundation of other "aveugleries" modeled on the same principles. L'Hospice des Six-Vingts opened in Chartres in 1291, under the royal protection of Philippe le Bel, and its ties to the Quinze-Vingts were further strengthened when Michel de Brache visited in 1356 and imposed the regulations of his hospice on what he perceived to be a poorly run sister institution.[127] Although the residents of the Six-Vingts wore badges designed and placed differently from those worn by residents of the older institution (a crescent moon in addition to the fleur-de-lys), the badge nevertheless signified their royal protection. And the residents of the hospice in Chartres also shared the Quinze-Vingts' papal dispensations to beg all over France (except in Paris, where only four residents of the Six-Vingts were allowed at any one time).[128] In spite of its royal favor, the Hospice des Six-Vingts was built, significantly, outside the walls of Chartres, and when the Navarrians attacked the town in 1356, the citizens of Chartres dismantled the building in order to rebuild their fortifications. It took the intervention of the king, Jean le Bon, to persuade the townspeople to rebuild the hospice, this time within the city walls. The unlucky institution was destroyed yet again by the English in 1432 and later rebuilt.[129] The original location of the hospice, its initial destruction at the hands of the Chartrians, and their reluctance to rebuild it all seem to indicate the low regard for the institution and its residents.[130]

Similar institutions with less strong connections to the Quinze-Vingts also appeared around northern France. In Tournai (now Belgium), a hospice for the blind was built in 1351, and it, too, adopted the regulations of the Quinze-Vingts, though it lacked full royal patronage. However, the regulations were augmented by a rule that shows the degree to which the administrators feared false mendicants: "Note, each time a blind person is taken in, he must swear that because of lack of sight (*faute de clarté*), he cannot make a living in the future."[131] Hospices for the blind were also founded in Meaux in 1351, Caen by 1364, Rouen in 1478, and Orléans by the end of the century.[132] Gauthier has noted that all of these institutions are in the north of France, and the southernmost foundation for the blind, Orléans, is also one of the last before 1500.[133] She did not note, however, that the north is also the origin of most of the satirical literature about the blind. Even if we

take into account the relative concentration of wealth and power (along with the possibility of increased literary patronage) in the north, the geographical correspondence is striking.

In short, regardless of the discipline that the residents of hospices for the blind had to undergo while in the confines of their institutions, the begging rights that they were given, along with the right to wear a badge of royal protection in some cases, made them appear privileged outside the institutions. And therefore, what we might in modern parlance call a backlash occurred, beginning even before the death of Louis IX,[134] and this backlash played itself out in a number of the plays and other texts that will be discussed in later chapters. So Louis' foundation had one meaning within its walls but quite another on the streets of Paris and beyond.

But what of England and its institutions for the blind? Evidently there were none devoted solely to people with that impairment. Nicholas Orme and Margaret Webster's detailed and comprehensive 1995 book *The English Hospital, 1070–1570* erroneously states that St Mary within Cripplegate, also called Elsingspital in honor of its founder William Elsing, was a hospital for the blind.[135] However, Elsing's charter of 1331 stipulated that the institution give preference to blind or paralyzed priests; any remaining space in the hospital could be given to blind beggars.[136] So although Elsing clearly had an interest in the blind, his generosity was first and foremost directed toward disabled priests, presumably because they could not perform the mass. In contrast to the Quinze-Vingts, this hospital, which was always under church control and was administered by Austin canons after 1340, had a relatively short history plagued with financial problems, even before Elsing's death; it spawned no imitators and was closed in 1536.[137] Orme and Webster also call the hospital of the Papey an institution specifically for the blind, but they go on to add that it "ministered to the clergy in general [and] also took in some who were blind as well as the lame and impotent";[138] thus it resembled Elsingspital in its primary clientele. These hospitals strongly reinforce the religious model not only because they were under church control[139] but also because they were actually ministering primarily to priests, who were likely to believe in some form of the religious model of disability.

An institution with a similar mission of caring for those too disabled to continue working was founded by Edward I in London in 1341, when he granted a "messuage with appurtenances" worth twenty pounds annually to those members of the guild of goldsmiths who were "blind, wearied, and infirm."[140] The Wardens' Account for May of that year states that the goldsmiths asked the king for assistance for "the many men of that mistery

blinded by the fire and the smoke of quicksilver, and some worn out by manual work and oppressed and debilitated with various infirmities," and the king granted their request in September.[141] This institution, if we may call it that (medieval documentation does not), resembles the Elsingspital and the hospital of the Papey in its goal of serving those blinded and impaired in other ways while working, and therefore none of these foundations represents for England the reimagining of disability and the sharp focus on blindness represented by the Quinze-Vingts in France.

So let us try to tie this information together by asking the question that led me to start researching these issues. Why is the literature of France so cruel to blind characters, and why is the literature of England so much more benign? While the religious model of blindness is similar in the two countries, their social models are radically different. In French and Norman culture the more frequent use of blinding as punishment had some influence, as would the privileges afforded members of royal hospices. These practices and institutions in France resulted in attitudes that to some extent commodified human sight and often resulted in inhumane satire against the blind in French secular literature. The commodification of sight represents a disturbing inversion of the social model of disability defined in chapter 1, which states that disability should not "belong" to an individual but to a society. Blinding as punishment very concretely demonstrates that in medieval society, a person's *sight* did not entirely belong to him either; rather, it—and the power that it represented—could be taken by anyone legally or physically powerful enough to take it. In the Middle Ages such forms of power were sociopolitical constructs that changed over time, evidently more slowly in France than in England. Sight's status as a commodity in France is evident in fictitious texts as well as history. The Quinze-Vingts' foundational legend of the noble French crusaders blinded at the hands of the infidels recasts the practice of blinding as a kind of usury, cruel and unusual interest that accrued daily for a debt left unpaid for too long.[142] And at least one fourteenth-century French author felt comfortable enough with the idea of sight as commodity that he used it for comic purposes: in the romance of *Bérinus,* to be discussed in chapter 4, a blind man accuses the sighted Bérinus of having exchanged eyes with him and refusing to return them.

In England, where blinding as punishment was rare except at the hands of colonizers and where there were no hospices solely for the blind, blindness existed as a relatively unmarked disability, and therefore the blind were not generally singled out for ridicule in art and literature. So the basic dif-

ference in the construction of blindness in these two countries is that in France, where the blind were more socially visible due to highly visible practices and institutions, the social model of disability gained ascendancy in the later Middle Ages, whereas in England, where the blind were in a sense less visible, the religious model generally held sway. Later chapters will show how this distinction plays out in literature, history, the visual arts, and even medical discourse.

I would like to close this chapter by contrasting French fact and English fiction. A deeply disturbing historical incident that took place in Paris will serve as a concluding synthesis of some of the major topics of this chapter as they relate to France. Several chronicles state that in 1449, a trial took place to judge two men and a woman who had kidnapped children in order to blind and mutilate them and send them into the streets as beggars. The trio of criminals were found guilty and condemned to be hanged, a sentence that attracted a great deal of public attention because it was supposedly the first hanging of a woman in France. The bourgeois Parisian whose journal includes the story of the blind men competing for the pig noted the event,[143] as did Jean Chartier, the chronicler for King Charles VII.[144] But perhaps the most reliable version survives in the records of Parliament. Jehan Baril, formerly a butcher, was accused of a number of crimes, including murder and putting out the eyes of a victim. He was known to feign disability, falling to the ground in the road or in the midst of a group of churchgoers.[145] His accomplice, Etienne Tierrier, had spent his life begging, though he was evidently healthy and able to earn a living. He had kidnapped two children, blinded one (with pins when the child was two years old, according to the king's chronicler),[146] and cut off the feet of the other in order to make beggars of them. Although Tierrier was married, he lived with a married woman other than his wife, and she was the accomplice who went to the gallows with him.[147]

Here is a terrible convergence of blinding, begging (both feigned and all too real), and the commodification of sight. While it would be an overstatement to say that such heartless treatment of children could occur only in a country in which mutilation was used as punishment, the likelihood of exacting this awful toll seems greater when the government is also using it. The feigning beggar and his friends knew that the legitimacy of actual disabled children would bring in more money, and they were not hesitant to manufacture the disabilities. The fact that none of the historical records mentions the fate of the blinded and lame children speaks volumes about medieval attitudes toward people with disabilities.

The Englishman William Langland, whose writing and revision of *Piers Plowman* took place in the second half of the fourteenth century and thus earlier than the heinous crimes in Paris, knew of the possibility of mutilating children in order to make them more lucrative as beggars, though his source for this knowledge is unclear. In all three versions of his text (Passus VIII in the A-text, Passus VII in the B-text, and Passus IX in the C-text), the narrator Will discusses the issue of beggars who feign disabilities to receive charity versus people with genuine impairments who are truly deserving of alms. In these sections Will specifically mentions blind people and other impaired people as worthy of charity for doing penance and suffering in purgatory on earth (A.VIII.82–88, B.VII.99–106, C.IX.175–86).[148] He also castigates sinful poor people who breed bastards and mutilate them in order to prompt pity later from almsgivers.

> [Thei] wedde [no] womman þat [þei] wiþ deele
> But as wilde bestes with "wehee" worþen vppe and werchen,
> And bryngen forþ barnes þat bastardes men calleþ.
> Or [his] bak or [his] boon [þei] brekeþ in his youþe
> And goon [and] faiten with [hire] fauntes for eueremoore after.
> (B.VII.91–95)[149]

In a passage in which he considers both blindness and mutilation in close proximity, Langland makes no connection between the two. He can acknowledge the terrible possibility of inflicting physical impairment upon children, but blinding as a form of mutilation does not occur to him (in spite of the fact that the word would have alliterated nicely in the line about breaking bones).

So blinding was a historical fact in late medieval France, but it seemed largely beyond the ken of the people of England at the same time—and even beyond the imagination of a poet as creative as Langland.

CHAPTER 3

"Blind" Jews and Blind Christians: The Metaphorics of Marginalization

In his influential book *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*,[1] R. I. Moore studies the rise of antipathy in Christian Europe toward three groups of social outcasts: heretics, Jews, and lepers. He charts the ways in which the authority of not only the church but also royalty and communal organizations was exercised on these groups. He draws particularly close connections between heresy and its metaphorical representative, leprosy; several twelfth-century writers asserted that as leprosy destroyed the body, heresy destroyed the church. The similarity in treatment of heretics and lepers was striking: capital punishment for the heretic, and a symbolic death sentence for the leper, who stood in an open grave while a priest read over him a ritual of exile from the community.[2]

However, Moore admits that generalizing about medieval Jews is more difficult.

> It is impossible to strike a true balance of the general situation of European Jews in the twelfth century. In many ways they shared in the general prosperity and expansion of the period. . . . [They] often occupied positions of influence, and many of them accumulated great wealth, not only through local money-lending (which was not invariably lucrative) but as part of a banking and trading network which extended through Europe and the middle east.[3]

This is a very different situation from those of the other two marginalized groups. Even though Jews in the later Middle Ages were repeatedly the victims of pogroms and were ultimately expelled from several European cities and countries, most medieval Christians, following genealogies of patristic

belief traceable from Augustine to Aquinas, understood that Jews had a place in the Christian world.[4] Furthermore, numerous medieval papal bulls—some forbidding Christians to force Jews to convert and be baptized, others outlawing violence against Jews—show that the medieval church generally supported the presence of Jews in Europe and threatened excommunication of Christians who did not.[5] Not only the forms of persecution of Jews but also their place in European society were different from those of heretics and lepers.

While a few medieval Christian writers viewed Judaism as a type of leprosy infecting the social body of Christ, another metaphor of illness—or more precisely, disability—was broadly applied to Jews in the Middle Ages. The metaphorical topos of the blindness of the Jews grew out of New Testament discourse and appeared with remarkable frequency in medieval writings of all genres. This chapter interrogates how the term for this disability was used as a derogatory metaphor that virtually reached the status of catachresis as defined by Naomi Schor in chapter 1. In medieval Europe, blindness was both fact and figurative language, and a number of texts show that stereotypes of the blind intersected with stereotypes of Jews; the social and textual strategies of accusation and exclusion were similar for both groups. Both Jews and blind people were overtly accused of greed, an accusation related to the usury practiced by Jews and begging practiced by blind people; in both instances, because money was not earned through physical labor, the concomitant accusation of sloth became widespread. Blind people and Jews in the Middle Ages were also believed to be disrupters of the social order, liars and lawbreakers accused of crimes from theft to murder. Most important, both groups were at least partly blamed for having chosen their marginalization, Jews by eschewing conversion and blind people through sinfulness or lack of faith.

A distinct undercurrent in the connection between Jews and the blind manifests itself in anxieties about the incomplete bodies of these "others." Beyond the Christian vilification of the practice of circumcision as "the mark of physical loss that symbolized the spiritual loss of Jewish disbelief in Jesus,"[6] some Christians believed that Jews, both male and female, menstruated or suffered from bloody fluxes.[7] This belief in malfunctioning or incomplete genitalia mirrors Freud's assertion that the anxiety of the sighted about the blind is a form of castration anxiety, the fear that one could become similarly "incomplete."[8] Blindness and Judaism thus become metonymically linked through the notion of an impotence that is deserved even if not actually self-inflicted. This connection is anticipated in the Old

Testament story of the Sodomites, where sexual inversion and the punishment of blindness are paramount (Genesis 19:1–11). The conjunction of blindness and issues of sexuality could certainly have informed medieval anxieties about Jews and the blind; medieval French drama associated sins of sexual excess with blind people.

As background to the argument that Jews and blind Christians suffered similar types of marginalization and punishment, I will read some representative biblical and patristic texts that made the anti-Judaic topos of the blindness of the Jews pervasive in Christian Europe. These texts were instrumental in the disciplinary strategies brought to bear upon Jews and blind people, the metaphorically and literally "blind," in law and literature. Although this discussion draws upon a number of textual genres, medieval drama dominates because it most clearly demonstrates the marginalization of both the blind and Jews. As the most social of genres in the Middle Ages, one that brought together communities in its writers, performers, and audience, drama provided an ideal method of "performing" Judaism and blindness in order to represent the marginalized groups to sighted, non-Jewish audiences. In the presence of Jews and blind people on the streets of urban areas, medieval society perceived a threat; in drama, the mimetic representations of these "others" first enacted that threat and then negated it through the performance of conversion, atonement, and miraculous cure that resulted in assimilation.

BIBLICAL AND PATRISTIC BACKGROUND

The metaphorical topos of the blindness of the Jews, which signifies their unwillingness to "see" the divinity of Jesus, can be traced to the Pauline letters of the New Testament. This metaphor per se is not entirely consonant with Christian teaching: while some Jews who were Jesus's contemporaries supposedly had the opportunity to "see" Jesus perform miracles, Christian faith was not meant to be based upon ocular proof. Since internalizing Jesus's message was more important, emphasis on the deafness of the Jews might have been more logical—and that metaphor in fact features in some anti-Semitic texts.[9] However, blindness dominates, perhaps because Paul, a Jew converted to Christianity after being blinded on the road to Damascus, chose this metaphor knowing that in the Jewish tradition, blind people were denied a number of rights and privileges accorded to the sighted. For example, blind men were forbidden to preach or to offer sacrifices.[10] II Samuel 5:8 cites the proverb that neither the blind nor the lame may enter

the temple, and the Talmud places blindness among conditions that are tantamount to death itself: "Four types are considered like the dead: the poor, lepers, the blind, and those who have no children."[11] Thus, instead of focusing on deafness to God's new word, Paul may have consciously employed a disability to characterize his nonbelieving contemporaries that Jewish writing frequently demeaned.

Paul emphasizes the metaphor of blindness both in his own words and in his readings of Old Testament prophets in Romans 11:7–11.

> 7. What then? That which Israel sought, he hath not obtained: but the election hath obtained it; and the rest have been blinded.
>
> 8. As it is written: God hath given them the spirit of insensibility; eyes that they should not see; and ears that they should not hear, until this present day. [Isaiah 6:9–10]
>
> 9. And David saith: Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompense unto them.
>
> 10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see: and bow down their back always. [Psalm 68:23]

Here Paul constructs the blindness of the Jews as divinely sanctioned, supposedly foretold by two of the Old Testament prophets who had foreseen Jesus's divinity and believed in him before his birth. These citations add authority to Paul's own assertions about Jewish blindness as he indicates the change of spiritual law that is to come. However, later in the chapter Paul states that "blindness in part has happened in Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in," implying that Christians should not feel superior to the Jews, who will be converted in time. In another of his letters Paul writes that the truth of the gospel is hidden from the spiritually lost, "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:4). Here Paul blames disbelief on "the god of this world," presumably greedy materialism, an accusation leveled at Jews from early Christian times through the Middle Ages.

The biblically inscribed metaphor of blindness proliferated in anti-Semitic writings of the Middle Ages, especially among patristic writers such as Augustine. In *The City of God,* for example, Augustine asserts that the Jews' rejection of Christianity blinds them to the nature of their own religion: "When they do not believe in our Scriptures, their own Scriptures, to which

they are blind when they read, are fulfilled in them."[12] In other words, the Jews' inability to see the prophecies of the coming Messiah in their scriptures prevents them from reading their own holy books correctly, and thus Jews do not fully understand their own religion. Augustine's interpretation of Jesus's miraculous cure of theblind man in John 9 includes a complex conflation of the spiritual blindness of nonbelievers and an indictment of physically blind people. Initially Augustine interprets the blind man as the human race generally, "for this blindness happened through sin in the first man from whom we all have taken the origin not only of death, but also of wickedness."[13] In explicating Jesus's assurance that the man's blindness was due to neither his sins nor those of his parents, Augustine writes,

> If no man is without sin, were the parents of this blind man without sin? Was he himself born blind even without original sin? Or had he while living added nothing? Can it be that because he had closed his eyes, his lusts were not at all awake? How great are the evils the blind commit! From what evil does the evil mind abstain, even with closed eyes? He could not see, but he knew how to think, and perhaps to lust for something which as a blind man he could not accomplish.[14]

Here Augustine creates a confusing slippage from blindness as a condition resulting from original sin, to blind people as exemplary of postlapsarian sinfulness generally, to a castigation of the blind man in John 9 for sinful ambition inappropriate to a blind person. Although Augustine first interprets the literally blind man in the scriptural story metaphorically, ultimately the man's sinfulness relates to his unwillingness to suffer blindness gladly. The exclamation in the middle of the passage, "How great are the evils that the blind commit!" is significantly ambiguous, referring to both metaphorically "blind" sinners and literally blind people.

One of the most interesting conjunctions of blindness and Judaism in patristic interpretation appears in the Venerable Bede's reading of the book of Tobit or Tobias. In the narrative, an evil ruler will not allow the bodies of Jews to be buried during a period of persecution, but the righteous Tobit secretly undertakes the interments. Exhausted after burying a body, he falls asleep on the roof of his house, and swallows defecate in his eyes, blinding him. In his commentary Bede praises Tobit's devout Judaism, as the scripture itself does, but the blinding causes the commentator to change his hermeneutic methodology to multivalent allegory.

> Do not be surprised, reader, that sometimes, typologically speaking, men's good deeds have a bad meaning and their bad deeds a good meaning. . . . Tobit's being blinded, therefore, denotes that, as the Apostle says, blindness has come upon a part of Israel. . . . Because of their swift flight, swallows are a figure of pride and volatility of heart, since their uncleanness immediately blinds those over whom it holds sway. For the one who recklessly enslaves his soul to the volatility of licentiousness and pride, sleeps, as it were, lying down beneath a swallows' nest. Now this blindness got the better of the people of Israel especially as the coming of the Lord in the flesh was imminent, when they were both being oppressed by the yoke of Roman slavery and transgressing the precepts of divine law by very immoral living.[15]

The scriptural metaphor of the blindness of the Jews is too strong for Bede to ignore, so he applies an allegory *in malo* (i.e., as a negative example) to a character who is immoral in the commentator's eyes only inasmuch as he is a Jew. Thus Tobit can represent the good Jew of pre-Christian times, and typologically he can prefigure the bad Jew who is blind to Jesus's divinity during the Christian era. Bede carefully justifies his indictment of Tobias with both an allusion to Romans 11:25 ("Now this blindness got the better of the people of Israel . . .") and by historicizing the Jews' sinfulness during a period of "very immoral living" under Roman rule.

Bede continues the justification of his antithetical reading in the next paragraph, which concludes the chapter.

> Nor should it seem absurd that this Tobit, blind as he was and preaching God's word, is said to signify both reprobate and elect alike. For the patriarch Jacob too, while wrestling with the angel, was both lamed and blessed, signifying, that is, by his limping the unbelievers of his nation, and by his blessing the believers.[16]

By pairing Tobit's impairment with that of Jacob, Bede effectively teaches the lesson that no unbelieving Jew is fully able-bodied: as a representative of his race, he is incomplete until he chooses to join the ranks of God's more recently chosen people.

The blind man instructs his son, whom Bede calls Tobias, to go to a far-away land to collect a debt. As Tobias is about to depart, a beautiful young man appears and offers to be the traveler's guide; this is the archangel Raphael in human form. In Bede's reading these two figures together allegorically represent Jesus: "By [the angel], quite appropriately, the divinity of

our Saviour is signified, just as his humanity is by Tobias." Along the road a large fish attacks Tobias, but the disguised angel tells the young man how to kill it in order to preserve its gall, part of which will cure blindness. (Bede interprets the fish as "the ancient devourer of the human race, i.e., the devil," whom Jesus slays.)[17] After returning home, Tobias cures his father's disability by applying the fish gall to his father's eyes, causing "a white film like the skin of an egg" to peel away from them. Of this event Bede writes, "And the Jewish people on realizing the very bitter malice of the most wicked enemy will recover the light they have lost. The white film which had obstructed his eyes denotes the folly of self-indulgence."[18] In Bede's allegory the miraculous cure for blindness coincides precisely with the cure of a faith "disabled" through sinfulness. Bede's allegorical exegesis of the book of Tobit reached a wide clerical audience because of its inclusion in the popular *Glossa Ordinaria,* which exists in numerous manuscripts and early printings; the *auctor* is cited by name, and the double allegorization of the elder Tobit as both good and bad Jew is reproduced there.[19]

In a version comprising over two thousand lines of Latin elegiac verse by Matthew of Vendôme, the *Tobias* became one of the most popular poems of the later Middle Ages, largely because it was adopted as a curricular text. It was one of the so-called *Auctores octo* collection that dominated European grammar-school education in the later Middle Ages and was printed fifty times before 1500. Although the poem cites Bede's commentary on the Tobias ("*Exponit Beda,*" l. 53), Matthew does not provide a consistent allegorical reading of the story. However, he chooses the moment of the father's blinding to invite his readers to allegorize, using the conventional metaphor of the nut and the shell (ll. 283–302),[20] and some of those interpreters would have exploited the catachrestic relationship between blindness and Judaism. The story reached a less literate audience when staged as an episode in the monumental Procession of Lille, dramatic reenactments of seventy-two stories from the Bible and Roman history. Probably written in the second half of the fifteenth century,[21] the play follows the biblical account of Tobias fairly closely except that it begins after the elder man is blinded, perhaps in order to preserve decorum in the production, since a dramatic representation of a bird defecating on a man would not have been conducive to an atmosphere of reverence.[22]

The numbing conventionality of the metaphor of the blindness of the Jews is most evident in the *Patrologia Latina.* A proximity search of the database using the roots for "blind" and "Jew," *caec-* and *Judae-,* within thirty

characters of each other reveals well over 600 instances of the pairing. (The search yields 698 examples, but a few are not related to the topic at hand, such as the name "Caecilius," better known as the Latin poet Statius.) Interestingly, the vast majority of these passages do not develop the topos but simply use it as a rhetorical gesture; for patristic writers, the connection of the terms in the vilification of Jews was too natural to deserve special attention. To paraphrase Naomi Schor, the metaphor of the blindness of the Jews "strive[s] toward catachresis," and its frequency in medieval religious discourse justifies Paul de Man's lack of differentiation between *trope* and *catachresis.*

The trope of the blindness of the Jews shared the discursive space of anti-Semitic stereotypes with the representation of Jews as the unruly other, bringers of disorder who were as sinful in behavior as in religious belief; in a recent article, Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler have called this the "trope of grotesque excess," mentioned in chapter 1.[23] Among the earliest patristic writers to use this trope was the fourth-century saint John Chrysostom, who wrote that the synagogue is "a brothel and theater . . . a cave of pirates and the lair of wild beasts." He adds, "Living for their belly, mouth forever gaping, the Jews behave no better than hogs and goats in their lewd grossness and the excesses of their gluttony." Chrysostom's pairing of the brothel and the theater highlights Jewish disorder,[24] while the accusations of theft and animalistic behavior became conventions of anti-Semitic diatribes. Peter the Venerable's *Adversus Judaeorum* applies the trope of excess to the theft of objects from Christian churches.

> What [the thief] had stolen from holy churches he sells to synagogues of Satan. . . . Christ now, through the insensible vessels consecrated to him, suffers directly the Jewish insults, since, as I have often heard from truthful men . . . they direct such wickedness against those celestial vessels as is horrifying to think and detestable to say.[25]

Here the accusation of theft is closely associated with the trope of excess, since the behavior of the Jews toward the sacred vessels is so unsavory as to defy description. Peter's racist stereotypes closely anticipate the representation of Jews in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament,* discussed later.

Given the connection between blind people and Jews in patristic literature, its appearance in later hagiographic and homiletic literature was inevitable. Two examples will suffice here. In one of the miracles of the Virgin at Rocamadour, the blindness of a Christian woman symbolically repre-

sents the blindness of the Jews so that the truth of her religion might be proven through a miraculous cure. A woman from Auvergne, blind for seven years, visits the shrine at Rocamadour with interests more worldly than religious: she is more focused on "the sort of sight that can be recovered and lost" than on the spiritual vision of Jesus eternally in heaven. Once in the church, she spends several days embodying the trope of grotesque excess: she must be "restrained by the brethren of the church because her spirit had become more fervent and her complaining was sometimes too shrill, and also because they found her voice irritating and excessively loud."[26] But one day at Lauds, during the Office of the Tenebrae, the lights in the church are extinguished, "an act which signifies the perfidy and blindness of the Jews, which persists to this day." When the church is illuminated again as "a symbol of the Catholic faith which spreads its clear radiance everywhere," her sight is restored. The miracle thus reenacts the prophecy in Isaiah 9:2 about the Jews who will convert to Christianity after Jesus's coming: "The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen."

Maurice de Sully, Bishop of Paris in the second half of the twelfth century, used another example of grotesque excess in a collection of vernacular homilies written between 1168 and 1175.[27] One of these is based on Luke 18:35–43, the miraculous cure of a blind man at Jericho who will not stop crying for Christ to heal him, in spite of attempts by the disciples to silence him. For Maurice, the blind man's excessive wailing represents insanity.

> Li nonveans senefie les paiens, les juis, les faus crestiens, quar ausi com li nonveans a perdue la veue del cors, ausi ont li paien, li jui, li faus crestien perdue la veue das corages; e ausi com li nonveans foloie, tele ore est, hors de la voie qui le doit mener a son ostel, ausi foloient li paien, li jui, li fauls crestien hors de la voie qui les doit mener a la vie pardurable. Li paien e li jui foloient par lor mescreance, e li faus crestien, ja soit ço qu'il aient bone creance, il foloient par malvaise vie qu'il demainent.[28]
>
> *[The blind man signifies pagans, Jews, and false Christians, because just as the blind man has lost his bodily vision, so have the pagan, the Jew, and the false Christian lost their spiritual vision; and just as the blind man often goes foolishly off of the path that should lead him to his lodgings, so the pagan, the Jew, and the false Christian go foolishly off of the path that should lead them to eternal life. The pagan and the Jew commit folly with their misbelief, and*

the false Christian, although he has correct belief, commits folly through the evil life that he leads.]

Maurice augments the conventional symbolic reading of blindness as a spiritual condition with insanity as another aspect of grotesque excess, and he literalizes the transgression of boundaries with the image of the blind and faithless leaving the correct path.

In the later Middle Ages, the trope of grotesque excess manifested itself against the Jews in numerous accusations of blood libel, the belief among Christians that Jews tortured and murdered Christian children. Some instances included the accusation that the Jews drank the blood of their victims. The first of these recorded in European history took place in Norwich in 1144, when the body of a boy was found on Good Friday. The rumor then spread that he had been crucified by Jews. Similar incidents occurred before the end of the twelfth century in Gloucester, Bury St. Edmunds, and Winchester. Accusations of blood libel resulted in the burning of 38 Jews at Blois in 1171, and 100 Jews at Bray-sur-Seine in 1191.[29]

HISTORICAL MODES OF CONTROL AND PUNISHMENT

In France and England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Jews and the blind both benefited from specially defined status in relation to the throne but also suffered expulsion from cities and, ultimately in the case of Jews, both countries. The special status of Jews resulted directly from their value as moneylenders to the nobility and aristocracy, but because moneylending for interest contravened Christian law, Jewish usurers were reviled as well. Usury also gave its detractors the impression that Jews were not actually working but were instead engaged in luxurious idleness. Thomas Aquinas argued that it was the duty of royalty to stamp out usury in spite of its usefulness: "It would be better for [princes] to compel Jews to work for a living, as is done in parts of Italy, than to allow them to live in idleness and grow rich by usury."[30] Similar notions were voiced by Louis IX (Saint Louis), Edward I, and Archbishop of Canterbury John Pecham, along with the Alsatian abbot Geiler of Kaiserberg, who implies that usurers' indolence makes them appear more important than Christians.

> Are the Jews, then, better than Christians, that they will not work with their hands? Are they not subject to the decree of God—in the sweat of thy brow

> shalt thou earn thy bread? Making money by usury is not working; it is flaying others while themselves remaining idle.[31]

Significantly, Geiler conflates Jewish idleness with flaying, physical mutilation that could have reminded his readers of the blood libel myth.

Usury was also believed to drain the coffers of countries where Jews lived, leaving kings in precarious positions. Thus, when Archbishop of Canterbury John Pecham demanded in 1285 that Edward I bring a halt to Jewish usury, the king replied that although he disapproved of the practice on spiritual grounds, he did not know what to do.[32] Even a century after Jews were expelled from England, Geoffrey Chaucer assumed that the readers of his "Prioress's Tale" would understand that a Jewish ghetto in Asia might be "sustened by a lord of that contree / For foul usure and lucre of vileynye."[33]

Aside from the economic convenience of Jews as moneylenders, popes and other powerful Christians argued for special protection of Jews as a people important to Christianity, so long as their social power was limited. Thomas Aquinas drew upon traditions of civil government to describe Jews as "bondsmen of princes," "serfs of the royal chamber," and "our effective property"; although the paternalistic nature of the king's relationship to Jews imbues these disempowering metaphors, nevertheless they resulted in a "status [that] bound Jews and rulers together, potentially guaranteeing the former's physical security."[34] This protection effectively limited Jews' freedom of movement, particularly in France. So while Jewish moneylenders' utility in the economy was paramount, their status required obedience to special political strictures of the societies in which they operated.

The economic utility of blind people in medieval Europe sprang from a very different cause: as Stiker has asserted, they were useful as objects of charity that could win donors eternal life.[35] However, the blind were least threatening when that charity took place through institutionally approved channels, and blind people who attempted to lead even a limited life outside domestic or religious confines were, like the Jews, the object of distrust, ridicule, and physical violence, partly because of social anxieties involving mendicants feigning disabilities. The passage from Augustine quoted here suggests as much: the blind should not be ambitious for more than they can accomplish. Humility is paramount, and striving for more than one's impairment allows is prideful.

Paternalism played a role in both the charity extended to the blind by the church and the royal protection of blind people in medieval England

and France, which entailed the granting of royal licenses to beg and the endowment of special institutions. The most famous and influential of these, the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts and its imitators, are examined in chapter 2. The creation of an enclosed space for the protection of the blind may appear to imitate the cloistering of a religious community, but the goal of these institutions to discipline and control their residents made the sites more similar in nature to walled Jewish ghettos, meant to segregate certain members of the population.[36] Also similar to the treatment of Jews, the protection offered by these institutions meant more effective control of the movement of blind people. In England such control was legal rather than institutional: edicts in 1388, 1405, and 1509 forbade beggars to leave their place of birth or current residence, and after 1388 any beggar hoping to travel in England was required to have a pass from the county justice of the peace.[37]

Increasingly institutionalized attempts to differentiate worthy mendicants from frauds—or in this study, truly blind people from false, sighted beggars—resulted in another similarity between that group and Jews: the wearing of special badges. Michel Mollat mentions that beggars in a number of cities had to wear badges as insignias of their official status.[38] The same was true for residents of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, who after 1312 were required by Philippe IV to wear a yellow fleur-de-lys sewn or pinned to the chest area of their uniform, identifying them as residents of a royal establishment.[39] The color yellow would have visually linked these badges to those worn by Jews; Michel Pastoreau has stated that by the fourteenth century, in the public eye yellow had become "the color of bile, lies, prostitutes, Jews, and criminals."[40] The most important codification of Jewish sartorial distinction occurred during the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, when Canon 68 of the conciliar decrees stated that Jews had to be identifiable "through the character of their dress."[41] It was Louis IX, founder of the Quinze-Vingts, who first forced French Jews to wear yellow badges in a decree of 1269; those who did not would lose their outer garment to their denouncers.[42] Although the color, shape, and size of badge were not consistent across Europe, the impulse to demarcate both blind people and Jews, even when such demarcation was meant to communicate a relatively privileged status, demonstrates the need to identify and categorize the other. The most severely disciplinary demarcation of lawbreaking beggars, including the blind, took place directly on the body: in the second half of the fourteenth century, beggars found on English roads outside regulated territories without a highway pass were branded with a hot iron.[43] To

use Goffman's terminology, these are all stigmas (and the branding exactly reproduces the stigma forced on Greek slaves); their stigmatic implications vary in degree but not so much in kind, depending on time and place.

Yet another perceived similarity between Jews and blind Christians lay in accusations that both accumulated inordinate wealth without working. Thomas of Chobham, a student in Paris in the late twelfth century and subdean of Salisbury in the early thirteenth, may have used his experiences on both sides of the Channel when he addressed this issue in his *Summa de arte praedicandi,* which he had completed by 1228.[44] Among other warnings to priests about the evils of beggars in church, Thomas wrote that they "often acquire alms of money in a large quantity, nor do they use the collected silver, but they save it with great avarice constantly until death."[45] In a collection of exempla for sermons, the thirteen-century Dominican Etienne de Bourbon recounts a tale told against the sin of avarice by Nicholas de Flavin, archbishop of Besançon, about a blind man who accumulates a great deal of money by begging and then engaging in usury. When alone he enjoys counting his money, until one day he hears a voice that says it is useless for him to rejoice in his ill-got gains because they belong to a worker in a nearby city. In despair, preferring to lose the money instead of allowing anyone else to have it, he hollows out a tree trunk, hides the money in it, and pushes it into a river. Fishermen pull the log from the water, and a worker in a nearby town who buys it for one of his projects finds the money inside.[46] The exemplum associates the blind man with the conventionally Jewish sin of usury, and then the tale returns the money to a segment of society where it rightfully belongs, a worker who is rewarded for his industry by finding the money in the honestly purchased raw material of his work.

The final punishment of the medieval Jews of both France and England was expulsion. Kenneth Stow has drawn a connection between the two kingdoms as the only European ones unified enough to manage the wholesale removal of Jews: "[Such] a scenario was possible only in England and to some extent France. No other medieval kingdoms or governmental units were so politically unified in the thirteenth century . . . or so civilly self-aware."[47] Stow's slight qualification of France's political unity is based on the French royalty's inconsistency in its policy toward Jews. Although Philippe IV first decreed the expulsion of Jews in 1306, they were recalled by Louis X in 1315, expelled again by Philippe VI in 1322, partially recalled by John II in 1359 (who was most interested in a small group of bankers), and then finally banished by Charles VI in 1394. In England, Edward I's edict was firmer and more permanent: he expelled the Jews from his kingdom in

1290, after having drained them of their money to the point that they were useless to him as lenders; they were not officially readmitted until the Interregnum in the seventeenth century.[48] The expulsion of the Jews from England corresponds with the moment at which the Jews' economic utility had been exhausted.

While the blind in medieval Europe were never singled out for expulsion, they suffered this fate in particular cities that expelled groups of beggars including the blind. Unlicensed beggars were expelled from London in 1359, and their livelihood was effectively destroyed when those who gave illicit alms were threatened with imprisonment.[49] In France, Louis IX expelled beggars from Paris in 1254, an action that may explain his desire to create a royally sanctioned group of blind mendicants at the Quinze-Vingts the following decade.[50] In the fifteenth century Charles VII again expelled beggars from Paris; the decree specifically mentions the simulation of corporeal infirmities as one of the reasons.[51]

The parallel marginalization of Jews and the blind outlined previously suggests that the presence of both groups in Christian society was at best simply tolerated (so long as appropriate strictures were observed) but not infrequently punished.

PERFORMING "BLIND" JEWS AND BLIND SINNERS IN RELIGIOUS DRAMA

Medieval drama is particularly fruitful terrain for exploring stereotypes of Jews and blind people, since drama is the most social of medieval art forms, bringing together a playwright (often a cleric), actors, and audience. The mimetic force of drama allows for the enactment of marginalization and punishment visibly upon the bodies of the actors.

The force of anti-Semitic social stereotypes is exemplified in the Benediktbeuern Christmas Play, which takes us out of France and England but shows a conventional European representation of a Jew as grotesquely excessive. The play opens with Isaiah prophesying the birth of Jesus and using the metaphor of blindness ("Let Judaea rejoice, and, now blind, let her flee from the threshold of error").[52] Also on stage are a group of Jews, led by a figure called Archisynagogus whose role is to argue against the prophets. Before his first speech, the following stage directions appear.

> Let Archisynagogus with his Jews, having heard the prophecies, make an excessive clamor; and, shoving forward his comrade, agitating his head and his entire

> body and striking the ground with his foot, and imitating with his sceptre the mannerisms of a Jew in all ways.[53]

The playwright implies that the uproar should be drawn from the Christian actor's understanding of Jewish stereotypes, which include those associated with grotesque excess: noise, frenetic movement, and violent physical activity. In performance the sound and the fury of Archisynagogus would have contrasted strikingly with the ordered, formal declamations of the prophets.

Similar freneticism characterizes the Jews who torture the stolen eucharistic bread in the fifteenth-century English Croxton *Play of the Sacrament.* Jonathas, the leader of the Jews who defines his character in terms of his wealth, wants to test the bread because of the unnatural Christian belief that has resulted in the anti-Semitic "conceyte" (which we might choose to call a catachresis) of the blindness of Jonathas's race:

> Þe beleve of thes Cristen men ys false, as I wene;
> For þe beleue on a cake—me thynk yt ys onkynd.
> And all they seye how þe prest dothe yt bynd,
> And by þe myght of hys word make yt flessh and blode—
> And thus be a conceyte þe wolde make vs blynd. (198–203)[54]

The playwright's mention of blindness here foreshadows the importance of vision in the play: what the Jews see will convince them of the divinity of Jesus and reinforce the beliefs of the audience. Before the torture begins, Jonathas repeats the anti-Judaic trope but gives greater agency to the eucharistic bread: it is "this bred that make us thus blind" (388). Then he and his colleagues, Jason, Jasdon, Masphat, and Malchus, stab the Host, causing it to bleed, and in fear they plan to throw it in boiling oil. However, the bread adheres to Jonathas's hand, at which point the playwright includes the stage direction "Her he renneth wood [mad], with þe Ost in hys hond." (l. 503). The Jews try to remove the bread by nailing it to a post. Jasdon says to the others, "Liffte up hys armys, felawe[s], on hey, Whill I drive in thes nailes" (l. 509); aside from assuring that the audience will see the Host's miraculous power because of its height, this line implies a mock "elevatio," with Jonathas and the Jews all raising the bread together. Further madness ensues after the Jews pull at Jonathas to free him, but his hand detaches and remains stuck to the Host, thus exemplifying through somatic disability his "incompleteness" without Christianity.[55] When a mountebank attempts

but fails to cure Jonathas, the Jews "bett away þe leche [physician] and hys man" (l. 653). The violence and insanity caused by the miracle undermine the logical intelligence of Jonathas's critique of Christianity, thus directing the audience to the belief that Christianity can be understood only through faith, not reason; the mysteries of the Eucharist are indeed "onkynd" (unnatural) in one sense, but the miracle of transubstantiation (under attack from Lollards during the century when the play was written)[56] was a foundation of medieval Christianity. Furthermore, the miraculous appearance of Jesus bursting forth from an oven disciplines not only the Jews but the sinful Christian who has stolen the Eucharist for them. They all undertake penance for their sins, and the play ends with both the restoration of order and an ambiguous assimilation of the Jews into Christian society.[57]

The trope of grotesque excess also informs a legend dramatized in a pageant included in an early fifteenth-century list of the York Cycle called the "*Portacio corporis Mariae,*" more popularly known as the "Play of Fergus," one of the episodes associated with the apocryphal life of the Virgin Mary. As pallbearers carry Mary's coffin, the Jew Fergus (whose Gaelic name substitutes one "other" for another) attempts to push it off their shoulders as an act of disrespect. His hands adhere to the coffin and are pulled from his arms, a miracle that causes him to convert and therefore be restored to physical wholeness. Fergus's blasphemy and the slapstick comedy of the play evidently excited the citizens of York to such a degree that they caused mayhem around the pageant: in 1431, the cycle records criticize the play partly because it was not from authorized scripture but also because it caused the audience to laugh and become violent ("magis risum et clamorem causabat quam devocionem, et quandoque lites, contenciones et pugne inde proveniebant in populo").[58] Among an audience who had never had contact with Jews, the mimetic representation must have carried all the more authority in its characterization of Fergus as a creator of disorder. And the play's effect of inciting violence may have suggested to the audience that the very presence of Jews in society necessarily resulted in such disorder, spilling from the Jew himself to those around him. The Play of Fergus was evidently suppressed, disappearing entirely from the cycle by the late fifteenth century.[59] Interestingly, this legend lives on in the lower border of a stained glass window in York Minster, where it is enacted by monkeys, one of which dangles by his stubby arms from the side of a draped coffin.[60]

A late fourteenth-century French play of the Assumption of the Virgin includes not only a Fergus figure, here called Ysachar, but also Jewish ac-

complices who are struck blind as they try to disrupt the funeral. Because the blinded Jews have been unable to see Ysachar's pushing of and sticking to the coffin, he describes the event to them in a passage full of praise of the Virgin. He states that his hands were dried out, discolored ("seiches," "descolorees"), and attached so strongly to the coffin that he could not remove them. The apostle Peter prays for the Virgin's intercession, Ysachar is released, and he converts. He then tells his friends:

> Mes amys que voy en ce lieu
> Estre aveugles par ceste emprinse
> Se ceste palme est sur vous mise
> En confessant la foy de crist
> Et recevant le sainct esperit
> Vous seres enluminez brief.[61]
>
> *[My friends in this place whom I see to be blinded by this affair, if this palm is placed on you while you confess faith in Christ and receive the holy spirit, you will be quickly enlightened.]*

The corporeal locus of Ysachar's disability has become so thoroughly blessed that it has acquired the power to make the works of God manifest, to paraphrase John 9.

Ysachar's four friends disagree about undergoing the miraculous cure, a division representing not only the Jewish community during Jesus's life but also the "sheep" and the "goats" into which humanity will be divided on Judgment Day. Ruben and Joseph scold Ysachar for turning away from his faith, and Joseph adds that he would rather be blind for a thousand years than believe in Jesus. So at this point the audience sees not simply Jews choosing to remain Jews, but blind people choosing to remain blind, with both states of being based on the rejection of Christianity and its miracles. And the text also reinforces the notion that vision is a commodity: while the miracle of a cure would belong to God, the choice to remain blind is a human one.

On the other hand, Jacob and Levi agree to convert if Ysachar can restore their sight. After a lengthy speech affirming why they should believe in the Virgin, Ysachar lays his hands on the men's eyes and they are cured. Significantly, their grateful responses allude to much more than their brief impairment.

Jacob: O dieu soit loue je voy mieulx
Que ne fis onc en ma vie.
Levi: Benoist soit le nom de marie
Je ne fus onc si hureux.

[Jacob: O God be praised, I see better now than I ever have in my life.
Levi: Blessed be the name of Mary, I have never been so happy.]

Here the Jews see not only Mary's miraculous grace but also, retrospectively, the error of their ways before their conversion, when they did not know how impaired their vision was.

The most blatant instantiation of Jewish grotesque excess—and the one most closely associated with the origins of anti-Semitism—occurs in the English cycle plays presenting the buffeting and crucifixion of Jesus. In the Chester and *Ludus Conventriae* cycles the soldiers who put Jesus on the cross are straightforwardly labeled Jews.[62] In the *Ludus Coventriae,* after three Jews have finished nailing Jesus to the cross, a stage direction states: "Here xule Þei leve of and dawncyn a-bowte Þe cros shortly."[63] After the Jews have crucified the thieves, they "cast dyce for his clothis and fytyn and stryvyn."[64] The playwright has embellished the crucifiers' characters with physical grotesquerie and slapstick violence reinforcing the cosmic upheaval that they have engineered in the crucifixion. Although the crucifiers in the York *Crucifixion* are not called Jews, the fact that they swear by Mahound (Muhammad) paradoxically signifies their Judaism, for swearing by the name of the Jewish (i.e., pre-Christian) god would have been blasphemous for the actors involved in the production.[65] The same type of swearing takes place among the crucifiers in the Towneley plays, in which Caiaphas encourages extreme physicality by promising to bless the torturer who beats Jesus the hardest.[66] Here the stereotype of Jewish greed intersects with that of disordered excess.

At the intersection of Judaism and blindness in medieval literature and drama are two minor biblical figures who are portrayed quite differently in England and France: Lamech and Longinus. Medieval scriptural commentary asserted that Lamech was descended from Cain and also murdered him, based on Genesis 4:23–24.

> 23. And Lamech said to his wives Ada and Sella: Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech: for I have slain a man to the wounding of myself, and a stripling to my own bruising.

> 24. Sevenfold vengeance shall be taken for Cain: but for Lamech seventy times sevenfold.

Genesis 4 states clearly that Lamech was a bigamist, a sin that figures in some drama. Nowhere does the Bible mention that Lamech was blind; rather, that tradition grew first out of Jewish scriptural commentary and was then disseminated in the *Glossa ordinaria*.[67] Also according to these texts, after killing Abel, Cain was cursed to wander the earth eternally until someone killed him, bringing both Cain's sin and God's wrath upon the killer.

In England the Lamech story received its lengthiest dramatic treatment in the *Ludus Coventriae* and the Cornish *Gwreans an Bys* (Creation of the World). The former version is structured as a fifty-line episode that interrupts the play of Noah. Lamech says that he has gone blind because of his age, and his impairment has also affected his mental health: "Blyndenes doth make me of wytt for to rave / Whantynge of eye syght."[68] He claims to have been a superior archer when he was sighted, and he calls on his guide, a boy, to share in reviving this talent by helping him find and shoot a beast. The boy sees movement in a bush, helps Lamech to aim, and they shoot. Cain emerges and says that the arrow has slain him, whereupon he dies. The boy identifies the dead man as Cain, and Lamech is so angry that he beats the boy to death with his bow; this murder represents bruising of the "stripling" in the verse from Genesis. Lamech then bemoans the fact that his punishment will be seven times as severe as Cain's for slaying Abel (a variation on the scriptural number). The blind man leaves, and Noah takes the stage again. This is a relatively neutral version of the Lamech legend that constructs the blind man as rather weak and confused. The playwright does not mention Lamech's bigamy at all; rather, his misdirected evil in killing the cursed Cain becomes yet another reason for the flood.

The version of the Lamech story that made its way into the *Ludus Coventriae* is strikingly represented in the earlier Holkham Bible (ca. 1327–40) and the Egerton Genesis (1350–75), manuscripts in which biblical narratives recounted episodically in Anglo-Norman are richly illuminated.[69] Neither text makes mention of Lamech's bigamy, but both identify the boy who accompanies Lamech as a servant[70] (a detail that diverges from the French version discussed later), and both represent Lamech's fatal beating of the boy on the same page as the first scene(s) of the Noah story, significantly juxtaposing the moment of blind violence and the salvific cleansing to follow. As is the case in most pictorial representations of blind

people in the Middle Ages, the closed eyes of the figures of Lamech show their impairment.

The Cornish *Gwreans an Bys,* which may have been written as late as the early sixteenth century,[71] devotes about 280 lines to the Lamech episode. In his opening soliloquy this Lamech claims to be a bad man and hopes to be proven worse than Cain. One aspect of his sinfulness is his bigamy, and he also claims to have other young women available to him. Then he tells the audience that he is blind.[72] While Lamech's character is obviously meant to be repugnant to the audience, his pride in his sins remains oddly detached from the murder of Cain which follows; instead, by ordering his material as he does, the playwright associates Lamech's sins with his blindness. After Lamech and his servant agree to go hunting together, Cain emerges and delivers a soliloquy that mentions the curse that will fall upon anyone who dares to kill him. The shooting then takes place, but the dying Cain has the strength to engage in a hundred-line dialogue explaining to Lamech what he has done and why God will curse him. After Cain dies, Lamech turns on his servant, accuses him of responsibility for the murder, and beats him to death. Two devils then come from hell to claim Cain's soul.

The Lamech of the Cornish play clearly exemplifies the stereotype of sexual excess sometimes associated with the blind, but the playwright has not integrated the evil that the blind man claims for himself into the episode of the murder. Instead, as in the Ludus Coventriae, this Lamech is portrayed as weak and uncertain when he is with his servant. This rather underdeveloped character remains one-dimensionally emblematic of blindness: the episode's real focus is his role in biblical history. Blindness is integral to that role but is not explored in any larger context, in contrast to an analogous episode in a French play.

The French version of the Lamech story, which appears in the fifteenth-century *Le Mistére du Viel Testament,* is much lengthier (almost 500 lines) and more detailed than either of the episodes from England, and the playwright is more intent than his counterparts on creating an evil, grotesquely excessive blind man. This Lamech first appears on stage as sighted, saying that he enjoys looking at the children he has by his two wives; he then gives a twenty-line speech praising bigamy, partly due to the fact that a man can have his pleasure with two women.

Quant il a ses plaisirs passez
Avecques l'une, sans mesprendre

Mais qu'il n'ait les espritz lassez
Avecques l'autre les peult prendre.[73]

[When he has finished his pleasure with one, without doing any wrong, unless he has fatigued his spirits, he can take his pleasure with the other one.]

Lamech's self-proclaimed sexual energy makes him resemble a fabliau character, as does his wives' discussion of his inadequacies, sexual and otherwise. Ada says that his time has passed, and Sella replies:

Il ne peult desja plus aller;
Nature en luy se depart toute;
Tantost il ne verra plus goutte.[74]

[Already he can't go any farther; Nature has completely departed from him; soon he will not see anything at all.]

Claiming to be repulsed, Sella later asks whether he thinks he can service ("fournir") two women at the same time, to which Ada replies that he can hardly handle one. They agree that it is their children in whom they take comfort. In this dialogue the playwright structurally implies the passage of time during which Lamech is going blind, and he also reiterates the sexual excesses of which Lamech is guilty while simultaneously challenging his masculinity. The structure of episode to this point also resembles the situation of the Sodomites, whose sexual sin leads to the divine punishment of blindness.

When Lamech reenters, he complains of his blindness, and he and his wives agree that his son by Sella, Tubal Cain, will serve as his guide.[75] At this point Cain appears, praying desperately to the devils in hell to allow him to die;[76] this prayer implicitly constructs Lamech as a devil, since he will be the one to send Cain to hell. After Lamech and Tubal Cain make their way through the fields and Lamech asks for help with his bow, Cain interrupts with another plea that devils take him to hell. As in the other version, Lamech, aided by the boy, shoots Cain, whose dying words again link his murderer to devils.

Dyables! Qui esse qui m'a frappé?
C'est fait de moy; je vois mourir.

Dyables, Dyables, je suys happé;
Venez tost mon ame querir.[77]

[Devils! Who is it who struck me? It's done for me; I'm going to die. Devils, devils, I am caught. Come soon to fetch my soul.]

Tubal Cain identifies the dead man as Cain, and Lamech explodes with rage, calling the boy a traitor and the son of a whore ("filz de putain"); this insult again alludes to the sinful nature of Lamech's marriages. He beats his son to death with his bow, and thus, unlike the Lamechs of the plays from England, the French character thus adds filicide to his list of sins. The playwright goes on to show Lamech returning home to the anger of his wives. When Ada hears what her husband has done, she cries, "Vous, aveugle, mastin infait, / Le confessés vous ainsi franc?"[78] [You, blind man, stinking dog, do you confess it so frankly?]. She later calls him an adulterer and a rabid dog "filled with the devil" ("remply du Dyable"), thus making explicit Lamech's diabolical connections to which Cain alluded earlier. Sella reemphasizes his disability, calling him a blind murderer.[79]

The Lamech episode of *Le Mistére du Viel Testament* deploys the stereotype of sexual excess associated with blind people, and then with Lamech's return to his family, it allows for a social response to the murder that, in the plays from England, has only religious meaning. The man is both blind and a murderer, attributes that are closely connected in the wives' final speeches, and his criminality has earthly effects as well as metaphysical ones. The French Lamech must suffer first the wrath of his family and then the vengeance of God, while the English and Cornish Lamechs fear only God because they do not return to society (and the Middle English Lamech says that he will flee and hide).[80] The French playwright's choice to place the blind man in human society allows the audience to watch sighted characters rebuking and insulting a blind one—and of course the response to the murder is justifiable, but part of that response is vilification of Lamech's disability. So the French Lamech, a blind man, exemplifies sin, and the family's cruel treatment of him is exemplary inasmuch as it is directed at both a sinner and a blind man. Audiences in England were given no such exemplary behavior to follow.

Another figure who tends to be treated differently in the drama of France and England is Longinus, the blind centurion who pierces the side of the crucified Christ with his spear; blood and water pour forth, and the holy effluence cures Longinus of his disability and converts him to Christianity

simultaneously. Although the Bible suggests that he was a Roman, many medieval texts either identify him as a Jew or state that the Jews employed him. For example, in MS Egerton 2658, a fifteenth-century prose version of the Passion, Longinus is "an euyl proude man" who "toke litel hede of our lady talkynge;" he shoves his spear hard into Jesus's side, "as þese cruel jewys sette him to [d]o."[81] Trinity College Cambridge MS B. 5.42, a fifteenth-century *Life of the Virgin and of Christ,* associates him more closely with Jews in a grammatically fragmented description: "But a kny3t amonges [the Iewis] that hete longius A proude man and A wykid at that time but aftur he was conuertid."[82] In Langland's *Piers Plowman,* Longinus is not only Jewish ("þis blynde Iew Longeus") but allegorically their chivalric champion who comes "to Iusten wiþ Iesus."[83] However, Langland's Longinus seems to bear Jesus no ill will: he was "maad" (made) to joust with him because all of the other Jews "were vnhardy, þat houed [þer] or stode, / To touchen hym or to tasten hym or taken hym doun of roode."[84] Furthermore, in his speech of tearful repentance, he claims not to have known what he was doing: " 'Ayein my wille it was, lord, to wownde yow so soore.' / He sighed and seide, 'soore it me aþynkeþ.' "[85] Both Langland's text and Egerton 2658 suggest that as a blind man Longinus was not fully aware or in control of what he did, a tradition that also informs English drama. This lack of awareness provides a good example for viewers of the religious model of disability. If Longinus is ignorant of what he is doing and therefore not fully culpable, he deserves his miraculous cure more than he would otherwise, and his ignorance also makes his bitter contrition more believable.

The tradition of Longinus in extant medieval drama divides across the English Channel. In Britain he receives little attention in extant plays. In the *Ludus Coventriae,* the most fully developed episode, one of Pilate's soldiers takes charge of Longinus, who places his trust in the man, saying "I trost 3e be my frend / lede me forth sere. Oure sabath 3ou save." Although the last sentence here seems to imply that Longinus is a Jew, his miraculous cure turns him strongly against his people; he says that he knows the Jews are responsible for Jesus's death and "þe jewys of myn ignorans dede me rave."[86] The blind Longinus in the York Cycle is completely silent; the miracle not only restores his sight but gives him a voice.[87] Regardless of the religion imputed to Longinus, which would have been visible to the audience through costuming, both of these plays suggest a weak man sinning against Jesus unknowingly. (It would have been interesting to see whether an entire play could have sustained this kind of characterization: a play in the 1503 register of the lost Hereford Cycle was devoted to "Longys with his Knyghtes."[88]

If, as the title implies, the blind man was actually somehow the leader of the centurions, then he may have been characterized as more actively, consciously evil.)

The French tradition of Longinus in drama presents him as straightforwardly malevolent and fully aware of the task that he is undertaking. In the thirteenth-century *Résurrection du Sauveur,* the soldiers appeal to Longinus by promising him payment in order to stab the body of the crucified Jesus. The character happily agrees to go with the soldiers because he needs money; his begging, though frequent, brings in little.[89] Thus he willfully engages in sinful abuse of Jesus's body and also evokes the stereotype of the ever-needy mendicant.

Arnoul Gréban's *Mystère de la Passion* (ca. 1452), a four-day extravaganza stretching to over 27,000 lines, survives in nine full or partial manuscripts and was produced in several cities at least fourteen times before the end of the century, including three times in Paris before 1473.[90] Gréban's Longinus is deeply antagonistic toward Jesus: when the soldiers invite him to come with them to hasten Jesus's death, he responds:

> Des longtemps ay eu desir
> de faire a Jhesus desplaisir,
> et se vous me donnez licence
> encore luy feray je offence,
> comment qu'il en doye advenir.[91]
>
> *[For a long time I've had the desire to do harm to Jesus,*
> *and if you give me permission, I will wound him again,*
> *no matter what the consequences are.]*[92]

Later Longinus adds that though Jesus never harmed him, he is glad he will die, and the blind man also wishes he had arrived before Jesus's death, presumably in order to abuse him in his last moments as other Jews have done.[93]

Because Gréban has created a Longinus who in no way deserves a miraculous cure, the playwright must structure the miracle very differently. As the divine effluence runs down the spear, Longinus says that dead men cannot bleed, and a centurion nearby explains that this liquid is itself a miracle showing that Jesus is the true son of God. Longinus then asks for Jesus's mercy and says:

La chere et precieuse goute
prendray et mettray sur mes yeux,
esperant qu'il m'en soit de mieulx
et que ma veue se ravoye.

[I will take and put on my eyes the dear and precious drop, hoping that it makes me better and that my sight is restored.][94]

Of course the miracle occurs, and Longinus praises Jesus.

The Longinus episode in Gréban's play differs markedly from those elsewhere. Here Longinus first enacts some of the conventional sins and excesses of blindness, but he must understand and repent of his sins before the miracle happens. Only then is the miraculous cure open to him. Gréban betrays some of the same discomfort as English writers with the fact that a miracle could cure a nonbelieving blind man, since such an event would challenge Christians who adhered to the religious model of disability that required them to submit to religious discipline in order to qualify for divine cure. However, the ways in which the writers deal with the issue differ greatly—and tellingly. It is as if the French playwright thinks of Longinus first and foremost as a blind man, whereas his English counterparts thinks of him largely as a character trapped in the dark sightlessness of ignorance, both physical and metaphysical. Gréban's structuring of Longinus's spiritual awakening allows the playwright to satisfy his audience first with the theatricality of a conventional blind character but then with an actively penitent sinner whose repentance earns him his cure.

Jean Michel's *Mystère de la Passion,* performed in Antwerp in 1486, features a Longinus episode very similarly to Gréban's, but Michel furthers the social aspects of the miracle. Again Longinus wants to inflict injury on Jesus but arrives after his death. With the help of a soldier named Brayart (perhaps related to the word *brailler,* "to bray, to cry"), Longinus stabs Jesus with the lance, and the effluence pours forth, evidently in greater volume than in most passion plays. Thirteen spectators—soldiers, Jews, and the nameless centurion—marvel at the great abundance of blood ("de sanc en grand habondance"; 29001), and each of nine Jews speaks of his newfound faith or of his sorrow at having played a part in Jesus's death. After more than fifty lines of such exclamations, Longinus speaks again, begging the savior's pardon for the mutilation. Longinus anticipates the miracle in language fraught with religious symbolism.

Mais, sire, las, par ta pitié,
prens de ce pecheur pacience
et enlumine la clarté
de ma tenebreuse ignorance,
car, en icelle confidence,
une tres precïeuse goute
de sanc qui de ton costé goute
humblement mectray sur mes yeulx,
[e]sperant qu'i m'en soit de mieulx
et que plus clerement te voye. (29052–61)

[But lord, alas, through your pity have patience with this sinner, and illuminate the brightness of my dark ignorance, for, with confidence in this, I will humbly put on my eyes a very precious drop of the blood that drips from your side, hoping that it makes me better and that I will see you more clearly.]

Michel's Longinus uses his restored sight to engage in an act of affective piety by focusing on and asking forgiveness for the terrible wound that he has made in Jesus's side, and he contrasts giving the wound with the gifts of light and grace that he has received in exchange. Only the Roman soldiers remain unconverted by the experience. The theatricality of the group of Jews converting around the crucified body of Christ would have been impressive, but the numerous voices praising Jesus also serve to teach Longinus the error of his ways with greater intensity than the sole centurion in Gréban's play. Longinus as a member of this large group provides an interesting example of the religious model: when he is blind, he is among Jews, and when he is sighted, he is among Christians.

Dufournet asserts that stories such as this one "produce confusion between the symbol and the signified: what was a metaphor for sin . . . becomes the sin, the consequence of sin, and the blind person is made the figure of the sinner."[95] What Dufournet reads as the convergence of the symbol and the signified, Naomi Schor would read as catachresis. But regardless of terminology, unlike the Lamech episode, all versions of the Longinus story allay social anxieties with his reintegration into sighted and Christian society. This progression would have been visible in performance, first with Longinus's gaze directed toward the body of Jesus as the source of the miracle, and then, during his monologue of grateful praise, in his ability to return the gaze of the audience, establishing a rapport with them.

The absence of Jews from England and, later, France adds a dimension to the dramatic performance of Judaism in these plays. Inasmuch as the New Law of Christianity defined itself in opposition to the Old Law of Judaism, medieval Christian society needed to "remember" Jews more than any other marginalized race. The final social marginalization represented by expulsion could not erase Jews from Christian history, and therefore, in a complex dynamic enacted in the drama, they could be benignly represented by Christians even as the representation of them was vilified (as was most noteworthy in the Fergus play in the York Cycle). The plays demonstrate the pressing need for the enactment of conversion of lapsed sinners and their reintegration into the Christian community, and playwrights chose the blind not only because the cured blind man demonstrates his incorporation into the community of the audience by returning their gaze but also because his blindness has a conventional metaphoric dimension, reminding the audience of the absent Jewish other, waiting like Tobit for the scales to fall miraculously from his eyes.

Moore's *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* examines the rhetorical dimensions of anti-Semitism represented in the important metaphor of leprosy, but leprosy did not dominate the anti-Semitic discourse of the later Middle Ages. This examination of the metaphor of blindness in a few of its permutations has demonstrated, I hope, that the language of persecution drew on a long-established tradition and exploited it in peculiarly medieval ways. However, inasmuch as a metaphor is both sign and signified, blind people were implicated by this language, and although they were not persecuted as systematically or as harshly as medieval Jews, the association could not have helped their lot. A persecuting society is partly built upon the rhetorical figures that it privileges, and in the Middle Ages the complex constructions of blindness as disability and trope of disability resulted in unfortunately similar types of marginalization for two very different groups of people.

CHAPTER 4

Humoring the Sighted: The Comic Embodiment of Blindness

We have already seen some examples of the cruel but supposedly humorous treatment to which blind characters could be subjected in literature and history. Rutebeuf's satirical "Ordres de Paris" lampoons the blind residents of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts and raises incendiary anxieties about the effects that their disabled "excess" could have on the city. Villon's bequest of his spectacles to the institution two centuries later is gentler, more personal social satire, but the motivation to satirize the hospice's residents is different only in degree rather than kind. The bourgeois Parisian's journal entry about the blind men competing for the pig, though not written in a humorous style, describes an incident that was obviously staged in order to amuse its spectators. For reasons delineated in chapter 2, it is not coincidental that all of these examples are Continental. Alongside these texts arose several others on the Continent that treated blindness as a cause for laughter; the writers of these works apparently had the express purpose of humiliating blind characters or placing them in degrading situations for comic ends. This chapter will present a roughly chronological discussion of "comic" representations of blind people in a variety of genres. Such satirical marking differs—markedly—from the relative absence of satire of blind characters in texts from Britain. But while these texts delight in cruelty to blind characters, they do the cultural work of representing blind people out in society, making their way through the world, inhumane though that world is. In other words, the characters at the margins of medieval society move to the center so that their position in that society can be evaluated and negotiated. This movement must necessarily be painful, since no marginalized group in history has been suddenly rescued from vilification in

order to be given more humane treatment; however, it is nevertheless a movement toward a version of the social model of disability for blind people because it acknowledges that they exist, even if through cruelty and satire.

In this chapter I will discuss ballads, fabliaux, farces, and a romance. Nearly all of these texts come from France, a predictable result of the fact that these genres are basically French in origin. Humor is an option for authors of ballads and romances but a generic requirement in fabliau and farce; however, the exploitation and degradation of blind characters for putatively humorous ends are not required in any of these genres. While it is not my intention to ignore generic distinctions (and I will highlight them when they are most significant), the deployment of stereotypes about blind people and related plot devices transcends genre, giving these disparate works of literature commonalities that deserve attention.

In thirteenth-century France at roughly the time that Louis founded the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts and the use of blinding as punishment was also current, a seminal text in the representation of blind people emerged from Tournai, then in France but now part of Belgium. It is tempting to assert that *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle* (*The Boy and the Blind Man*), which has been called the first farce in French, was so popular that the myriad negative characteristics of the blind that it deploys influenced subsequent writers to the degree that those traits later became stereotypes. However, scant manuscript evidence and the nonexistent medieval performance history of the play contradict such an assertion. A more likely possibility is that the playwright made use of a set of stereotypes of blind people that he knew his audience would recognize, recognition that is paramount in comic drama. The play's humor, if it may be called that, grows out of several of the excesses associated with blindness and the punishment administered because of them.

The play opens with a blind man begging for alms and bemoaning the fact that he has no guide. He crosses paths with a boy, Jeannot, who agrees to guide him for a small daily wage; the blind man says that if he sings and Jeannot begs, they will earn "plenty of money and bread." The boy replies,

> je prierai Diex griés torment
> envoit tous chaix k'au povre aveule
> feront nes une bone seule,
> car il l'aroient bien perdu. (47–50)[1]

[I will pray to God to send many misfortunes to those who, even once, give alms to a poor blind person, because that would be wasted money.]

The blind man overhears the boy, who claims to have said this only to trick rogues ("c'est pour ces vilains decevoir").

The pair beg unsuccessfully, and when the boy complains, the blind man says:

Se je jamais pain ne rouvoie,
joliement me meintenroi,
tant ai je deniers assamblés. (104–6)

[If I ever stop asking for bread, I will still maintain myself nicely, having amassed so much money.]

The blind man promises Jeannot that he will share part of this wealth even if the day's begging proves fruitless. Here is an example of the stereotype that blind beggars are stingy and greedy, making them, in effect, false mendicants unworthy of further Christian charity.[2]

When Jeannot promises to procure a woman for the blind man, he says that not only does he already have one, but that when he has sex with her (the verb used here, *pourquler,* has strongly obscene connotations), Jeannot can help by raising her legs so high that one could roll dice on the soles of her feet (135–40). This sexual banter, at which Jeannot claims offense, reflects a "grotesque excess" typical of marginalized others in medieval literature;[3] in addition, it may have suggested the sin of sodomy to the play's original audience, since the woman's acrobatic posture in combination with the blind man's obscenity could imply anal intercourse. If this is the playwright's intention, then the character's blindness is justified in terms of the divine punishment enacted upon the Sodomites.

Jeannot then claims that he needs to leave for a moment to piss; instead, he adopts a different voice, insults the blind man, and slaps him.

Truans, Diex vous doint mal estrine,
quant si desordenement parlés!
Mais chierement le comparrés:
tenés pour çou! (147–50)

[Beggar, may God give you bad luck when you speak so improperly! But you will pay for it dearly: take that!]

The young valet scolds his victim with an economic metaphor that alludes to both the blind man's sin and the punishment yet to come. In this voice we may well hear the anxieties of medieval society as a whole, castigating the blind man for his sexual and pecuniary excesses.

The pair arrive at the blind man's house, where he complains of his lover's absence. Jeannot offers to buy food and to repair the blind man's torn robe; the man takes off his clothes and gives Jeannot his money. After a self-congratulatory aside, the boy tells the blind man to find another valet, for he is leaving. This he does in the final lines of the play.

> Fi de vous! enne sui je au large?
> Je n'aconte un estront a vous.
> Vous estes fel et envious;
> se n'estoit pour tes compaignons
> vous arïés ja mil millons,
> mais pour iaus serés deportés.
> S'il ne vous siet, si me sivés! (259–65)
>
> *[Fie on you! Am I not out of your reach? You're nothing but a turd to me.*
> *You're a trickster and a jealous person: if it were not for your companions*
> *(like me), you would already be rich by millions, but you will pay for them.*
> *If you're not satisfied, run after me!]*

The play apparently ends with the silent, victimized blind man standing alone before the audience.

The brevity and simplicity of this play suggest that the playwright was not interested in exploring cruelly innovative ways of abusing blind people; rather, he shows conventional treatment of the blind and stereotypes relating to them in order for the audience to rekindle their disdain toward greedy sightless mendicants. (In the most recent edition of the play, the introduction calls it "a scene from daily life.")[4] But the scene has special meaning as drama that it would not have in another genre. In performance the blind man's role makes him the isolated other, the object of the audience's gaze who can neither acknowledge nor return it; thus he is rendered acutely powerless. At another level, the (presumably) sighted actor's performance as a blind man instantiates the figure of the false mendicant that medieval society feared and hated; an effective performance would have confirmed the belief that blindness could be persuasively feigned. Jeannot, on the other hand, uses asides to build a sense of complicity with the audi-

ence as he elicits confessions from the blind man that prompt righteous anger. Jeannot then steals the blind man's ill-got gains to spend himself, thus returning them to the economy of the community that has been victimized by greedy, unjustifiable mendicancy. The young valet ultimately represents the enforcer of poetic justice that here coincides with discipline, at least in the opinion of the playwright.

No records of specific performances of *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle* survive, but absence of such evidence is not at all suprising. However, the unique manuscript copy of the play demonstrates that it had a long performance history. Carol Symes has studied additions and emendations in the manuscript, BN fonds français 24366, that made it conform to changing textual conventions relating to performance practices over the course of two centuries. She delineates the scribal activity as follows.

> Five main phases in transmission can be identified: the original transcription campaign, carried out sometime around 1270 (Scribe); an initial attempt at clarification, either by the same scribe working at a later time (with a better pen) or by a close contemporary (Hand A); a further attempt at clarification, effected sometime between the end of the thirteenth and middle of the fourteenth centuries (Hand B); and two periods of radical revision and censorship in the mid- to late fifteenth century, the heyday of the farce (Hands X and Y).[5]

Symes also describes five explicits, only one of which she tentatively identifies as having been penned by one of the scribes above (Hand B).[6] This evidence strongly suggests a lively, lengthy performance history for the play, and since it appears to have had some popularity, other medieval copies probably circulated but did not survive.

Symes also indicates the play's possible didactic value for friars and others in the communication of doctrine; she cites Preacher Michel Minot's favorite text, Matthew 15:14, "Leave them: for they are blind and leaders of the blind; for if a blind man offers to lead a blind man, they will fall into the pit together," a verse that echoes the opening of the play, in which the boy saves the blind man from falling into a hole.[7] I would add that the play also teaches the lesson of leaving the blind man in his marginal situation in society, which is exactly what the boy does at the end of the play. Furthermore, the possibility that the play was presented within some kind of religious framework would help to explain why closely analogous scenes of blind men and their guides punctuate some of the lengthy religious dramas discussed later.

In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, Eustache Deschamps penned a satirical ballad in which the persona engages in dialogues with beggars with different disabilities ranging from lameness to St. Anthony's fire. Significantly, the first of the beggars is a blind man.

> Pour Dieu donnez maille ou denier
> A ce povre qui ne voit goutte!
> —Va t'en sans chandoille couchier
> D'ardoir ton lit es hors de doubte.[8]
>
> *[For God's sake give a (ring? buckle?) or a penny to this poor person who sees nothing!—Go to bed without a candle so you will not be afraid of setting your bed on fire.]*

We have already seen the accusation that careless blind people cause fires in "Les Ordres de Paris," the satire by Rutebeuf discussed in chapter 2; here the implication provides a slightly paranoid rebuff to the blind man that deflects his request for alms, a deflection that the persona applies to all the beggars in the final line of each stanza, "Atten encore jusqu'à demain" ("Wait until tomorrow again"). Ironically, the poem closes with the poet/persona begging from princes, who dismiss him with the same line.

Deschamps' pointed, direct social satire of blind people is very different from the use of blindness in the English lyric "Beware (The Blynde Eteth Many a Flye)" by Deschamps' younger contemporary, John Lydgate. This six-stanza rhyme royal poem provides a satirical warning to men about the wiles of women who deceive and entrap them in love. Lydgate concludes each stanza with a variant of the line, "But ever beware: the blynde eteth many a flie," a proverb popular from the Middle Ages through the sixteenth century.[9] This proverbial use of blindness connects the man who chooses not to see a woman's duplicitous nature to a blind man; it is a world away from Deschamps' voicing of a blind beggar, due to both the conventionality of the proverb and the distancing effect of the metaphor. While the proverb is degrading toward blind people, its application unites the sighted with the blind, implying that everyone has blind spots, some of which are born of a willful refusal to see the truth.

In *The Scandal of Fabliau,* R. Howard Bloch notes that in that genre, which focuses on the body, "the body itself is . . . never whole" but is fragmented.[10] Bloch is largely concerned with both verbal and literal mutilation of bodies, but within that group are also disabled bodies, which in the me-

dieval imaginary represent a lack of wholeness, and we shall see that mutilation and disability are closely linked in some of these texts. One of the notable features of fabliaux and other comic texts is that disability and mutilation tend to reproduce themselves. In the texts examined later, blindness is never the sole disability to play a role in the plot: other disabilities and chronic illnesses flesh out the narratives.

Among the best known fabliaux involving blind characters is the thirteenth-century *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne* (*The Three Blind Men of Compiègne*) by the otherwise unknown poet Cortebarbe. This narrative centers on testing the characters' faith in what cannot be seen, and such faith is called into question as the minstrel or performer of the poem frames it.

> On tient le menestrel a sage
> qui met en trover son usage
> qe fere biaus dis e biaus contes
> c'on dit devant dus, devant contes.[11]
>
> *[A minstrel is held wise who uses his experience to write beautiful sayings and beautiful stories that are recited before dukes and before counts.]*

The minstrel figure calls upon his readers or listeners to believe that he is writing this fabliau from his own experience, but ultimately the poem will question the reliability of believing what one is told.

The narrative begins with a clerk, riding on a fine palfrey and accompanied by a squire, who happens upon three poorly dressed blind beggars who are making their way to Senlis. He thinks that one of them can probably see; otherwise, how could they travel? Thus the plot of the fabliau is set in motion by the clerk's anxiety about beggars feigning blindness. Interestingly, the clerk raises the issue of disability as he makes his resolution: "El cors me fiere goute / se je ne sai s'il voient goute." ["May gout strike my body if I don't find out whether they see a little," 31–32]. At a superficial level the clerk plays off his vision against theirs: either he and they are sighted, or his vision of them is as impaired as theirs is. The clerk shows his familiarity with the conventional street cry of the blind ("qui ne voit goutte"), but he deploys it in a way that highlights commodification: the able-bodied man shows a joking willingness to bring gout on himself in exchange for finding out whether the blind men are able-bodied. Metaphorically he wagers his able-bodiedness against theirs.

When the blind men hear the clerk approaching, they ask for alms, and

he says he will give them a besant. Each of the blind men thinks that one of his companions has received the money, but actually the clerk has given them nothing. He withdraws to eavesdrop on the men, who decide to return to Compiègne to amuse themselves—and the clerk decides to follow them to see how they will end up ("e dist que adés les siurra / desi adont que il savra / lor fin," 67–69). Cortebarbe thus creates a close identification between the clerk and the minstrel poet who introduces the fabliau: both are creators of narratives that must be played out until they reach closure. However, Cortebarbe has also cast doubt on the clerk's cleverness, since he has not been able to recognize that the three men were actually blind. It is noteworthy that Cortebarbe does not return to the issue at all; there is no epiphanic moment at which the clerk realizes that the men cannot see, for such a realization would make the clerk look less clever. Cortebarbe seems unable to exercise full control over his subject matter just as the sighted clerk cannot fully comprehend and control the blind men; their independence is curious and bothersome to him.

When the blind men arrive at an inn, they ask to be served a splendid meal on their own in a painted room (81–85); the men's desire for visual ostentation that they cannot themselves enjoy foreshadows the excesses of the feast to come. The innkeeper obliges, putting faith in the fact that they will be able to pay him. He even rationalizes that men dressed so poorly often have plenty of money ("Si fete gent ont deniers granz," 89), thus showing his knowledge of the convention of the greedy beggar who has amassed a fortune like the character in *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle.* The blind men stay the night, as does the clerk, though his presence is still unknown to his victims. When the innkeeper asks for payment, a stichomythic dialogue takes place among the blind men as they begin to understand that none of them has the besant. The innkeeper then threatens them with violence. At this point the clerk comes forward.

> Li clers, qui fu a biau harnas,
> qui le conte forment amoit,
> de ris en aise se pasmoit. (176–78)
>
> *[The clerk, who was well versed (in trickery) and who loved the story greatly, split his sides laughing with pleasure.]*

So the clerk has seen the story of the blind men that he set in motion reach its end, and he intervenes, telling the innkeeper that he will be responsible

for the men's bill. The blind men then leave, and they do not reappear in the fabliau. Again, there is a close similarity between the work of Cortebarbe and the work of the clerk: they use the blind men as vehicles for their plot, and when the characters are no longer needed, they are expunged, once again assuming their marginal position.

From this point forward, the tale is about money, but the motif of disability remains present. The ringing of the church bell for mass inspires the clerk to ask the innkeeper if he would allow the local priest to pay the blind men's debt on the clerk's behalf, to which the innkeeper readily agrees. The clerk has his horse prepared for a quick departure, and then he goes with his host to the church, where he whispers in the priest's ear that the innkeeper lost his mind to a terrible illness the previous night ("une cruel maladie / li prist ersoir dedenz sa teste," 244–45) and that the clergyman should read a gospel over him in order to cure him. In full hearing of the innkeeper, the priest responds that he will do "it" as soon as the mass is finished; assuming that the priest is talking about paying the money, the innkeeper says that he clears the clerk of his debt, and the clerk departs. After the mass, comedy ensues as the priest tries to force the innkeeper to kneel before him to hear the gospel, but the supposedly insane man becomes angry and repeatedly demands his money, until the priest must ask his parishioners to restrain him. While the priest is reading the gospel and sprinkling holy water over him, the innkeeper, angry and ashamed of having been duped, realizes that his best option is simply to return to his inn, and the priest interprets this change of behavior as the end of the man's insanity.[12]

Cortebarbe introduces the moral in his own voice: many people are often unjustly put to shame. Although the poet's creative project allies him with the clerk in the fabliau, the moral takes up the cause of the innkeeper. But Cortebarbe's apparent sympathy for that character in the slippery, satirical genre of fabliau causes the reader to question the moral: is the innkeeper's shame actually unjust? His initial step toward shaming himself occurs when he trusts three blind men to pay for a luxurious meal in spite of their impoverished appearance, trust based on his prejudicial belief that blind beggars often squirrel away fortunes. Of course he demonstrates his gullibility yet again when he trusts a clerk with no connections to the blind men to pay their bill, and even further when he believes that the parish priest will clear the debt, but the first link in his chain of mistakes is with the blind men.

Other common medieval attitudes toward disability are equally integral to the plot. As mentioned earlier, the fabliau is set in motion by the clerk's

suspicion that the men cannot be blind and are begging under false pretenses. (Cortebarbe's identification with the clerk as story-maker may be most clearly represented in the fact that neither the poet nor the character explicitly acknowledges that this suspicion is disproven; it is simply the catalyst for setting the plot in motion, a clear example of narrative prosthesis.) On the other hand, the clerk knows how to exploit the religious model of disability to his advantage in at least two ways. First, he makes the innkeeper comfortable with the notion that the priest will take responsibility for the debt initially incurred by the blind men, as if it were normal for churchmen to care for the disabled financially. The clerk then fabricates the story of the innkeeper's insanity for the priest, who sees it as his religious duty to use scripture to effect a cure for the impairment.

Integral to the genre of fabliau is substitution: one lover for another, one object for another, one sum of money for a very different one. In this fabliau where the clerk's first words set up an exchange of one impairment for another, disability becomes the commodity of exchange in the plot. Here the clerk's flippant oath about falling victim to gout if one of the blind men cannot see comically raises the possibility of substitution (and if this were a romance, generic conventions might require that he be stricken with the disease), but the actual substitution occurs when the clerk conjures up the innkeeper's insanity, which structures the second half of the plot as the blind men's impairment structured the first half. Of course the innkeeper's disability is a fabrication (also often integral to fabliaux), but its results are real: the clerk gets away without paying for the blind men, and the townspeople of Compiègne are likely to remain suspicious of the innkeeper's sanity for some time.

Central to this discussion but not quite central to the fabliau are the three blind men. Although these men embody some of the familiar stereotypes associated with their disability, notably drunkenness and raucousness, they are not among the most grotesquely excessive in medieval French literature. However, ultimately they bring misrule to Compiègne in spite of themselves because of their mistaken belief that the clerk has given them a besant, whereby Cortebarbe implies that even when they seem to be in control, they will inevitably upset the social order somehow. The bipartite structure of the fabliau, in which the blind men appear only in its first half, has the effect of "[bringing them] from the periphery of concerns to the center of the story to come," to quote Mitchell and Snyder's definition of the structure of narrative prosthesis.[13] Their utter absence from the second half of the tale shows Cortebarbe "fixing" their deviance by remarginalizing

them, sending them back to the liminal, depopulated place where the clerk first saw them: the road from Compiègne to Senlis. Although the blind men have benefitted temporarily from the clerk's tricks, their presence in the town is a problem, allowing no possibility of social integration.

Another fabliau, the second in the popular late medieval collection *Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles* (ca. 1462), raises several issues relating to disability, including blindness. The tale is set in London, a setting that is significant in relation to the tale's subject matter, and takes place "not too long ago" ("n'a pas long temps").[14] There a bourgeois merchant lived with his wife and beautiful daughter, whom the couple prized above all else. Unfortunately the girl develops a serious case of hemorrhoids,[15] and "because of the severity of her illness, [she] could do nothing but cry and sigh."[16] The distraught parents first ask the advice of a *matrone,* a woman skilled in medicine, and when her prescription of "one hundred thousand types of herbal medicines"[17] proves ineffectual, they call in several doctors from the London area to examine the girl's affliction, which has by now been going on "a long time."[18] Although they prescribe "clysters, powders, ointments, and all sorts of remedies," the girl's affliction remains intractable, and she is "more dead than alive."[19] In their desperate search for a cure, the family turns to an aged Franciscan friar who is blind in one eye. He makes a medicinal powder and returns to administer it while "eyeing her diseased parts, as if he could not contemplate them enough."[20] As he is about to apply the powder by blowing it through a tube,

> La pouvre fille, si ne se peut elle contenir, voyant l'estrange fasson de regarder a tout ung oeil de nostre cordelier, que force de rire ne la surprint, qu'elle cuida longuement retenir. Mais si mal, helas! Luy advint, que ce ris a force retenu fut converty en ung sonnet dont le vent retourna si tres a point la pouldre que la pluspart il fist voler contre le visage et sur l'oeil de ce bon cordelier.
>
> *[The maid noticed the strange fashion in which the friar looked at her with his one good eye, and was overcome with laughter. She managed to contain her mirth for a while, but finally she had kept it pent up for so long that it was transformed into a crude sound whose wind scattered the powder with such force that most of it flew into the good Franciscan's face and eye.]*[21]

Although the corrosive powder ultimately fails to cure the girl, it blinds the friar's good eye, and he asks the merchant for recompense for his now total blindness. The merchant first agrees only to give the friar alms, but later he

increases the offer to the sum he would have paid had his daughter been cured. However, the blind man complains that now he can neither perform mass and other offices of the church nor study holy writings in order to preach. When the merchant refuses to offer more money, the friar takes his case to court.

> 'Dieu scet que pluseurs se rendirent au consistoire pour oyr ce nouvel proces, qui beaucoup pleut aux seigneurs du dit parlement, tant pour la nouvelleté du cas que pour les allegations et argumens des parties devant eulz debatans, qui non accoustumées mais plaisantes estoient.
>
> *[Lord knows that a great many people went to the court to hear this strange and curious trial, which amused the lords of the Parliament, both because of its novelty and because of the allegations and arguments which the parties debated; these were both unusual and amusing.]*[22]

The case, left undecided in Parliament, is sent from one court to another. The girl is later cured, but not before the story of her hemorrhoids becomes widely known to the London public.

The tale's treatment of blindness is in keeping with other French comic texts. First, it is not narratologically necessary for the friar to be blind in one eye, but the writer makes him so in order to allow him to enact his disability in a manner that strikes the sighted people around him as humorous: the way he uses his single eye causes the girl to laugh and to fart. Thus the writer affords the audience an opportunity to laugh along with the girl at the disability of visual impairment and to see it further degraded by flatulence at close range. And again, fabliau's generic principle of substitution comes into play. The girl's disability, caused by the length and severity of her supposedly embarrassing illness, is displaced by the friar's intensified disability as he becomes fully blind. Retrospectively we can see that the writer is implying that the blinding is a punishment for the friar's sexual curiosity; if he had not scrutinized the girl in such an attentive, sexually charged way, she would not have laughed or farted.[23] Thus this tale at least partially deploys the narrative convention of blinding as punishment for sexual impropriety, which will be the subject of the next chapter; however, unlike the texts examined there, this sexual misdemeanor remains unexamined and undeveloped, an implication of voyeurism rather than a fully developed reason for condemning the friar.

Another aspect of the satire is clearly anticlerical, even though, as

Howard Bloch and others have pointed out, clerics in fabliaux are most often priests, not friars.[24] The antifraternal bent of the tale's anticlericalism is historically appropriate, given the friars' reputation as practitioners of medicine, but according to medieval medical practice relating to hemorrhoids, the friar in the tale is a quack. John Arderne, a mid-fourteenth-century doctor and author of *Treatises of Fistula in Ano, Haemorrhoids, and Clysters,* writes at length on proper treatments for hemorrhoids, none of which are dry; when corrosives are used, they are applied in ointments.[25] Arderne's predecessor in medical writing, Lanfrank, castigates "lewed lechis" who attempt to treat hemorrhoids with corrosives alone.[26] Indeed, had the friar in the tale used an ointment, his attempted cure would not have backfired due to a simple puff of wind. Although the writer does not call the friar's medical abilities into question, the family's appeal to him as their final hope indicates that he was not high in the London medical hierarchy.

The one-eyed friar in the first part of the tale is satirized for his disability, his inappropriate sexual curiosity, and his quackery, but the satire of the fully blind friar after the "accident" calls into play the stereotype of the greedy blind man constantly begging for money. This may also have added to the general antifraternal tone of the tale, since friars were to offer their medical services free of charge, but here he is demanding not only payment but recompense.[27] This convention of the greedy blind man receives no closure in the tale, which leaves the friar traveling from court to court, begging for the money that he believes he deserves. The lack of closure in itself implies the repeated, potentially comic performance of the blind man's disability, since he must go to each venue, prove his disability, tell yet again the humiliating story of how he was fully blinded, and plead for money that he will never receive. Inasmuch as a court of law is always theatrical, the blind friar becomes an actor who performs on demand whenever he can find an appropriate audience. And the friar's repetition of the story intradiegetically reflects the writer's desire that the fabliau itself be told repeatedly.

BÉRINUS AND THE *TALE OF BERYN*

A lengthy fourteenth-century French prose romance called *Bérinus* offers a variety of interesting treatments of blindness in contrast to its fifteenth-century English translation, *The Tale of Beryn,* which for many years was attributed to Chaucer. Contiguous episodes of *Bérinus* show that the writer understands how vision has been commodified in French culture, including the use of blinding as punishment. The *Beryn* author, however, includes

only one of the episodes in his translation, which he recasts as satire of a very English kind of legal system.

Reaching more than six hundred printed pages in its modern edition, *Bérinus* is far too long and complex to discuss in its entirety. We will focus only on the adventures of the title characters on the island of Blandie, an episode that takes place in the first quarter of the romance. Bérinus, son of a wealthy Roman during the reign of Philip Augustus, has wasted his youth in gambling and neglected his dying mother. His father marries an evil woman who wants her stepson out of their household, so Bérinus decides to renounce his heritage and become a merchant if his father buys him five ships. His first commercial voyage takes him to the isle of Blandie (a name related to the verb *blandir,* "to flatter"), where he loses an ill-considered wager that will require him to drink all the water in the sea. The winner takes Bérinus and his men before the local authorities, but not before other Blandiens try to take further advantage of the apparently wealthy foreigner.

Three citizens in particular cause trouble for Bérinus: a man who plants his own knife on Bérinus and then accuses him of having used it to murder the man's father, a woman who claims that her child was fathered by Bérinus, and a blind man who says that Bérinus has stolen his eyes and refuses to return them.

> L'aveugle l'emmena, par l'aide de la gent qui y seurvindrent, par devant le seneschal, et la se plaigny de Bérinus, et dist devant tous qu'il lui avoit mauvaisement ses yeulx crevez et emblez; pour quoy il requeroit au juge que il lui en feist droit et raison.[28]
>
> *[The blind man led him before the seneschal, with the help of the people who guarded him, and there he accused Bérinus and said in front of everyone that he had horribly destroyed and stolen his eyes, for which he required a judge who would give him right and reason.]*

On their way to court Bérinus and his men encounter a fellow Roman named Gieffroy, who offers his help to them. Gieffroy explains that the ruler of the island, Isope, is an aged man who has been blind for sixty years, but nevertheless he rules peacefully and well; ultimately he will judge the accusations brought by the three Blandiens.[29] Bérinus and his men then cut Gieffroy's hair raggedly so that he appears to be a fool, and they go before the judge Hannibal to confront the accusers. There the blind man embellishes his story of Bérinus's supposed crime.

> "Seigneur, je me plaing de Bérinus qui cy est, qui mes yeulx m'a tolus et emblez. Il avint en un jour, qui passez est, que nous fusmes compaignon ensemble d'un chatel et d'un avoir; si cheï que il s'en ala en une besongne et me laissa ses yeulx pour les miens. Or est ainsi que je les vueil ravoir, car j'en ay mestier."[30]
>
> *["My lord, I accuse Bérinus who is here, who took and stole my eyes. It happened on a day in the past that we were companions in possessions and fortune; it befell that he went away for work and left me his eyes for my own. Thus now I want to have them back, because I need them."]*

The blind man contextualizes the loss of his eyes in the world of commerce, building his tale on the fact that Bérinus is a merchant who needs his companion's eyes in order to do what a merchant does. The blind man's formal accusation takes a different tone from its earlier instantiation, in which he simply accused Bérinus of blinding him; here the disabling takes on the fanciful aura of romance, or perhaps a fabliau-like interest in substitution, with the possibility of the exchange of eyes being undone. The change in the blind man's story also draws attention to it, as it becomes the only accusation of the three that is not humanly possible.

Playing the fool, Gieffroy argues against the three accusers on behalf of Bérinus, saying of the blind man's accusation,

> "Sachiez, sire seneschal, que de tout ce il dit verité, mais, puis qu'il vuelt ses yeulx ravoir, il est bien raison que messire rait les siens. Si vous prye que vous facies rendre a mon seigneur ses yeulx, car il s'en aidera trop mieulx que d'uns estranges."[31]
>
> *["Know, sir seneschal, that all he says is true, but since he wants to have his eyes back, it is right that my lord have his back. I pray that you have my lord's eyes given back to him, because he will be aided much more by them than by strange ones."]*

Again the romance deploys a fabliau-like doubling of disability: both the blind man and Bérinus have been harmed by the exchange. The blind man then withdraws his claim, but Gieffroy will not let the case drop; he adds, "'se vous avez les yeulz monseigneur perduz, si voulons nous que vous nous en faciés amende, car messire avoit trop plus chier les siens que les vostres.'"[32] ["If you have lost my lord's eyes, then we want you to pay a fine to us for them, because my lord held his own eyes much more dear than

yours."] The seneschal takes money from the blind man, and afterward, Gieffroy also effectively argues against the other two false accusers.

Gieffroy's defense further commodifies the sense of sight by claiming that Bérinus deserves the return of his rightful property—his own eyes—and if no such return can be made, a fine is due to the offended party. So the physically impossible exchange of eyes, which has a certain leaden humor in itself, is replaced by a financial exchange, which would have struck a medieval audience as humorously ironic inasmuch as blind people were generally the recipients of money rather than givers. The humor is augmented by the fact that the blind man is caught out by Gieffroy, who, as far as the Blandiens know, is a fool.

The ruler Isope, who has heard of Gieffroy's legal triumph, sends gift-bearing messengers to invite the victorious Romans to his court. In order to reach it, they must cross mysterious and potentially dangerous terrain of the type that is familiar in romance. Among the most frightening obstacles is a bridge, guarded by scorpions and dragons, that crosses a raging river. In order to explain the history of the river, the *Bérinus* writer interrupts the travel of the Romans to recount the lengthy tale of the evil king Agriano of Gamel, a kingdom near Blandie.

When Agriano ascends to the throne, he expels all women from Gamel, thus incurring the wrath of several of his knights who unite against him and swear to join the women in exile. The leader of this group, Grianor, so enrages the king that he orders the knight's nose cut off.[33] The exiles settle on the island of Blandie and elect a leader, Mirame. Agriano decides to conquer the rebels' island, and when he has taken control of it, he cuts off the nose and puts out one eye of each citizen; the text states that men, women, mothers, sisters, and everyone suffered the same fate.[34] After living under Agriano's tyranny for fourteen years, Mirame incites the Blandiens to challenge Agriano, whose forces have been depleted because of their inability to reproduce. Agriano sends forty knights with his response to the challenge, and Mirame orders them punished with multiple mutilations: each knight loses his nose, his lower lip, his ears, and both eyes, though one knight is spared one of his eyes in order to lead the others back to Gamel.[35] The detail of the one-eyed knight is probably indebted to the narrative of Simon de Montfort's mutilation of the heretics of Bram, when one hundred prisoners were blinded and had their noses cut off, but one man was left with one eye so that he could see to guide them home;[36] however, the writer of *Bérinus* may have had a more general knowledge of the kinds of mutilation to which French rulers sometimes resorted.

The Blandiens ultimately conquer Agriano, and Mirame then orders the digging of a ditch six thousand feet deep, so deep that a stone tossed into it will not reach the bottom in half a day. There the evil tyrant and his highest barons are imprisoned for ten years,[37] until God sends a violent subterranean flood to fill the ditch and drown them.[38] The flooded ditch becomes the river that Bérinus and his men have to cross in order to reach Isope.[39]

The narrative of Agriano and the Blandiens provides a military variant on the idea of the commodification of sight as it appears in the episode of Bérinus's blind accuser. The accusation alludes to the biblical proverb of "an eye for an eye" with the cycle of escalating mutilation that Agriano sets in motion playing out the proverb in a way that is both literal and deeply disturbing. The initial commodifier of sight in the foundational legend of Blandie is also, significantly, a homosexual; the narrator states that in Agriano's kingdom men lived with each other sinfully against nature,[40] and three of the four complete manuscripts of *Bérinus* label Agriano's men "sodomites."[41] Agriano's mutilation of the Blandiens exemplifies his tyranny, but Mirame's blinding and mutilation of Agriano's forty knights becomes a sociopolitical reenactment of the blinding of the Sodomites that the narrative attempts to justify. In this light, Mirame's mutilation of the knights accomplishes the same work as Simon de Montfort's mutilation of the sinful Cathars, who lived in closed communities and were also accused of being sodomites.[42]

The *Bérinus* writer's final use of blindness in this section of the romance is a metatextual one that questions the very use of blindness as a symbol in fiction. When Gieffroy first encounters Bérinus and the Romans, he describes the ruler of Blandie, Isope, as "un viel homme ancien . . . a LX ans passez que par viellesse ne voit goute"[43] [an old ancient man . . . [who] for sixty years past because of his old age, sees nothing at all]. However, when Bérinus, Gieffroy, and the others reach Isope's palace after their long journey, they encounter an Isope who is old and frail but also fully sighted. He looks over the richly attired men, and when he has scrutinized them well ("Quant li roy. . . les ot bien regardez"), he treats them generously because, as he says, "vrayement onques mais je ne vy gent qui si me pleüssent, et si en ay moult veü en ce pais"[44] [truly I have never seen people who please me so much, and I have seen many in this country]. Indeed, Bérinus's looks so delight Isope that he offers the Roman his daughter in marriage. It is as if the *Bérinus* writer is working self-consciously to dispel Gieffroy's mistaken description of Isope by including multiple references to Isope's sight in a few short lines.

In a narrative that has already commodified vision, Isope's disappearing disability highlights the fact that his condition is the choice of the creator of the narrative, whether that creator is Gieffroy intradiegetically, or the romancer extradiegetically. The creation of fictions is also important to Isope himself, whose name would have been known to French readers as the supposed father of fables, Aesop. A legendary biography of Aesop that had limited circulation in the Middle Ages described him as disabled, though not blind: he was both hunchbacked and a dwarf. And although the legendary life does not make Aesop a king, he manages to ascend from the rank of a slave to the position of an important diplomat from Athens.[45] The *Bérinus* Isope also came to Blandie as a poor man who ingratiated himself to the king enough to marry his daughter and ascend to the throne, according to Gieffroy.[46]

While we cannot retrieve the branch of Aesopic biography to which the *Bérinus* writer may have alluded, we can nevertheless see within the romance that Isope's disappearing blindness exemplifies a moment of either *Homerus dormiens* (which will not help us understand the romance better) or narrative prosthesis, whereby the putative disability is "fixed" and normalized.[47] Gieffroy, as a trickster figure, may be lying to Bérinus and his men about Isope's blindness so that the men will put greater faith in Gieffroy as their first line of defense. His success will guarantee him a reward that he is anxious to win: passage on their ships back to Rome. The "fable" of Isope thus shows that Gieffroy is as tricky in his relations with the Romans as he is with the Blandiens.

But Gieffroy's praise of Isope as just is undermined as the Romans make their way into Isope's court. One of the last romance "wonders" that they pass is a gruesome tree filled with a thousand heads of people who, according to Gieffroy, have been falsely accused but have lost their legal cases.[48] (But Gieffroy also says that Isope executes any accusers who are found to be false,[49] so the truth about whose heads adorn the tree remains unclear.) So what Bérinus knows about Isope is itself a changing commodity, the result of narratives spun for him by Gieffroy, who is bargaining for his return home. Bérinus exchanges one "fact" for another as he learns that the ruler is not blind but sighted. Ultimately Isope's disappearing blindness narratively reverses the irreversible blindness of Bérinus's blind accuser when Isope's sight is figuratively "restored" to him, but the results in both instances are the same: Bérinus receives vindication and reward.

The *Bérinus* writer uses social and historical constructions of blindness—the blind beggar as greedy liar, punitive blinding, and sight as a commodity in several forms—that would have been familiar to his French au-

dience. The author/translator of *The Tale of Beryn* drew his material from the episode of the three false accusers, but he chose to ignore the rest of the issues raised in the French text, perhaps because they did not have the same kind of cultural resonance for his English readers. The foundational legend of Agriano is not mentioned at all. Geoffrey, the anglicized version of Gieffroy, becomes satirically emblematic of feigned disability, not only mental disability when playing the fool as in *Bérinus,* but also such physical disabilities as lameness and paralysis.

Before we turn to Geoffrey's satirical treatment of the legal system, we should look at the figure of Isope as he is presented here. The *Beryn* author translates Gieffroy's description of the aged, blind king quite closely: he is "so grow in yeris, that sixty yeer ago / He sawe nat for age,"[50] and he executes false accusers. But in this kingdom there is no horrifying tree filled with heads, and also this Isope is truly blind, because nothing in the text indicates otherwise. At the end of *Beryn,* when the title character goes to Isope's court, the emphasis is on Isope listening, with no implication that he can see (ll. 3989, 3998, 4007). Thus the *Beryn* poet did not allow medieval readers to revise their thinking about the nameless city that Isope rules: it is a place of weakness and uncertainty because its ruler is truly blind, and try as he might, he cannot stop its residents from their habitual lying.

In the Middle English work, the blind man catches up with Beryn in the street and takes him before the steward Evander, to whom he makes his complaint.

> "Ye know wele that offt tyme I have to yew i-pleynyd,
> How I was be-trayed and how I was i-peynyd,
> And how a man somtyme and I our yen did chaunge:
> This is the same persone, though that he make it straunge . . .
> Sith ye of hym be sesed, however so ye tave,
> Let hym never pas til I myne eyen have."[51]

A few lines later the narrator states that the blind man hopes to get money directly from Beryn or imprison him until the money can be delivered.[52] The other false accusers then appear, as in *Bérinus,* and after they make their accusation, Beryn bemoans his fate until Geoffrey appears.

Geoffrey in *Beryn* is even more of a trickster than his French predecessor.

> And when that Beryn in this wise had i-made his mone,
> A crepill he saw comyng with grete spede and hast,

> Oppon a stilt under his kne bound wonder fast,
> And a crouch under his armes, with hondes al forskramed.[53]

Fearing that he is about to be falsely accused again, Beryn runs away, but the lame man is faster and knows the roads better. When the cripple catches Beryn, he is so intent on escaping that he sheds the mantle and the sleeve on which the man is pulling. Beryn finally agrees to listen to the man. Geoffrey, who is 100 years old, says he has lived in this city for many years and has grown accustomed to the false nature of its citizens; in order to live more easily among them, he has feigned disabilities for the past twelve years, but he shows Beryn that he is able-bodied.

> He cast asyde [the stilt and the crutch] both and lepe oppon an huche,
> And adown ageynes, and walked too and fro,
> Up and down within the shipp, and shewed his hondes tho,
> Strecching forth his fyngers in sight over al aboute,
> Without knot or knor or eny signe of goute,
> And clyghte hem efft ageyns right disfeterly,
> Som to ride eche other and som aweyward wry.[54]

Geoffrey's feigned disability in *Beryn* provides an interesting variation upon Isope's disappearing disability in *Bérinus*. Within the narrative, it builds Beryn's confidence in Geoffrey as a man who has learned important survival strategies in a foreign city, but more importantly, the narrative "cure" of Geoffrey rather than Isope gives Geoffrey the added power that went to the ruler in the French romance.

Throwing off the feigned physical disabilities also adds a dimension to Geoffrey's disguise when he assumes the role of badly coiffed fool in order to defend Beryn before a judge: he is both physically and tonsorially transformed.[55] Unlike Gieffroy in the French text, Geoffrey augments his foolishness by telling the seneschal Hannibal nonsensical stories of how he gave birth to the entire crowd surrounding them and by engaging in witty stichomythy with him.[56] As is generally the case with literary fools, Geoffrey places himself at the ambiguous boundary between having a mental illness, a condition that his unkempt hair suggests, and playing a jester, which his jokes imply. Nevertheless, Hannibal and the other citizens think Geoffrey is a "fole of kynde,"[57] genuinely mentally disabled; they are as duped by this feigned mental disability as they have been for the previous twelve years by the feigned physical ones. The English Geoffrey is also far more performa-

tive as a fool than the French Gieffroy: he warms up the crowd with his wit before the arrival of the false accusers, and they repeatedly "laughed at him hertlich."[58]

The blind man states that he and Beryn have been "partineres / Of wynnyng and of lesing" until Beryn runs away with the man's eyes that he had lent in order to allow Beryn "To se the tregitours pley, and hir sotilté."[59] According to the *Middle English Dictionary,* "tregitours" applies to a range of entertainers that includes sleight-of-hand artists, jugglers, illusionists, and magicians. Whereas the French Bérinus ostensibly took the blind man's eyes in order to do business, here Beryn is accused of taking them in order to see a show based on illusion (which, in effect, is what Geoffrey's performance amounts to). The blind man then trots out a supposed proverb that is humorously ambiguous in this context: "'Ful trewe is that byword, "a man to servesabill / Ledeth offt Beyard from his own stabill."'"[60] Bowers translates "to servesabill" as "too accommodating," in which case the proverb states that a man who leads Bayard, a conventional medieval name for a horse, from his own stable for someone else's use is too accommodating, just as the blind man maintains that he has given too much of himself in order to accommodate Beryn. However, in many of Bayard's proverbial appearances, including those in the works of Chaucer that the Beryn poet probably knew, the horse is *blind,* [61] implying a reversal of roles, with Bayard representing the blind man. Rowland quotes one of Skeat's *Early English Proverbs* (no. 288), "as bold as blind Bayard," and she points out that it implies "foolhardiness and presumption,"[62] characteristics that suit the lying blind man far more closely than the victimized Beryn. In this reading of the proverb, Beryn's presence has drawn the foolhardy, presumptuous blind man out with the possibility of extorting money from the innocent foreigner.

Geoffrey's first counterargument serves to separate the blind man's working partnership with Beryn from the reason that Beryn supposedly now has the blind man's eyes.

> "Yf thow haddest thyn eyen, thow woldest no counsell hele.
> I knowe wele by thy fisnamy thy kynd were to stele.
> And eke it is thy profit and thyne ese als
> To be blynd as thowe art, for nowe whereso thow go,
> Thow hast thy lyvlode whils thow art alyve,
> And yf thowe myghtest see, thow shuldest never thryve."[63]

This is a relatively rare instance of the deployment of the largely French stereotype of the greedy, dishonest blind beggar in Middle English literature, but its presence here is doubtless due to the French source text. Geoffrey's response also isolates the blind man from Beryn by implying that the blind man does not need to be Beryn's business partner when his blindness is his livelihood, an observation similar to the one made by the blind characters in the St. Martin plays discussed later.

In his defense of Beryn, Geoffrey amplifies the accusation that Beryn exchanged eyes with the blind man in order to see a show of "tregetours." Geoffrey first paints a picture of a relationship between the two men that is both professional and personal, and then he tells of an entertainer of unsurpassed reputation who visited their area; no one "set of hymselff the store of a boton" if he had not managed to see this magician's remarkable performance.[64] Beryn and the soon-to-be blind man make a covenant to travel to see the show, but after some traveling the latter "fil flat adown to erth, o foot ne myght he go,"[65] because of his age, feebleness, and the summer heat. According to Geoffrey, Beryn is concerned about his companion's well-being, offering to take him home and then return later when he is feeling better. The companion, however, has another idea.

> "Beryn, ye shull wend thider without eny let,
> And have myne eyen with yewe that they the pley mowe se,
> And I woll have yeurs tyll ye com aye."
> Thus was hir covenaunt made, as I to yewe report,
> For ese of this Blynd and most for his comfort.[66]

Geoffrey says that both "the hole science of al surgery" and "sotill enchauntours and eke nygramancers" were needed to effect the swap, but when it had taken place, Beryn took his companion's eyes to see the "al the pley."[67] While he is away, the other man loses Beryn's eyes, and therefore, Beryn does not return the ones that he has borrowed. At this point the Beryn poet returns to his source text: Geoffrey adds that the borrowed eyes are less useful to Beryn than his own would be, because he would see better with the original ones.[68]

Although the writer of Beryn chooses to retain the mercantile associations between Beryn and his companion, he modifies the narrative in order to make sight less of a commodity, and therefore the blind man becomes more culpable for his disability. The man is literally playing with his sight

rather than lending it to his business partner for their mutual work. The reason for switching eyes could hardly be more frivolous, even if the entertainer's show is the hottest ticket in town, and although Beryn is willing to sacrifice the theatrical spectacle in a moment of crisis, the other man is not. The men switch eyes not in order to conduct business but because Beryn is doing a favor for his companion, and thus the eyes become property on loan to the advantage of the lender, rather than commodities exchanged for mutual advantage. Geoffrey's elaborately constructed fiction shows how remarkably "servesabill" Beryn has been to the blind man. One of the poet's cleverest variations on his source reinforces the idea that sight transcends possession of eyes: somehow the blind man's sight remains his own, no matter where his eyes are, because he will see the spectacle vicariously through them. It is as if Beryn were using the other man's eyeballs to film the show for later viewing. These carefully considered differences between Beryn and Bérinus highlight important discrepancies in attitudes toward sight and blindness in England and France.

After Geoffrey's remarkable defense of Beryn, the blind man concedes defeat and withdraws his accusation, but Geoffrey is not satisfied: the blind man must leave monetary sureties to await the court's verdict on Beryn's lost eyes. The narrator adds that this expense did not hurt the blind man much, "For thoughe that he blynd were, yet had he good plenté—/ And more wold have wonne thurh his iniquité!"[69] Again the blind man is characterized as dishonest and greedy. Ultimately the blind man and the other false accusers must pay a fine to Beryn and submit their "body, good, and catell" to him, thereby doubling his wealth.[70] So Geoffrey's feigned disability leads to poetic justice for Beryn, but it also becomes a lesson to readers about misplaced belief in people who appear to be impaired. The seneschal Hannibal and the other citizens talk of how duplicitous the Romans are for arraying their spokesman as a fool.[71] However, the citizens' reaction to the fool shows that they are conditioned to respond with derisory laughter that keeps them from looking at him seriously, for he is actually a man they already know.

As is generally true of French texts, *Bérinus* exemplifies the social model of disability in relation to blindness, deploying this model in striking and disturbing ways. Disability, disabling, and commodification of the body are closely linked in both the story of the blind man and the Sodom-like story of Agriano. Within the fiction of the romance, these are very real disabilities and disablings, and even the overlay of romance that allows the blind man to fabricate his outlandish accusation does little to leaven the seriousness

with which disability is treated. In the societies ruled by Agriano and Mirame, disability and disabling become pervasive, and even the story of how the blind man became blind has a strong social dimension: he was working with his partner, playing his part as a productive member of society.

The Tale of Beryn presents an unusual hybrid of French and English literary culture and legal history. The *Beryn* poet follows his source text in presenting a fully blind man who claims to have exchanged his eyes with the title character, and thus a degree of commodification of vision is necessarily involved. On the other hand, the issue of blindness—and issues of disability more generally—are not caused by or given particularly stigmatic meaning in society but rest more on individual choice. In this staunchly unreligious text, the religious model of disability in any strict sense is absent, but the text certainly gives negative examples that can be read in a Christian context. Of course the blind man is a liar, like his French counterpart, but more important are the additions to the English translation in his ill-considered lie. He has chosen his blindness in a way that calls to mind the earlier point about the religious model of disability blaming the disabled person: he is certainly culpable for losing his vision in pursuit of frivolous "tregitours" instead of earning his livelihood with his business partner, the more socially justifiable reason for his French counterpart's blindness. The poet reinforces the selfishness of the blind man's motivation by having Geoffrey fabricate the idea that somehow the blind man will be able to see the show when Beryn returns his eyes: it is a self-serving choice. Geoffrey also builds on the blind man's self-incrimination by explaining that the exchange of eyeballs was accomplished by surgery and necromancy, two suspicious and perhaps sinful human activities. The story of the blind man's choice of disability is parodically imitated by Geoffrey's choice of a changing menu of feigned disabilities,[72] though in playing the fool he lies in the service of truth and for the good of others, whereas the blind man lies only to serve himself.

RELIGIOUS DRAMA

Also deploying multiple disabilities while centering on a blind character is a comic episode of a religious play, *Le mystère de la vie et hystoire de monseigneur sainct Martin,* which was probably performed in 1441 in Tours, where Martin had been archbishop. (This episode, which appears in abbreviated form in the popular *Golden Legend,* was also popular in homiletic literature, as shown in chapter 6.) In a scene set two weeks after St. Martin's

death, the blind man Jolestru and the lame man Haustebet have heard of the great miracles that the saint's body can perform; however, they want to avoid being cured because they would lose their status as beggars. The blind man says:

> Helas! nous serions varletz,
> Et maintenant nous sommes maistres.
> Il n'y a bourgeois ne prebestres
> Qui ne nous donne maintenant.
> Nous amassons trop plus argent
> Sans peines et sans travailler.
> Donc pas n'aurions un denier
> Si ce n'estoit en labourant.
> Houer, bescher en desertant
> C'est droictement la vis Martin.[73]
>
> *[Alas, we would be apprentices, but now we are masters. There isn't a burger or a priest who doesn't give to us now. We earn a great deal more money without trouble and without labor. Then we wouldn't have a penny if it weren't by laboring. Hoeing and digging to clear land, that's exactly the life of Martin.]*

Then in an arrangement that is conventional in medieval literature concerning characters with these two disabilities, the lame man persuades his blind companion to carry him on his back, allowing them to work in tandem to stay well away from the powerful relics. At this moment the procession of St. Martin approaches, and Haustebet goads Jolestru to run quickly; the blind man is soon exhausted, causing his lame rider to accuse Jolestru of trying to stay near the procession in order to gain his sight. The blind man denies this accusation energetically, but in the end, they are caught by the procession and miraculously cured. Jolestru is disconsolate at the turn of events, but Haustebet consoles him and persuades him to follow Martin's relics in order to thank God.

In this dramatic episode, the actors perform the otherness of both disabled people and Jews. These characters resemble the Jews in the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* in not only their innate belief in the power of the holy body central to the drama (inasmuch as the sacramental bread is the body of Christ) but also their ultimately futile refusal to allow that body to exercise power over them. The staging of the scene in which the blind man

carries his lame companion provides a visually comic performance of two "incomplete" men becoming one; their disabilities are akin to the incompleteness enacted upon Jonathas and Fergus in the English plays. For fictional Jews and disabled characters, succumbing to the power of the sacred object results in the miraculous erasure of their dominant traits: the Jews lose their Judaism, and the disabled characters lose their disabilities. That loss is effected by divine intercession that occurs in spite of the characters' sinful natures: the Jews' apostasy and the disabled characters' laziness are driven out. While the episode shares some similarities with the versions of the Longinus story in which his cure is undeserved, here the significance of the cure is very different. It effectively punishes the disabled men, an act of divine discipline that requires their reintegration into the society of laborers. Interestingly, the author of the St. Martin play allows Jolestru a nostalgia for his blindness, a sign that the outward change in him has not entirely cleansed his spiritual sinfulness: he remains an unwilling convert. This final detail of characterization, then, straightforwardly exemplifies Mitchell and Snyder's notion that "the ruse of prosthesis [in this case, a miraculous cure] fails in its primary objective: to return the incomplete body to the invisible status of a normative essence."[74] Jolestru's nostalgia also allows the audience to assume that blindness taints the soul to such an extent that it cannot gratefully accept a divine gift, a spiritual state that is akin to despair. At the end of this play, then, blindness retains its status as a catachresis representing a sinful moral and spiritual state.

An analogous drama, *La moralité de l'aveugle et le boiteux,* was written by André de la Vigne at the end of the fifteenth century; it was performed at Seurre in Burgundy on October 10, 11, and 12, 1496.[75] De la Vigne earned enough renown as a poet to have been named *orateur* of Charles VIII and secretary to Queen Anne of Brittany.[76] Because his play is not part of a longer work celebrating St. Martin, the playwright can take the time (and the tone) to deploy and elaborate upon several aspects of grotesque excess. The drama opens with the two characters bemoaning their lot in life. Like his counterpart in *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* the blind man here has been misled by an evil guide who has robbed him and left him in an unprofitable location for begging; his only helpful former guide, Giblet, has died. The blind man agrees that he will carry the lame man but complains of his weight. He insists that his companion defecate before they go further (yet more of the grotesque excess associated with marginal characters), and while doing so, the lame man tells of a saint who has died recently whose body performs miracles. Like the characters in the preceding play, these two

agree that they do not want to be cured of their disabilities because they would then be required to work. In order to avoid the saint, the blind man wants to go to the tavern, but the pair are caught by the procession and suddenly cured. De la Vigne then reverses the roles from the earlier drama: while the lame man curses his bad luck, the blind man is grateful for the unexpected blessing.

> J'estoye bien fol, je suis certain,
> D'ainsi fuyr la bonne voye,
> Tenant le chemin incertain,
> Lequel par foleur pris j'avoye.
> Hellas! le grant bien ne sçavoye,
> Que c'estoit de veoir clerement. . . .
> Se j'ay esté vers toi mutin,
> Pardon requiers de ce meffait![77]
>
> *[I was mad, I am sure, to have fled the proper path, holding to an uncertain route that I had taken in madness. Alas, I didn't know what a great good it was to see clearly. . . . If I was rebellious toward you (Saint Martin), I ask pardon for my misdeed.]*

The blind man's grateful declaration is filled with diction of the repentant apostate; like the Jew that inhabited the medieval Christian imagination, this blind man always seems to have known that grace was available, but his rebellious spirit kept him from it. The tone here is reminiscent of the brief speeches of the cured Jacob and Levi in *The Assumption of the Virgin,* inasmuch as all three characters not only praise God for performing the miracle but also imply regret for not having embraced God's grace earlier. After the miracle, the formerly blind man swears future usefulness to his society. The other man, however, promises to maintain the appearance of impairment through the use of potions and lard on his legs, allowing himself to continue begging. De la Vigne thus teaches not only Christian morality but social awareness: viewers should not only believe God can work miracles but also beware of able-bodied beggars acting disabled.

A visual representation of the blind man carrying the lame man as they are about to confront Saint Martin survives in an embroidered roundel from a Burgundian altar frontal of about 1425, now housed at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York (fig. 3). The roundel is divided down the middle by the corner of a building that hides the saint from the approaching

Fig. 3. The blind man, carrying the lame man (left), encounters St. Martin. Embroidered altar frontal, Burgundy, ca. 1425; Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York. Reproduced by permission of the Cooper Hewitt Museum.

men, who are on the left, the side of sinfulness. The representation of the blind man here is significant in relation to his and analogous characters' desire to remain blind in order not to have to work: he is noticeably portly, and by medieval physical standards he might even be considered obese. The artist here is exploiting the convention traceable through much comic literature that blind beggars are capable of amassing enough wealth to keep themselves better fed than the average worker.

The lengthiest dramatic treatment focusing on a blind character appears in *Le Mystère de la Résurrection* from Angers in 1456. This three-day

extravaganza stretches to nearly 20,000 lines, roughly 1,400 of which are devoted to episodes in which a blind man finds a guide, is abused by him, sings and sells songs, and ultimately receives a gift of charity from his community that symbolizes the new law inaugurated by Jesus's death and resurrection. The prologue to the second day's performance outlines the ostensible purpose of these comic interludes.

> Aussi y sont, par intervales,
> D'aucuns esbatemens et galles
> D'un aveugle et de son varlet,
> Que gueres ne servent au fait,
> Si ce n'est pour vous resjouïr
> Et vos esperis rafreschir. (5460–65)[78]
>
> *[Also for some diversion and amusement, there are at intervals a blind man and his valet that hardly serve the action, if not in order to give you joy and refresh your spirits.]*

The playwright is disingenuous here in claiming that the episodes merely entertain, because they are interwoven with and comment upon the miracles and mysteries of Jesus's life and resurrection. And within the three-day production they chart an irregular course that leaves behind the religious model of disability and moves toward a moment of social modeling that is clearly meant to serve as a lesson in charity for the audience. In that irregularity is a great deal of tension between the playwright's need to accommodate Jesus's cure of blind people and Christian charity with his desire to deploy the stereotypes of the blind that had become conventional by the mid-fifteenth century, perhaps most strongly in drama.

The blind man first comes on stage just after the Jews involved in the crucifixion, including Annas and Caiaphas, have used Joseph of Arimathea's respectful entombment of Jesus's body to convict and imprison him for being a disciple.[79] The transition from the misguided Jews to the disabled man could have been read by the audience as having a symbolic dimension due to the connection of their figurative and literal blindness. The blind man here is named Galleboys, as we learn eighty lines after he first appears; however, other characters in the play rarely call him by his name, and in the manuscripts his prompts are simply "Cecus," showing the degree to which his disability is his identity. He has become blind because of sickness

and old age, and he needs a guide to help him find food and lodging. A candidate named Saudret appears and expresses interest in the job, though he immediately wants to know what his salary will be. Although he is evidently young (the blind man calls him both "mon enfant" et "mon filz" within thirty lines of his entrance), he has unique work experience:

> J'ay servy de varlet grant pose
> L'omme qui fut aveugle né
> Que Jhesus a enluminé
> Le saint et glorïeux Prophete.
> Vostre chose sera bien faicte
> Se je m'en mesle, je me vant.[80]
>
> *[I served as valet for a long time for the man born blind to whom Jesus gave light, the holy and glorious prophet. Your affairs will be well handled if I am involved, I dare say.]*

We learn later that Saudret's insistence on knowing his salary is due to his previous master's unwillingness to pay him after the miraculous cure ("il ne me prisa plus rien / Ne me paya" (5044–45); "he didn't appreciate me at all or pay me"). Thus Saudret is more complicated (and perhaps more awkwardly characterized) than the boy in *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle.* He believes in Jesus's divinity, as he should after having seen the miracle involving his previous master, and yet he bears a grudge against the blind because of his earlier treatment. The playwright engages creatively with biblical history here by alluding to the miraculous cure in John 9, but he does not construct a formerly blind man whose miraculous cure causes him to turn from the stereotype of avarice associated with his disability. (This paradox faintly echoes the cured but spiritually unchanged characters in versions of the blind man and the lame man discussed previously.)

In their second scene on the first day of *Le Mystère,* the blind man puts on airs by insisting that Saudret call him "Monseigneur mon maistre" (4756), a request that the boy greets with derision, though he finally agrees to use "maistre." The blind man suggests that they sing a song to make money, to which the valet responds:

> Je ne vis oncques avenir
> Qu'a mon autre maistre on donnast

Or pour sermon qu'il sermonnast
Ne pour hault crier, ne pour braire.
Mais je suis bien content de faire.[81]

[I never saw it happen that anyone gave gold to my other master for a sermon that he preached nor for crying loudly or braying. But I am very happy to do it.]

The playwright here uses the guide to highlight the trope of grotesquely excessive noise associated with blind beggars, even one who preached and was destined for miraculous cure.

The characters' song, which stretches to twelve eight-line stanzas, hyperbolically extols the inestimable patience, industry, and other virtues of married women who take care of drunken husbands, crying babies, and domestic trials and tribulations (4827–4947). Pierre Servet, editor of the Angers *Résurrection,* has written about this song and the one sung by the pair later (to be discussed below) that they are part of the didactic message of the play; he goes so far as to say that this one is "closely connected to a sermon" representing women not as they are but "as they ought to be."[82] Aside from the fact that Galleboys and Saudret have no position of authority from which to deliver such a "sermon," Servet studiously ignores the last two lines of the song that serve as the punch line to the overextended joke: after describing at exaggerated length the virtues of women, the pair sings, "Marïez vous grans et petis / Si verrez se c'est faulte!" (4945–46; "Get married, great and small, and you will see if this is false!"). Furthermore, when the song has concluded, the blind man says he can't imagine any woman who wouldn't want to have a copy of the song—at the cost of a nice loan to the singers, without any interest (4947–52). The song is simply a means of making money that uses outlandish idealization of women to flatter them into buying.

The song's homiletic value is further compromised by the character who asks for one hundred copies of it: the Jews' messenger, evidently a Christian but also a drunk who is introduced swigging from a bottle earlier (3915–49).[83] He pays ten deniers per copy in advance and tells the pair that they should make their way to Jesus's sepulchre to seek a miraculous cure for Galleboy's blindness; the messenger cites the precedent of the man born blind, Saudret's former master (4961–78, 5003–16). After some disagreement, the blind man pays Saudret some of the money, and they go to the sepulchre, which is guarded by heavily armed men capable of murder

(5119–23). In what is apparently a ruse manufactured by Saudret to humiliate his companion, the boy works the blind man into paroxysms of fear, urging him to flee while claiming to be unable to see whether the guards are pursuing them (5124–58). Galleboys is so frightened and so utterly dependent on Saudret that he calls the boy "mon seigneur et mon amy" ("my lord and my friend," 5153), effectively deflating his own attempts at titular self-aggrandizement earlier. When this scene was staged, the actor playing the blind man would no doubt have run helter-skelter around the playing area, broadly performing his blindness for the boy's—and the audience's—entertainment. And as Galleboys runs, he falls victim to runs of another kind, according to Saudret.

> Ha! Fy! Je ne sens que püour!
> Chié avez! A Dieu! Las! Fy!
> Fy, de par le grant gibet, fy!
> Se n'est que merde que de vous!
> Vrayement, s'ilz viennent aprés nous,
> Ilz vous trouveront a la trace![84]
>
> *[Oh! Fie! I smell only stench! You have shat! Oh God! Alas! Fie! Fie, on the part of the great gallows, fie! It's nothing but shit from you! Truly, if they come after us, they will find you by the scent!]*

Here the grotesque excess descends into the realm of the fully Rabelaisian.[85] The blind man has missed his opportunity for miraculous cure through a combination of his gullibility and his cowardice, whereby he has both literally and symbolically befouled himself.

On the second day of the Angers *Résurrection,* the only scene involving Galleboys and Saudret is performed after almost 9,000 lines of drama, at the end of what must have been a lengthy day. The previous scene, Jesus speaking to the souls of the matriarchs and patriarchs recently freed from Limbo, creates a serious context that makes the blind man's entry all the more comic. In individual speeches fifty-three freed souls praise Jesus for saving them, and of those, at least twenty-four call him "monseigneur" or a close variant such as "mon chier seigneur" (13205–14044 passim). Then, soon after the blind man's entrance, he insists as he did the previous day that Saudret ought to call him "monseigneur" (14095–96). The demand is comic not only in its futile repetition of the previous day's inappropriate request but also because of its juxtaposition with the high seriousness of the

previous scene in which the honorific has been used repeatedly and appropriately to address Jesus. Saudret insults the blind man roundly, calling him, among other things, a dog turd (14105); they again agree that "maistre" will suffice. However, when Galleboys then says that he will be unable to pay Saudret in the future, the boy counters that Galleboys is reputed to be rich (14217–18), and the insults continue ("Stinking louse filled with lousiness!" 14221–22). Putting on the airs that he has claimed for himself earlier, Galleboys calls upon the blood of his lineage and challenges Saudret to a duel (14223–26); however, the blind man's choice of dueling game, "Broche [en] Cul" ("Stick in the Arse," 14254), further gives the lie to his claim of elevated birth. The descriptions of the preparations for this game and the players' postures, both here and in *La Farce du Goguelu* where it features prominently, suggest that each player's hand and feet are tied together, and then he bends over to have his hands tied close to his feet, leaving him standing but very nearly "hog-tied." The player is then given a stick with which to hit his opponent's arse.

The tying of the opponents requires a third person to participate, and Saudret claims to find someone to do the task very quickly, though actually he only changes his voice in order to fool Galleboys.[86] Here we see another example of the highly theatrical motif of the guide taking on a false voice as a disguise in order to inflict violence on the blind man, as Jeannot does before he slaps the blind man in *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle.* Of course the nonexistent character, who is labeled Fictus in both manuscripts, claims to have tied Saudret properly for the game "as surely as [he sees Galleboys]" (Tantost a vous je voys," 14327), but the boy remains free. Fictus ties the blind man tightly, to the point that the victim claims to be too painfully bent over ("Je suis trop mallement courbé!" 14378). And in yet another recourse to the scatological, the blind man claims to be so badly bent out of shape that he needs to defecate, so he calls upon Fictus to be ready to untie him (14399–402). However, the unbound Saudret makes quick work of the game: he trips Galleboys and beats him so thoroughly that the blind man asks him to stop in a speech in which he calls his servant "monseigneur, mon maistre" (14444). The two negotiate about Saudret's wages with the boy now in the position of power, for, as the blind man acknowledges near the end of the scene, he has been humiliated and recognizes his mistake ("s'est il humilié / Et congnoit assez son desfault," 14527–28).

Saudret maintains the ruse of the ever-present Fictus even after he has won his way with Galleboys, and the first scene on the third day of the *Résurrection* opens with Saudret insisting that Fictus be paid for his efforts—

money that the boy himself obviously keeps. Thanking Galleboys for the payment, Fictus says he is leaving. Given the fact that Fictus appears in this scene only to disappear fewer than 100 lines later, one might ask why the playwright did not dispatch the nonexistent character at the end of the blind man's last scene on the previous day. The answer, I think, lies in the character's parting words in response to Galleboys asking his name.

> J'ay nom Chose Sainte
> Qui suys en Jherusalem painte.
> La mercy de Dieu qui tout fist,
> Vous ne trouverez si petit
> Qui ne vous dye ou je demeure. (15257–61)
>
> *[I have the name of Holy Thing, and I am from Jerusalem. By the mercy of God who made everything, you won't find anyone too small to tell you where I live.]*

This odd parting comment makes sense only in the context of the previous scene, in which Jesus appears to his apostles, gives them a lance representing justice and the keys of heaven, and then disappears. He begins his lengthy sermon by scolding Thomas for believing in him only when he could see his body, adding that those who believe in him through faith in what they hear but without seeing him will be blessed in the present and future (14768–86). At the end of his explanation of the mystical gifts, Jesus disappears ("Icy endroit Jhesus s'en aille par dessoubz terre soubdainement" [15119]; "Here Jesus suddenly goes from the place underneath the earth"), and the apostles speak of him, with Thomas the last to do so. The doubter castigates himself for not having believed the reports of the resurrection until he saw the risen Jesus (15153–61), the apostles leave the stage, and Galleboys enters with Saudret—and Fictus.

Fictus's strange parting comment that he is holy and comes from Jerusalem parodically connect him to Jesus, and at that moment he disappears from the stage, as Jesus has done. Jesus leaves behind the doubting Thomas, whose faith in him has been weak and who has relied on ocular proof instead. Fictus leaves behind the believing Galleboys, who praises him and wishes him a good journey (15254, 15262). The blind man's faith in the character's existence has been complete, without the possibility of ocular proof. As a foil for Thomas, Galleboys shows that by necessity he must put his faith in what he cannot see; he is ready for belief, but he does not yet

believe the story of Jesus's sacrifice and resurrection. And so the blind man remains in ignorance.

The blind man and his valet then decide to sing another song: this one, even longer than the first at sixteen stanzas with a chorus, is a paean to the joys and troubles associated with wine, a conventional subject for a blind man given the stereotype of drunkenness (15280–443). Afterward, the same messenger of the Jews who bought the earlier song appears and asks for a hundred copies of this one, which Galleboys agrees to sell for ten deniers each. Then, as if to reinforce the truth of the song, Galleboys insists that they go to a tavern to drink, and, according to the stage direction, it is the station representing the hostel where the pilgrims at Emmaus met the risen Christ (15493). Again the playwright reinforces the notion that the blind man barely misses the opportunity of Christian belief.

Later on the third day of the performance, the pair reappears on stage complaining of hunger and lack of money (suggesting that some time has passed since the messenger paid them for their song). The blind man begins to beg for money or food, and a shopkeeper ("Apoticaire") invites them to eat a meal at his place "pour Dieu" (16527); his tone seems genuinely respectful of the impoverished duo.[87] This shopkeeper appeared on the first day of the play just after the second scene involving the boy and the blind man: he is the merchant who sells perfumes and ointments to the Maries who are going to visit Jesus's tomb, whom he praises for bargaining less than any other of his customers (5291–96). Though Galleboys again puts on airs by asking for a better grade of bread than the shopkeeper has provided (16545–554), he and Saudret tuck into their meal happily, closing their final scene. Here, then, to round out the episodes involving the blind man, is a scene in which the new law of charity preached by Jesus is enacted on behalf of the blind man.

The playwright constructs Galleboys from his first appearance as a foil to the man born blind whom Jesus has earlier cured, and Saudret's first-hand experience of that miracle invites viewers to consider the contrast between this fictional character and the earlier biblical figure. The blind man never claims belief in Christ, in spite of the attempt to be cured at his sepulchre. Indeed, Galleboys' fear of the soldiers at the tomb shows that he has no faith that Christ will protect him, and his defecation immediately afterward symbolizes the way that such disbelief befouls him spiritually.[88] The fact that he does not try again for a miraculous cure reinforces this lack of belief, and the playwright structures the departure of Fictus in the first scene on the third day to emphasize Galleboy's misplaced faith. The play-

wright implies that the blind man remains a nonbeliever, which may well mean that he is a Jew (which could have been communicated to the audience through costuming as much as text). If so, then his literal blindness must also be symbolic in the context of this very religious play, and his disbelief becomes the underlying reason for his humiliation. If on the one hand the shopkeeper's gift of charity at the end shows that giving alms to the blind is exemplary, in another sense the audience is left questioning whether this blind man is fully worthy to receive them. Just as powerfully exemplary—and far more theatrically satisfying—are the instances of degradation and humiliation that the blind man has suffered at the hands of Saudret and others.

Let us leave French religious drama with a point that is perhaps obvious but worth a passing mention: blind characters are not satirized in extant medieval biblical drama from England. This is not to say that English drama is devoid of satire and attendant types of humor. The battle between Noah and his wife in the Chester and Wakefield plays, based on stereotypes of gender and age, is broadly satirical, as are the class and gender issues raised in the well-known Wakefield *Second Shepherds' Play.* Perhaps satirically presented blind characters found their way into French religious drama because they had become stock figures in secular drama such as *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle;* thus French playwrights could seek recognizable comic relief from outside the Bible, whereas English playwrights, who may not have had such secular models, found humor in fleshing out biblical characters.

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FARCE

A very slight fifteenth-century farce that reaches only 127 lines, "Un Aveugle et son Varlet et une Tripière," is perhaps the most blatant text of its genre in the use of narrative prosthesis: the blind man is used simply as the catalyst for bringing together the sexually suggestive guide and the earthy tripe-seller. Opening the play bragging that he is "un gentil mignon / Et un bon petit garson"[89] ["a fine beggar and a good little boy"], the guide is in the process of taking bottles of wine to his blind master, who is overjoyed to have them. The pair conventionally bemoan their lack of money, and the guide (in lines that are missing from the manuscript) suggests that they go to the tripe-seller to beg for food. The blind man has earlier said he is also deaf, though he is able to engage in dialogue, but the guide says that they will fail in their efforts if the man speaks. When the guide explains to the tripe-seller that his master can neither see nor hear, she replies that she has

no doubt that the man can see well (67–68). However, when she offers him some liver, he replies by nonsensically telling her how drunk he was on the day after St. Martin's Day (74–76). After another absurd exchange with the tripe-seller, the blind man is silent, and he remains so for the rest of the play as the guide and the tripe-seller engage in sexually charged double entendres. Thus the blind man's role in the play is merely to raise suspicions about whether he is impaired and to exemplify the stereotype of drunkenness associated with the disability. Tangentially he gives his guide an excuse to beg from the tripe-seller for flesh of different kinds. When he has fulfilled these functions in the plot, he becomes marginal to the action.

The anonymous *Farce du Goguelu* will serve well to conclude this section on drama, not only because it is probably the latest of the French plays discussed here, having been written in the 1490s, but also because it deploys several dramatic devices involving blind people that we have seen in earlier plays: a sighted character disguising his voice to inflict violence on the blind character, the playing of *broche en cul,* and the blind man befouling himself.

The farce, which features a blind man, his chambermaid, and the valet Goguelu, begins with the three actors, presumably not yet in character, singing a begging song accompanied by the valet's vielle. The actor playing the blind man immediately brings misrule and grotesque excess to the stage: he asks the audience where his chambermaid is, and when no one answers, he beats a member of the audience with his stick.[90] (The reason that this blind man has a chambermaid remains unexplained in the text and would no doubt have raised questions for the audience about the source of his money, since he later shows himself to be a beggar.) The chambermaid enters and asks whether he hasn't cried out for her enough already (35), suggesting noisy misrule in the performance. She claims to have a glass of wine for him but pisses into the glass instead; although he hears her urinating and identifies what she is doing, she persuades him that the sound is coming from the wine cask, and he drinks the urine. Furious, he insults her obscenely and beats her repeatedly (45–70).

Goguelu enters, makes the blind man agree to hire him as his valet in case the angry chambermaid should quit, and proceeds to ally himself with her against their ill-natured master. She proposes that they persuade him to play *broche en cul* (318) in the same way that it was played in the Angers *Résurrection:* only the blind man will actually be bound, but she will not. When the blind man is tied up, Goguelu pretends to distance himself from the game, and the chambermaid says she sees a sergeant approaching who looks like an executioner (463–65). She runs away, and Goguelu, "faignant

sa voix" (disguising his voice), accuses the blind man of being the brigand with a thousand ducats,[91] presumably a thief. The valet then beats the blind man, counting the blows as his victim begs for mercy. He even threatens to hang the blind man (514). When the valet finally withdraws to speak to the chambermaid, she says that their victim has received "bonne discipline" (525), a line that Jody Enders reads in terms of the uses of violence in the play: "That phrase exploits the multiple connotations of the term *discipline:* the master has been disciplined, he has 'learned his lesson,' he has been taught well, he has gotten a good beating, and he has felt the good whip."[92] I would add that it is equally important to this play that a blind man is being disciplined for embodying the misrule and excess that is conventionally associated with characters of his type.

The result of this discipline is that the blind man, calling for the help of the Virgin Mary, admits, "D'ahan je chie sus et jus / Tout partout, devant et derrière" ("For my suffering I have shat above and below, all over everywhere, in front and behind" [528–29]). The chambermaid reappears to tell him to go wash himself in the river. The blind man scolds his companions for leaving him in danger, to which the chambermaid replies that if he wants to retain their services, he needs to speak to them differently (540–55). Counseling good cheer, Goguelu picks up his vielle again, and the trio sing about a beautiful eighteen-year-old girl who can only be wooed by men with money (577–606). The song restores harmony among them, and the play closes as they agree to go from house to house singing in order to earn cash.

This chapter's discussion of medieval comic literature involving blind characters is bracketed by two short, self-contained plays, the thirteenth-century *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle* and the fifteenth-century *Le Farce du Goguelu,* that have a great deal in common. In both plays the blind men attempt to control their servants, but the servants exploit their masters' impairment in order to humiliate and inflict violence on them. However, the differences in the endings of the farces may be significant in terms of the evolution of a social model of disability during the two centuries that separate them. At the end of the earlier play the blind man, robbed of his clothes and his money, is alone, powerless, and silenced; the playwright does not even allow him a formalized complaint of the type that might be expected in this situation. At the end of *Goguelu,* although the blind man has been humiliated and threatened with similar desertion, Goguelu and the chambermaid invite him to travel with them, singing and begging; the power dynamic has

shifted inasmuch as his former servants now seem to be more like companions, but nevertheless they agree to make their way through the world with him. The social vision here parallels that in the blind man's final scene in the Angers *Résurrection,* in which his guide remains with him and the shopkeeper's charity provides them a place in society, marginal and temporary though it may be. In both of the fifteenth-century plays the blind man learns that he remains part of society only by the sufferance of the sighted, who may occasionally feel called upon to remind him of his "place" by humiliating him—but in comparison to the utter isolation of the blind man in *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle,* such a situation may represent progress, if we dare call it that.

Scholars of medieval English literature will be aware by this point of an important omission from this chapter dealing with humor and blindness: one of *The Canterbury Tales*' best fabliaux, "The Merchant's Tale," in which the main character goes blind and is miraculously cured. In terms of genre and basic subject matter, the tale might appear to belong here, but in comparison to the texts discussed earlier in which blind characters are subjected to physical abuse and cruelty *because of* their blindness, it does not. Chaucer makes January blind and subjects him to relentless satire, but the poet sets himself apart from his French contemporaries in that he does not satirize the impairment of blindness. As a blind character January does not perform his disability in a degrading manner, he does not embody most aspects of grotesque excess, and other characters do not take advantage of his impairment to subject him to physical violence. These differences, which imply a great deal about Chaucer's deployment of disability, make "The Merchant's Tale" more appropriate to the subject of the next chapter, the subject of which is blinding as punishment for sexual transgression.

CHAPTER 5

Blinding, Blindness, and Sexual Transgression

Because sexual sins received a great deal of attention in medieval texts, and because such sins conventionally required punishment, it is logical that medieval writers would literalize the catachrestic meaning of blindness and use the impairment to punish sexually sinful characters. Furthermore, as we have seen in several French texts, representations of the blind often featured sexual excess, so the connection of blindness and sexual transgression also existed beyond the metaphorical. A more surprising aspect of blinding as punishment for sin is that the preponderance of literary examples are from England rather than France, but the texts discussed in this chapter suggest several possible reasons for this imbalance.

Of course classical precedents in which blindness was associated with sexual sin survived into the Middle Ages, though they generally had limited influence. For early twenty-first-century readers, blinding as punishment for sexual transgression still evokes the image of Oedipus. The place of the incestuous king in the Western imagination during the past century is due to Freud's use of the myth in his psychoanalytic theories, which, by the mid-twentieth century, made the Theban ruler a household name. Such was not the case, however, in the Middle Ages, largely because the story of Oedipus gained its greatest cultural significance in the Renaissance and later, after the recovery of Sophocles' Greek play.

In medieval Europe the Oedipus myth was best known through the *Thebaid* by Statius (ca. 48–96 C.E.) and its twelfth-century French translation, *Le Roman de Thèbes.* However, in the Latin epic, Statius devotes very little attention to Oedipus, focusing instead on the quarrel between his sons Eteocles and Polynieces for control of the Theban throne. This attention to

the next generation necessarily emphasizes the results of Oedipus's incestuous relationship with his mother Jocasta, and therefore the king's self-blinding remains a circumscribed, personal act of penance, an event that is far less significant than the ongoing battle that tears the kingdom apart.

The *Thebaid* opens after Oedipus has blinded himself.

> Impia iam merita scrutatus lumina dextra
> merserat aeterna damnatum nocte pudorem
> Oedipodes longaque animam sub morte tenebat.
>
> *[Already had Oedipus with avenging hand probed deep his sinning eyes and sunk his guilty shame in eternal night, abiding in a long and living death.]*[1]

In the following lines, Oedipus turns toward heaven his "empty orbs, the cruel, pitiful punishment of his life," again implying the very personal nature of this self-inflicted punishment.[2]

Medieval versions of the Thebes legend are even less attentive to Oedipus's blindness. The twelfth-century Latin "Lament of Oedipus," an 84-line poem, presents a generalized complaint about the title character's unfortunate fate and his condition at the moment of lamentation; the anonymous poet mentions the self-blinding only in two lines in which the pain in Oedipus's heart symbolically supersedes the mutilation ("I opened the wound in my heart / When I tore my eyes from their sockets" [69–70]).[3] The prologue to the Old French *Roman de Thèbes,* an encapsulated history of Oedipus, devotes only one line to his self-blinding just after he learns that Jocasta is his mother ("Il meïsmes s'est essorbez" [497]),[4] and only twenty lines later the narrative shifts its focus to Oedipus's sons. John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* goes further in removing self-punishment from his description of Oedipus's blindness. First he states that the discovery of Jocasta's identity causes Oedipus to weep his eyes out (1002), a variant that retains the penitential aspect of his blinding while erasing the self-inflicted violence. Only later does Lydgate have recourse to his *auctor*'s description of the blinding.

> As his sones rebuke hym and dispise,
> Vpon a day / in a certeyn place,
> Out of his hede / his eyën he gan race,
> And cast at hem, / he can non other bote,
> And of malice / they trad hem vnder fote . . . [5]

This odd variant of Oedipus's blinding makes sense within the context of the Theban legends of Oedipus's warring sons and perhaps shows the medieval anxieties about his self-punishment. Medieval retellings confront the incest but focus on its sociohistorical consequences, not its personal ones for Oedipus. These texts may also betray a sense of discomfort with the possible conflation of Oedipus's self-blinding and acts of penance: in medieval Catholicism, no sin would require such self-inflicted punishment.

Another classical text in which blinding is closely related to issues of gender and sexuality, the story of Tiresias, was apparently less widely retold in the Middle Ages than the story of Oedipus, but it exercised some influence through Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the *Ovide Moralisé.* In Ovid, Jupiter and Juno call upon the wise Tiresias to adjudicate in their quarrel over whether men or women enjoy sex more. He is a fit judge because earlier, while walking in the forest, he sees a pair of snakes coupling and separates them with his staff, an act that transforms him into a woman for seven years. At the end of that time he finds two snakes similarly conjoined and separates them again, thus changing himself back to a man. Tiresias draws upon his experience in judging that women enjoy sex more, an answer that so displeases Juno that she blinds him. Jupiter, however, compensates for the disability by giving him the gift of prophecy.

> . . . gravius Saturnia iusto
> nec pro materia fertur doluisse suique
> iudicis aeterna damnavit lumina nocte;
> at pater omnipotens (neque enim licet inrita cuiquam
> facta dei fecisse deo) pro lumine adempto
> scire futura dedit poenamque levavit honore. [333–38]
>
> *[Saturnia, they say, grieved more deeply than she should and than the issue warranted, and condemned the arbitrator to perpetual blindness. But the Almighty Father (for no god may undo what another god has done) in return for his loss of sight gave Tiresias the power to know the future, lightening the penalty by the honour.]*[6]

According to Robert Garland, who has studied representations of disability in classical Rome, Tiresias's blindness paired with his prophetic gifts attests to "a highly ambivalent attitude toward the blind and the intersexual."[7] For

medieval readers, the connection between blindness and punishment for sex may have made the text less ambivalent.

The *Ovide Moralisé* offers interpretations for disparate aspects of the narrative but no overall allegorical reading. The poet uses Juno's blinding of Tiresias as the occasion for a rather general warning to his readers to beware of women in positions of power; this section discusses women's predilection for seeking vengeance but does not mention blinding specifically (1060–85).[8] By taking this antifeminist stance against the goddess responsible for the punishment, the poet precludes the possibility of allegorizing the blinding negatively; instead, his reading of Tiresias naturalizes the disability.

> Li temps, qui a double nature,
> Or de chalour, or de froidure,
> Et diversement se varie,
> Est entendus par Tyresie. (1107–10)
>
> *[The weather, which has a double nature, either of heat or of cold, and changes itself diversely, is understood by Tiresias.]*

The coupling snakes represent the sowing of seeds, which require both masculine and feminine characteristics to germinate; here the poet draws on the theory of bodily humors. When the seed is in the ground, the heat of summer dominates, and the masculine nature of the weather dries and ripens the fruit, filling gardens with herbs, flowers, and fruit (1117–25).

> Emprez esté commence yvers,
> Qui a femeline nature.
> Lors recommence la froidure . . . (1126–28)
>
> *[After summer begins winter, which has a feminine nature. Then the cold begins again . . .]*

Jupiter and Juno are also allegorized as types of weather conditions, and then the poet turns to the blinding.

> Tyresyes fu anublez,
> Et Juno, d'ire escommeüe,
> Le despoulla de sa veüe,

Qu'en yver obscurcist et trouble
Li airs. . . .
Mes dessouz l'ivernal froidure,
Qui est geuvrieuse et obscure,
Se norrist des fruis grant plenté,
Que la chalours dou tens d'esté
Fait puis aparoir. . . . (1172–76, 1179–83)

[Tiresias was clouded, and Juno, strongly moved by anger, deprived him of his sight, as in winter the air darkens and is turbulent. . . . But under the wintry cold, which is frosty and dark, a great abundance of fruit is nourished, which the heat of the summer weather will then cause to appear. . . .]

Thus the poet explains both the blinding, which is climatically associated with winter, and Tiresias's return to maleness, represented by the summer heat. However, Tiresias's blindness falls out of the allegory, and the fruit that is nourished in winter, presumably Tiresias's gift of prophecy, is associated with his having been a woman. The poet builds this rather clumsy attempt at allegorization around what he seems unable to say: he does not imply that Tiresias's blindness contributed to his prophetic gifts, an erasure that seem distinctly medieval.

What the poet calls allegory follows the natural reading. Here he recounts the story of Jesus and his resurrection in a manner that suggests rather than defines precise symbolic correspondences. The poet implies that Tiresias's change of gender resembles Jesus's reappearance as a man after the Resurrection when he comes back miraculously. To explain Tiresias's blindness and his prophetic powers, the poet must resort to a different biblical figure, Paul.

C'est cil qui, par vertu devine,
Perdi la corporel veüe,
Qui au tiers jour li fu rendue,
Mes tant dis come il ne vit goute,
L'enlumina Dieus si, sans doute,
Qu'il vit touz les devins secrez. (1256–61)

[It is he who, by divine virtue, lost his physical sight, which was restored on the third day, but while he saw nothing, God enlightened him so that without a doubt, he could see all divine secrets.]

This allegorization of Tiresias's story pulls in a very different direction from the allegory of the seasons. As the ground for the allegory the poet uses the two characters' blinding and prophetic powers (though he must invent the latter for Paul, and the phrase "sans doute" may betray his discomfort in tampering with biblical history). But there is a telling slippage in relation to blindness in the allegory here: Paul's temporary disability of blindness corresponds to Tiresias's temporary "disability" of being a woman. When the period of each punishment draws to a close, nature rights itself through the restoration of the "normate," the sighted and the male. This symbolic correspondence thus leaves Tiresias's ongoing blindness unallegorized. So in these two readings we see different but related anxieties about blindness. Admittedly, such moralizing allegories are generally not seamlessly constructed, but in these particular examples the seams unravel twice around the issue of blindness.

The best-known biblical narrative to include this punishment is the blinding of the Sodomites,[9] who, according to most medieval exegesis, offend against God by demanding immediate satisfaction of their homosexual desires with the angels visiting Lot (Genesis 19:4–11).

> 4. But before [the angels] went to bed, the men of the city beset the house both young and old, all the people together.
>
> 5. And they called Lot, and said to him: Where are the men that came in to thee at night? Bring them out hither that we may know them:
>
> 6. Lot went out to them, and shut the door after him, and said:
>
> 7. Do not so, I beseech you, my brethren, do not commit this evil.
>
> 8. I have two daughters who as yet have not known man: I will bring them out to you, and abuse you them as it shall please you, so that you do no evil to these men, because they are come in under the shadow of my roof.
>
> 9. But they said: Get thee back thither. And again: Thou camest in, said they, as a stranger, was it to be a judge? Therefore we will afflict thee more than them. And they pressed very violently upon Lot: and they were even at the point of breaking open the doors.
>
> 10. And behold the men [i.e., the angels] put out their hand, and drew Lot unto them, and shut the door:
>
> 11. And them that were without, they struck with blindness from the least to the greatest, so that they could not find the door.

Although this account does not describe the queer gaze whereby the Sodomites had seen the beauty of the angels, it is nevertheless definitively

interrupted, and, if we follow Freud's interpretation of blindness, the Sodomites are symbolically castrated, rendered impotent, because of their homosexual desires.[10]

In *The City of God,* Augustine was the first patristic writer to identify the Sodomites' sin as homosexuality (16.30). Due to the homophobia of medieval Catholicism, patristic writing generally places more emphasis on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah than on the blinding of the Sodomites. However, the two are narratologically linked, since Lot and his family must be allowed to escape from the Sodomites before the cities are destroyed. But the ordering of these events—blinding as the initial punishment, followed by death—becomes the organizing principle for a number of narratives in which sexual transgressions are punished.

Some medieval biblical commentaries do not interpret the blinding of the Sodomites at all.[11] This occlusion relates partly to the overwhelming attention given to the sin of the Sodomites, but it also grows out of the fact that blindness had such a firmly established metaphorical meaning in Christian discourse that it would not have required glossing in this context. The Sodomites are already spiritually blind because of their habitually sinful nature, and therefore blinding as punishment merely literalizes their spiritual condition. This kind of reading is available in a text that has received a great deal of attention since the advent of queer theory in literary studies, Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus.* He writes:

> Percusserunt autem illos caecitate angeli, ut ostium domus, quod aperire cupiebant, non repperirent. Hic quidem mirabilis angelorum declaratur potestas, ut offusa inpuris caecitate non repperirentur domus ostia. Sed etiam illud ostenditur quia caeca est omnis libido et ante se non videt. (I.6.53)[12]
>
> *[But the angels struck them with blindness so that the door of the house, which they desired to open, they could not find. This indeed reveals the miraculous power of the angels, that the impure, engulfed in blindness, could not open the doors to the house. But it also shows that all desire is blind and does not see what is in front of it.]*

Damian goes on to vilify the particular kind of desire that the Sodomites display, but he does not add any significant new dimensions to his interpretation of blindness itself.

Although apparently little known during the later Middle Ages, the Middle English poem *Cleanness* includes what may now be the most widely

read Middle English translation of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. In the alliterative poem, after the angels have pulled Lot into the house and barred the door,

> Þay blwe a boffet inblande þat banned peple,
> Þat þay blustered, as blynde as Bayard watz euer;
> Þay lest of Lotez logging any lysoun to fynde,
> Bot nyteled þer alle þe ny3t for no3t at þe last,
> Þenne vch tolke ty3t hem, þat hade of tayt fayled,
> And vchon roþeled to þe rest þat he reche mo3t . . .(885–90)[13]
>
> *[They struck a blow among that cursed people, so that they strayed about, as blind as Bayard ever was; they lost any glimpse for finding Lot's lodging, but made a disturbance there all night, for nought in the end. Then each man that had failed in pleasure went on his way, and each one hurried to the rest that he could reach.]*

The Bayard simile, conventional in Middle English,[14] here equates the Sodomites' blindness with beastly ignorance. The poet's nonbiblical detail about the blinded men creating a disturbance may be an instantiation of the stereotype of blind people as bringers of disorder and misrule, though it generally appears more frequently in French literature. In the poet's shift from plural pronouns for the Sodomites in lines 886–88 to the singular "vch" in the last two lines, we see him carefully obviating the possibility that the Sodomites could have exercised their pleasure on each other after the blinding: they went their separate ways, and thereby the poet inscribes the isolation not only of queer sexual transgressors but of blind people.

Like the biblical account, the poem does not specifically link the male gaze of the Sodomites to their desire for the angels, but through the Bayard simile, the poet implies their lack of self-control. And later in the poem, God describes the profound pleasure that married couples can derive from "clean" sex, but intercourse must take place "At a stylle stollen steuen, unstered wyth sy3t" [at a quiet secret meeting, undisturbed by sight] (706). Admittedly, the phrase is ambiguous: the lovers' meeting must not be disturbed by the voyeurism of others, but the phrase also seems to imply that the couple should not allow their gaze upon each other to inflame them unduly. The line may serve as a reminder that Andreas Capellanus wrote that the gaze is crucial to sexual desire in *The Art of Courtly Love.* He bases his

very definition of love on the ability to see: "Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex . . ."[15] Andreas goes on to say,

> Blindness is a bar to love, because a blind man cannot see anything upon which his mind can reflect immoderately, and so love cannot arise in him, as I have already fully shown. But I admit that this is true only of the acquiring of love, for I do not deny that a love which a man acquires before his blindness may last after he becomes blind.[16]

Thus Andreas denies blind people some of the refinements that result from real love: handsomeness, nobility of character, humility, virtue, and several other positive traits that he praises in chapter 4, entitled "What the Effect of Love Is."[17] This is a different kind of sexual punishment associated with blindness, closer to Freud's association of blindness with castration.

Blinding as punishment for lust features prominently in the foundational legend of the city of Oxford. Variants of the story of the eighth-century St. Frideswide, patron of Oxford, apparently predate the earliest written witness in William of Malmesbury's *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum.* In this version, Frideswide, a princess, is devoted to Christ and to the preservation of her virginity. A nameless king, intent upon marrying her, pursues her from Oxford to the forest and back again. When she realizes that he is still following her, she prays "for protection for herself and punishment for her persecutor."[18] As he passes through the town gates, a divine blow strikes him blind; the punishment makes him realize that his persistence is sinful, so he sends messengers asking Frideswide for forgiveness, at which point his sight is restored.

In another twelfth-century life of the saint preserved in BL MS Cotton Nero E 1, the king is identified as Algar of Leicester, "a most villainous man and hateful to God."[19] Here he sends messengers to Frideswide to threaten to kidnap her if she remains unwilling to marry him. She prays in their presence, and they are struck blind; she then prays that their sight be restored, and it is. However, Algar, who remains adamant in his desire for her, comes with his henchmen to Oxford, but as he enters the city, he is blinded. In a significant variation from William of Malmesbury's version, this text states, "It is thought to have come about in this way that kings never enter Oxford. The profane king remained blind all the days of his life, always plotting and scheming to injure the blessed Frideswide."[20] The lack of for-

giveness of Algar contrasts the next episode in the narrative, which tells of a girl "whom a devil had struck blind nearly seven years previously" who is miraculously cured by the water with which Frideswide washes her hands.[21] Interestingly, the text offers no reason at all for the devil's blinding of the girl. For our purposes, this version of the tale is significant in that it fully instantiates both sides of the religious model of blindness, since one instance of impairment in the legend is caused by God and the other by the devil.

Although the cult of St. Frideswide in the Middle Ages had limited popularity beyond Oxford, her legend and its connections to blinding and blindness exercised some influence. The assertion in the twelfth-century "life" that kings avoided Oxford for fear of being blinded held true until the time of Henry III. According to the chronicle attributed to Thomas Wykes, Henry bravely entered Oxford on April 5, 1264, in spite of the old superstition of Frideswide's antiroyal wrath;[22] on the other hand, the anonymous writer of the Annals of Osney Monastery says that on that day Henry hedged his bets by entering the church of St. Frideswide (Christ Church Cathedral) "with great devotion, as no king had attempted from the time of King Algar."[23] A short Latin acrostic verse on the name "Fridesvvida," written in a fourteenth-century hand and preserved in Bodleian MS Digby 177 (fol. 320v), mentions the blinding of the king of Leicester, the blinding and healing of his messengers (here called "warriors"), and the miraculous cure of the blind girl.[24] And Chaucer knew enough of Frideswide's association with Oxford to give an oath upon her name to John the cuckolded carpenter in "The Miller's Tale," which is set in Oxford.[25]

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

Chaucer's version of the tale of the beleaguered Custance carefully balances the miraculous cure of blindness as proof of sanctity and blinding as punishment. Both of these episodes occur, significantly, after Custance's rudderless ship has taken her to Northumberland, and thus the miracles are inscribed as part of the history of Chaucer's England.

The episode of blinding is based yet again on an improper use of vision, though that impropriety begins with Satan, who "saugh of Custance al hire perfeccioun" (583) and incites a young knight to fall passionately in love with her. When she refuses him, he wreaks vengeance by not only murdering Custance's friend and spiritual companion Hermengyld while the two women are sharing a bed but also framing Custance by leaving the bloody knife next to her. The circumstantial evidence convinces almost everyone of

her guilt except king Alla, who doubts the knight's insistence that Custance is the murderer. Alla commands that the knight swear an oath, at which point a divine hand intervenes.

> A Britoun book, written with Evaungiles,
> Was fet, and on this book he swoor anoon
> She gilty was, and in the meene whiles
> An hand him smoot upon the nekke-boon,
> That doun he fil atones as a stoon,
> And both his eyen broste out of his face
> In sighte of every body in that place.
>
> A voys was herd in general audience,
> And seyde, "Thou hast desclaundred, giltelees,
> The doghter of holy chirche in heigh presence;
> Thus hastou doon, and yet holde I my pees!" (666–76)

This miracle convinces its witnesses of Custance's innocence and results in many conversions to Christianity, including King Alla's. His first act as king is to sentence the blinded knight to death ("This false knyght was slayn for his untrouthe / By juggement of Alla hastifly" [687–88]).

This episode of Chaucer's tale deserves analysis in relation to the two texts to which it is most closely related, the Anglo-Norman chronicle of Nicholas Trevet and John Gower's "Tale of Constance" from the *Confessio Amantis*. For this study, such a comparison is particularly valuable inasmuch as Chaucer's tale has a sharper focus on motifs of true and false sight and vision than either of these possible source texts.

In Trevet's version, which seems to have been Chaucer's primary source, the divine punishment is more severe, but the human punishment is less immediate. Here the knight's accusation and oath take place not before the king (who has not yet met Custance when the murder occurs) but before the murdered woman's husband, a constable named Olda.

> A peine avoit parfini la parole qe une main enclose come [poyn] de homme apparut devant Olda et quantq'estoient en presence, et feri tiel coup en le haterel le feloun, que ambedeux les eux lui envolerent de la teste et les dentz hors de la bouche, et le feloun chei abatu a la terre. E a ceo dit un voiz en l'oy de touz: "Adversus filiam matris ecclesie ponebas scandalum; hoc fecisti et non tacui."

> *[He had scarcely finished the accusation when a closed hand like a man's fist appeared before Olda and all who were present and struck such a blow on the nape of the fellow's neck that both his eyes flew out of his head and his teeth out of his mouth, and the criminal fell, struck down to the ground. And at this a voice said in the hearing of all, "You were placing a stumbling block against the daughter of mother Church; this you have done and I have not remained silent."]*[26]

Even though the divine voice (speaking, appropriately, in Latin) accuses the knight of bearing false witness against a daughter of the church, Olda decides to delay final judgment on the murderer until he hears from the king; the royal verdict to execute comes a few days later ("Puis deinz poi de jours par le roi fu le jugement doné de sa mort." [ll. 254–55]), and afterward the king, for his love of Custance and because of the power of her miracles, allows himself to be baptized and then marries her.

In relation to blinding as punishment, this narrative has very different valences from Chaucer's version. Although Trevet states that the devil inspires the evil knight not only to love Custance but also to kill Hermengyld as revenge,[27] the text deploys no verbs of vision to rationalize his lust, as Chaucer does. Likewise, the physical punishment goes beyond blinding to loss of teeth, metonymically associated with the mouth, the site of the man's sin of lying. And finally, inasmuch as this text is a chronicle, Trevet reserves the verdict of capital punishment for the king, even though the divine presence has made its displeasure fully apparent: the execution takes place according to human time and protocols. Thus Trevet constructs the divine blinding as one of a number of punishments exacted by both God and humanity, with God and the king working in conjunction to bring about justice. Blinding is simply one in a menu of punishments.

Likewise, in this text the blinding of the murderer has a less direct influence on Northumbrian society than it has in "The Man of Law's Tale." Trevet does not describe the reactions of the witnesses at all. The pagan king Alle does not see the miracle, so its effects on him are anything but immediate. Following the delayed judgment upon the murderer, the king has himself baptized "because of the great love that he had for the maiden [Custance], and because of the miracles shown by God,"[28] and his conversion allows for their marriage. Yet again, the significance of the blinding as divine retribution is diminished: it becomes only one of an undifferentiated group of miracles associated with Custance, but that group as a whole is evidently less important than Alle's love for the maiden in his decision to con-

vert to Christianity. While it would be an overstatement to say that the religious model of disability is inoperative here, the social model dominates the episode. Trevet's primary interest is in how society will react to and structure itself around the blinded man; the meaning of his blindness must be socially and legally processed before his fate is determined and before Alle marries.

In the *Confessio Amantis* version of the story of Constance, Gower's construction of the blinding is largely antithetical to Trevet's: the Middle English author places the entirety of the murderer's punishment under divine control. At the moment that the knight perjures himself,

> . . . the hond of hevene him smot
> In tokne of that he was forswore,
> That he hath bothe hise yhen lore,
> Out of his hed the same stounde
> Thei sterte, and so thei weren founde.
> A vois was herd, whan that they felle,
> Which seide, "O dampned man to helle,
> Lo, thus hath God the sclaundre wroke
> That thou ayein Constance hast spoke:
> Beknow the sothe er that thou dye."
> And he told out his felonie,
> And starf forth with his tale anon. (874–85)[29]

Here, with the gruesome detail of the murderer's far-flung eyeballs, Gower sharpens the narrative's focus on the blinding as a miracle of divine power and wrath. Not only is blinding isolated as the initial punishment (thus sparing readers the image of the projectile vomiting of teeth recorded in Trevet's chronicle), but also God takes charge of executing the murderer, giving him only enough time to confess his crime. This redaction follows the religious model of disability entirely: the murderer's body belongs to God alone. But although the punishment itself is narratively streamlined, it is not as fully integrated into the text as it is in Chaucer's tale: the knight's lust for Constance is not described as a sin based on his vision or Satan's. Thus these two texts do not clearly construct the blinding as a punishment for sexual transgression, even if they imply that the knight's eyes led him to temptation; rather, blinding is a punishment for the murder, as it had been under the rule of the Normans.

As in Trevet's text, the absent Alla hears about the miracle later ("the

seconde day a morwe," [890]) and contemplates its significance before committing himself to conversion. Again, the king's love of Constance seems to be a stronger motivation for baptism than belief in the power of the Christian God.

> For al his hole herte he leide
> Upon Constance, and seide he scholde
> For love of hire, if that sche wolde,
> Baptesme take and Cristes feith
> Believe, and over that he seith
> He wol hire wedde . . . (896–901)

Although Gower says that Alla has "thoughte more than he seide" (895) about the murderer's miraculous blinding and death, any direct influence of these events on his decision to marry Constance is elided. His consideration of the miracles, followed by his proposal to Constance that he be baptized and marry her, all serve to distance the force of the miracles, making Alla seem a ruler more interested in carefully consolidating his own power than in placing his faith in a higher one.

In the *Confessio Amantis* to some extent, and in the Anglo-Norman *Cronicles* more clearly, the blinding scene and Alla's conversion take on a somewhat different meaning if we read them in light of the fact that blinding as punishment, particularly when it involved the removal of the eyes from the body, was the prerogative of royalty, who had a "monopoly on this particular form of violence," as Bührer-Thierry states. Indeed, God does not inflict this gruesome form of blinding on anyone in the Bible. These texts cast the divine voice in the role of a ruler protecting one of his subjects whose familial relationship to him is laid out in Trevet's text as "a daughter of mother church." Alla learns of this potentially competitive ruler's actions and must decide whether to become an ally—thus his rather slow, deliberate meditation on whether to reinforce the punishment through execution, and whether to convert. The conversion ultimately resembles a homosocial bond based on an alliance across the body of a woman, figuratively the daughter of God and Mother Church. While in Trevet's chronicle it makes some sense that the king does not enter hastily into an alliance, the politicized relationship between God and Alla seems less consistent with Gower's intentions. Indeed, a comparison between Trevet and Gower shows a slippage in the latter author's text: while Gower's God serves as both blinder

and executioner, his additional power does not persuade Alla to convert more quickly.

If we return to Chaucer, then, we see added significance in the fact that the murderous knight's vision is inscribed in his sins against Custance, thus sexualizing and thematically justifying the ocular punishment of the knight, and we also see that Chaucer structures the moment of blinding more similarly to Trevet than to Gower by including the divine description of Custance as a daughter of the church. Immediately following the passage quoted here, Chaucer devotes several lines to the effect of the blinding on the witnesses, including, in this narrative, King Alla. The onlookers—"al the prees"—are "agast," "mazed," and filled with "drede and eek . . . repentaunce" (677–80).

> And as for this miracle, in conclusioun,
> And by Custances mediacioun,
> The kyng—and many another in that place—
> Converted was, thanked by Cristes grace!
>
> This false knyght was slayn for his untrouthe
> By juggement of Alla hastifly . . . (683–88)

Here, unlike the other narratives, the strong, immediate reaction to the miracle shows that none of the witnesses, not even Alla, understands the blinding as a divine punishment that tacitly asks for human completion; rather, the punishment stands on its own as a miracle showing God's power, and the only human force that can be added to it is Custance's reiteration of that power, her "mediacioun," which immediately causes *many* conversions, not just Alla's. Only then does Chaucer turn to the murderer's execution, which is structured not as a royal verdict demonstrating the king's power but as a sentence that is passive both politically and grammatically: the knight is slain because divine justice presumably requires the execution, and Alla sacrifices the possibility of political grandstanding by ordering the execution "hastifly." It is significant that here, unlike Trevet's narrative, the sentence of execution is handed down by a newly converted Christian king who is perhaps humbled by the miracle he has seen; he is not so much joining God in an alliance as carrying out his will as a humble servant. Jesus then makes Alla marry Custance—there is no question of earthly negotiations—and we are told "Thus hath Crist ymaad Custance a queene" (693). The blinding thus

becomes the site of the divine rather than a human display of power, and the human power that Alla exercises is within Christian law. So Chaucer deals with the blinding very much according to the religious model. Christianity immediately takes control, and the response to the disability is structured entirely by Christian belief to the point that Alla and Custance lose practically all agency in the decision to marry each other. Their union, like the blinding, belongs to God. Whereas Trevet's version seems to work to contain a religious miracle within a secular society, Chaucer's version uses the miracle to reinforce the Christianity of the society as a whole.

Comparing this episode in "The Man of Law's Tale" and its source texts suggests that blinding as punishment takes on different meanings depending on literary and cultural contexts, even though the same hand of God metes out the punishment for the same crime in each narrative. While the power behind the punishment is all God's, the ways in which the characters position themselves in relation to that power reveal important differences in the texts. But what do the differences tell us about the social understanding of blinding (and/or blindness) as a possible divine punishment in fourteenth-century England, even when the disability does not assume the dramatic form that it takes in these tales? In Trevet's version the religious model of disability is less fully operative than in the Middle English revisions. Although God inflicts a form of punishment that has its roots in Norman history, it has no clear effect on society as a whole, and its effect on the king is rather anticlimactically delayed. Gower's redaction creates a more powerful divine hand that has complete control over the disabling and execution, but as in Trevet's tale, its power does not result in the immediate conversion of the society in which the miracle takes place. Chaucer's revision, however, foregrounds the religious model of disability in a number of ways. Blinding as punishment fits the crime of the improper vision transferred from Satan to the murderous knight; society is immediately terrified and profoundly altered by the extravagantly disabled body of the knight, and Alla sees it as his duty to reinforce God's punishment with all possible haste. Here, disability is caused by God, and due to the instantaneous conversion of those who see the miracle, the response to that disability is a Christian response.

THE MERCHANT'S TALE

The other instance of blinding as punishment for sexual transgressions in *The Canterbury Tales* victimizes January in "The Merchant's Tale," whose

sexual passion for his wife crosses the boundary into adulterous territory. The tale draws on very different constructions of blindness: while January's impairment is consistent with ideas in medieval medicine that sexual excess can lead to blindness, especially in old men, the resolution of the tale seems more closely aligned with the religious model of disability.

Before examining January's blindness, we should briefly examine the importance of his nationality, which Chaucer mentions in the first lines of the tale: "Whilom ther was dwellynge in Lumbardye / A worthy knyght, that born was of Pavye, / In which he lived in greet prosperitee . . ." (1245–47).[30] January is from northern Italy, a Lombard knight. For fourteenth-century English readers this title would have linked him closely with a group whose metaphorical blindness was the subject of an earlier chapter: Jews. During the fourteenth century the Lombards were the largest group of Christians to engage in the practice of usury, which had been an important occupation for the Jews earlier. These Italian moneylenders (the term *Lombard* could apply to any Italian engaged in commerce)[31] grew in influence as Jews were victimized in pogroms or officially exiled during the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; in the second half of the thirteenth century Italian moneylenders established themselves in the Netherlands, France, and areas of Germany.[32] In European society Jews and Lombards were openly criticized and victimized for participating in usury,[33] and in London in 1369 the commons, petitioning Parliament to limit the powers of the Lombards, called them "traitors, spies, usurers, and Jews and Saracens."[34] Given the widespread vilification of Lombard moneylenders across Europe, the well-traveled Geoffrey Chaucer certainly knew that he would not predispose his readers in January's favor by calling him a Lombard and pointing out that he has garnered "greet prosperite."

Furthermore, Chaucer carefully constructs a January whose Christianity is questionable at best. His initial ideas about marriage, in which he claims that married bliss will become his heaven on earth, suggest blasphemously misplaced faith in earthly life. Although January flippantly swears by an occasional Christian saint or by God, his wedding is attended by pagan deities, and Venus's joyful dancing at January's conversion to her cause results in her torch knocking Damian into burning love (1774–78). The Merchant blames January's blindness on the figure of Fortune, and the pagan deities Pluto and Proserpina reverse the disability; Chaucer's use of pagan gods to resolve the conflict between January and May is particularly telling in light of the fact that some analogues have God and St. Peter in the roles of the mediating divine observers.

Echoes of both moneylending and the faithless blindness of the Jews appear in January's character. In his first speech January opines that "wedlock is so esy and so clene / That in this world it is a paradys" (1264–65), implying that he will be lent the delights of the afterlife before he dies. However, in a related speech later, he tells his brothers Placebo and Justinus that he knows heaven on earth is impossible: "'I have,' quod he, 'herd seyd, ful yoore ago, / There may no man han parfite blisses two—/ This is to seye, in erthe and eek in hevene'" (1637–39). Significantly, he goes on to describe the requirements for entry into heaven in economic terms appropriate to a Lombard knight.

> ". . . I shal lede now so myrie a lyf,
> So delicat, withouten wo and stryf,
> That I shal have myn hevene in erthe heere.
> For sith that verray hevene is boght so deere
> With tribulacion and greet penaunce,
> How sholde I thanne, that lyve in swich plesaunce
> As alle wedded men doon with hire wyvys,
> Come to the blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve ys?" (1645–52)

Although January's brother Justinus replies that a wife is more likely to be the old man's "purgatorie" (1670) than his heaven on earth, January remains blasphemously content to buy earthly happiness instead of a heavenly afterlife, and the Merchant emphasizes the commercial nature of the marriage negotiations, based on a "sly and wys tretee." In an example of *occupatio* that highlights the Merchant's own abilities to speak the language of business, he says, "I trowe it were to longe yow to tarie, / If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond / By which that she was feffed in his lond . . ." (1696–98). The business dealings here show that January has sold the promise of heaven in order to buy May, and the Merchant alludes to January's loss of interest in Christianity by stating that he now belongs to Venus, who happily attends the wedding: "And Venus laugheth upon every wight / For Januarie was bicome hir knyght" (1723–24).

The Merchant shows that the possibility of losing heaven that January has earlier feared becomes a reality as the couple are about to consummate their marriage: the narrator describes May as having become January's "paradys" (1822). Thus, at the end of a complex series of theological and contractual negotiations, January's attention to Christianity has been displaced by his worship of May. The intensity of January's lust exemplifies the

third type of adultery described by the Parson late in *The Canterbury Tales:* "in hire assemblynge they putten Jhesu Crist out of hire herte and yeven hemself to all ordure."[35]

The connection between January's character as a Jew-like Lombard and his "investment" in sexually transgressive behavior broaden the readers' understanding of Chaucer's use of medieval conventions relating to the blindness that will befall January. When the Merchant first mentions his blindness, the famous apostrophe to "Fortune unstable," laden with sexual double entendres, is a poetic tour de force that strongly points to the power of the "sweete venym queynte" as the major evil that is poisoning January's life (2057–68). However, when the Merchant returns to a less theatrical narratorial tone, sexuality and materialism receive equal attention as aspects of January's character: "Allas, this noble Januarie free, / Amydde his lust and his prosperitee, / Is woxen blynd, and that al sodeynly" (2069–71). In January's case, his blindness seems as closely related to his prosperity as his lust. Here Chaucer implicitly deploys a structure that is indebted to the religious model: January is being punished for sins that are partly sexual and partly materialistic, though the narrator satirically refuses to spell out the connection. This may be the reason that Chaucer does not exploit January's blindness to humorous ends: the sins themselves have already been derided, so the punishment, poetically justifiable in Christian terms, need not be.

January's material interests, first for money and then for May, creates a contextualized moral justification for January's blindness that adds to our understanding of the physiological reasons for January's disability as defined in medieval medical discourse. That discourse has received the fruitful attention of Carol A. Everest in an article entitled "Sight and Sexual Performance in the *Merchant's Tale.*"[36] Everest points out that Chaucer's tale differs from its analogues in making the central figure elderly. She also cites medical treatises and other texts by such writers as Aristotle, Galen, Vincent of Beauvais, and Bartholomaeus Anglicus, all of whom connect sexual activity with a diminution of bodily moisture, a condition that directly affects the eyes. Summarizing the observations of these writers, she states:

> Chaucer's old knight clearly faces risks to his eyesight simply by virtue of his age; he increases his susceptibility, however, in his foolish insistence on sexual pleasure as a measure of his manliness. . . . In advancing years, too much sex further dims the vision of those who already experience the natural dessication of the body. (100)

Everest's findings in this article reinforce the connection between sexual activity and blindness; in a very real sense, medical discourse asserts that sex is its own punishment, at least physiologically—and medieval Christians would have understood that punishment as having been inscribed in human physiology by the divine hand.[37]

Chaucer's characterization of January's blindness is noteworthy for its lack of satire of the disability, largely because the Merchant has so thoroughly derided the sighted January that satire of the blind man as blind is unnecessary. He does not "perform" his blindness for the entertainment of other characters; his blindness has instead taken the form of self-delusion about marriage. However, in relation to marriage, a dimension of conventional satire becomes clear when we compare this text to a body of others about blind people: in the enclosed world that January has created, May becomes the guide-as-trickster figure. As in *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* the Angers *Résurrection,* and other such plays, May as guide exacts punishment on the blind man in exactly the way that will hurt him most.

Chaucer constructs May as guide through repetition (thrice in seventy lines) of the observation that the blind January must always have his hand on May. Literally this desire is because of his "outrageous" jealousy (2087), but in another sense his refusal to leave May gives her control over January's movements. The description of their contact ("he had hond on hire alwey" [2091]; "Januarie . . . hadde an hand upon her evermo" [2102–3]; "With Mayus in his hand" [2157]) resembles the description of a blind woman in Guillaume de Saint Pathus' hagiography of Louis IX. In *Les Miracles de Saint Louis,* Guillaume describes Agnés de Pontoise, taking pains to assert how her blindness manifested itself: "Et adonques ele aloit ausi comme les avugles vont, tenant sa main sus l'espaule de [sa suer] qui la menoit"[38] ["And at that time she also went as blind people go, holding her hand on the shoulder of [her sister] who led her"]. In the Middle Ages the figure of the blind man and his guide "could easily be observed in everyday life, impressed itself upon writers, artists, and audiences, and became a significant motif in the various representations of the blind."[39] Chaucer's iteration of how January has his hand on May in order to keep her under control represents yet another example of the Merchant describing a situation from January's deluded point of view: he needs to believe that he retains the power in the relationship, but as May proves, he does not.

So, like the Merchant, let us leave "Januarye and May romynge myrie" (2218) until we turn to the miraculous restoration of January's sight in chapter 6.

SEXUALLY TRANSGRESSIVE WOMEN

Inasmuch as women's vanity and insatiable sexual appetite were antifeminist conventions in medieval Europe, it is not surprising that female characters in both religious and secular literature become victims of blinding as punishment for sexual sin. A particularly amusing instance of such punishment occured at the shrine of Thomas à Becket, whose relics, like those of most saints in medieval Europe, were renowned for their ability to cure the ill and the disabled. In the best-known compilation of medieval hagiography, Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend,* the history of the relics of St. Thomas of Canterbury includes several miracles. The hagiographer resorts to a rather conventional laundry list of the powers of Thomas's relics: "By Thomas's merits the blind saw, the deaf heard, the lame walked, the dead were brought back to life."[40] But immediately thereafter we are told that Thomas's relics could cause blindness as well. An English lady, eager to attract men's attention through enhancement of her beauty, wanted her eyes to change color, so she made a vow and walked barefoot to the tomb of St. Thomas. There she knelt in prayer but, when she stood up, found that she was blind. Repentant, she began to pray to the saint that her eyes, even if their color was unchanged, be restored as they had been before—a favor that was granted her, but not before she went to great pains to obtain it.[41] Here in miniature is a narrative that bears some resemblance to that of the elderly January in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale:* through folly related to sexuality, a character loses her sight, only to regain it through divine intercession. At any rate, the power of the saint that helped pilgrims "whan that they were seke," according the the General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales,* could also punish.

In the early fifteenth-century Arthurian romance "Sir Launfal" by Thomas Chestre, the victim of blinding for sexual sin is none other than Queen Guinevere. Even when she marries Arthur early in the poem, Guinevere has a reputation for having had "lemmanys vnþer here lord, / So fele þere nas noon ende" (47–48).[42] After a feast at Arthur's court, Guinevere leans out of her tower to look at a group of dancers, and her gaze falls on the dancing Launfal in a passage rife with verbs of vision.

> Þe Quene lay out and beheld hem alle;
> "I se," sche seyde,"daunce large Launfalle:
> To hym þan wyll y go.
> Of alle þe kny3tes þat y se þere,
> He is þe fayreste bachelere. . . ." (646–50)

Guinevere later offers herself to him, but Launfal refuses, saying that he will not be a traitor (683); an affair with the queen would cause him to betray not only Arthur, but also Launfal's fairy lover Tryamour, whose existence he must keep secret if she is to remain available to him. However, when Guinevere responds angrily that he has never loved a woman, Launfal replies that he loves a woman far fairer than the queen—and the fairy's generosity to Launfal comes to an end. Guinevere complains to Arthur that Launfal has insulted her, and the other knights, suspecting Guinevere has caused the trouble, decide that the matter can be dropped if Launfal brings the lover so that her beauty may be judged alongside the queen's. At this point the queen swears a rash oath whereby she mockingly submits herself to the court for punishment if Launfal's lover is more beautiful: " 'ȝyf he bryngeþ a fayrere þynge, / Put out my eeyn gray!' " (810).

Chestre delights in detailed descriptions both of twenty of Tryamour's maidens in waiting as they appear on the appointed day in order to announce her arrival, and of Tryamour herself. Because of the importance of the male gaze in resolving the conflict, these scenes are described according to what the noblemen see, with heavy emphasis on verbs of sight.[43] Among the details about Tryamour is that she, like Guinevere, has "eyen gray" (935). Tryamour's triumphant beauty is so obvious to everyone that King Arthur does not even consult the nobles before announcing his judgment—and then Tryamour passes her judgment upon Guinevere.

> Kyng Artoure seyde, withouten oþe,
> "Ech man may yse þat ys soþe,
> Bryȝtere þat ye be."
> With þat, Dame Tryamour to þe Quene geþ,
> And blew on here swych a breþ
> Þat neuer eft myȝt sche se. (1003–8)

This punishment of the adulterous female gaze not only blinds the Queen but also silences her; she neither speaks nor is spoken of in the six remaining stanzas of the poem, in which Tryamour and Launfal ride away together to "fayrye" (1035). So the punishment that Guinevere's rash oath would have allowed the court to exercise upon her is trumped by the "royal" fairy Tryamour. What would have been social justice is displaced by metaphysical justice. This is not quite the religious model of disability in terms of the execution of the punishment, but given the sinful reason for the miraculous blinding, it takes on religious overtones.

The degree to which Chestre appropriates Guinevere's future is remarkable here: not only is Guinevere blinded, but the blindness is pointedly permanent. Presumably Chestre knew enough of Arthurian literature to realize that Guinevere was not blind during her affair with Lancelot and the demise of the Round Table. Through Tryamour Chestre challenges both royal authority (permissible in the world of this romance because Guinevere has misused it) and the authority of the textual tradition in which he is writing, for no known version of the Arthurian legend ends with a blind queen. Even though Chestre's view of the Arthurian court has not been entirely favorable, the reader may sense in his blinding of the queen a desire to redirect the future of the Round Table away from the queen's adultery. In "Sir Launfal," the queen has tried but failed to initiate an adulterous affair, and it is as if Chestre wants to use the blinding to deprive her of the agency of attempting another one.

I would like to conclude this section with a discussion of a poem in which partial blindness is at least one of a number of disabilities visited upon a female character, Robert Henryson's Cresseid in *The Testament of Cresseid.* While this character is not fully blind, the poem creates a thematic framework for her visual impairment, describes her damaged eyes, and reaches its climax in a crucial moment when she cannot see.

Henryson's poem continues Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,* in which the title characters are sexually transgressive inasmuch as their affair in the besieged city of Troy occurs outside marriage and before Criseyde has reached the end of the requisite period of mourning for her deceased husband. Chaucer provides no closure for the love affair between the title characters: Criseyde is traded to the Greeks in a hostage exchange and does not return to Troilus. Henryson's Cresseid chooses to stay with her Greek lover Diomede until he tires of her, at which point she blasphemes against the pagan gods in the temple of Venus and Cupid, where her father Calchas serves as keeper. In her complaint Cresseid chastises "fals Cupide" and his "mother [Venus], of lufe the blind goddes" (134–35).[44] Cresseid's association of blindness with Venus instead of Cupid is clearly misdirected; conventionally Cupid was represented in the Middle Ages as blindfolded, symbolizing his willfully arbitrary instigation of love among mortals. Either Cresseid's misconception of Venus or her wrath causes the pagan gods to turn against her. Venus, Cupid, and others appear to her in a dream, and Cupid speaks to the gathered pantheon about how Cresseid has blasphemed,

". . . Saying of hir greit infelicitie
I was the caus, and my mother Venus,
And blind goddes hir cald that micht not se,
With sclaunder and defame iniurious.
Thus hir leuing vnclene and lecherous
Scho wald retorte in me and my mother
To quhome I schew my grace abone all vther." (281–87)

Henryson has structured this stanza so that Cresseid's slander of Venus lies in both blaming her for the lover's unhappiness and calling her blind. Cupid thus implies that the accusation of blindness is not merely misinformation but also an insult.

After Cupid has laid out the charges against Cresseid, Saturn and the Moon (Cynthia) carry out their sentences upon her by inflicting her with leprosy, which was believed to be a venereal disease in the Middle Ages. In order to deprive Cresseid of her beauty, Cynthia says that she will imbue the blasphemer's eyes with blood ("Thy cristall ene mingit with blude I make . . ." [337]). Henryson evidently knew of the possible ocular effects of leprosy, which can lead to blindness.[45] However, the punishment does not fully blind Cresseid, for when she awakens, she looks at herself in a mirror to see "hir face sa deformait" (349). (This action is reflected in her later apostrophe to both Greek and Trojan women to regard her terrible state as a mirror of their mortality: "in 3our mynd ane mirrour make of me" [457].)

Later, as Troilus makes his way home from a battle, he rides past Cresseid and the band of lepers with whom she is begging for alms. The stanza in which they encounter each other merits full quotation.

Than vpon him scho kest vp baith her ene,
And with ane blenk it come into his thocht
That he sumtime hir face befoir had sene,
Bot scho was in sic plye he knew hir nocht;
3it than hir luik into his mynd it brocht
The sweit visage and amourous blenking
Of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling. (498–504)

Although Cresseid casts her eyes upon her former lover, she does not recognize him: later she must ask another leper who he was (533–34). This significant moment of temporary blindness is the most painful revenge of the gods upon her, for her tainted love has deprived her of the ability to see

the man whom she once gazed contentedly upon.[46] Instead, Henryson gives Troilus the active gaze because his true love has not damaged his vision. But even though Troilus sees enough of his former lover in the leprous Cresseid to recall her in memory, he cannot recognize her standing before him. So in a harshly judgmental way, Henryson has used Cresseid's disabilities to prevent interaction between the characters in both directions: she cannot see him, and he does not recognize her. When Cresseid learns the identity of the knight, she faints and then revives to bemoan her fate and write her testament (another indication that her blindness is not permanent). She dies immediately thereafter.

Henryson's construction of Cresseid's impaired vision draws upon the religious model of disability inasmuch as the pagan gods are responsible for her punishment. Her blindness at the crucial moment of Troilus's appearance has clear symbolic meaning in terms of Augustinian spiritual vision, of which her sinfulness has deprived her, and we could simply interpret it as a nice plot device whereby Henryson can pass judgment on Cresseid. However, in relation to larger issues of blindness, this episode is rare in medieval literature because of its confrontation of the categorical instability of the impairment in certain cases. Cresseid is not fully physically blind, but she has blinded herself to Troilus's love for her and the need to return to him. The instability of her character manifests itself in the instability of her vision—but if the necessity of her intermittent visual impairment is largely plot-based, the temporary blindness also represents Henryson's understanding that a disability is not always a predictable, unchanging impairment.

That Cresseid's inability to see Troilus is basically religious punishment is reinforced by the strong resemblance of this episode to the exemplum of the Lollard-abetting locksmith recounted in chapter 1. In that story the locksmith who has misused his skills in helping a heretic steal the Eucharist is not blind, and yet he cannot see the elevated Host at the mass; miraculously, God deprives him of the sight of the body against which he has transgressed, the body of Christ, until he confesses his sin and receives absolution. Similarly, the punishments that the pagan gods visit upon Cresseid prevent her from seeing the body that she once loved most, and the miracle of this deprivation sends her into paroxysms of penitence in stanzas concluding with the verse "O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troylus!" (546, 553, 560). Unlike the locksmith, she is not offered another chance to see the beloved body, but like him, she dies a true penitent, though Henryson does not allow any sense of spiritual resolution to inform the conclusion of the poem.

Perhaps it is merely coincidence in *Sir Launfal* and *The Testament of Cresseid,* but nevertheless it is striking that supernatural female figures blind human women in order to save or avenge men in their service. In "Sir Launfal," gray-eyed Guinevere, who has rashly wished blindness upon herself, is blinded by the gray-eyed fairy Tryamour, and in the *Testament,* the Venus whom Cresseid has accused of being blind is one of the gods who blind Cresseid, at least for a moment, and Troilus thus remains Venus's knight, the faithful, true lover.

In the introduction to this chapter I mentioned that the majority of instances of blinding as punishment for sexual transgression came from England, and this is doubtless due to the dominance of the religious model of disability there. All of the Middle English texts analyzed here bring a metaphysical dimension to the blindness or blinding, in some cases straightforwardly Christian and in other cases less obviously so. In English texts it seems that a character commits a sexual sin and is punished, and he is either unable to commit such sins in the future or readers are to assume that the punishment is an effective deterrent. The general pattern of the intersection between blindness and sexuality in French literature is different and, in a sense, more naturalistic: blind people are constructed as sexual beings, and the grotesque excess of that sexuality, if it appears, will be punished socially rather than metaphysically. And inasmuch as that grotesquely excessive sexuality will probably recur, society must constantly be wary of it, since it is their purview, not God's.

CHAPTER 6

Instructive Interventions: Miraculous Chastisement and Cure

This chapter examines a number of instances of miraculous cure of blindness, nearly all of which exemplify and reinforce the religious idea of disability. Integral to the Christian understanding of curative miracles are Jesus's cures of people with disabilities in the New Testament, and out of these grew the popular topos of *Christus medicus,* or Christ as physician. While Jesus's health-restoring miracles conceptually associate him with the practice of medicine, he also used the trope to describe himself in Mark 2:17, when he has surprised the Jews by sharing a meal with sinful men.

> And the Scribes and the Pharisees, seeing that he ate with publicans and sinners, said to his disciples: Why doth your master eat and drink with publicans and sinners? Jesus hearing this, saith to them: They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. For I came not to call the just, but sinners. (Mark 2:16–17)

This passage might easily be misinterpreted as inconsistent with John 9, in which Jesus says that the man's blindness was caused by neither his own sinfulness nor his parents', for here sickness (and by extension, disability) seems to be metaphorically equated with sin. However, while Jesus figuratively implies that sinners are sick, he does not say that all sickness is sin.

Part of the popularity of *Christus medicus* can be attributed to St. Augustine, who, according to Rudolph Arbesmann, "holds first place among patristic writers in the West" in the frequency with which the phrase appears in his writings, mainly his sermons.[1] Its value in a homiletic context is clear: as Arbesmann states, it is an easily comprehensible metaphor, but also

it relegates all earthly physicians to a rank well below Jesus in terms of their skills and abilities. In other words, it contains any tendencies toward the formation of a medical model of disability within the religious model. Most of the examples of the *Christus medicus* trope that Augustine deploys are general enough to apply to visual impairment as well as any number of other ailments and conditions. However, an important dimension of the trope relates to the blindness of the Jews. For example, Augustine asserts that the Jews chose their own blindness by refusing to acknowledge Jesus's divinity.

> They were blinded in order that they might stumble on the stone of stumbling, and have their faces filled with shame, and thus humbled, seek the name of the Lord, and no longer a righteousness of their own, by which the proud is inflated, but the righteousness of God, by which the ungodly is justified. For this very method turned out to the good of many of them who, filled with remorse for their wickedness, afterward believed in Christ.[2]

One of the most significant literary texts to deploy the *Christus medicus* trope is Langland's *Piers Plowman.* According to Raymond St-Jacques, the trope not only links together a number of major themes in the poem but also becomes a structural element. Langland also exploits its physical aspects, "notably the ugliness of sickness and wounds, the tenderness of the true physician's ministrations, the insidiousness of the charlatan's prescriptions."[3] In Passus XVI of the B-Text, Piers Plowman teaches "lechecraft" to Jesus so that he can cure himself if he is wounded in his fight with the devil, but before exercising his medical skills on himself, he tries them on others, including people with disabilities: "[Jesus] soughte out the sike and synfulle bothe, / And salvede sike and synfulle, both blynd and crokede / And commune wommen convertede [to goode]."[4] The conjunction of disabled people and prostitutes shows that illness and sin were both so necessary to the *Christus medicus* trope as to become almost interchangeable.

MIRACLES OF THE SAINTS

The *Christus medicus* trope transforms itself in the miracles performed by saints, Christian history's fully human representatives of Jesus's continuing curative powers on earth. A comprehensive study of the miracles of saints in relation to visual impairment in texts from England and France alone would require a book-length study, so I have limited my discussion here to some of

the most interesting and complex *vitae et miraculi* while attempting to find texts from both England and France written in each of the five centuries covered by this study. My goal here is to provide not an exhaustive survey but rather a representative sampling of the types of miracles related to blinding and sight that were discursively acceptable in orthodox Christianity in these two countries. The majority of these miracles do not come from the *vitae* of the saints but rather from the *miraculi* caused by their relics. Of course living saints also cured blindness and other impairments, but in the *vitae* hagiographers generally remained focused on the basically linear narratives of the lives of the saints rather than on the histories of and reasons for the impairments that they cured. In contrast, the *miraculi,* which are compilations of short, discrete narratives, feature miracles as their generic *sine qua non.* This structural requirement allows the narrative to center on the recipient of the miracle, providing a history detailed enough to justify the climax, whether cure or chastisement. In terms of Christian didacticism, the *vitae* are meant to teach readers saintly behavior, and therefore they must focus on the saints, while the *miraculi* teach the good (and sometimes bad) human behavior that can effect saintly intervention.

Although miracles fleshed out in stories are the most valuable type for this study, it is important to acknowledge that not all recorded miracles are fully elaborated in narratives. For example, in the miracles of the relics of St. Godric of Finchale, numerous cures of blindness and other impairments and illnesses are described in single flat sentences (e.g., "438. Mathildis de Clif, annis quatuordecim caeca, ibi est lumine pleno reparata"[5] [Mathilda of Clif, blind for fourteen years, was restored to full sight there]). For a saint like Godric whose cult was not widely known outside his immediate geographic region, the fully elaborated miracles serve as exempla, while others, such as Mathilda's, simply contribute to the catalogue of the miraculous occurrences at his shrine, contributing to their accretion over time rather than offering specific details. Such catalogues are generally more common in England than in France, since England generated a greater number of localized cults than did France.[6]

CHASTISEMENT

In chapter 2 I asserted that in Norman and French cultures, sight became a commodity in exchanges between those in political power and their subjects. Between representatives of Christian holiness and their subjects in miraculous cures of disabilities, some degree of commodification must also

exist: disabled people offer saints good Christian behavior and proper ritualized observances, and in exchange the saints cure their disabilities. But while miracles of cure dominate hagiographic material, another system of exchange exists alongside them: miracles of chastisement, in which sinful behavior is punished with disability in a fashion that closely mirrors the punitive disabling discussed in chapter 2. Collections of miracles written under French and Norman control on both sides of the Channel within roughly two hundred years of the Norman Conquest contain a far higher proportion of miracles of chastisement than English collections do. Thus the French and Anglo-Norman texts create parallels between the exercise of religious power and secular power: saints apparently reinforce a ruler's right to mutilate, and vice versa. On the other hand, in texts produced by English writers about local saints, such punishment is relatively rare and tends to be described in a far less tangibly physical way; they are metaphysical chastisements written on the body with a much lighter touch.[7]

Paramount among miracle collections in which chastisement is nearly as important as cure is *The Book of Sainte Foy,* begun by Bernard of Angers in the early eleventh century. The book opens with a pair of strikingly similar narratives, rather lengthy for their genre, each of which focuses on a man who loses, gains, reloses, and regains his sight. In the first, a servant named Guibert is the object of his master Gerald's jealous anger over a woman, even though Gerald is a priest. Returning from St. Foy's feast day, Guibert is accosted by Gerald and his men, and Gerald tears out Guibert's eyes with his own fingers and throws them to the ground. Gerald's mother then has pity on her son's victim, taking him in and caring for him. Guibert becomes a successful jongleur and indulges in the greed stereotypically associated with blind men in French literature: "He received such profit from it that—as he is in the habit of saying—he didn't care to have his eyes thereafter because both the lust for wealth and the enjoyment of income delighted him."[8] Here a blind man earns a living through what could be called labor, an aspect of the social model of disability that is rare in English texts. On the other hand, the text includes echoes of the sinful attitudes of the title characters in the plays of *The Blind Man and the Lame Man,* who abjure miraculous cure and the concomitant need to work because they earn an adequate living by less strenuous means.

On St. Foy's feast day, the first anniversary of his blinding, the saint appears to him in a dream and instructs him to honor her at Conques, where his sight will be restored. There, at midnight, "two light-filled globes like berries . . . were . . . driven deeply into the sockets of his excised eyes,"[9] and

in the morning he can see. Guibert then takes up residence near Conques, and an abbot puts him in charge of selling wax, an occupation that makes him a good deal of money. He becomes arrogant and sinful, taking up with "a likeminded and unchaste woman," so St. Foy punishes him by blinding him in one eye but not completely destroying it.[10] He repents and the saint cures him again; then he returns to his sinful ways, is blinded again, repents, and is cured. This cycle happens a fourth time as well, though now he is blinded in his other eye. (Even Bernard cannot resist a sardonic note about the repetitive nature of these miracles: "For every time this happened, I would have been able to write a little chapter of miracles, if I hadn't avoided a taste for redundancy.")[11] In order to remove himself from temptation, Guibert becomes a monk. The hagiographer Bernard claims to have heard the story from Guibert himself, who lived to a ripe old age, and Bernard also emphasizes the veracity of the first miracle by pointing out that during Guibert's initial year of blindness, his career as a jongleur allowed many people to witness his impairment.

The story of Guibert intersects with and is followed by the story of the similarly named and impaired Gerbert. Gerbert journeyed to Conques to see Guibert after his sight was restored, and there he became a devotee of St. Foy. Gerbert later frees three prisoners from the control of an evil lord, who has Gerbert blinded as punishment. In a state of despair that causes him to contemplate suicide, Gerbert is visited by a vision of St. Foy, whose gestures seem to indicate that his sight will be restored if he makes a pilgrimage to her shrine. By the time he reaches the monastery in Conques, his sight is improving, and he begins to "boast indiscreetly about God's gift," only to be "enveloped in shadows again before the midday meal was finished."[12] After several days of prayer, he regains his sight. Although Gerbert contemplates returning to the life of a warrior, a noblewoman dissuades him, and he, too, becomes a monk. However, his chastisement is not yet complete.

> But to prevent the happenstance that he might be corrupted by arrogance or by the seductive counsel of those near him—for human nature is frail—and might wish to return to secular life, through divine will the sight of his left eye began to disappear almost completely afterwards.[13]

While Bernard alludes to the fact that Gerbert's monocular blindness is a constant reminder of God's power over him, the other important effect of the impairment goes unremarked: it makes him less useful as a soldier.

These two narratives set the tone for Bernard of Angers' first two books

of the miracles of St. Foy. While in both cases the initial blindings are caused by humans, the subsequent ones are divine retribution, particularly in the case of Guibert. There the commodification of both vision in exchange for good Christian behavior and blindness as punishment for sexual sin is clearly set forth, to the point that the hagiographer himself begins to weary of the give-and-take. Even so, Gerbert's narrative serves a slightly different purpose that becomes clearer when he reappears at the beginning of Book 2. Blind in his left eye (as stated in Book 1), he is attacked by a man who wrongly believes him to have stolen a wineskin; the man cuts Gerbert's good eye deeply, pierces the pupil, and then hacks the eye to pieces, leaving him totally blind again. Gerbert prays repeatedly to St. Foy, and he is cured at the altar of St. Michael in her church.[14] Thus Gerbert is cured twice after being unjustly blinded by human hands, and St. Foy shows herself capable of rectifying human injustices. While Guibert's narrative begins the same way, the focus shifts from initial injustice of his blinding by his master to Guibert's own sinfulness and St. Foy's punishment of it. So Bernard's first narrative shows that the saint is as likely to punish as she is to cure—and the prodigious number of miracles of chastisement in her book attest to this duality.[15]

Sight as commodity also features in a miracle of chastisement in Book 3, written after Bernard's death by his anonymous successor. A warrior named Renfroi who inhabits a manor that belongs to the monks of Conques unjustly attempts to take possession of it. When the monks visit the manor bearing the reliquary of St. Foy, the warrior gathers fifty men in order to take vengeance, but they are all struck blind when they step on "the holy virgin's" property. Renfroi then goes to Conques, agrees to cede the manor, and regains his vision.[16] Here, the exchange of property for sight highlights another aspect of its commodification.

Bernard is quite straightforward about the value of miracles of chastisement, especially when recipients of miraculous cure become sinful again.

> For when [miraculously cured people] begin to sneak off to worldly affairs, divine power immediately hinders them. Either by blinding an eye or disabling a limb, God forces them to stay where they are. Moreover, Guibert, just as I said above, was unable to control his lust, and every time he was sullied with a prostitute he experienced the retribution of divine justice.[17]

Thus Bernard clearly constructs impairment as punishment for sin, particularly among those who have already come to know the power of divine healing.

The stories of the unjust punitive blindings of Guibert and Gerbert early in the miracles are joined by another in Book 4 that seems even more cruel inasmuch as the victim is a child. In Conques a man named Benedict kills a man named Hugh, and then, for fear of reprisal, the murderer and his wife flee, leaving behind everything they own, including their five-year-old son. Hugh's family, "impelled by the same Furies who drove Orestes to slay his mother,"[18] pierce the child's eyes with sticks and leave him for dead. The villagers take him to the church, where he recovers and then begs for several months. Finally they take him to the altar, where his vision is slowly restored. The fact that three of the ninety-seven miracles in this collection, including the two introductory ones, feature people blinding each other as punishment clearly shows its presence in eleventh-century discourse. Of course these blindings must be unjust in order for the victims to merit miraculous cures, but such undeserved mutilation hints at the larger use of blinding as punishment of criminals; indeed, Gerbert is blinded the first time by a lord whom he has acted against, and the second time by a man who believes him guilty of theft.

On the other side of the Channel in the eleventh century, just after the Norman Conquest, Norman clerics worked to establish their authority over Anglo-Saxon Christianity. We should remember that the Anglo-Saxons did not always submit happily to the newly arrived Norman clergy: as mentioned in chapter 2, in 1087, Archbishop Lanfranc ordered the blinding of several laymen who opposed the installation of a Norman abbot at St. Augustine's Abbey.[19] The Norman clergy also had a complicated relationship with Anglo-Saxon saints, though perhaps not as antipathetic as David Knowles and other twentieth-century monastic historians believed. S.J. Ridyard has provided an important reevaluation of these historians' overgeneralizations about the Norman rejection of Anglo-Saxon saints and hagiography. According to Ridyard, the goal of post-Conquest revisions of older texts, "perhaps in a majority of cases," was to make use of the English saints by fully documenting their history (including updated lists of miracles) and publicizing them.[20] Ridyard rightly contends that a saint was "a crucial part of the equipment used by the religious community in the definition both of its internal relations and of its relations with external and ecclesiastical powers."[21] So it is not surprising that the Norman clergy, seeking to solidify their power, might use hagiography as a genre in which divine punishments, including blinding, reproduce some of the types of punishment deployed by the Norman power structure outside monastic communities.

At Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, the first Norman abbot, Galandus (1066–75) oversaw the production of the *Vita et Miraculi Sancti Kenelmi,*[22] a collection that exemplifies the Franco-Norman taste for miracles of chastisement that is atypical of English hagiography. Two episodes of chastisement in the miracles of the saint's relics describe blinding with a grotesque physicality that may indicate that the writer had seen such punishment used on recalcitrant locals. The first of these involves St. Kenelm's jealous sister Cwoenthryth, who wants to usurp the throne from her seven-year-old brother, already king of his people. She pays the boy's tutor and steward, Æschberht, to kill him, and he buries the boy in the wilderness. Cwoenthryth takes control of the kingdom and forbids her subjects to search for or even mention Kenelm, on pain of death.[23] But Pope Leo the Younger in Rome is visited during Mass by a dove carrying word of Kenelm's death and the whereabouts of his body, so he notifies the Archbishop of Canterbury that it should be translated to Winchcombe and buried next to his father. As the body is borne into town, Cwoenthryth, in the upper room of a church, sees crowds processing with it and becomes enraged. Cursing her brother through witchcraft, she begins chanting Psalm 108, an imprecation against one's enemy, backward.

> But her curse turned back on her. For . . . straightway both her eyes, rooted out from their sockets, dropped upon the very page she was reading. That same psalter, adorned with silver, still shows the proof of this chastisement, stained on the same sentence with the blood of the fallen eyeballs. That wretched woman died shortly afterwards.[24]

This miracle of chastisement is written not only on Cwoenthryth's body at the site of her sinfulness—the eyes that she uses blasphemously to misread the psalm—but also on the psalter itself in her blood.

A similar miracle of chastisement blinds a lady of Pailton "who presided over that village," who complains that the village priest has declared the feast of St. Kenelm a day of rest from all work. "With arrogant pride" she orders that work continue as usual, but "scarcely had she spoken when both her eyes shot out on to the table, as had happened above to the unworthy sister of the martyr."[25] Although she repents immediately "with grief and wailing," the text does not indicate that she was cured, and as further punishment, her cart oxen shake off their yokes and escape, never to be found again.

While these miracles may betray a rather Norman tendency to emphasize the cruel physicality of the blindings, an important difference separates

them from the nearly contemporaneous miracles of St. Foy. Although both Kenelm and Foy died as children, Foy as a saint takes upon herself the very adult power of blinding people; she blinds Guibert in the first narrative, and the story of Renfroi and his fifty men implies that she, not God, blinds them because her relics are in the manor that he has seized. Thus, even when the text uses passive voice, the reader is invited to assume that the saint rather than God is administering the punishment. Kenelm's hagiographer is more cautious, using passive voice in both miracles of chastisement and thus leaving the identity of the agent ambiguous. This choice may reflect the Norman writer's understanding that the English market for a relatively minor saint with only localized popularity would not bear the attribution of punitive blinding to his juvenile hand.

That both of the punitive blindings in Kenelm's miracles should strike politically powerful women is surely significant, and the hagiographer's comparison of the two asks his readers to consider them in tandem. To justify them the text deploys the stereotype of women's greed in both instances, a stereotype also associated with the blind. These two blindings of women are balanced in the collection by miraculous cures of blind men: a certain Leofsige, blind from birth, who prays at the saint's shrine and then rejoices with the abbot and brothers of Winchcombe;[26] and one Osbern of Wick, who is cured there during a visit from the abbot of Winchcombe, who prays for Kenelm's intercession.[27] Both miracles emphasize aspects of the monastic community, and the latter serves to reinforce the power of the abbot, which the foreign and relatively newly arrived Galandus would have appreciated. On the other hand, for a community of monastic readers, both the chastisement and the disfigurement of the proud, greedy women would have been equally exemplary.

The relics of the Irish saint Modwenna, who died in 517, were translated to Burton, England, at some point in the eleventh century, and during the first half of the following century the abbot of the Benedictine abbey there, Geoffrey, compiled earlier texts and added more recent tales to create *The Life and Miracles of St. Modwenna*.[28] Geoffrey records two significant miracles of chastisement involving blinding that took place within fifty years of the Norman Conquest, further evidence of the popularity of such miracles when judicial blinding as punishment was still practiced. Indeed, the second of these miracles involves just such blinding.

The first miracle, which took place during the abbacy of Geoffrey Malaterra (1084–94), befell Aelfwine of Hopwas, a royal official and "enemy of the church" who openly showed contempt for the miracles performed by

Modwenna. Boasting of his evil deeds to his family while resting his chin on his hands, he "suddenly . . . put out his own eye with a thrust of his thumb. Thus he demonstrated before everyone that divine judgment had been visited upon him for his sin."[29] Thereafter Aelfwine became a "milder" and less sinful man. Here the symbolic connection of self-inflicted injury to sinfulness is apparent.

In the time of Geoffrey Malaterra's successor Nigel (1094–1114), a forester named Osmund committed a number of offenses against the monastery, including theft and slaughter of its farm animals and false claims of ownership of some of its woodland. One night during his sleep "a terrifying figure in the shape of a threatening nun appeared to him in a dream"; she places her fingers on his eyes and says, "Behold, I will have your eyes torn out and my wood will return to its rightful owners, whether you wish it or not." Although the frightened Osmund apologizes to abbot Nigel and promises to make amends, he cannot keep himself from recidivism. He steals and slaughters sixteen of the monastery's pigs, and the same week he commits another unnamed crime, so "as his faults demanded, [he] lost his eyes. Just as Modwenna had announced to him beforehand, the evil man was found guilty and suffered the penalty that was his due."[30] Modwenna's use of an earthly system of justice validates the practice of blinding as punishment by making it an instrument of divine justice. In no other miracle of chastisement that I have found are saintly and earthly punishment so closely conjoined, reinforcing such punishment as appropriate for both secular and religious authorities to administer.

In *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour,* produced in Quercy in 1172–73, the Virgin uses blinding as punishment against a group of thieves who lead astray some pilgrims traveling to her shrine. She also paralyzes them but leaves them the use of their tongues so that they can beg mercy of the pilgrims, who are then moved to pity and pray for the thieves. The Virgin removes the impairments, and the pilgrims continue to Rocamadour, where they report the miracle.[31] In this instance as in some of the miracles of St. Foy, it is the saint herself, not God, who administers the punishment.

Across the Channel during the twelfth century, miracles of chastisement, including those involving blinding, were less common. In the miracles of St. Godric of Finchale by Reginald, a monk of Durham, only one is a miracle of chastisement. It represents the most common reason for blinding in miracle collections: as punishment for working on a holy day. Miracle 220 tells of a certain John of Wermuth who worked in the fields on a Sunday and was blinded in one eye by God; after a number of years, he vis-

its the tomb of Godric and is cured.[32] (Here, as is the case with Kenelm, the minor saint is a healer rather than a punisher of sinners.) The placement of this miracle very near the end of the collection seems calculated to leave the reader with the knowledge that miracles of chastisement are at least possible, though the lesson of this monocular blinding is very different in degree from St. Foy's complete blinding of fifty-one men at her manor near Quercy. The potential threat of this punishment is partly undermined by the cure within the narrative and then further weakened by the fact that in two of the last five miracles in the collection, Godric cures blind people: miracle 222 tells of a man blind since birth whom Godric cures, and the final miracle, 225, rather sentimentally describes a woman blind for fifteen years who has never seen any of her children until the saint intercedes on her behalf.[33]

Eadmer of Canterbury's *Miracles of St. Dunstan,* probably written in the first decade of the twelfth century, "sets out to correct and supersede" a text covering exactly the same subject by his friend and contemporary Osbern.[34] In the town of Sapperton near Gloucester, the priest at a church dedicated to St. Dunstan urged his parishioners to observe the saint's burial day, May 19, by abstaining from manual labor. However, a "rustic fellow" ignored the instruction, and when his neighbors scolded him, he responded gruffly and "was still muttering under his breath when behold, one of his eyes fell out of his head onto the ground, making him realize that by working the land on that day he was not behaving properly."[35]

The Miracles of Mary Magdalen by Jean Gobi the Elder, an early fourteenth-century Latin compilation of events that took place at the church of St-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume in Provence, has already been mentioned in chapter 1: it includes the miracle of the man whose sight is restored so that he can see the elevation of the Host physically rather than only spiritually. The book is unusual in its organization: each chapter is devoted to only one type of miracle. Two of the nineteen miracles in the chapter devoted to sight involve chastisement, and the latter of these presents the most common reason for chastisement by blinding: working on a feast day. In this instance, a resident of Arrigas works in the fields the entire day of the feast of Saint James, and because he "did not respect the light of the day of the feast . . . at the end of the day he found himself totally deprived of the light of his eyes."[36] The rather awkward parallel structure of this sentence very clearly indicates that the misuse of the light of a workday results in the privation of ocular light—one commodity is unjustly gained, another is justly lost. The blind man has heard of Mary Magdalen's interventions on behalf of her de-

voted followers, so he vows to visit her shrine if she will intercede with God on his behalf. She does so, and God "chases from [the man's] eyes the shadow of blindness." The cured man then keeps his promise to visit the Magdalen's shrine.

The chronology of these events exemplifies a relatively unusual characteristic of Mary Magdalen as represented in Gobi's text: she is surprisingly willing to perform miracles away from St. Maximin if recipients of cures promise to visit afterward. In another miracle of chastisement involving vision, a broken promise to visit the shrine results in punishment. A mother whose young daughter is blind prays to the Magdalen, promising to visit St. Maximin if the girl is cured. The girl's sight is restored, but the ungrateful mother fails to keep her vow to visit the saint's shrine, at which point "divine vengeance struck the girl anew" by depriving her of her vision again.[37] The mother realizes that her own negligence has resulted in her daughter's punishment, so she goes quickly to the church to pray, resulting in a second miraculous cure of the girl. So due to the girl's youth, the initial vow of the mother becomes the commodity promised but then not delivered in return for the miracle. The failed exchange results in the second blinding. It is tempting to point out that this miracle of chastisement flies in the face of Jesus's teaching in John 9 that the blind man is not blind because of the sins of his parents. Here the girl's second blinding is a direct result of her mother's sinfulness, effectively teaching the lesson that family members' religious intercessions on each other's behalf can be either efficacious or harmful.[38]

Although Jesus's cure of blind people in the New Testament repeatedly manifests his divinity, there are no surviving scriptural accounts that follow the newly sighted people as they bear witness to the larger community about the miracle that has given them their vision. Presumably medieval Christians felt that the recipients of these cures were simply integrated into the Christian community. However, one figure's cure begins his ministry: Saul of Tarsus, later to become St. Paul, who is blinded on the road to Damascus and then cured by the Christian Ananias.

A notable representation of the blinding and cure of Paul in Middle English literature is the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul,* a fifteenth-century East Anglian play that follows Saul from his days as a persecutor of Christians through his blinding and cure and until the point when he is lowered from the walls of Jerusalem in order to escape persecution as a new convert, the point at which his ministry begins. Although the blinding of Saul by a bright light and his subsequent cure must be staged in any drama address-

ing this episode from the book of Acts (9:1–25), the blinded Saul is given very little stage time here. The biblical account says that when the light from heaven appears to him, the voice of Jesus identifies itself and tells him to continue to Damascus where he will be told what to do (Acts 9:3–7). Saul is led to Damascus by his companions, "and he was there three days, without sight, and he did neither eat nor drink" (Acts 9:9). In the play, the voice of the "Savyour," though frightening to Saul, is much more comforting.

DEUS: Aryse, and goo thou wyth glad chere
Into the syte a lytyll besyde,
And I shall the[e] socor in every dere,
That no maner of yll shal betyde,
And I wyll ther for the[e] provyde
By my grete goodnes what thou shalt doo.[39]

Thus, even though the godhead's contact with Saul disables him, the dramatic text shows a merciful Jesus who consoles him. Perhaps this gentler representation of Jesus made the playwright feel he could multiply the kinds of disability inflicted upon Saul: while Acts mentions only that Saul is "without sight," the drama intensifies his injuries.

SAUL: O mercyfull God, what aylyth me?
I am lame, my leggys be take me fro;
My sygth lykwyse, I may nott see—
I can nott tell whether to goo. (197–200)

The liberties that the playwright takes with the scriptural account balance severer divine chastisement with more immediate divine mercy—and the fact that Saul addresses God as "mercyfull" indicates that he immediately understands that he is not dealing with the God of the Old Testament.

In Acts, Jesus appears to Ananias to tell him to go and find Saul, who is praying (Acts 9:11), though it is unclear whether he is praying as a terrified Jew or a newly converted Christian. In the play, Jesus tells Ananias that Saul

Wantyth hys syth, by my punyshment constrayned;
Prayeng unto me, I assure thou shalt him fynd.
Wyth my stroke of pyte sore ys he paynyde,
Wantyng hys sygth, for he is truly blynyde. (220–23)

Line 222 plays on two possible meanings of *pyte* listed in the *Middle English Dictionary*. The "stroke of pyte" shows "a disposition to mercy" on the part of Jesus, who could have punished this persecutor of Christians more harshly, but *pyte* also implies the "misery" or "distress" that Saul is suffering.[40] The term *pyte* returns in Saul's soliloquy of contemplation (which has no analogue in Acts).

SAUL: Lord, of thi coumfort moch I desyre,
Thou mygty Prynce of Israell, King of pyte,
Whyche me hast punyshyd as thi presoner,
That nother ete nor dranke thys dayes thre.
But, gracyos Lorde, of thy vysytacyon I thanke the[e]
Thy servant shall I be as long as I have breth,
Thowgh I therfor shuld suffer dethe. (262–68)

Unlike his counterpart in Acts, Saul here states unambiguously that he is a fully converted Christian, humble enough to bear Jesus's chastisement for as long as necessary; he implies that it will last no longer than three days, thus reflecting the three days that Jesus was dead after the crucifixion. The emphasis on the word *pyte* here is integral to the playwright's construction of the religious model of disability. Jesus is the "King of pyte," a far less conventional phrase than "king of mercy" (and indeed, Saul is thankful for God's "marcy" only a few lines later [290]). He has pity on the blind man, though punishment is bound up in that pity, and therefore Jesus's followers, medieval Christians, might feel justified in directing the same emotion toward blind people, while perhaps also pitying them for the sin that might have brought about the impairment. Later, in his sermon on the seven deadly sins, Paul praises pity as paramount with humility, the virtue that counteracts the deadliest of all sins, pride.[41]

When Ananias with the help of the Holy Ghost has cured Saul, the playwright again gives him a speech for which there is no analogue in Acts. In the first of two stanzas, Saul thanks the "blyssyd Lord" for letting the scales fall from his eyes (297–98), and he says that because of his profound contrition, "For my offencys, my body shal have punycyon" (303). Here the playwright's divergence from the biblical narrative creates an economy of physical chastisement that equates blindness with divine punishment and sight with proper self-discipline. While Jesus was punishing Saul with blindness, he needed only to pray and fast, but when that punishment is miraculously removed, the newly created Paul must discipline and punish himself.

The playwright of the Digby *Conversion of St. Paul* opts not to take full advantage of the obviously available trope of the blindness of the Jews, even though Saul as a persecutor of Christians could have exemplified it very concretely. Rather, in an instance of chiasmus, the catachresis of blindness, representing Saul's previous spiritual state, results in his immediate conversion, at which point he becomes an object of Christian pity, similar to blind people all over medieval England. Thus the medieval audience of the play would have learned a Christian response to impairment, a response that the playwright, for good measure, also extends to lameness (though it apparently afflicts Saul only briefly, since it is never mentioned again after its first appearance). This is a more valuable religious lesson for the living art of drama to teach than the lesson of vilifying Jews, none of whom lived in England when this play was written.

Roughly contemporaneous with the Digby play is a dramatization of the same biblical story that appears as an episode of the French *Cycle de Mystères Hagiographiques,* which focuses on some of the earliest Christian martyrs. The differences between the representations of the divine in the blinding scene suggest the French playwright's understanding of blinding as royal prerogative. In the English play the stage directions indicate that the "Godhed spekith in hevyn,"[42] and later one of the soldiers accompanying Saul says that he "hard a sounde / Of won spekyng wyth voyce delectable."[43] Thus the text may imply that the actor playing God is not visible on stage, or if he is, he is in a place designated as "hevyn" and is not directly involved in the scene of Saul falling from his horse. In "La Conversion Saint Pol" Jesus appears on stage with a burning torch that he throws at Saul, making him fall from his horse. The disappointed God in the English play bears little resemblance to this militant ruler, who calls Saul "stubborn" ("testu") and asks bluntly why he makes war against him ("Dy pour quoy me guerroies tu?").[44] This Jesus is evidently so fully human that Saul must ask who he is, to which Jesus replies that Saul attacks him when attacking his followers. In this speech Jesus calls Saul "fol" (insane) and "felon," which as an adjective means "cruel," but it also implies its Old French nominal meanings of "traitor" or "rebel." Thus the playwright creates a Jesus who couches his attack on Paul in terms appropriate to a military leader, perhaps a king, against whom Saul has wrongly taken up arms. When Jesus appears to Ananias to ask him to cure the blind man, Ananias reiterates Saul's reputation in highly politicized terms: "Il a le renon / D'estre .i. felon mauvés tirant, / Qui va vostre gent martirant" ("He is renowned for being a cruel, terrible tyrant who goes about martyring your people" [89]). Ananias phrases

Saul's cruelty to Jesus's subjects as an affront to his royal power as a just ruler.

Although in the English play the converted Paul refers to Jesus or God with conventional terms of royalty ("mig[h]ty prince of Israel, king of pité" [674], "king conctipotent of hevyn glory" [684]), the French Paul couches his praise of Jesus in terms that emphasize his lineage: "C'est Jhesu Crist— / Nestroit de lignee royal / Du roy David saint et loyal" (91). Furthermore Paul says that he has delivered his people from diverse laws into a single faith. This description makes a greater effort to explain why and how Jesus became king than the conventional titles of royalty applied by the English playwright do. Thus the more human, active, powerful Jesus represented in the French play resembles an earthly king more than the distant and perhaps disembodied voice in the English drama. And the carefully defined royalty of Jesus may serve to reinforce the idea that it is the king's prerogative to use blinding as punishment against Saul.

In spite of the obvious didacticism of most of the miracles of chastisement discussed here, a few of them serve to show that both God and the saints have a sense of humor, even in relation to an impairment as serious as blindness. One of these, discussed in Chapter 5, appears in the chapter of the *Golden Legend* devoted to St. Thomas of Canterbury and tells of a woman who is blinded by the saint because she wants eyes of a different, more attractive color.[45] The flippancy of the lady's wish for miraculous cosmetic surgery sets the humorous tone for this chastisement, and Jacobus has the comic sense to maintain it by not dwelling on the spiritual aerobics that the lady had to do before regaining the use of her unfashionably colored eyes through miraculous cure.

In his translation of the *Golden Legend* into English for his printed edition of the text in 1483, William Caxton does not include this episode. Norman Blake identifies Caxton's source texts as an unidentified Latin version of the collection, the early fourteenth-century French translation by Jean de Vignay, and the English translation of the same French text known as *The Gilte Legende,* a relatively close translation that is apparently concerned with Englishing the text linguistically more than culturally. The incident of the blinded vain woman appears in both of these vernacular texts.[46] Its absence in Caxton is in keeping with the general lack of interest in blinding as punishment in English hagiographical texts, and perhaps Caxton also suppressed it because it presents an important English saint in a less-than-charitable light.

An ideal transition from miracles of chastisement to miracles of cure,

also involving humor in some of its redactions, is the story of the blind man and the cripple discussed in chapter 4, which is derived from a brief episode in the *Golden Legend.* Jacobus may have borrowed the story from an early thirteenth-century sermon by Jacques de Vitry, whose text is the oldest extant version to feature men with these two different impairments. (A twelfth-century Latin version focuses on two lame men.)[47] The pair of impaired men do their best to avoid the powerful relics of St. Martin in order not to have to give up their comfortable life of begging, only to fall within their aura and be cured; both of these writers clearly state that the cure took place against the men's will.[48] Neither of these texts is meant to be humorous, nor is the rather flat version that appears in chapter 63 of the *Speculum Sacerdotale,* a book of exempla for sermons.[49] In a fourteenth-century verse translation of portions of the *Golden Legend* known as the *Northern English Legendary,* the translator takes the tale a step further from its origins by making both of the impaired men blind. Beyond this change, the men's attitudes toward their lives and a possible cure by St. Martin remain the same.

> For þai were blind, men fand þam fode;
> Þarfore þam thought þaire lifing gude.
> Þai went þam till ane owten-strete,
> For þai wald noght saint Martyn mete,
> And in a hows still þai þam hid,
> For no might suld on þam be kyd.[50]

In their hiding place the men hear the people in St. Martin's funeral procession singing, at which point, "Sight was sent þam both vntill / All-if it war noght with þaire will." Thereafter, the narrator's attention remains focused on the procession and burial. The translator's choice to make both men blind effectively removes the conventional comic potential of the blind man carrying the lame man, diminished though that potential already is in a written text as opposed to a play. As we have seen, that comedy draws upon the trope of grotesque excess, but the English translator negates the possibility of raucous humor that is at least implied in the *Golden Legend.* These men are not running through the city streets in order to avoid the bier of the saint; rather; they are hiding in a house, out of public view. Here again is evidence that an English writer, while unafraid to mention blind characters' moral shortcomings, avoids the satire available to him were he to make them perform their disability for laughs.

Less clear in its representation of this miracle as one of chastisement is John Mirk's *Festial,* a collection of homilies from the mid-fifteenth century. In Mirk's humorless retelling of the exemplum, the pair of characters, blind and lame as in the *Golden Legend,* have an oddly mixed reaction after they meet the shrine in the street and are cured: "Þen sayde þay to Seynt Martyne, 'We thonken þe for þe gret good þat we haue had for þy loue, but for oure hele we thonke þe not; for now we most gete ours lyuelod wyth swynke and trauayle þat haue lyued all our lyue yn oure es.'"[51] Thus, instead of showing gratitude in one character and frustration in the other, the writer deploys the religious model's conventional response to miraculous cure while also reinforcing the stereotype that disabled people are contentedly lazy. However, the men's grudging acceptance of the fact that they must now work brings the religious model to bear on their frustration; their reluctance notwithstanding, they appear ready to do what God has cured them for, making them better Christian examples than their counterparts in the French plays who plan to feign disabilities.

MIRACULOUS CURES

Although miraculous cures of blind people in medieval hagiography take a variety of forms, by far the most common represents the beneficiary as changing from blind to sighted instantaneously. In this category we must necessarily include flat, one-sentence descriptions of miraculous cure such as the one reproduced from the miracles of Godric of Finchale above, since these abbreviated accounts provide no details to differentiate them from this most common type. Two other types of miracles occur with some frequency: restoration of sight slowly over a period of hours or days, and miracles, sometimes instantaneous, accompanied by the extrusion of liquid, generally blood, or a film from the eye.

The slow recovery of sight is apparently not associated with any particular time or place in medieval Europe. In the *Book of Saint Foy,* we have already seen how the aforementioned Gerbert was in the process of undergoing a slow recovery while approaching the monastery of Conques, until he boasted of the forthcoming miracle and was "enveloped in shadows again" and had to pass several days in curative prayer.[52] Later in the collection, a valiant warrior named William is afflicted by both blindness and severe headaches. He prays, fasts, and seeks the holy water of St. Foy, which initially cures his headaches but leaves his sight "very dim." He then goes to Conques, spends seven days there praying, and attends mass on her feast

day. Afterward, he can "make out human shapes as one does in the wavery light of dawn," though he cannot tell their identity. Only after returning to the altar once more does his sight return "little by little" until he can see clearly.[53] These slow miracles reinforce Bernard's representation of St. Foy as an unusually strict disciplinarian whose efficacy in curing blindness seems calibrated to the petitioner's proximity to her shrine.

Among miracles in which matter is extruded from the eye as a sign of the miraculous cure, the most common type involves blood, and perhaps it is no surprise that these sanguineous manifestations, sometimes accompanied by pain, occur mainly in French hagiographic collections. Of St. Foy's twelve miracles that cure blindness, three of them involve bleeding at the eyes, and two of these three miracles involve pain. The most dramatic of these, which appears in Book 4, written after Bernard of Angers' death by a monk of Conques, receives unique emphasis in the collection because it both begins and ends with passages of Latin verse.[54] The text tells of a widow who weeps so disconsolately for her dead spouse that she "wear[s] out her eyes with tears" to the point of going blind, an impairment that she has for nine years before a vision in a dream tells her to go to Conques. Once in the hospice there, she prays for St. Foy's help, at which point

> First a pain like an unbearable migraine headache began to pound her head, and like a Bistonian woman who had drunk deeply of wine she rolled her head back and forth on her bed without stopping. Finally a boy led her by the hand to the holy virgin's abbey church and there she soaked the dust with streams of tears. But wondrous to see! And contrary to nature, her tears turned to blood, which flowed in waves and lay in red clots on the ground. After this gush of blood stopped, a tiny spark of light gradually began to light her eyes and she distinguished the shapes of things inside the church. Before sunset she could see everything clearly.[55]

The hyperbolically gory nature of this miracle deserves attention and will be discussed later. What is noteworthy about it is that the writer implies that the woman brings her blindness on herself with her immoderate weeping, grief that suggests the sin of selfish pride rather than acquiescence to God's will. Thus, while she is evidently penitent enough to merit cure, it comes with painful punishment beyond the blindness itself. The other miracle involving painful ocular bleeding also mentions the sin—or at least the weakness and foolishness—of the blind man, whose blindness comes upon him when he lazily falls asleep while keeping watch over horses; he compounds

his mistake by refusing to trust a vision instructing him to go to Conques, and he therefore remains blind two more years before deciding to petition St. Foy. Finally, at the foot of her altar he is struck by terrible pain in several parts of his head, after which "so much gore was seen to gush forth from each of his closed eyes that his clothing and beard were completely befouled with clotted blood."[56] Only then is his sight restored. These two narratives, which seem to justify the infliction of pain upon the recipients of the miracles, contrast the first one in which bleeding from the eyes appears. In this instance, the central figure is a blameless blind and lame man whose impairments simply exist without a definite cause. He heeds a voice that tells him to go to Conques, where, "after a violent discharge of blood," he regains his sight without any pain.[57]

If there is a causal connection between blame for one's blindness and pain in the miraculous cure in the miracles of St. Foy, it does not hold true for all hagiographic literature in medieval England and France. The association of blamelessness and painlessness characterizes the bloody cure of Leofsige, a man born blind, in the miracles of St. Kenelm.[58] Our Lady of Rocamadour also bloodily but painlessly cures a boy born blind at the behest of his apparently sinless mother.[59] In *The Miracles of St. Dunstan,* a young girl born blind experiences the relatively mild discomfort of both tingling and itchiness as "copious amounts of blood flowed forth" at her moment of cure.[60] On the other hand, in Thomas of Monmouth's *Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich* (1172), a girl born blind, deaf, and dumb cries out with pain and claws her cheeks as her sight is miraculously restored, and the narrative does not imply that either she or her mother, who is acting on a vision, has sinned.[61] Jean Miélot's fourteenth-century *Miracles of Saint Josse* include a narrative that positions itself between sin and innocence in relation to this issue: a young man named Robert meets an evil spirit that almost looks like a man ("ung mauvais esprit presque en la semblance d'omme"), and the sight blinds him. In this instance blindness is caused by metaphysical evil rather than the evil of the blinded person. At the altar of Saint Josse the innocent Robert's eyes begin running with a great abundance of blood, but no pain is mentioned in relation to his cure.[62]

Regardless of whether the blind people in these miracles are characterized as sinful, the ocular bleeding should serve to remind us of the multivalent symbolic associations between Jews and blind people outlined in chapter 3 (and the miracle performed by Our Lady of Rocamadour at Lauds on Holy Thursday is particularly relevant). The bleeding described in these miracles is reminiscent of menstrual bleeding, and medieval Christian discourse

asserted that both male and female Jews menstruated.[63] The bloody flux of menstruation—and by extension this type of flux from the eyes—is associated with impurity, and, as Mary Douglas's work shows, Western societies also generally see impairment as a type of bodily impurity. But in these miracles the bloody flux takes with it the impurity of the impairment, not only restoring the sight but concomitantly reinforcing Christian belief.[64]

The other common extrusion from the eyes at the moment of miraculous cure is variously described, but generally it is related to the coating on the white of an egg. The appearance of this substance in hagiographic literature can be traced to biblical precedents. In the book of Tobias, about half an hour after the son anoints his father's eyes with curative fish gall, "a white skin . . . like the skin of an egg" comes out, and the elder man can see.[65] A similar phenomenon in different terms occurs to the blinded Paul when Ananias miraculously cures him and "There fell from his eyes as it were scales."[66] In a miracle of St. Benedict, an old man begins to see dimly in church but must later have a thin skin ("tenuem . . . pelliculam") removed from his eyes with a sharp knife in order to see clearly.[67] The girl who is cured through the intervention of St. William of Norwich bleeds from her eyes after a "film, which had covered the maid's eyes like the skin of an egg, parted."[68] A variant on the egg motif that also seems partly indebted to the flux of blood appears in the little-known collection of miracles attributed to St. Hugh of Avalon written by Giraldus Cambrensis in the early thirteenth century. There a youth, blind for some time, has "a certain cloudy substance cover[ing] his pupils," and when he is cured, "something like the albumen of an egg flowed from every part of his eyes."[69]

Half of the first ten miracles of Eadmer of Canterbury's early twelfth-century *Miracles of St. Dunstan* involve restoration of vision. The most interesting of these in terms of the economies of exchange between the saint and a blind person involves an old woman who prays at Dunstan's tomb but remains uncured. On her way home she is deserted by her guide while crossing a bridge, presumably a particularly precarious spot. She cries out to the saint, "Alas, Dunstan, O Dunstan, how vain, how injurious was my coming to you. Not only did I not receive the illumination that I sought from you, but, woe is me, on account of you I have lost the sight that I enjoyed through my guide."[70] Immediately thereafter her sight is restored, with the implication that her humility at this moment of desperation rendered her spiritually fit for a cure.

The story of the punitive blinding, castration, and miraculous cure of Thomas of Elderfield is perhaps unique in medieval history inasmuch as

the legal case against him survives in the early thirteenth-century plea rolls of the county of Gloucester, and the story of the cure is preserved in Willam of Malmesbury's *Vita Wulfstani.*[71] The latter document also shows the terrible social treatment of a purported criminal after his mutilation, leaving him no choice but to turn to religion for consolation. Naturally the texts differ in their description of the supposed crime committed by Thomas. The relatively brief account in the plea rolls (which I am simplifying further) states that George of Nitheweie accused a certain Thomas of wounding his arm and thus breaking the King's Peace. Jurors understand that Thomas is guilty, and they decide that the two men should fight a duel. George wins, and Thomas is therefore blinded and castrated.

William of Malmesbury's introduction to the miraculous cure of Thomas of Elderfield frames the event by combining nationalistic pride in the remarkable powers of English saints and the religious model of disability. In an apostrophe exhorting "noble" England to rejoice, he says that although the country was slow to adopt "health-giving baptism," it can now vie with countries farther east in the efficacy of miracles performed on its soil. He then creates an unusual hierarchy of types of miracle.

> To infuse the eyes of the blind with sight, to move the lips of the dumb with speech, to stretch the tendons so the lame and crippled may walk, to clean up the skin of lepers, and to repair or confer new utility to other limbs not indeed lost but enfeebled, this was indeed great and very wonderful. But far more wonderful because absolutely extraordinary is the restoration of new limbs for old ones cut off and in every way utterly destroyed. Yet God has deigned to honor England, the corner of the whole world, beyond all other kingdoms of the earth, and to favor it with a certain prerogative of dignity.

In this passage are vague echoes of St. Paul's use of the fable of the body and its member as a metaphor for the church as the body of Christ. The health of the nation of England depends on its Christianity through the administration of "health-giving baptism," after which the disabilities in the national body can be cured. Among these cures, the regeneration of what is absent trumps the restoration of what has been lost.

In order to deploy the religious model of disability at its fullest in relation to the miracles that supposedly followed this rather cut-and-dried legal case, William of Malmesbury must assert that Thomas was not guilty of the crime of intentionally wounding George. The hagiographer states that

earlier in life Thomas had become a respected hall-servant in the household of the chief justiciar of the kingdom, attracting the attention of his master's wife, who "netted [him] in the snares of Venus" during a two-year affair. Then Thomas feels remorse for this sin, confesses it, and rejects the wife's continuing advances, even when she is widowed and asks him to marry her. So instead, she marries George, who learns of Thomas's old affair with his wife and comes to feel "an inexorable hatred" for Thomas. As the two men are walking home after an evening of drinking, George attacks Thomas, who wounds his assailant in self-defense. George then runs away, "[telling] the story quite differently from the way it had happened" and accusing Thomas of violating the king's peace. The trial takes place, the two men fight a duel, and Thomas loses, even though he has put his trust in the Lord, the Virgin Mary, and the blessed Wulfstan. The sentence is then handed down and executed in a horrifying passage that deserves full quotation simply because its subject matter is (thankfully) so rare.

> And though he was liable to hanging by the custom of the realm, the justices mixed mercy in their judgement, declaring him deserving of castration and blinding, and authorized the victor's neighbors and kinsmen to execute this judgement. They extracted one eye at once and with ease, more from eagerness to punish than any love of justice, in the presence of servants left behind by the justices for the purpose and a crowd of curious people willingly streaming in for the spectacle. But the other one, already badly injured by George, they could hardly dig out and then only with great difficulty and anguish to the suffering man. They sharpened the blinding instrument two or three times then cast it into the brain in the hope of extinguishing life along with sight. The wretched Thomas felt that nothing was left for him except to raise to God the eyes of his mind and so, crying out strongly, he constantly and continuously invoked the blessed Mary and the blessed Wulfstan. The apparitors completed the job with cruelty, and in full sight of many cut off the pupils and nerves that had been dug out but were still hanging off the front of his face and flung them down onto the field. They then tore out his testicles from the scrotum and threw them even further away so that some young men kicked them to and fro to each other among the girls. None of this could escape notice by the people, who had come with such curiosity to see the affair and as usual would not leave until it was brought to a conclusion. . . . The reason I mention this is that later, when [Thomas's] members had been miraculously restored, many were compelled to disbelieve by malice or forced to doubt by the amazement of so great a miracle.

> I admit that doubt crept over me too until trustworthy men who had been present at the deed and seen everything with their own eyes cleansed the shadows of all doubt from my heart with their oath.

William, born to a Norman father and an English mother in about 1080, is notably silent about the cruelties of the Norman legal system in what is the last recorded instance of blinding as punishment that I have found in English history. In his opinion, the justices show mercy in sentencing Thomas to blinding and castration rather than hanging, and then they conveniently absent themselves as the punishments are administered, leaving only their servants to watch. The cruelty of the punishment partly lies in the eager participation of the apparitors and the prurient curiosity and abuse of the surrounding crowd.

The treatment of Thomas by the brothers of the hospital of St. Wulfstan shows the degree to which people punished by mutilation were excluded from society.

> A certain woman, moved by mercy, took him from their arms and had him put in a hamper and carried to St. Wulfstan's Hospital. When the brothers of that house repelled him as a disgrace and unworthy of dwelling with them, the maidservants who had brought the hamper there took it back again, threw the wretched Thomas out against a wall and left him. And thus he, whom they had not admitted freely, they retained against their will.

Even the brothers at the hospital dedicated to St. Wulfstan, the saint who will ultimately perform the miracle, refuse aid to the desperate man. Rather, a woman named Isabel takes him secretly into the hospital and dresses his wounds. Nine days later, on the eve of the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin, Thomas prays to her for pity, and she appears to him along with St. Wulfstan. His eyes begin itching, and he calls for Isabel to wash them. When she removes his bandages,

> to his wonder and amazement, he observed a light entering the doorway across which his bed was set. Not believing himself, he suspected that he was in death's departure just before being carried off. But he moved his eyes around and could make out every object and see his hands moving pretty clearly. Turning on his other side towards the street, he distinctly saw people coming, going and standing about just as he once had. So he noisily bawled out to Isabel how he was and declared that he could see freely. She ran to him, and others too, and they could

> not believe for joy. But they eventually learned by certain signs and proofs ("indiciis et experimentis") that he could distinguish everything by sight. Getting up quite close they made out new if tiny pupils in the bottom of the eye pits, like two small plums.

Thomas's eyes grow every day, and, "lest anything of divine grace be imperfect but restore everything in full," his testicles reappear as well. They are palpated by the visiting bishop of Rochester and one of his monks, whose skepticism about the miracle is thus dispelled.

Retrospectively, the meaning of William's opening remarks about the power of England's saints becomes clearer. If the nation remains "healthy" in its Christianity, its legal system can make mistakes that will be miraculously corrected. The religious model of disability offers a kind of a divine court of appeals, and William need not confront the cruelty of the punishments administered by the Normans, his father's people.

This overview of hagiographic literature concerning blindness shows that miracles of both chastisement and cure, when recounted in simple, unadorned form, may avoid recourse to worldly power structures and stereotypes. However, when miraculous events—and particularly those in French and Norman texts—take on narrative complexity, they tend to be amplified with material that intersects with conventional aspects of blindness that we have seen outside the territory of hagiography: commodification of sight, stereotypes of excess, symbols of Judaism, and so on. This material tends to reproduce and reinforce worldly systems of power while presenting the glories of divine castigation or forgiveness. And although this literature does not consistently equate disability with a degraded spiritual state, these miracles make this connection frequently enough to keep it alive and well in medieval Christian discourse.

Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" and "Merchant's Tale": Recasting the Religious Model of Cure

In light of the conventions of miraculous cure cited previously, the unique nature of the ostensible cure of the blind Briton in Chaucer's "Man of Law's Tale" becomes all the more striking. In this episode, the Christian heroine Custance, her secretly converted friend Hermengyld, and her still pagan husband Elda encounter a Christian blind man, who asks Hermengyld to restore his sight. Initially she hesitates, but at Custance's behest, she evidently restores his sight—though Chaucer does not actually say so.

Both Nicholas Trevet's and John Gower's texts mention that the blind man's sight is completely restored. Chaucer's text is very different, giving us the religious model of disability not once but twice. In "The Man of Law's Tale," Chaucer writes that this blind man cannot see "But it were with thilke eyen of his mynde / With which men seen, after that they ben blynde" (II, 552–53). These lines, which probably allude to the Augustinian idea of inner vision and the spiritual understanding that it represents, construct Chaucer's blind man as a bit less blind than his counterparts in the analogous texts, because his true faith allows him to identify Hermengyld and ask her to give him his sight. What is unique about Chaucer's version of the miracle is that it never really states that the blind man is cured; Custance encourages Hermengyld "and bad hire wirche / The wyl of Crist, as doghter of his chirche." The next stanza shifts the reader's focus from the blind man, who is not actually mentioned again, to the surprised reaction of Hermengyld's pagan husband Elda, who converts before the end of the day.

In this episode, as in the tale as a whole, Chaucer downplays the value of physical sight and vision in favor of spiritual sight. The purpose of the miracle is therefore less to help the blind man see than to convert Elda. Thus in this very Christian tale the religious control of the meaning of blindness and sight is constructed unexpectedly. God controls the blind man's disability and has partially compensated for it by giving him inner vision, so when God makes his work manifest through Hermengyld, the miraculous work that he is doing is the conversion of Elda. Thus the religious model here more or less erases the blind man; the miracle is merely a catalyst, a plot device, rather than a profound change of condition for the blind man. But in order to justify this use of the religious model, Chaucer has recourse to some rather clumsy excuses for the presence of the Christian blind man in pagan Northumberland, because the conversion of Northumberland is to be Custance's great accomplishment. So Chaucer says that Christians had been chased out by the pagans long ago, but a few remained, observing their religion "in hir privitee," and this blind man is one of those. In Northumberland, miraculous cure is of, by, and for Christians alone, and because the goal of the miracle is to convert pagans to Christianity, the subject of the miracle needs to be a deserving believer already so that the focus can remain on the converts.

This rather straightforward double deployment of the religious model is far more orthodox than its appearance in "The Merchant's Tale." My separation of January's story into an examination of his impairment in chap-

ter 5 and his miraculous cure in this chapter allows us to look at the role of May as both January's guide figure generally (see the previous chapter) and his guide to his own miraculous cure. Metzler devotes some attention to the ways that people with disabilities arrive at holy sites, and perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the blind cure-seekers are led by friends, neighbors, family members, or even strangers.[72] While May is not expecting a miraculous cure for January while she is "in his hand" as they stroll around the garden, she is expecting a reward for herself when she leads him to the pear tre: the company of her would-be lover Damian.

The changes that Chaucer made to his likeliest source text for "The Merchant's Tale" in representing the miraculous cure are telling in terms of the discomfort that he evidently felt about exercising a fully Christian religious model of disability in the restoration of sinful, foolish, undeserving January's sight. Chaucer apparently drew his tale from a version of a short Italian *novella,* part of the collection that acquired the nineteenth-century title *Il novellino.*[73] This version has no clear geographical setting, and the husband is not characterized as particularly old; thus it lacks two of the most powerful reasons for vilifying January in Chaucer's tale: his identities as a Lombard and an aged, spiritually blind *mal marié.* In the Italian text the husband's jealousy and his physical blindness are, in that order, his defining characteristics, and in a short, fabliau-like text, they are sufficient to set the plot in motion.

In a medieval work of fiction centered on a disability, it is also easiest for a writer to deploy the widely understood religious model, which is what the Italian tale does. The man loses his sight because "it happened that, as it pleases God, this man suffered an illness in his eyes and became blind" ("avenne, chome piacque a Dio, che questo homo li venne uno male nelgli occhi, donde aciechò").[74] In Chaucer's tale, it is a scorpion-like personified Fortune, with her "sweete venym queynte," that blinds January.[75] While in the most Christian of the *Canterbury Tales* (e.g., "The Man of Law's Tale"), Fortune is an agent of an identifiably Christian God,[76] here Chaucer has set his tale in morally suspect Lombardy, a place where pagan deities occupy the same space as Christianity: although an ostensibly Christian priest marries January and May, the wedding celebration is dominated by Bacchus and the dancing Venus, whose poorly handled fiery brand knocks Damyan into love with May.[77] In such a spiritually ambiguous world, Fortune's allegiance is unclear.

Unlike its Continental sources, Chaucer's tale devotes some attention to

the garden in which the adulterous liaison will take place. Significantly, the descriptions of the construction of the garden and January's use of it appear immediately before the passage describing the onset of January's blindness. In January's eyes, the "gardyn, walled al with stoon" (2029) serves as a place for him to worship May, with "no wight but they two" (2050; cf. 2135) in attendance; Chaucer emphasizes the garden's function as *hortus conclusus* and locus of love by comparing it to its counterpart in the *Romance of the Rose* (2031–33). However, January's blindness gives the garden a somewhat different role: it is the only place in which he does not need to exercise his "outrageous" possessiveness of May (2084–91). The world beyond becomes a place fraught with jealous fears in which January only allows May to move about when he has his hand upon her. In a sense, he can only be himself in the garden, and Chaucer implies the connection between January's self and his self-enclosure by first describing the garden as "walled al with stoon" and later adding that January is "as blind as is a stoon" (2156). January's blindness cuts off any natural intercourse with the world beyond the garden, and thus Chaucer seems to suggest a rather English denial of the social model of disability, with the blind man outside society.

The contrast between the Christian novellino and the largely pagan "Merchant's Tale" is represented most clearly in the deities that bring about the miraculous cure: St. Peter and God in the former, Pluto and Persephone in the latter. In the Italian tale, St. Peter asks God to restore the husband's sight so that he can see what his wife is doing; God agrees to do so, but he also says that the woman will find an excuse to pardon herself. When the husband sees her committing adultery, the wife says that the act of cuckolding her husband is what has miraculously cured him. Like January, the husband is content with the response, and the story concludes with an aphorism about how quickly women can find excuses.[78] There could be no clearer example of a narrative based on the religious model of disability: God takes away the man's sight and then later restores it. However, it is significant that the man goes blind by chance, at God's whim rather than as punishment for sin, and therefore he is not undeserving of cure. This tale is too brief for theological complexities relating to impairment.

In the more pagan world of January's Lombardy, blindness can be caused by one deity (if we choose to give the personified Fortune that status) and undone by another; like the gods in Latin literature, they do not work in concert. Pluto and Persephone, who are enjoying January's garden with some of her ladies, discuss whether the cuckolding that is about to take

place before them is indicative of women's nature. The scriptural auctoritates that they cite to justify their views are largely from the Old Testament: Pluto cites Solomon and Jesus, son of Syrak (author of Ecclesiasticus), but Persephone refutes Solomon's wisdom. In consecutive lines she very generally cites the exemplary behavior of female martyrs "that dwelle in Cristes hous" and women from Roman history, but she names none of them. So Christianity is a known repository of exempla for pagan gods, implying that in this world Christianity has more authority than paganism. But perhaps for that very reason, the Christian God will not concern himself with January's blindness here. January has apparently lost all interest in God, with May becoming the object of his devotion, and therefore, according to the religious model, he does not deserve a cure. So while Chaucer eschews the religious model of God curing a blind man as it is inscribed in his likely source, he betrays his inability to throw off that model when he resorts to pagan divinities rather than the Christian one. In short, Chaucer's choice here shows that he has such respect for the Christian model of disability that he refuses to use it for humorous ends.

The humor of the conclusion of "The Merchant's Tale" is heightened by January and May's discussion of whether he actually saw what he saw in the pear tree. May claims to have been taught that "struggling" with a man in a tree will heal January's eyes, but when he claims that she was doing more than struggling, she replies:

> "Thanne is," quod she, "my medicyne fals;
> For certeinly, if that ye myghte se,
> Ye wolde nat seyn thise wordes unto me.
> Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfit sight." (2380–83)

May claims to have effected a medical cure for January's blindness, and since medicine is not always perfect, the cure is neither immediate nor complete. She continues:

> "A man that longe hath blynd ybe,
> Ne may nat sodeynly so wel yse,
> First whan his sighte is newe come ageyn,
> As he that hath a day or two yseyn.
> Til that youre sighte ysatled be a while,
> Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile." (2401–6)

May's response represents a remarkable change from the wife's response in the novellino, in which she tells her husband, "If I had not done this with him, you would never have seen the light."[79] She does not deny having sex with her lover, an activity that is evidently as restorative for her husband as it is for her. May, on the other hand, claims to have administered a kind of magical folk medicine, and thus any kind of debt to the religious model of disability is yet again averted. However, Chaucer may well have drawn the idea of January's initially imperfect vision from the type of miracle cited earlier in which the cured person regains his vision slowly over a period of time.

Thus we conclude with Chaucer's use of blindness in *The Canterbury Tales*. As we might expect from a writer of his sophistication, he complicates the use of miraculous cures considerably: in "The Man of Law's Tale" he shows that he fully understands the religious model but refuses to deploy it in its conventional form, and yet his turn away from religious figures as the cause of January's cure may show that he felt the religious model was inappropriate to a comic genre such as fabliau. However, his use of the pagan gods allows him to allude to the religious model without risking blasphemy.

In this chapter we have seen examples of cures of blindness visited upon characters who do not deserve it: the blind man and the lame man in the story of St. Martin's relics, and January in "The Merchant's Tale." Humor is integral to Chaucer's tale and available in the hagiographic episode, humor based at least to some extent on the surprise of a cure of a disabled character who does not deserve it and who cannot properly use the unexpected gift he has been given. Implicit in this humor is the sighted audience's understanding that using one's sense of sight is the easiest thing in the world, and only foolish characters such as these would question its value or reliability. However, in conventional Christian teaching (where humor is not a priority) the vast majority of miracles of cure is based on the principle that the recipient of the miracle deserves it because of his fervent belief in God's power, belief that he has demonstrated through acts of faith. The consistent lesson of these tales is that miracles come to those who deserve them; the obvious (though not entirely logical) antithesis of that lesson is that miracles do not come to those who are undeserving. The burden of this notion, even when left unspoken, must have weighed heavily on people with impairments in medieval Europe.

But disabled Christians who did not benefit from miraculous cures while alive were promised the gift of able-bodiedness in the afterlife. St. Anselm wrote that the bodies of those in heaven will be perfect, except for those who have received wounds and scars in the service of Christ, which

will be symbols of their faith; otherwise, "There shall be none blind, lame, or defective." Anselm's student Augustine developed this idea further, saying, "All human beings will rise again with a body of the same size as they had, or would have had, in the prime of life,"[80] with all defects removed. Thus the religious model of disability colonized the bodies of people with impairments in the afterlife, when bodily perfection mirrors spiritual perfection.

CHAPTER 7

Medieval Science and Blindness: Case Studies of Jean l'Aveugle, Gilles Le Muisit, and John Audelay

I began research on blindness with the assumption that medieval medical manuals and treatises on optics would be a rich source of information about the impairment, but I chose to delay that research until the last phase of this project in order to be able to understand how other kinds of discourse informed medieval scientific writing. This methodology places medicine in the context of the social model of disability rather than privileging it as its own model. However, in relation to blindness there was relatively little cross-fertilization between optics and medicine, and between scientific writing and literature. Indeed, this study includes only two literary moments in which medicine informs fiction: one is the fabliau of hemorrhoids and flatulence from *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* in which a friar is blinded by supposedly curative powder meant for his patient's "nether eye," and the other is implied in Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale," in which medieval medical writings can explain the reasons for January's blindness, even though Chaucer does not allude to them directly. In other words, both of these tales show how a person can be blinded (the former humorously, the latter through activity recognized as potentially dangerous by respectable medical authorities, though the tale itself is humorous), but medieval texts generally do not allude to medicine's triumphs over blindness. Cures of this impairment are more readily available in hagiographic and other religious texts such as those discussed in chapter 6. There, hagiographers (especially during the thirteenth century and later) often state that people suffering from impairments tried medical cures unsuccessfully before resorting to religious ones, a progression that serves to enhance the divine power in the miracle by comparison to the previous medical failure.[1] And significantly,

the tales containing medical moments date from the late fourteenth century ("The Merchant's Tale") and the early fifteenth century (*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles*), when western European culture was undergoing what has been called "medicalization."[2]

OPTICS

Although the study of optics in medieval Europe devoted some attention to the structure and function of the eye, the field focused on theories of vision, and therefore optical theorists generally mentioned blindness only in passing. This focus was partly determined by the widely known ideas of the medical writer Galen (ca. 129–99 C.E.) and the mathematician Ptolemy (ca. 127–48 C.E.). Both of these men believed that vision was based on extramission, the emergence from the eye of a force or substance that gives sight. Galen, who based his work in optics on that of the Stoics, asserted that the visual pneuma, carried by the optic nerve, emerged from the eye and used the air as its medium. He also thought that the crystalline lens was responsible for sight, since, as he writes, "cataracts, which lie between the crystalline humor and the cornea, interfere with vision."[3] Ptolemy, using geometric calculations to elaborate upon the theories of Euclid, posited the notion that visual rays emanated from the eyes in the shape of a cone.[4]

The field of optics changed radically with the arrival in Europe of the work of Abu 'Ali Hassan ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hayhtam, known in the Middle Ages as Alhazen or Alhacen (ca. 965–1039). Alhazen refuted the theory of extramission, writing that corporeal emissions from the eye would fill all space and destroy the eye.[5] Instead, he posited the theory of intromission, in which each point in the cornea received a perpendicular ray from the object being seen, thus developing the geometric theories of Ptolemy.[6] He also wrote of the structure of the optic nerve and the eye as having layers or "tunics," and he asserted the necessity of a clear "glacial humor," the equivalent of Galen's crystalline humor: "if injury should befall the glacial humor," he writes, "sight is destroyed."[7]

Interest in optics grew in Europe during the twelfth century, reaching its medieval zenith in the thirteenth. The Englishman Robert Grosseteste (ca. 1168–1253), who studied at Oxford and Paris, justified the study of optics with a Platonic theory equating light with God. David C. Lindberg writes that in Grosseteste's view, "Because optics could reveal the essential nature of material reality, of cognition, and indeed of God himself, its pursuit became not only legitimate, but obligatory."[8] Obviously the equation of light

with God had ramifications for blind people, especially given the common medieval locution that described the disability as being "deprived of light."

Although Grosseteste did not know the works of Alhazen, his younger contemporary, the Franciscan Roger Bacon (ca. 1214–92), used them as the foundation of his theory of vision. Bacon was the first of the medieval European "perspectivists," a term coined by Lindberg for "member[s] of the mathematical tradition in optics."[9] Bacon strategically synthesized a number of previously existing classical and medieval theories of vision with Alhazen's, positing that vision occurred through the combination of intromission and extramission on the basis of "species," which Biernoff defines as "aspect, form, or external appearance."[10] According to Lindberg, species is that which "an object produces . . . in the adjacent transparent medium [the air] which in turn produces a further likeness in the next part of the medium"[11] until it reaches the eye. But Bacon believed that the soul also produces its own "animate" species that pass through the medium to the "inanimate" species, resulting in sight of the object.[12] Bacon adopts Alhazen's theory of rays striking the cornea to complete sight as well as his belief that if the glacial humor is destroyed, blindness results.[13]

Bacon's best-known thirteenth-century followers, the Pole Witelo and the Englishman John Pecham, were both Franciscans in Paris in the 1260s while Bacon was there, and they probably wrote their optical works in the 1270s. Witelo's goal was to gather the mathematical treatises on optics, including those by Ptolemy, Alhazen, and Bacon, into one work.[14] Pecham, who may have been influenced by Witelo's work but was most indebted to Alhazen, wrote the *Perspectiva communis,* which became "by far the most popular of all medieval treatises on optics, doubtless because of its broad scope and introductory character."[15] In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, according to Lindberg, we find "little or no additional progress" in the Baconian synthesis that Witelo and Pecham represented,[16] which means that there was no new interest in visual pathologies or blindness in this field.

Although medieval writers in the field of optics generally discussed the structure of the eye in their works and often included diagrams of it,[17] their attention to how people see evidently precluded any interest in why people do not see. This was particularly true of the perspectivists, whose focus on both vision and visual cognition simply assumed fully functioning eyes. While writers such as Bacon mentioned the effects that both physiological and external influences could have on vision (e.g., intoxication, infirmity, the softening of the eyes of those who work in hot environments such as

blacksmiths and bakers)[18] blindness was not within his purview. What writings in optics have in common with medical writings during the Middle Ages is an interest in and debate about the structure of the eye: the number of tunics, and the nature and function of each. However, medieval medical writers seemed uncertain about how to use this knowledge as a basis for understanding blindness.[19]

MEDICINE

Medieval medical manuals include numerous cures for various diseases and conditions of the eye, but descriptions of cures for blindness are very rare, due to the assumption that once a person is blind, he is beyond the help of the physician. The intransigence of the condition combined with the general perception of the sighted that all blindness tends to be alike becomes a kind of a physical reinforcement of the catachresis that we have examined earlier: blindness becomes a monolithic condition with a monolithic meaning that admits of only a limited number of adumbrations and emendations.

But while they may be rare, folk cures appear occasionally in medieval medical manuscripts. Unfortunately their relative isolation from each other makes their provenance difficult to trace, but it is noteworthy that some of them require ingredients that suggest a debt to Christian understandings of the origins of the impairment. Two such examples will suffice. MS Harley 2378, a fourteenth-century work, suggests the following: "For a man that hath lost his syght alto-gedere, Take aloe and opium, of eyther I-liche myche, and stampe hem and medle it with wommanes mylke that norischit a knaue chyld; anoynte ther-with his eyne and he schal seen" (fol. 69).[20] The use of mother's milk destined for a male child may have been drawn from miracles such as that which appears in the *Golden Legend*'s chapter on St. Remy, in which the saint's mother cures a blind priest with her milk.[21] The early fifteenth-century English medical practitioner Thomas Fayreford wrote that he cured a twelve-year-old boy from Tiverton in Devon who had been completely blinded in one eye by a blow. Fayreford put swallow's blood in the damaged eye twice daily and gave the boy betony mashed with ale to drink, and within fifteen days the boy recovered his sight in the eye.[22] Here we might be reminded of the swallow that blinded Tobias, in which case the blood represents the medieval medical precept that like can cure like, or the ingredient could have been borrowed from the writings of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, who recommends the use of blood from the right

wing of a swallow to cure blindness in book 12, chapter 22 of *De Proprietatibus rerum*.[23] These cures suggest a certain degree of permeability and perhaps even cross-fertilization between religious discourse and medical writing in the absence of scientific analyses of disability.

Medicine in the Middle Ages changed as surgeons took their place beside physicians as medical practitioners. This spatial metaphor seems particularly well suited to this historical development, because an ongoing weakness of medieval medicine was that the knowledge in these two fields was not fully integrated: physicians applied internal and external medicines, and surgeons operated. Only in the fourteenth century did the medical curriculum begin to include both bodies of knowledge, but their interrelatedness was not always clear. While any number of extant medieval manuscripts might exemplify this division, it is particularly evident in BL MS Sloane 1975, a late twelfth-century work that belonged to a monastery near Noyon in France. The first ninety folios of this manuscript are devoted to tracts on herbs, the bodily humors, and medicines made from parts of animals; some of these writings are taken from Hippocrates and Dioscorides. At the end of the manuscript, fully separated from the text, are highly generalized miniatures of various operations: brain surgery to cure epilepsy, surgical removal of hemorrhoids and nasal fungus, and the couching of cataracts, one of the only causes of blindness that was treatable in the Middle Ages. These illuminations, emblematic representations of surgery that are in no way meant to teach viewers how to perform the operations, must have offered medieval readers tantalizing glimpses of potentially efficacious practices about which the manuscript itself does not teach.

In relation to some illnesses and disabilities, the supervision of patients by both physicians and surgeons had detrimental effects. Medical historian Michael McVaugh states that this separation informs the treatment of cataracts. The knowledge of how to couch cataracts, which had been available to the ancient Romans, evidently returned to medieval Europe in Middle Eastern materials brought back by crusaders, but the bipartite nature of medieval medicine made the disease a site of professional contestation. McVaugh writes, "A physiological interpretation of cataracts allowed physicians to claim control over aspects of the condition from which they could profit, whatever the outcome, and forced surgeons into anatomy-based treatments that narrowly restricted their therapeutic options."[24]

One of the earliest European surgeons to write about couching cataracts, Benvenutus Grassus (sometimes called Grapheus), may have been a converted Jew who studied at Salerno in the mid-twelfth century.[25]

Grassus borrowed much of his knowledge of the structure of the eye and cataracts from a Latin translation of Galen by ninth-century Arabic translator Hunain Ibn Ishq, reproducing Hunain's observations that the eye is composed of three humors and seven tunics or layers, though he believes that there are probably only two tunics.[26] Grassus streamlined Galen's catalogue of eye diseases from over one hundred to only twenty-six; of these, seven are different types of cataracts, four of which are curable and three incurable. He gives causes and identifying features for each of these before he describes the process of couching or removal with a needle, which can cure all of the curable types of cataracts.[27]

Grassus states that a cataract starts as water descending into and clouding the eye, where it gradually hardens. In order to be susceptible to couching, the cataract must be mature and hard, allowing the patient to see no more than light and dark; at this stage it cannot be cured by topical or internal medicine. He instructs surgeons to proceed as follows.

> On the day following a laxative, at about nine o'clock in the morning, have the patient sit straddling a bench with you on the same bench facing him. Have him hold his good eye closed and begin in the name of Jesus Christ by raising his eyelid with one hand. And with the other hand take a silver needle and place it toward the outer canthus and pierce the eye with the needle, twisting it round and round drill-fashion with your fingers until you touch the cataract with the point of the needle. Then push the cataract downwards with the needle, holding it there for as long as it takes to say four pater nosters, and then raise the needle upwards. If it should happen that the cataract pops back into place, then push it towards the outer canthus. In other words do not take out the needle until the cataract has been firmly couched. Then remove the needle, again twisting it round and round as it comes out. Have the patient close his eye. Dress the wound with a bandage soaked in egg white, and have the patient lie supine in a dark room for nine days without moving his eye. Change the dressing three times during the day and three times during the night and have him eat only a little boiled egg with bread. A young patient should drink only water, though an older one may drink wine well diluted with water. . . . After nine days have the patient cross himself and get up from his bed and wash his face in cold water. After this he can return little by little to his usual tasks.[28]

While Grassus's description of the surgical procedure is relatively clear and straightforward—almost, we might say, scientific—it is noteworthy that the operation is structured by religious observations: the invocation of Christ,

the prayer-based length of time that the cataract should be depressed, and the patient crossing himself when he finally leaves his bed. Here the religious model of disability informs the medical one.

Lanfranco of Milan, a Pisan born in the first third of the thirteenth century, included a chapter on cataracts and their removal in his *Chirurgia magna* (1296), which was probably written in France but became popular enough to be translated into Middle English, French, and Spanish during the Middle Ages.[29] Unlike Benvenutus, Lanfranco instructs the surgeon to chew fennel and blow in the patient's eye before surgery, and he requires that the surgeon draw out the cataract ("And whanne þou hast broken þe place þat þe water [cataract] was ynne, þan presse it adounward, & drawe out al þe watir [cataract] þerof clene").[30] Lanfranco's instructions also differ from Benvenutus's in that he requires no religious observances as part of the surgery.[31]

The most respected and widely influential medical writer of the later Middle Ages, Guy de Chauliac, gives instructions for couching cataracts that are almost identical to those in Benvenutus's treatise. Guy was born in south-central France near the end of the thirteenth century. He studied first at Toulouse, but the greater part of his medical training took place in the 1320s at the renowned university at Montpellier, where six years of training were required to complete the program. He had established himself as a physician in Lyon by 1344, and roughly contemporaneously he began working for the papacy in Avignon, where he served Clement VI, Innocent VI, and Urban V. It was during this period, when he had access to the papal library, that Guy wrote his monumental *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* in which he strove to bring together the practices of medicine and surgery. Translations of the *Chirurgia magna* in several languages attest to the popularity of the work in the Middle Ages: there are three different translations into Middle English, and two extant Old French copies.[32] Guy died in 1368.[33]

Guy's description of cataracts first delineates their development in three stages. The first, "ymaginacio" or "fantasia" ("ymaginacioun or fantasie" in the Middle English translation) is so called because the sufferer sees things that do not exist.[34] In the second phase, "suffusio" in Latin and "suffocacioun" or "strangelynge" in English, the water that supposedly formed the cataract descends into the eye, where it can be seen.[35] The final stage, "catharacta" in both Latin and Middle English, "letteþ the sighte as þe duste of a mylne [mill] and þe clowde of þe ayre letteþ the sonne" (prohibet visum ut catharacta molendini et catharacta celi prohibet solem).[36] Guy

stresses that the cataract may be couched only in the third stage, when it has become hard. In order to hasten the hardening so that the operation can be performed, patients may eat fish, onions, and other foods that are supposedly bad for the eyes.[37]

According to Guy, the couching should be performed as follows.

> Sette [the patient] in a place þat is ful clere, on þe liȝte side, in sittynge vppon a stedfast stole. And be þere a good seruant byhynde hym þat schal holde his hede wel stille. And þan the wircher, after þat he haue chewede fenel sede or garlik or some sharpe þing, he schal sitte afore þe pacient somewhat hyere þan the pacient vpon þe same stole, in holdynge þe pacientes hondes vnder þe knees of þe same paciente, and þe wirchere schal byclippe þe pacientes knees wiþ his fete. And þan open þe eyȝe of þe pacient wiþ þat oþer honde. Wirche þe right eyȝe forsoþe with þe lefte hand and þe lefte eyȝe with þe right hand. And when þe eyȝe is open, he schal blowe þerynne þries or foure tymes þat þe catheracte may resceyue movynge wiþ hete. Afterward he schal commaunde þe paciente þat he turne his eyȝe toward þe nose and þat he holde it stille. And þan, in þe name of God, he schal put yn a nedel in turnynge, crokynge aȝeyne by þe myddel of þe coniunctyf, goynge aside fro the vueales þerof, in þirstynge and persynge withyn til þat he perceyue þe nedel to be in þe voyde place. And afterward he schal turne þe nedel towarde þe cornea, and þriste he it inne til it come to þe myddes of the appel and a litel more. And þan, somewhat in foldynge and in takynge the catheracte, putte he it hider and þider downward, and halde he it here wiþ a nedle so longe tyme as þou schulde seie þre Pater Noster or one Miserere. And if þe catheracte rise, take he it als ofte with the nedel þat it byleue bynethe, in eschewynge neuerþelatter of spredynge abrode of vuea and fro touchinge of þe cristallyne. And after þat it is well stablede and þat it rise not vp, drawe oute þe nedel in foldynge as þou puttest it yn.[38]

> Constituatur in loco bene claro a parte lucis super scampnum bene firmatum equitando; et retro ipsum sit bonus minister qui teneat sibi caput bene firme. Et tunc operator, postquam masticaverit semines feniculi vel allia aut aliquod acutum, coram paciente sedeat aliquantulum alcius paciente in eodem scampno tenendo pacientis manus subtus genua eiusdem pacientis. Et operator amplextetur genua pacientis cum tybiis suis et tunc aperiatur pacienti oculus cum altera manu—operatur enim dextrum oculum cum sinistra manu et sinistrum cum dextra—et aperto oculo, insufflet in eo ter vel quater ut catharacta motum cum calore recipiat. Deinde precipiat pacienti ut vertat oculum versus nasum et teneat ipsum firmum, et tunc in nomine Dei intromittat retornando acum per

> medium coniunctive, deviando venulas ipsius, inpingendo et perforando intus quousque percipiat acum esse in vacuum. Et post vertat acum versus corneam, et quando videbis acum intus per corneam impingat eam usque ad medium pupille at aliquantulum plus, et tunc quoddammodo plicando et apprehendendo catharactam reponat et transponat eam inferius; et hic tantum eam teneat cum acu quantum diceret ter Pater noster aut unum Miserere, et si catharacta resurgit, tociens eam cum acu capit quod inferius remaneat, cavendo tamen de dilatacione uvee et tactu cristallini. Et postquam bene firmata fuerit at non resurgit, extrahe acum, voluendo sicut eam intromisisti.[39]

Guy is aware that some earlier surgeons have recommended removing the cataract: "And somme of þe olde leches of Grece, as Albucasis and Avicen reherseth, drewe it out in makynge an hole vnder cornea and in soukynge." However, Guy counsels against this because of the risk of damaging the eye, resulting in a "newe errour . . . werse þan the firste."[40]

In spite of the relative precision with which Guy describes this operation, he precedes the instructions with advice that surgeons not become experts in the treatment of cataracts: "Make the[e] nought siker [sure] in þe wirchinge of catheractes, for medecynes profiten but litel in hem and wirchynge with a nedle is ful gileful [tricky]."[41] Similar hesitancy about performing this operation appears in the work of Lanfranco, who claims to have given up couching not because of a lack of knowledge about the operation but because of the complications that can follow, ruining the reputation of otherwise respected surgeons.[42] So in spite of the significant medical achievement represented by cataract removal, it was probably performed less frequently in medieval Europe than many of the other procedures described in these surgical manuals, whether because of the interference of physicians or likelihood of failure.

Two historical figures in French-speaking Europe provide useful evidence about the efficacy of cataract surgery and the textual constructions of blindness, Jean L'Aveugle, a ruler and warrior, and Gilles le Muisit, the abbot of Tournai.

JEAN L'AVEUGLE AND AUTHORIAL AMBIVALENCE ABOUT BLINDNESS

Jean of Bohemia, Count of Luxembourg, was born in 1296. After a military campaign in Poland in 1337, he suffered a violent inflammation of the eyes, with the right one particularly endangered. However, even before this cam-

paign, he had had eye troubles that were probably hereditary. One of his ancestors was also nicknamed Aveugle, and Henri VII had weak vision like his son.[43] Jean called doctors to his aid, but the first to attempt it, a Frenchman, actually worsened the problem. Jean ordered the doctor sewn into a sack and thrown in the Oder River. Back in Prague, he agreed to see an Arab doctor who insisted on protection from the king's anger, regardless of the results of the consultation. These precautions were well taken, because as a result of the treatment, Jean lost the use of his right eye. In 1340, Jean had problems with his remaining eye. He consulted doctors in Prague and Breslau before turning to surgeons at the renowned medical school of Montpellier. There, Guy de Chauliac refused to operate on him, treating him instead as a physician; however, when he wrote the *Chirurgia magna,* Guy identified the king's problem as cataracts.[44] All treatments failed, and Jean became completely blind. Czech chroniclers state that initially Jean attempted to "pass" as sighted.

> Simulabat se tamen idem rex videre, cum non videret, et multi, qui ipsum intuebantur, cecitatem ipsius non consideravere, quia omnia facta sua taliter disponebat, ut videre crederetur[45]
>
> *[However, the king pretended to see when he did not, and many people who gazed upon him did not consider him blind because he managed his deeds in such a manner that he was believed to see.]*

Jean's dissembling may have had something to do with the need for a king to be sighted in order to serve as a military leader, but it also bespeaks a certain degree of shame. That Jean had a reason to be ashamed was reinforced by some chroniclers who thought that this impairment was divine punishment for Jean's sacrilege, especially robbing the tombs of saints Wenceslaus and Adalbert;[46] thus the religious model of disability informed the perception of Jean's blindness among some of his subjects.

It is difficult to say whether Jean's attempt to pass as sighted or his supposed offenses against Czech saints were known in France and England, where he gained renown primarily for fighting and dying in the battle of Crécy in 1346. In the numerous chronicles and poems that honor his courtliness and commemorate his death, the writers' attitudes toward Jean were partly determined by their political allegiance in the Hundred Years' War, but they also responded to Jean's blindness in ways ranging from admiration to complete obfuscation. Perhaps Jean's unwillingness to acknowledge

his impairment initially made contemporaneous writers reticent to commit it to their prose or verse, but regardless of their motives, their responses imply a good deal about larger social attitudes toward blindness as a disability.

The most important poet-commemorator to serve in Jean's court was Guillaume de Machaut. Born in about 1300, Guillaume became a personal clerk to Jean by 1323, traveling across Europe with him on diplomatic and military campaigns until at least 1330. At that time Jean appealed to Pope John XXII for a clerical position for Guillaume, who was appointed canon of three churches including Rheims, which he retained after giving up the other two positions by 1337. These responsibilities would have required him to stop traveling with Jean, but nevertheless, the 1320s offered him lengthy exposure to courtly life that influenced his work profoundly.[47]

In *La Prise d'Alexandrie* (ca. 1370), Guillaume not only idealizes Jean but offers a highly personal description of his debt to the king.

Cils Behaingnons, dont je vous conte,
N'ot pareil duc, ne roy, ne conte;
Ne depuis le temps Charlemeinne,
Ne fu homs, c'est chose certeinne,
Qui fust en tous cas plus parfais,
En honneurs, en dis & en fais.
Je fu ses clers, ans plus de xxx.,
Si congnu ses meurs & s'entente,
S'onneur, son bien, sa gentillesse,
Son hardement & sa largesse,
Car j'estoie ses secretaires
En trestous ses plus gros affaires.
S'en puis parler plus clerement
Que main autre, & plus proprement.[48]

[This Bohemian of whom I'm telling you
Has neither duke nor king nor count as his equal;
Nor, since the time of Charlemagne
Was there a man (this is a fact)
Who was in all ways more perfect,
In honor, in words, and in deeds.
I was his clerk for more than thirty years
So I knew his morals and his intention,
His honor, his goodness, his nobility,

His boldness and his largesse,
Because I was his secretary
In all of his most important affairs.
I can speak of him more honestly
And more properly than many other people.]

Michel Margue cautions readers not to take literally Guillaume's assertion that he spent three decades as Jean's secretary, but the figure shows Guillaume's "real attachment . . . to his first master that by far surpasses a simple connection between servant and patron."[49] After the king's death Guillaume's connection to the royal family continued with the patronage of Jean's daughter Bonne and then, after her death in 1349, her son-in-law Charles II of Navarre.[50] The ongoing patronage of Jean and his family indicates communication between them and Guillaume even if the poet was no longer part of the court, so it seems highly unlikely that he would not have known of Jean's blindness. However, he never mentions the king's impairment in any of the works that refer to or represent him.

The earliest of these was probably *Le Jugement du Roy de Behaingne,* written between 1342 and Jean's death, by which time Jean was probably completely blind. In this lengthy poem the king judges a love debate between a knight and a lady. The first-person narrator provides laudatory descriptions of him (including his generosity), first to the knight and lady in the king's absence and then when he meets the king, but his blindness is erased.[51] Rather, lines 1493–94 state that the king rose when he *saw* the lady. In his later *Le Confort d'Ami,* written in the late 1350s for his imprisoned patron Charles II of Navarre, Guillaume reiterates the king's support of him (line 2936) and advises princes to model their behavior on that of Jean. Here, even in the hyberbolic rhetoric of praise used by medieval poets to characterize their patrons, Guillaume's description of Jean's generosity seems extreme, to the point of profligacy.

Et par ma foy, s'il avenist
Qu'il heüst .ii. .c. mille livres,
Il en fust en .i. jour delivres,
Qu'a gens d'armes les departoit
Et puis sans denier se partoit.
Je le say bien, car je l'ay fait
Plus de .l. fois de fait.
Je ne di pas en si grant somme

Con dessus le devise et somme,
Einsois le di par aventure.

[And by my faith, if it happened
He had two hundred thousand pounds,
In a single day he'd be rid of them,
Giving everything to his knights,
And then going his way without a penny.
I know this well, for I've seen it happen
More than fifty times, in fact,
But not, I'd add, with so great a sum
As I've described and related above.
That I said by chance.][52]

Guillaume's strange retrenchment in relation to how much he had seen Jean give away calls attention to his gift giving, which was of course expected of royalty; however, the wisdom of a king giving until he was penniless is certainly questionable.

We will return to the issue of the king's generosity in relation to the work of other writers later. A more significant question here is why Guillaume never mentions Jean's blindness. According to R. Barton Palmer, Machaut's silence "may be a polite way of dealing with John's private sorrow and public troubles," which the poet later hints at in *Confort d'Ami* when he uses the rhetorical device of *occupatio* to allude to but turn away from Jean's military campaigns on the other side of the Rhine, since "many knights and many ladies / Know that nothing was blameworthy" there.[53] The assertion raises more doubts than it allays. Or, Palmer says, Guillaume's distance from Jean's court may have made him reticent to talk about what had happened there during his tenure at Rheims,[54] but given his continuing contact with Jean's descendants, it seems unlikely that he would not have had reliable information about Jean's blindness. Another factor may come into play here: Guillaume characterized himself in two of his poems as being *"borgne,"* which means "one-eyed" or otherwise visually impaired.[55] If he experienced or witnessed some of the negative treatment of visually impaired people in France described in previous chapters here, he may have felt more keenly than a fully sighted writer the need to preserve the legacy of his patron from similar vilification.

Generally, chroniclers were less reticent than Guillaume to state that the king was visually impaired. Among the earliest of these to write of Jean's

death was Jean le Bel, canon of Liège and chronicler for the English king Edward III. In his description of the battle Jean does not mention Jean's blindness, but he eulogizes him first in the later list of the princes and barons killed in battle, doubtless due to the dead man's high rank.

> Si commenceray au plus noble et au plus gentil, ce fut le vaillant roy de Boheme qui tout aveugle voult estre des premiers à la bataille, et commanda, sur la teste à coper, à ses chevaliers qu'ilz le menassent si avant comment que ce fust, qu'il poeut ferir ung cop d'espée sur aucun des anemis.[56]
>
> *[I will start with the most noble and most refined, that was the valiant King of Bohemia, who, completely blind, wanted to be among the first in battle, and who commanded his knights, on pain of decapitation, that they lead him ahead in whatever way it could be so that he could give a blow with his sword to some of the enemy.]*

Although this description appears highly laudatory, Jean, as a supporter of Edward III, may have perceived a certain degree of irony in the fact that the first warrior in battle was not only blind but felt entitled to threaten his own men with death if they did not lead him into the fray.

Regardless of Jean's motives, the naming of the king first among the fallen became conventional for chroniclers on both sides of the conflict. The most important among the supporters of Philippe VI was Jean Froissart, whose chronicle exists in three slightly different versions. Although Froissart admires the Bohemian king, he generally misidentifies him as Charles, who was Jean's son. Neverthless, Froissart heaps praises upon him as "larges et courtois, preux et vaillans"[57] ("generous and courtly, noble and valiant"). As in Jean le Bel's redaction of the battle of Crécy, here the king enjoins his nobles to lead him first into battle, but Jean's threat against his own men is missing. In a passage clearly indebted to the earlier chronicle, only when listing the dead does Froissart mention Jean's impairment.

> Si commenceray au jentil et noble roy monseigneur Carle roy de Behaingne qui tous aveugles vot estre premiers à le bataille et coummanda et ennjoindi trés especialment à ses chevaliers qu'il le menaissent coumment que ce fust, si avant qu'il peuuist ferir .I. cop d'espee sour aucuns dez ennemis.[58]
>
> *[I will begin with the courtly and noble king milord Charles, king of Bohemia, who, completely blind, wanted to be the first in battle and com-*

manded and enjoined his knights very forcefully that they lead him in whatever way it could be, so far in advance that he could give a blow of his sword to some of the enemy.]

While Froissart probably knew Jean le Bel's work, his support of the French necessitated an alteration of his source material. His erasure of Jean's rash threat against his own nobles creates a more favorable impression of the Bohemian king before the battle; he is in control of both himself and his men. The acknowledgment that Jean was blind only after the description of his participation in battle obviates the possibility of the reader asking whether the king was wise to insist upon fighting, and it also puts him in the ranks of the heroic dead whose martial glory is not to be questioned.

In the two other (and probably later) versions of the king's preparation for battle, the king, who is described as blind before the battle, makes the same request to be led to the front of the force in order to strike a sword-blow, and his knights agree. Froissart adds a dramatic detail to the description: the nobles tie their horses' reins to those of the king's horse so as not to lose him in the press of the battle, and thus the king and his men die together.[59] This alliance (in the etymological sense of the word) suggests that Froissart or his redactors saw political value in representing a Jean who inspired allegiance among his knights rather than gaining it through threats, as in the Jean le Bel chronicle; the king thus becomes less obstreperous and more heroic. It also recasts the knights as valiant heroes willing to die alongside their leader rather than as reluctant companions afraid of dying by his hand. In neither of these two versions is the king's blindness mentioned in the aftermath of the battle.

But not all French chroniclers held as favorable an opinion of Jean's exploits as Froissart did. Jean de Venette, who anonymously continued a chronicle by Guillaume de Nangis after 1300, brought it up to 1368 and therefore included the battle of Crécy.[60] In a view more ambiguous than most, Jean states that the king of Bohemia was

> strenuum valde et doctum in armis, cujus strenuitatem probat effectus armorum et cordis magnanimitas. Nam ex ambobus oculis caecus erat atque senex, et tamen non propter hunc defectum reliquerat vim armorum.[61]
>
> *[very vigorous and schooled in arms, who proved his vigor in deeds of arms and magnanimity of heart. But he was blind in both his eyes and old, and yet because of this defect he did not leave behind his strength in arms.]*

If there is a grudging admiration for the king in this passage, Jean allows the grudge to dominate later, when he lists the dead, among whom was the blind king of Bohemia, "qui quidem ad praelium se faciens duci, tam suos quam alios, quia non videns, gladio feriebat" ("who, having had himself led into battle, struck both his own men and others with his sword because of not seeing").[62] Here, then, is an implication of the misrule that is associated with the blind in some literary texts, and we might also be reminded of the necessarily misdirected violence of the "game" of the blind men clubbing the pig described in chapter 1.

Evidently only one chronicle of the battle of Crécy fails to describe Jean as blind, an anonymous Belgian work of uncertain date. The chronicler appears to be indebted to Froissart inasmuch as this text states that one of the king's retinue leads him by the reins into battle. But if the chronicler also learned from Froissart that the king was blind, he chose not to include the information, perhaps because it did not suit his goal of creating a Jean who was strong enough to survive the battle, if only for a day. In this text, although the king's companion dies, Jean is found alive the day after the battle by Edward III's men, who report his survival to their leader.

> Tantost commanda que on le allast querre et que l'on l'apportast en sa tente; et quant il le vit, grant pitié en eut et commanda à ses mires que dilligament regardassent à lui. Et quant ses plaies furent appareillies et ils l'eurent couchié en son lit, son esperit rendi.[63]
>
> *[Immediately [Edward III] commanded that they go fetch him and that they bring him to his tent; and when he saw him, he had great pity on him and commanded his doctors that they look after him diligently. And when his wounds were dressed and they had laid him in his bed, his spirit surrendered.]*

This chronicler seems intent upon raising the levels of prowess and courtoisie by representing Jean as stronger than in other chronicles, making him a worthier opponent for the English king's forces. And because the more powerful Jean has been brought down, the courtly king is moved to pity. Had the Bohemian been characterized as blind, Edward's response of pity might have been complicated by guilt, but the chronicler avoids such complications.

While all of three versions of Froissart's chronicle mention sooner or later that Jean was blind, Froissart the poet evidently did not feel constrained to do so. In *La Prison Amoureuse,* a lengthy poem in which a patron

and a counselor exchange philosophical ideas about love, Froissart invokes the figure of the king of Bohemia near the beginning of the work as a paragon of courtly largesse whose generosity apparently verged on profligacy. In a passage referring to an unspecified battle, Froissart writes that the king addressed his men as follows.

"Aiés memore
Quant mes largeces me blamiés
Et pour trop large me clamiés!
Tous li avoirs qui est en Bruges
Repus en coffres et en huges
Ne m'euïst valu une pomme,
Se n'euïssent esté chil homme
Qui m'ont a mon besoing servi
Jamais ne l'arai desservi." (82–90)

["Remember
when you criticized me generosity
and said I was too free with my gifts.
All the riches in the coffers
and chests of the city of Bruges
wouldn't have been worth an apple to me
if these men hadn't been there
who came to my aid in time of need.
Never will I be able to repay that."][64]

After some generalized praise of the king's generosity, Froissart goes on to recount the version of Jean's death at Crécy in which his nobles tie their reins together with his before entering the battle.

Although it is practically impossible that any late medieval or early modern reader could have collated all of these texts to form a picture of Jean l'Aveugle, they present the modern reader with an interesting, fairly consistent representation in which the king is usually either blind or extremely (and perhaps dangerously) generous, but not both in the same text.[65] This bifurcation of representations has something to do with the respective conventions of poetry and chronicle in medieval literature: although more chroniclers of the battle of Crécy could have ignored Jean's disability, they gained no great advantage by doing so (unless they manipu-

lated the story further, as the anonymous Belgian chronicler did), whereas poets idealizing the king's many virtues did not need to mention any of his weaknesses or his impairment. However, the king's potentially excessive generosity may in a sense be a *result* of his blindness rather than an entirely separable aspect of his character. Jean had a reputation for remarkable largesse before his vision was impaired; for example, when visiting the pope in Avignon in order to persuade him to take Jean's side in a political conflict, the Bohemian king distributed 10,000 gold florins in two weeks.[66] The earliest textual indication that his spending habits may have been problematic appears in Jean d'Outremeuse's *Myreur des histors,* which was written about 1400 but which concludes its account of Jean in April 1339 with an account of his visit to the bishop and chapter of Liège. Jean told them that he had recently pawned the region of Mirwart for 20,000 florins in order to repay a debt to the treasury of Malines (modern Mechelen), so he had no money.[67] This event took place when Jean must have been nearly completely blind. In one particularly telling episode in 1343, Jean's sons Charles and Jean-Henri refused to allow Louis of Bavaria to give their father 240,000 marks, saying that if their father had the money, he would distribute it to his Rhenish knights, leaving nothing for his children.[68] And even though the passage quoted from Froissart's *Prison Amoureuse* cannot be associated with a particular place or time in Jean's life, it strongly implies that some of Jean's men criticize his generosity, to which Jean replies that it creates indissoluble allegiances. Thus we might suspect that a blind king, whose impairment will not allow him to repeat the earlier acts of military prowess that inspired allegiance in his troops, may have needed to rely on increased gift giving to instill loyalty in them.

The uses and erasures of Jean l'Aveugle's blindness in these texts represent an ironic revision of the commodification of sight discussed in earlier chapters. As a trait that did not contribute to his courtliness, the impairment simply disappears from some works; these writers apparently cannot muster the rather condescending view that Jean was courtly *though* blind, and its absence implies a great deal about the writers' inability or unwillingness to reconcile these characteristics. So these writers do not trade in the currency of his disability, though chroniclers, especially Froissart, can more easily reconcile Jean's blindness with his bravery at Crécy, especially if he is surrounded by retainers. The trait of largesse, which can appear in both kinds of text, remains problematically poised between virtue and vice, and the political needs created by Jean's blindness problematize it further.

GILLES LE MUISIT: BLIND POET AND SUCCESSFUL CATARACT PATIENT

One chronicler of Jean L'Aveugle's death at the battle of Crécy remains to be discussed: Gilles le Muisit (1272–1353),[69] the abbot of the Benedictine abbey of St. Martin in Tournai, now in Belgium. In his *Annales* Le Muisit introduces Jean before the battle and lists him among the dead, but in neither instance does he note Jean's blindness.[70] It is unlikely that Gilles did not know about Jean's impairment: not only was Gilles a contemporary of the Bohemian king, but also his chronicle was detailed and generally accurate.[71] A more likely reason for the absence of this fact is that Gilles himself was blind while dictating the work,[72] and elsewhere in the abbot's corpus we find such despair about and loathing of the impairment that, as a chronicler, Gilles may have chosen to suppress the information.

The abbot of Tournai began losing his sight due to cataracts in 1345, and on August 14, 1348, on the eve of the Feast of the Assumption, he stopped celebrating the mass because he could not see.[73] The moment at which he chose to admit his blindness was important inasmuch as he was performing sacred work in a sacred space. Thus the timing of the undeniable onset of his blindness would have suggested to medieval Christians that it was the work of God, as the abbot himself believed.

Gilles' feelings about his impairment provide the subject for the lengthy poem *Lamentations,* a wide-ranging work in which he constructs his blindness as punishment for his sinfulness. The work opens with a third-person introduction that may have been written by one of the monks who compiled Gilles' work after his death.

> Ch'est li lamentations l'abbet Gillion le Muysit ou tempore que Nostre Sire li avoit envoyet empaichement de se vewe et que il avoit le lumiere des yels couverte si que vir les gens ne pooit, ne lire, ne escrire, et ne veoit fors clartés et lumieres, et grossement, et se reconisçance de ses pekiés et de ses meffais.[74]
>
> *[This is the lamentation of the abbot Gilles le Muisit at the time that Our Lord sent him an impediment to his sight and he had the light of his eyes covered so that he could not see people nor read nor write, and he saw nothing except brightness and light, and roughly, and his recognition of his sins and of his misdeeds.]*

Gilles reiterates his belief that his blindness is a result his life of sin: "il m'est venus empaichemens . . . / par mes pekiés, par mes outrages / Que j'ai fait en

tous mes eages"[75] ("the impediment came upon me because of my sins and my transgressions that I have committed at every age"). The abbot also discusses the nature of sin, describes how the devil turns Christians from God, delineates how to earn eternal life, and analyzes the seven deadly sins and the Ten Commandments. Breaks in the text may represent the divisions between sections as Gilles dictated them.[76] The poet generally uses a verse of scripture as the starting point of each new section, and a significant one, Apocalypse 3:19, appears as a heading for two sections: "Quos amo, arguo et castigo" ("Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise"),[77] an idea that also appears in the vernacular body of the poem when Gilles addresses God ("envoyet m'avés / De vos castiement"; "you have sent me your chastisement").[78] This clearly represents the religious model of disability, but Gilles constructs the punishment of blindness as a result of God's love rather than his wrath. We will see that Gilles returns to this verse in his later work as well. However, Gilles betrays a more inimical view of his blindness toward the end of the poem.

> A mi avés bien commenchyet
> Qui de vos dart m'aves lanchiet
> Si que j'ay pierdu me lumiere
> Du corps que molt avoie chiere.[79]
>
> *[With me you have begun, who shot your arrow at me so that I lost the light from the body that I held very dear.]*

The rather violent metaphor deployed by Gilles here, whether one translates *dart* as English *arrow* or simply *dart,* suggests straightforward punishment rather than corrective chastisement.

Gilles addresses the subject of blindness in some detail only *after* his successful cataract surgery, an indication of the shame that he feels about his impairment. We have a relatively objective first-person account of the operation in Gilles' *Annales.*

> Modo sciant futuri quod quidam magister de Alemania venit in Tornacum et, visis oculis meis, promisit cum Dei adjutorio me curaturum. Consideratis omnibus que michi dixit, finaliter contra consilium propinquorum et amicorum meorum omnium ego acquievi ejus consilio, ita quod Dominica post Exaltationem sancte Crucis in uno oculo et feria quinta sequenti in alio permisi in eis artem suam exercere. Qui cum parvo dolore et cito transacto cum quodam instrumento ad modum acus est operatus, discooperiens lumen oculorum.[80]

[Let it be known that a certain master from Germany came to Tournai, and, having seen my eyes, promised that with the help of God he would cure me. Considering everything that he said to me, finally against the counsel of all my nearest and dearest, I acquiesced to his counsel, so that on the Sunday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross I allowed him to exercise his art in one eye, and then five days later in the other. Performed with little brief pain it was done with a certain instrument like a needle, uncovering the light of the eyes.][81]

The operation was considered significant enough to merit an illumination in Gilles' collated works, now in Bibliothèque royale de Bruxelles MS 13076. On folio 50v, an illuminator, probably Piérart dou Tielt, has represented Gilles being supported by an assistant while sitting in a chair as the surgeon operates.[82] Unfortunately the illumination, which at best would have presented a generalized view of this operation, is so badly smudged in the area of Gilles' face that it does not merit reproduction here.[83]

In a prose introduction to *Li Regrasciemens Gillion le Muysit,* a poem of gratitude to God and the saints for his cure, the operation is described in the third person, perhaps by one of the manuscript's scribes.

Ch'est li loenge et li regrasciemens l'abbet Gillion le Muysit à Dieu, à le Virgène Marie, à saint Martin, à tous sains et à toutes saints, de chou que li veue li est recouvrée, qui avoit estet aveules trois ans et plus, et n'avoit célébret, ne riens veut fors un pau d'air, et avoit estet environ siscante-deus ans abbés esleus, se fu aidiés par un maistre nommet Jehan de Meence, qui ouvra en ses yeuls d'un instrument d'argent, à manière d'aiguille, sans peler, à pau d'angousce et tos passée, et fu faite cheste cure, et vey des deus yeuls selonc sen eage souffisçaument, l'an de grâce MCCCLI, environ le fieste saint Rémi; s'est ausi se conclusions des coses qu'il a fait escrire.[84]

[This is the praise and the thanks of the abbot Gilles le Muisit to God, to the Virgin Mary, to Saint Martin, to all male and female saints, that his sight was recovered for him, who was blind for three years and more, and who didn't celebrate mass, nor saw anything except a little light, and had been elected abbot about sixty-two years earlier. He was aided by a master named Jean of Mainz, who worked on his eyes with a silver instrument similar to a needle, without removing the surface, with little anguish and quickly passed, and this cure was done, and he saw with his two eyes sufficiently for his age,

the year of our Lord 1351, around the feast of St. Remy; it is also the conclusion of the things that he had written down (by others).]

We know nothing of Jean of Mainz beyond these two passages, though together they suggest that he was an itinerant surgeon; since these men were often distrusted because of their unknown professional experience and their ability to leave town if an operation were bungled, the suspicions of Gilles' friends were not groundless. However, Gilles' trust in him proved well founded.

While the introduction of *Li Regrasciemens* offers a distanced view of the abbot and his impairment, the poem itself, written in the first person, includes some of Gilles' most degrading personal views of blindness as a disability. After stating that he was once blind, Gilles remarks that God can do whatever he desires, and he cites the biblical stories of Tobias, cured of blindness, and Job, whose patience was tested. Gilles ties these narratives to a loose translation of the Latin verse from Apocalypse cited previously: "Thus the sweet God desires to test those whom he loves" ("Ensi voelt assayer li dous Dieus cheaus qu'il aime").[85] Gilles then exhorts sinners to have faith in God, as he has had. He remembers having lost his sight for a long time, and his impairment was well known everywhere, communal knowledge that conventionally serves to validate the medical "miracle" of his restored sight. Then Gilles resorts to exaggeration that both the prose introduction and his later writings call into question.

Or [me veue] m'est parfaitement, bénis soit Dieus, rendue.
Car je voy me Sauveur al autel vrayement
Et toutes autres coses, sachiés, parfaitement.[86]

[Now it [my sight] has been perfectly restored, may God be blessed. So truly I see my saviour at the altar and everything else perfectly, you know.]

Gilles' repeated claim of perfectly restored vision is undermined by both the poem's introduction, which states rather flatly that he sees sufficiently for his age, and Gilles' own subsequent writings, discussed later, in which he says he is ashamed of his imperfect sight after the operation. This passage is also significant for our purposes because it exemplifies the importance of seeing the elevation of the Host, which Gilles singles out as an important function of his restored vision.[87]

A hyperbolic appraisal of his vision may have seemed necessary to Gilles here as a means of separating himself from the pitiful, unflattering description of blind people that immediately follows.

> Il n'est plus grans meskiés que de se clartet pierdre;
> S'on kiet, s'on se honnist, on ne se poet seul tierdre;
> On ne set à qui pour le milleur ahierdre;
> Povre est qui ne voit quant faire ne poet oèvre.
>
> Oncques n'est asseur, aveules toudis doubte;
> En öir des nouvielles met sen entente toute;
> Tout chou que les gent dient, mult volentiers ascoute,
> Et aler seul ne poet, tenir li convient route.[88]
>
> *[There is no greater unhappiness than to lose one's light. If one shits, if one defiles oneself, one can't wipe oneself. One doesn't know whom it is best to cling to; poor is he who doesn't see, since he can't do work. Never is he sure, a blind man always doubts. He puts all his attention into listening to news. Everything that people say, he happily listens to, and he cannot roam alone, it behooves him to keep company.]*

Gilles seems intent on shocking his audience with the immediate recourse to grotesque scatological detail, but the line reflects the frequent association of defecation with the disability of blindness that appears in comic literature discussed in chapter 4. That association takes a variety of forms, from the metaphorical comparison of the blind man to excrement in the final moments of *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle* to blind characters befouling themselves in the Angers *Mystère de la Résurrection* and *La Farce de Goguelu*. Gilles' representation of a blind man as inherently suspicious but dependent on others for guidance is also evidenced in these works.

Gilles goes on to compare blind men to starlings because of their need to travel in groups, a description reminiscent of *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne,* and he asserts that because blind people lose all the amusements of the world, they need only a warm bed and a deep bowl, presumably for alms or food ("Aveules a perdut tous les déduis dou monde, / Mestier a caut lit, d'esquyelle profonde"). And then Gilles raises another apparently conventional hardship of being blind: "S'il n'est bien patiens, il est en aventure; / Chou qu'il ot et ne voit, li fait souvent pointure"[89] ("If he is not very patient, he is at risk; that which he hears but doesn't see often causes him pain").

The sentence is ambiguous inasmuch as most objects implied by the impersonal pronoun *chou* (Modern French *ce,* English *this* or *that*) would not make noise for the blind man to hear. However, medieval French drama features several episodes in which noisy characters with disguised voices cause pain to their sightless victims with slaps and other physical violence,[90] and Gilles may be alluding to such incidents taking place in real life.

Gilles clearly indicates the poverty of many blind people in a later stanza.

> Rikes gent de clartet, ch'est li dis des aveules,
> Qui font par ches kemins masonchieles d'esteules;
> Par moustiers et par rues les ont aussi li peules.[91]
>
> *[Rich [are] sighted people, that's the saying of blind people, who build little houses of straw by the roads; people also have them by monasteries and by streets.]*

It is doubtful that the elderly abbot of Tournai ever spent a night in a lean-to such as he describes, but his description of blind people lodged in them in close proximity to the monastery in hopes of receiving alms probably grew out of his own experience.

Gilles' recourse to so many conventions and stereotypes relating to blind people raises interesting and perhaps unanswerable questions. He became blind at the age of seventy-five, after having been at the abbey in Tournai for sixty years and having served as its abbot for decades, so it is unthinkable that a man of his importance would have suffered all of the degradations and deprivations that he associates with the blind in this poem. However, he had clearly internalized these negative representations, whether through secondhand experience, literary representations, or word of mouth. Gilles' espousal of these stereotypes may well explain why he did not want to mention Jean L'Aveugle's blindness in his *Chroniques.*

In fact, the relative ease of Gilles' life during the period of impairment becomes part of the subject matter of *Li Complainte des Compagnons,* which seems to draw upon yet another stereotype of the blind man, that of the bibulous bon vivant. Comprising 136 quatrains, this poem is too lengthy for full consideration here, but we can glean some valuable information from the passages that address blindness. Unlike *Li Rigrasciemens,* this text does not resort to negative generalizations about blind people; rather, it presents a personalized view of Gilles, both blind and sighted, within the

monastic community. The first nine stanzas, in the unidentified voice of one of Gilles' band of friends, presents the blind abbot as a lover of drinking and companionship; he would offer his visitors the best of his good wine, clear and without dregs.[92] However, since his operation, he has become another person, eschewing both drink and his friends. The group decides to speak to the abbot about his changed behavior, and Campion (a dialectal variant of *champion* but also perhaps an attempted play on the word *compagnon*) will serve as their spokesman. The remainder of the poem presents the dialogue of Campion and the abbot in their own voices.

Campion praises Gilles for both his good wine and his good cheer ("vo boin vin et vo chière"), reminding him that when he was blind, he would have succumbed to melancholy and died without his companions. Although the friends are pleased at the recovery of Gilles' sight, Campion closes his speech with an exhortation that the abbot make peace again with good wine, good meat, and his companions[93]—in other words, return to the social life he led when blind. Gilles justifies his change of heart using both theological and medical arguments. Reflecting on the time of his blindness, he recalls indulging in immoderate drinking and diet.

> Or sachent tous et toutes, quant aveules iestoye,
> Dou fort vin sans temprer à men plaisir buvoie;
> D'aus, d'ougnons et airun, de riens ne me wardoye,
> Car pour homme perdut, sachiés, je me tenoie.
>
> *[Now all men and women know that when I was blind, I drank strong wine at my pleasure without moderation. I guarded myself against nothing—not against garlic, onions, or sour food—because, you know, I reckoned myself a lost man.]*

To this unflattering self-portrait Gilles adds the observation that blind people are often despised ("Ches gens qui sont aveule, sont souvent despitet"),[94] thus completing a picture of both self-loathing and social ostracism. He thus implies that his drinking sessions in effect ensured or perhaps even bought the company of his friends. The abbot also says in this speech that he is not entirely cured ("J'ay les ioex diffamés, un pau s'en suy honteus";[95] "I have defective eyes, I am a little ashamed of them"). This admission of imperfect vision after his miraculous operation and his consequent shame may have derived from Gilles' knowledge of a category of hagiographic literature, discussed in chapter 6, in which incomplete cure may

represent the insufficient spiritual purity of the subject of the miracle. But inasmuch as Gilles has elsewhere equated his blindness with sin, by logical extension he would equate the ongoing weakness of his vision with ongoing, unforgiven sinfulness.

Later, Gilles further delineates the precarious state of his eyes and the measures he must take to preserve them.

> Il me convient warder dou vent et de l'orage,
> D'airuns et de fors vins, dont j'avoie l'usage,
> Et, pour chou que je voie, contrefaire le sage,
> Mes coutumes cangier et muer me corage.
>
> J'ay les deus ioex moult tenres, se me nuyroit lumière,
> Ail, vins tasters et veillers, fèves, feus et fumière.
> Se m'en convient warder ou revenir arière
> en l'estat prumerain et cangier me manière.[96]
>
> *[It is necessary for me to guard against wind and storms, sour food and strong wines that I used to have, and so that I can see, imitate the wise man, change my habits, and alter my disposition. I have two very tender eyes, and light, garlic, wine sops and aged wine [?], broad beans, fire, and fumes annoy me. It's necessary for me to guard against them and change my ways or go back to my earlier state.]*

Jean of Mainz may have been a better educated doctor than Gilles' friends suspected, because avoiding wine, garlic, and sour food is in keeping with medieval medical advice available through Arab doctors whose work is cited by Guy de Chauliac in his chapter on cataracts.[97]

In the final section of the poem, which both lists the things that Gilles rejoices in seeing and offers further praise to God, the poet returns to several of his favorite motifs. In a long list of what people can see (more than a quarter of the 65 stanzas in this section begin with the phrase "On voit" or a variation of it), he reinforces the importance of seeing the elevation of the Host: "En véoir men Sauveur al autel, ay trouvet / Men salut" (273); "In seeing my savior at the altar, I have found my health." The connection of the elevation to health may be an allusion to the purported health-giving properties of visual participation in the mass that are outlined in chapter 1. Gilles also thanks God again for chastizing him with blindness: "De chou que fait m'avés, ne doy faire silence / Vous m'avés castyet et donnet pa-

tience" (274); "About what you have done for me, I ought not to be silent; you have chastized me and given (me) patience."

Gilles le Muisit had a complex relationship with his impairment, and he was perhaps even more conflicted about it after his partial cure. The religious model of disability to which he frequently alluded gave him no choice but to see his impairment as punishment, even if it came from a lovingly disciplinary God. It is not surprising that he could only regard the success of the cataract operation in religious terms as well, and doing so allowed him to assume a certain superiority over those who remained blind, an attitude that is evident in *Li Regrasciemens.* But the fact that his sight was not completely restored evidently left Gilles in continuing self-doubt and shame about his spiritual state. Ironically, this may have made him place more faith in medicine, as he does in rehearsing the dietary restrictions that he must follow in *Li Complainte des Compagnons:* God did all that he planned to do for Gilles, and afterward, maintenance or improvement of the abbot's vision was in his own hands, because he dared not ask God for more.

JOHN AUDELAY

It is a fortuitous coincidence that late medieval England provided us with a blind poet that in many ways resembled Gilles le Muisit. John Audelay, who lived during the second half of the fourteenth century and roughly the first quarter of the fifteenth, was, like Gilles, a member of a monastic community who composed most if not all of his poetry toward the end of his life after becoming blind. His work was organized, evidently by his fellow Augustinian canons, into a single manuscript, now MS Douce 302 at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The corpus of his writing begins with a long, rambling (though unfortunately acephalous) work bearing some resemblance to Gilles' *Lamentations* in which Audelay describes the world that he inhabits as full of sin and desperately in need of Christian redemption. And like Gilles, Audelay used his blindness literally, metaphorically, and catachrestically as emblematic of the sins of his time. However, the differences between these men are as telling as the similarities.

John Audelay was born before 1393, because records show that by 1417 he was a priest, a position that required him to be twenty-four. Michael J. Bennett, whose discovery of a significant life-record of the poet transformed the study of his work, believes that Audelay was "probably substantially older" by 1417, because he was blind, sick, and contemplating his demise just

nine years later.[98] But the event on Easter Sunday of 1417 in which his name is first recorded may have aged him. At that time he was serving as household chaplain for the family of Richard, Lord Lestrange of Knockin (Shropshire), who went for an early Easter mass to St. Dunstan's Church in London. According to eyewitness testimony recorded in multiple records, in the church Lestrange encountered Sir John Trussell, whose relations with the Lestranges were strained for reasons that are not entirely clear. Lestrange insulted Trussell, and when a physical altercation ensued, onlookers separated the men and persuaded Lestrange to leave. When Trussell returned to the church for vespers later in the day, Lestrange, with his wife and a group of retainers including Audelay, burst in; several of the men were armed with swords and daggers. Both Lestrange and his wife threatened Trussell verbally, and then his men attacked and maimed Trussell and his son. In the scuffle a parishioner who was trying to make peace received a wound that proved fatal. At the trial in June, two servants were found guilty of assault, Lord and Lady Lestrange were found guilty of inciting it, and Audelay and the other retainers were convicted of aiding and abetting the violence. Trussell was awarded substantial monetary damages that may have ruined the Lestranges financially.[99]

Audelay was probably still sighted when this incident occurred; had he been blind and therefore unable to perform the mass, he would not have been useful to the Lestranges as a priest. The next life-record for Audelay is his book of poems: in the colophon at the end of the first section he identifies himself as "capellanum qui fuit secus [*sic*] et surdus" ("chantry priest who was blind and deaf") at Haughmond, which is near Knockin, and he gives 1426 as the year of completion of the work. So it appears that Audelay went blind during the nine years after the ambush of 1417. Given the prevalence of the religious model of disability in Europe at the time, it is not surprising that Audelay felt God had blinded him as punishment for his participation in that ambush, which desecrated the sacred space of a church with blood on the holiest day of the year.

While Audelay shares with Gilles the preacher's desire to exhort his readers to better Christian behavior, the English poet's work is much more strident in its tone. Some of that stridency is attributable to what Bennett has called Audelay's "unusually morbid and exaggerated sense of his own sinfulness,"[100] but it must also have arisen from the fact that for Audelay the act of writing was one of personal penitence for his own sins, whereas Gilles wrote (or more precisely, dictated) to prevent himself from becoming bored.[101] Furthermore, Audelay wrote in a time and place of considerable

religious foment due to the church's fears of Lollardy; indeed, it has been suggested that the altercation between the Lestrange and Trussell families grew out of Lord Lestrange's suspicion that Trussell was a Lollard.[102] James Simpson sees in some of Audelay's work a courageous, far-reaching attempt to address both the heresies of the Lollards and, more interestingly, the corruptions of the church and the clergy; the latter category of material could have resulted in Audelay himself being accused of Lollardy.[103] With such ambitious goals, Audelay required a certain stridency.

The manuscript of Audelay's work was written by two scribes whom Susanna Fein logically believes to have been Augustinian canons in residence with Audelay at Haughmond Abbey; she also believes that Audelay supervised the production of the book.[104] He clearly felt strongly that the book was a unified product whose integrity would be compromised if it were damaged, as the final stanza of the book threateningly states.

> No mon þis book he take away,
> Ny kutt owte noo leef, Y say for-why,
> For hit is sacrelege, Y 3ow say,
> Beþ acursed in þe dede truly.[105]

Ironically, Audelay's book has not survived intact: the first twenty-four folios are missing, and thus a comprehensive overview of what he wrote about his blindness is impossible. However, the body of Audelay's work that is extant suggests that the missing pages would have divulged little about the poet's attitudes toward his blindness or about the disability generally. While the content of the book is very personal in the intensity of religious belief expressed there, it is not autobiographical. Audelay tells his reader repeatedly about his unfortunate physical state, and he identifies himself as a chantry priest for the Lestrange family in Haughmond, but he tells us nothing about the events of his life. Doing so in the early part of his book would have given it a very different focus from the poems that have survived. Partly because of this detachment from the events of Audelay's life, and also because the work was written while he was a sickly, blind chantry priest who was likely to remain in that post for the rest of his life, the overall structure of the manuscript is devoid of any sense of an evolution in Audelay's understanding of the meaning of his blindness over time.

Even so, Audelay's blindness became integral to the way he identified himself to his readers. He names himself eighteen times in his work,[106] and

in sixteen of those instances, he identifies himself as blind within a few lines of his name; in the two remaining poems, he mentions his blindness elsewhere in the text. He closely associates sin and his disability in several of these self-namings. For example, at the end of his "Salutation to St. Bridget," he asks his readers to pray for him "þat is boþ blynd and def, þe synful Audelay."[107] Elsewhere Audelay, adopting the voice of the Old Testament God, has recourse to the blinding of the Sodomites as a means of relating blindness to sin.

> Herefore fro 3ou I wil turne my face,
> And betake 3ou into 3our enemyse hond,
> And withdraw fro 3ou merce and grace,
> And blynd 3ou boþ with schame and schond,
> And drown 3ou within a lytyl stownd,
> As I did Sodom and Comor . . .
> Be ware betyme or 3e be schend. [108]

This story, based on God's angry chastisement which Audelay himself feels, is an ideal exemplum for not only his perception that his blindness is punishment but also his self-loathing. And Audelay believes that because of his sin he is "schend," as he states elsewhere in *The Counsel of Conscience;* although he hopes his readers can repent, he says, "Fore I say soþ I am eschent; / Prays fore me, þat beþ present, / Þe blynd Audlay."[109] The most frequently repeated indication that Audelay sees his blindness as at least part of his earthly punishment is a significantly abbreviated allusion to the verse from Apocalypse quoted repeatedly by Gilles Li Muisit, "Quos amo, arguo et castigo" ("Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise"). Three sections of Audelay's longest work "The Counsel of Conscience" and also the poem as a whole conclude with slightly varying lines that become a refrain for Audelay.

> God haþ me chastysyt fore my leuyng;
> I þong my God, my Grace, treuly,
> Fore His gracious vesityng;
> Be ware, seris, I 3oue pray,
> For I mad þis with good entent,
> In the reverens of God omnipotent;
> Prays fore me þat beþ present,
> My name is Ion, þe blynd Awdlay.[110]

Audelay's juxtaposition of God's chastisement of him and his blindness differs dramatically in tone from Gilles' use of the verse from Apocalypse, because Audelay does not relate God's love to the chastisement. This telling contrast between these blind men show the depth of Audelay's despair, whether it resulted from the incident on Easter 1417 or other aspects of his sinful nature.[111]

Audelay also uses the legend of Longinus, the blind knight who stabs the crucified Jesus, to reinforce the distance that he feels from the possibility of a similar miraculous cure in *The Seven Bleedings of Christ.*

> O Ihesu, fore þe charp spere
> Þat þro3 þyn hert Longyus can bere,
> Þat was a blynd kny3t;
> Þou perse me hert with contricion
> Fore þe syns I haue e-done,
> As þou 3if him his sy3t.[112]

In an unexpected reversal of roles, Jesus becomes the Longinus figure, using the spear as the prick of conscience to create contrition in the poet. (One is reminded that Gilles le Muisit uses the metaphor of a weapon—an arrow or a dart—in order to describe how God blinded him.) The logical extension of the role reversal would put Audelay in the Christ role, but far from claiming divinity for himself, he only identifies with Christ's pain, as affective piety demands. Contrite contemplation of his sins prevents him from considering the possibility of a miraculous cure for his own blindness.

Audelay's self-loathing is also apparent in his deployment of the simile of the blind horse Bayard, which we have already seen in *Cleanness* and *The Tale of Beryn.* In *The Counsel of Conscience* Audelay trots out the simile twice in about forty lines, first applying it to Christians who do not heed warnings to stay away from sin: "Bot al blustyrne furþ as bayard þe blynd. /A3ayns þe goodnes of God men ben vnkynde."[113] The rhyming of "blynd" and "vnkynde," in the sense of "unnatural," emphasizes the debased, animalistic nature of sinful humans. Shortly thereafter Audelay admonishes his readers, "Bluster not furþ vnblest as Bayard þe blynd,"[114] highlighting the separation of the unblessed sinners from God. Toward the end of the poem, however, Audelay turns the simile on himself as he warns priests to attend to their duties devoutly.

A sad ensampil her may ȝe se.
I pray ȝoue, breder, haue hit in mynd;
Þaȝ I say soþ, blamys not me,
I blustur forþ as Bayard blynd.[115]

Audelay seems to imply that he is a sad example of a formerly wayward priest from whom other priests may learn, though due to his divine punishment, he can now only blindly stumble toward the truth.

These examples highlight the ambiguity of Audelay's use of blindness as both figurative and literal. Audelay sees his literal punishment as figuratively applicable to his readers, such as when he tells clerics that the devil has blinded them with sin.[116] Indeed, some readers have found the metaphorical import of blindness in Audelay's work to outweigh its biographical significance, since Audelay outlines so little of his own life. Tim Machan writes, "Rather than specify the historical John Audelay, the self-references (to his blindness and deafness) turn his condition into a metaphor as they come to suggest formulaically that the author of the poems is a prototypical sinner, blind and deaf to his own sins and to the salvation of Christ."[117] Machan sees the metaphor as more catachrestic than it is, but such reading will inevitably lead to misinterpretations. For example, in "*De meritis misse*" ("The Virtues of the Mass"), Audelay includes the popular belief, discussed in chapter 1, that seeing the elevation of the Host will prevent blindness for a day: "Blynd that day thou schalt nought be / The sacrement yif thou may se."[118] One critic has argued that these lines refer to the avoidance of spiritual blindness through attendance at mass,[119] though actually Audelay intends the lines very literally.

It is impossible to know whether Audelay's blindness was due to cataracts, but the period of nine years between the St. Dunstan's incident and the completion of the book would certainly have been long enough for them to develop. Although translations of the medical manuals cited here were circulating in England by 1426, I have found no records of cataract surgery there before 1500 (but there is no reason that records of such medical activity should have been kept). Audelay's understanding of medicine apparently did not encompass the convergence of medicine and surgery that was espoused by Guy de Chauliac and others and that gave cataract removal a greater chance for success. In *Marcolf and Solomon,* Audelay employs an extended medical metaphor in which he compares sins to wounds and priests to surgeons, and then in the next stanza he discusses sickness

within the soul as a different type of ailment. Jeremy Citrome has noted that the passage "is particularly interesting for its detailed separation of surgeons and physicians,"[120] and this separation may indicate that Audelay's knowledge of available surgical treatments was limited. So even if Audelay was blinded by potentially removable cataracts, we have no evidence of a "miraculous" cure for him that might compare to that of Gilles le Muisit, and therefore we have nothing from Audelay resembling Gilles' postoperative poems that reveal his negative attitudes toward the blind and his sociability while disabled. We are left with a poetic voice very different from Gilles, that of a man very much alone with his sins and those of the world around him. One senses strongly in Audelay the isolation that blindness can bring about, particularly in a man who seemed to revel in his sorrows.

In an essay that deploys trauma theory to explain that Audelay might have unconsciously related his blindness to the trauma of the St. Dunstan's ambush, Robert J. Meyer-Lee has argued that Audelay's self-naming as blind, in conjunction with his assertion that the Holy Ghost inspires him, is the poet's bid for "the designation of the blind prophet, the suggestion that Audelay, in his codex, has been given the gift of divine vision at the mere cost of his earthly sight. In a word, blindness signifies his vatic powers as a poet, and, in this function, it represents the greatest claim that a poet can make."[121] Meyer-Lee also states that the figure of the blind vatic poet has a long literary history. While no one would deny the antiquity of this type of figure, Meyer-Lee's assertion that Audelay might have self-consciously modeled himself upon it is problematic, because it had very little influence in the Middle Ages. Classical figures such as Tiresias and Oedipus, examined in chapter 5, received scant attention before the Renaissance, and although the reputation of Homer survived, his blindness was not universally acknowledged,[122] and his epics were unknown except through partial translations. In short, models for this type of figure were largely unavailable. Furthermore, Audelay's sinfulness and self-doubt would have been inconsistent with a powerful, hortatory voice, had he chosen to employ one.

These three historical figures exemplify responses to blindness that are generally in keeping with attitudes available in other texts studied here. The varied representations of Jean L'Aveugle bear witness to a hesitancy to describe him as blind that is partly determined by the generic differences between chronicle and poetry, but some writers' apparent anxiety about naming his impairment is significant in and of itself. Of John Audelay, Eric Stanley has written, "There is nothing to suggest that Audelay thinks of blindness other than as an affliction common to fallible humanity."[123] While

Stanley may overstate the case slightly, he is basically correct: the lack of detail about Audelay's visual impairment in his work reduces it to the level of common experience rather than particularized suffering. Although I have emphasized his blindness here, in his writings it also takes a place alongside his deafness, sickness, and general frailty, in the same way that blindness in English society seems to have had some special, religiously determined meanings but was not strongly marked socially. The corpus of Gilles Li Muisit's work might allow us to think his attitude resembled Audelay's, but with the successful removal of his cataracts also came the removal of constraints in describing his impairment. In his later work he deploys several of the social stereotypes that we have seen elsewhere in continental texts. So long as Gilles needed to read his own blindness as the chastisement of a loving God, he suffered the difficulties of living with the impairment silently as part of that chastisement. Once Gilles was cured, however imperfectly, he could describe the difficulties openly since they were no longer God's scourge upon him. What is remarkable but very medieval is the social quietism inherent in the descriptions; Gilles does not imply that any injustices are being done to the blind, because doing so would imply questions about the justice of God's loving discipline as made manifest through social cruelty.

AFTERWORD

The Visibility of the Blind in England and France

The material presented within these covers has shown that blindness as an impairment was more socially marked, both positively and negatively, in France than in England. The impairment also seems to have been more *re*-marked on the east side of the Channel, a logical result of its multiplicity of meanings. It is tempting to credit Louis IX with the cultural attention devoted to blindness in France after the foundation of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts in the 1250s, but obviously other cultural forces were at work, not all of them so positive. And of course the survival of the hospice depended on the continuing interest of later monarchs in its mission.[1] The social importance of this ongoing royal patronage cannot be underestimated in the institution's longevity. Alongside this remarkable institution we must consider the less salubrious aspects of the treatment of the blind in France as evidenced by the pig-beating game, the cruelly satirical drama and poetry, and the general suspicion of people whose inability to work forced them to beg for a living.

Blindness seems to have captured the political and artistic interests of the people of medieval England far less than it did among the French. It is difficult to analyze a relative absence such as this one. Obviously there was no royal foundation such as the Quinze-Vingts to create interest in the special nature of blindness, but social concern for the poor and impaired was not dictated purely by royalty. Although the end of the use of blinding as punishment in the thirteenth century would have obviated the possibility of viewing blind people as criminals, that is surely not a sufficient cause for the differences between these countries. And regarding satirical drama and poetry, England simply produced a smaller quantity of humorous literature

than France, so the relative paucity of texts that cruelly target blind characters must be understood in that literary-historical context.

Uniting the two countries was the ambivalence in Christian teachings about blindness and other disabilities, which validated some rather negative attitudes toward people with disabilities while also resulting in the creation of systems of charity that must have kept many people with disabilities alive. Whether blindness was a sign of God's love, as for Gilles le Muisit, or his wrath, as for John Audelay, remained a central theological question throughout the Middle Ages, one that medieval people must have constantly asked—and it is still asked in some religious sects today.

The increasing attention to blind people in France during the period discussed in this book was not always favorable; the relative lack of attention to blind people as a marked group in England might have represented disinterest or neutrality. But the unfortunate aspects of the French treatment of the blind may have been as important as the social ameliorations in increasing their visibility as a unique minority, and the visibility of the blind that we can trace to medieval France has remained a constant in French culture, resulting in later attempts to educate and create reading systems for the blind. Indeed, France has been responsible for some of the most important developments in education for the blind; beyond the remarkable accomplishments of Louis Braille, the work of philosophers such as Diderot and reformers such as Valentin Haüy significantly improved the lives of blind people. England, as often as not, has followed France's example in this area.[2]

So if the place of the blind in medieval French society was not always an easy one, they at least began to have a particular place. In other words, they became more visible than their English counterparts, and that visibility was apparently a necessary step toward reform.

Abbreviations

EETS	Early English Text Society
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association*

Notes

Chapter 1

1. *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris,* Alexandre Tuetey (Paris: Champion, 1881), 204.

2. *The Romance of Alexander: A Collotype Facsimile of Ms. Bodley 264,* intro. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933). Although James does not connect the scene to the "entertainment" recounted by the Parisian chronicler, he describes the scene with the four blind men on p. 24; he describes other illuminations of blind figures on p. 25 (fol. 77v) and p. 46 (fol. 180v). Fighting crippled men are described on p. 33 (fol. 109r).

3. For a fuller consideration of this scene, see Edward Wheatley, "The Blind Beating the Blind: An Unidentified 'Game' in a Marginal Illumination of *The Romance of Alexander,* MS Bodley 264," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 68 (2005): 213–17.

4. *Le garçon et l'aveugle, jeu du XIIIe siècle,* ed. Mario Roques, trans. and commentary Jean Dufournet (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1989), 21.

5. Carol Symes, "*The Boy and the Blind Man:* A Medieval Play Script and Its Editors," in *The Book Unbound: Editing and Reading Medieval Manuscripts and Texts,* ed. Siân Echard and Stephen Partridge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 112.

6. In an important review essay on disability history for the *American Historical Review* in June 2003, Catherine J. Kudlick listed well over 100 academic articles, books, and other publications relating to disability, but in 2003 she found only 3 books and 3 articles dealing with disability in the premodern West ("Why We Need Another 'Other,'" *American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 [June 2003]: 793, n. 101).

7. Paul Longmore, *Why I Burned My Book and Other Essays on Disability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 9.

8. For a summary of these arguments, see Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability: An Outdated Ideology?" in *Exploring Theories and Expanding Methodologies: Where We Are and Where We Need to Go,* ed. S. N. Barnartt and B. M. Altman (Amsterdam: JAI, Elsevier Science, 2001), 11–20.

9. Shelley Tremain, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critical Disability Theory," 1–24, in *Foucault and the Government of Disability,* ed. Tremain (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 10.

10. Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

11. Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 2.

12. "Developing the Social Relational in the Social Model of Disability," in *Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research,* ed. Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer (Leeds: Disability Press, 2004), 33.

13. Davis, "Crips Strike Back: The Rise of Disability Studies," in *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism, and Other Difficult Positions* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 41. Davis's essay provides a helpful, readable overview of some of the major issues in the evolution of disability studies.

14. Robert A. Scott, *The Making of Blind Men: A Study of Adult Socialization* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969), 14.

15. Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability,* trans. William Sayers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 65.

16. See "Lenses and Eyeglasses," in *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages,* ed. Joseph R. Strayer (New York: Scribner, 1982–89), 7:538–41. Of course glasses would have been unavailable to the majority of visually impaired people in the Middle Ages, because of both expense and, in certain geographical areas, lack of knowledge about production.

17. Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 11.

18. *Medicine, Society, and Faith in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1–2.

19. Ibid., 2.

20. *Holy Bible* (Douay-Rheims Translation; Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books, 1899). Less socially and theologically complex episodes of Jesus curing blind men are recounted in Matthew 9:27–31 and 20:30–34, Mark 8:22–26 and 10:46–52. The blind are also mentioned in groups of people with a variety of disabilities whom Jesus cures; see, for example, Matthew 11:5 and 15:30 and Luke 7:21.

21. Quoted in Darrel W. Amundsen, "The Medieval Catholic Tradition," 88–89, in *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Traditions,* ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Darrel W. Amundsen (New York: Macmillan, 1986). Arnold of Villanova repeated this injunction in his late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century treatise *De cautelis medicorum,* stating, "When you come to a house inquire before you go to the sick whether he has confessed" (quoted in Angela Montford, *Health, Sickness, Medicine, and the Friars in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004], 110).

22. The *Golden Legend* survives in about 1,000 manuscripts, and after 1450 nu-

merous printed editions appeared in not only Latin but every western European language. See William Granger Ryan, intro., *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:xiii.

23. For a list of saints renowned in France for their ability to cure blindness, see Zina Weygand, *Vivre sans Voir: Les aveugles dans la société française du Moyen Age au siècle de Louis Braille* (Paris: Créaphis, 2003), 25.

24. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 138.

25. From *Technologies of the Self,* ed. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. H. Hutton (London: Tavistock, 1982), 40; quoted in Jeremy Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 27.

26. Martha L. Rose, *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 79.

27. Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 33.

28. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations,* trans. J. E. King (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), bk. V, sec. 38, p. 537.

29. Stiker, *A History of Disability,* 73–74.

30. Amundsen, "The Medieval Catholic Tradition," 86.

31. Ibid., 85

32. *Disability in Medieval Europe,* 11–13. For a consideration of this issue from a sociological perspective, see Nichola Hutchinson, "Disabling Beliefs? Impaired Embodiment in the Religious Tradition in the West," *Body and Society* 12 (4): 1–23.

33. G. J. C. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 55–56. During the course of the thirteenth century, most masses also added the elevation of the chalice, but it always remained both liturgically and symbolically less significant than showing the Host.

34. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 96. Snoek echoes this assertion almost verbatim, calling the "elevatio" "the indispensable high point of the Mass" (56).

35. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist,* 56.

36. Ibid., 59.

37. Ibid., 59.

38. Ibid., 60.

39. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 97. Duffy also includes photographs of squints that are still extant in churches in Ipswich and Lavenham (figs. 46, 53).

40. Snoek, *Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist,* 59–61.

41. Ibid., 293.

42. Ibid., 59.

43. Ed. Gillis Kristensson (*Lund Studies in English* 49; Gleerup, 1974), p. 85, ll. 324–25.

44. Douglas Gray, *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 418.

45. Ibid., 11–12. Gray reproduces the text from J. Gairdner, *The Historical Collections of a London Citizen* (London: Camden Society, 1876), who took the narrative from MS BL Egerton 1995, fol. 219. The story is quoted in less detail in Duffy, 101–2.

46. *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Louvain: J. LeFever, 1882), 2:234. In a literary-biographical sketch of Gilles' life, Albert de Haenens also suggests that this moment was part of the celebration of the mass rather than contemplation of an artistic representation of Jesus (*VOIR barré* 20 [May 2000]: 12).

47. Jean Gobi l'Ancien, *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine,* ed. and trans. Jacqueline Sclafer (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1996), 88–91.

48. Agnés de Pontoise, a woman cured of blindness by the relics of Saint Louis in the church of Saint Denis during a mass, demonstrates an equally ardent desire to see the elevation. She can make out the priest going through the motions of the elevation, but because her cure is not instantaneous, "she did not perceive well the body of our savior, because she still had weak eyesight." Guillaume de Saint Pathus, *Les Miracles de Saint Louis* (Paris: Champion, 1931), 182.

49. Richard Strange, *The Life and Gests of S. Thomas Cantilupe* (Gant: Walker, 1674), 254.

50. Ibid., 256.

51. Quoted in Naomi Schor, "Blindness as Metaphor," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (1999), 77–78.

52. Ibid., 77.

53. It is significant that the Greek verb used here and translated as "scandalize" is based on the word οκάνδαλου, a object that causes one to stumble—or literally a stumbling block. This irony could be intentional, since in this instance sight rather than blindness causes the stumbling.

54. *Ancrene Wisse,* part 2: 40, quoted in Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 115.

55. Goffman, *Stigma* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963, repr. 1986), 1–2.

56. "In Search of a Social Model of Disability: Marxism, Normality, and Culture," in *Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research,* ed. Barnes and Mercer, 57.

57. Stiker, *A History of Disability,* 85–86.

58. Bronislaw Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris,* trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 201.

59. Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 39.

60. Ibid., 290–91. For a description of badges associated with hospices for the blind, see Brigitte Gauthier, "Les 'aveugleries' médiévales (XIème–XVème siècles)." *Cahiers d'histoire* (Lyon) 29, no. 2–3 (1984): 109, 116.

61. Quoted in Dufournet, *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle,* 213, ll. 1–15.

62. Georgina Kleege, *Sight Unseen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 14.

63. Stiker, *A History of Disability,* 87.

64. Ibid., 65.

65. Weygand, *Vivre Sans Voir,* 64.

66. Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe,* 32–33.

67. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 6–7.

68. Ibid., 8.

69. Ibid., 8.

70. Ibid., 53–54.

71. Rod Michalko, *The Difference that Disability Makes* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 118.

72. Weygand, *Vivre Sans Voir,* 26.

73. The phrase was used by Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler in "Othered Bodies: Racial Cross-Dressing in the *Mistere de la Sainte Hostie* and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament,*" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 73.

74. Trans. Helen Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 303– 67.

Chapter 2

1. According to Bloch and von Wartburg in the *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), an older variant of *cecus* based on Latin, *cieu,* largely disappeared in the later Middle Ages (entry under *aveugle,* 48).

2. Ibid., 48.

3. Alexis' father, who fails to recognize his son, says he was blinded ("avoglez," l. 394) by his own sinfulness, and the narrator later states that mortals are blinded ("avoglet," l. 618) for the same reason. The plural noun *avuegles* appears in a list of disabled people who are cured by Alexis's relic (l. 551). For an overview of poem in the context of this manuscript, see Rachel Bullington, *The "Alexis" in the Saint Albans Psalter: A Look into the Heart of the Matter* (New York: Garland, 1991), 47–104.

4. Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française,* 10 vols. (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1881–1902).

5. Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, *La Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr par Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence,* ed. Emmanuel Wahlberg (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1922), 41, stanza 231, ll. 1154–55.

6. The noun *blindness* is used figuratively to represent spiritual sightlessness in the *Blickling Homilies* 23, ca. 971 ("Þæt we ony3ton þa blindnesse ure ælþeodi3nesse"), and literally in Aelfric's Deuteronomy 28:28 ("Sende þe Drihten on . . . blindnysse, þæt þu gropie on midne dæ3."). The adjective *blind* is used to describe Bartimaeus in the *Anglo-Saxon Gospels,* Mark 10:46.

7. *Bodleian Homilies* 64/23: "Hwæt dyde þe Hælaend þa ða he hælde þonne blindne?" 46/25: "Paulus . . . earnode beon ȝehæled on ðare blindnesse."

8. 62 fn: "Beo ho iblind, ho is eað falle."

9. OED: *Cursor Mundi,* l. 7246: "Þai blinded him and prisund bath." The verb *blinded* actually appears in only two of the four fourteenth-century manuscripts reproduced by Richard Morris in his Early English Text Society edition of the poem, MS BL Cotton Vespasian A.III and Bodleian MS Fairfax 14. The word is absent from the other two manuscripts, Göttingen University MS Theol. 107 and Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.8, which say that Samson was beaten (*Cursor Mundi,* vol. 2. Early English Text Society. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1875, repr. 1966). The absence of the word from two manuscripts suggests that it may not have been universally known.

10. John Lascaratos and S. Marketos, "The Penalty of Blinding during Byzantine Times," *Documenta Ophthalmologica* 81 (1992): 133. This article includes several reproductions of Byzantine manuscript illuminations of punitive blindings.

11. Ibid., 133.

12. Ibid., 134–35.

13. "'Just Anger' or 'Vengeful Anger'? The Punishment of Blinding in the Early Medieval West," 75–91, in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages,* ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 91.

14. Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *English Historical Documents, c. 500–1042* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), 249.

15. Ibid., 213.

16. Ibid., 218.

17. Ibid., 423.

18. Ibid., 423.

19. In her article "Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England," Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe mentions the role of the English Archbishop Wulfstan in the writing of these and other laws, but it is unclear why she asserts that the "mitigated sentence as alternative to death" is "called for by Wulfstan in Cnut's voice." See *Anglo-Saxon England* 27 (1998): 217.

20. Quoted in O'Keefe, "Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 212.

21. Ibid., 217.

22. Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 2:452–53.

23. Matthew Strickland, *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066–1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

24. David C. Douglas, ed., *English Historical Documents,* 2:1042–1189 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953), 158.

25. *History of English Law* 2:461, n. 3. The English legal writer Bracton (d. 1268) recommended this pair of punishments only for the rape of virgins. See *Bracton on*

the Laws and Customs of England, 4 vols., ed. and trans. Samuel E. Thorne (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1968, 1977), 2:414–19.

26. David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway, eds., *English Historical Documents, 1042–1189* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953), 164.

27. J. Earle and C. Plumner, eds., *Two of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892, 1899), 1:287–92.

28. Ibid., 159.

29. Orderic Vitalis, *Ecclesiastical History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 4:284.

30. Ibid., 6:353.

31. Ibid., 355.

32. Suger of St. Denis, *Vita Ludovici VI Grossi,* ed. Henri Waquet (Paris: Champion, 1929), 190; quoted in Klaus van Eickels, "Gendered Violence: Castration and Blinding as Punishment for Treason in Normandy and Anglo-Norman England," *Gender and History* 16, no. 3 (November 2004): 594.

33. *The History of the Tyrants of Sicily by "Hugo Falcandus,"* trans. Graham A. Loud and Thomas Wiedemann (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 119.

34. Ibid., 124.

35. Van Eickels, "Gendered Violence," 597.

36. Liam Mac Mathúna, "On the Expression and Concept of Blindness in Irish," *Studia Hibernica* 19 (1979): 50–51. While the Normans may have introduced this double punishment, Mathúna notes that there was a well-documented tradition of blinding as punishment among indigenous Irish rulers earlier; this practice sets them apart from the Anglo-Saxons.

It is ironic that Dudon of Saint-Quentin, the late tenth-century chronicler of the first three dukes of Normandy, said that in his day blindness was one of the infirmities that always earned the compassion of the men about whom he wrote; see *De Moribus et actis primorum normanniae ducum,* ed. Edouard Lair (Caen: Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie, XXIII, 1865), 262.

37. Marie de France, *Fables,* ed. and trans. Harriet Spiegel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 88, l. 45.

38. Strickland, *War and Chivalry,* 52. Strickland mentions another incident in which Richard blinded three prisoners, but because this event is recorded in William le Breton's *Philippidos,* a chronicle strongly supportive of Phillip II of France (1180–1223), Strickland questions the reliability of the report (202, n. 128).

39. Roger of Howden, *Gesta Henrici II* [Rerum britannica Medii Aevi Scriptores (Rolls Series) 49.2], 34; quoted in van Eickels, "Gendered Violence," 593.

40. Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1992), 132.

41. Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicarum,* ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman, 1875), 139; quoted in van Eickels, "Gendered Violence," 594–95.

42. F. W. Maitland, ed., *Select Pleas of the Crown,* vol. 1, *1200–1225* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1888), 77:34.

43. In this case, Thomas de Bestenoure was attacked by a group of men who beat him, broke his bones, stabbed him repeatedly, and left him for dead; however, he survived and brought them to trial. Two of the men, Roger and Aylwin, were sentenced to be blinded and castrated. See *Curia Regis Rolls of the Reign of Henry III: 7 to 9 Henry III* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1955), 219–20.

44. Mary Bateson, *Borough Customs* (London: Quaritch, 1904), 1:77.

45. Ibid., xlvi.

46. *Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Edward I, A.D. 1281–92* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1893), 192.

47. "No Man from henceforth shall lose either Life, or Member, for Killing of [the King's] Deer," *Magna Charta de Foresta, The Great Charter of Forests* (London: Kidgell, 1680), 28.

48. Horn, *Mirror of Justices* (Selden Society, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1895), 141. An odd rape case tried in 1314 attests to the validity of Horn's text. In the Eyre of Kent, a certain Alice brought charges of rape against a certain John, and the inquest found that he was guilty. The rape had taken place before 1285—nearly thirty years earlier, before the Second Statutes of Westminster—and if Alice had not withdrawn her appeal, "the judgment of the Court would have been that Alice should tear out John's eyes and cut off his testicles" (F. W. Maitland, ed., *Year Books of Edward II,* vol. 5, *The Eyre of Kent 6 & 7 Edward II,* vol. 1 [Selden Society, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1910], 134–35).

49. Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law,* 2:461.

50. Appendix C: "Simon de Montfort, his Family and Background," 294–98, in *The History of the Albigensian Crusade: Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay's "Historia Albigensis,"* trans. W. A. Sibly and M. D. Sibly (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1998), 294.

51. Ibid., 69–70.

52. Ibid., 79.

53. Ibid., appendix C, 297.

54. Susan L'Engle, "Justice in the Margins: Punishment in Medieval Toulouse," *Viator* 33 (2002), 135.

55. Ibid., fig. 11, p. 161.

56. Ibid., 137–38.

57. Susan L'Engle, who has studied the illustrations in MS Lat 9187, is uncertain of whether the one under discussion represents blinding or branding, which was also used as a punishment in medieval France. However, she is apparently unaware of any uses of blinding in the area of Toulouse in the century preceding the illustrations; she states (but offers no evidence) that it "became more common in the fifteenth century" for such crimes as theft of animals (144). Nor does she take into account blinding anywhere else in France earlier in the Middle Ages.

Aside from this historical evidence, the illustration itself, crude though it may be, does not suggest branding. The artist could easily have drawn the rod so as to make

visible the iron shape that was to be branded into the victim's face (a shape that would presumably have been recognizable to the manuscript's original viewers), and the artist would also have probably included a representation of the executioner's other tool necessary for branding: fire.

58. Nicole Gonthier, *Le châtiment du crime au Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998), 149.

59. Ibid., 148.

60. Ibid., 148–49. Although I have not systematically sought out late examples of blinding as juridical punishment in countries beyond France and England, I have found several surprisingly late instances. The latest occurred in Amsterdam in 1617; see Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression; From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 75.

61. *Droit et coutume en France aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 196–97.

62. *The Crossroads of Justice: Law and Culture in Late Medieval France* (London: E. J. Brill, 1993), 166–67.

63. Thomas H. Ohlgren, ed., *A Book of Medieval Outlaws: Ten Tales in Modern English* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 61.

64. Two chronicles, *L'Histoire des ducs de Normandie* and the work of an anonymous chronicler of Béthune, mention the conflict between Eustache and the Count Renaud of Boulogne, but they offer few descriptions of specific events and make no mention of the blinding episode. See Glyn S. Burgess, *Two Medieval Outlaws: Eustace the Monk and Fouke Fitz Waryn* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 14.

65. *Patience,* l. 80, p. 189, in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript,* ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

66. *The Towneley Plays,* vol. 1, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 259, ll. 279–80.

67. Gauthier, "Les 'aveugleries' médiévales (XIème–XVème siècles)," *Cahiers d'histoire* (Lyon) 29 (2–3), 1984: 99–100.

68. Ibid., 100–103.

69. *Vie de Saint Louis,* 80.

70. Guillaume de Saint-Pathus, *Les Miracles de Saint Louis,* ed. Percival B. Fay (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1932); 26, 153, 179–84 (Miracles LVIII *bis* and LIX).

71. Louis' goal of disciplining particular groups of the urban poor is also evident in a slightly later foundation, the Maison des Filles-Dieu, which opened in 1260. According to Louis' chronicler Joinville, it served "a great number of women . . . who, because of poverty, had committed the sin of lechery" (quoted in Louis Guillaumat and Jean-Pierre Bailliart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris: Echos Historiques du XIIIe au XXe Siècle* [n.p.: Société Francophone d'Histoire de l'Ophtalmologie, 1998], 7). The Quinze-Vingts and the Filles-Dieu were seen as comparable institutions by at least one medieval artist, who depicted Louis founding both of them in a stained glass

window in the church of Sainte-Madeleine in Troyes; see Phillip Lanthony and Paul Bonnin, "La fondation des Quinze-Vingts par Saint Louis dans un vitrail de Troyes," *L'ophtalmologie des origines à nos jours* (Annonay, France: Laboratoire Faure, 1983), 4:17–20.

72. Jean Dufournet, intro. to *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1989), 66.

73. In a number of medieval European cities, licensed beggars wore identifying badges to differentiate them from unlicensed (and possible fully able-bodied) beggars; see Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 152. In the fifteenth century Charles VII again expelled beggars from Paris, and the decree mentioned specifically the simulation of corporeal infirmities as one of the reasons; see Jean Dufournet, intro. to *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Champion, 1989), 67.

74. Guillaumat and Bailliart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 38–39.

75. Villey, 93. In an unpublished dissertation, Mark P. O'Tool argues that Louis' personal interest in blind people extended beyond the desire for social control. See "Caring for the Blind in Medieval Paris: Life at the Quinze-Vingts, 1250–1430," diss., University of California at Santa Barbara, 2007, 73–117.

76. Roques, ed., *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle,* 137. Roques includes a complete text of the rules of the hospice.

77. Guillaumat and Baillart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 12.

78. Ibid., 7.

79. Ibid., 17–21.

80. Ibid., 19.

81. Ibid., 20–21.

82. Ibid., 138, 147.

83. Ibid., 140.

84. Ibid., 141.

85. "Règlement donné aux Quinze-Vingts par Michel de Brache, aumônier du roi Jean (1351–1355)," 137–47, in *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* ed. Mario Roche.

86. Guillaumat and Bailliart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 39–40.

87. Ibid., 143–44.

88. "Les 'aveugleries' médiévales," 106.

89. Léon le Grand, "Les Quinze-Vingts depuis leur fondation jusqu'à leur translation au faubourg Saint-Antoine (XIIIe–XVIII siècle)," *Mémoires de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France* (13–14):115.

90. Guillaumat and Bailliart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 25; this source does not include earlier records of the number of residents.

In his dissertation, O'Tool describes the considerable ambiguities in the terminology used in archival documents to describe the residents of the hospice, ambiguities that call into question the number of blind people living there at any given time. Our knowledge of the size of the institution's population is further compli-

cated by discrepancies between narrative accounts and archival records ("Caring for the Blind in Medieval Paris: Life at the Quinze-Vingts, 1250–1430," diss., University of California at Santa Barbara, 2007, 123–33).

91. Guillaumat and Bailliart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 37.
92. Doc. 388.
93. Doc. 390.
94. Doc. 391.
95. Doc. 393.
96. Doc. 395.
97. Doc. 392.
98. Doc. 404.
99. Doc. 408.
100. Doc. 409.
101. Docs. 410, 411.
102. *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 37.
103. Ibid., 37.
104. Quoted in le Grand, 117.
105. Ibid., 118.
106. Pierre Desrey, *La généalogie auecques les gestes et nobles faitz darmes du trespreux et renomme prince Godeffroy de boulion . . .* (Paris: Jehan Petit, 1504), pp. ꝗ.ii.v and ꝗ.iii.r. (This signature, which is designated by a symbol that resembles the Greek ꝗ, follows the signature designated by "z.")
107. *Le Fleur des Antiquitez, Singularitez, et excellences de la noble et triumphante ville et cité de Paris, Capitale du royaulme de France* (Paris: . . . la rue neufve nostre Dame à l'enseigne sainct Nicolas, 1539), fol. XXV, section V.
108. A. de Montaiglon, "Tableaux de l'Eglise des Quinze-Vingts," in *Revue de l'Art français* 6 (June 1886): 163–64.
109. Ibid., 165; quoted from doc. 6386, Archives des Quinze-Vingts.
110. In Poincelot's list of seventeen paintings, number 8 is "Un tableau, représantant Solimans, qui fait crever les yeut aux captifs Français . . . de Person," and number 14 describes "Un tableau représantant saint Louy païant la rançon des captifs de Saladins." Doc. 5565, quoted in de Montaiglon, 166–67.
111. Ibid., 164.
112. Le Grand, "Les Quinze-Vingts depuis leur Fondation jusqu'à leur translation au faubourg Saint-Antoine." *Mémoires de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris* 13 (1886): 107–260; 14 (1887): 115–16.
113. Carpentras: E. de Rolland (1863), 13.
114. Le Grand, "Les Quinze-Vingts," 117.
115. Ibid., 123.
116. See David Gerber, ed., *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000). Unfortunately this collection does not include any essays on the Middle Ages.

117. *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris,* 9.

118. Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis,* 8.

119. *Mémoires et Journal Inédit du Marquis d'Argenson,* ed. M. le Marquis d'Argenson (Paris: P. Jannet, 1868), 4:8.

120. Inasmuch as a number of modern sources have fully debunked the myth of the three hundred crusaders, it is distressing to see it resurface in the writings of contemporary scholars attempting to retrieve aspects of the history of disability. See, for example, Margaret A. Winzer, "Disability and Society before the Eighteenth Century: Dread and Despair," in Lennard J. Davis, ed., *The Disability Studies Reader* 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 92.

121. Quoted in Roques, ed., *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* 63.

122. In relation to the history of the French language, it is interesting that Villon here expresses impatience with the construction "quinze-vingts" instead of the more common "trois cents." This numerical designation, already archaic when Villon wrote *Le Testament* in the early 1460s, was distant enough from common usage to serve roughly twenty years later as inspiration for the structure of the legend of the crusaders, supposedly blinded in groups of twenty over a period of fifteen days.

123. Villon, *Le Testament Villon,* ed. Jean Rychner and Albert Henry (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 1:132, ll. 1728–35.

124. Villon, *The Complete Poems,* ed. and trans. Barbara N. Sargent-Baur (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 173.

125. Quoted in Villon, *The Complete Poems,* ed. Sargent-Baur, 225, note for l. 1728.

126. Quoted in *Le Testament Villon,* ed. Rychner and Henry, 240, note for ll. 1730–31.

127. Gauthier, "Les aveugleries médiévales," 115.

128. Le Grand, "Les Quinze-Vingts," 49–50.

129. Gauthier, "Les aveugleries médiévales," 116.

130. Ibid., 116.

131. Ibid., 117.

132. Ibid., 115–17.

133. Ibid., 117.

134. The "backlash" against the 1990 "Americans With Disabilities Act" is beginning to receive some scholarly attention. See, for example, Mary Johnson, *Make Them Go Away: Clint Eastwood, Christopher Reeve, and the Case Against Disability Rights* (Louisville, Ky.: Avocado Press, 2003).

135. Orme and Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070–1570,* 121.

136. *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: London* (London: Constable, 1909), 535.

137. Ibid., 536.

138. Orme and Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070–1570,* 121.

139. In the case of Elsingspital, the institution's debts may have been caused by

the church associated with it. A 1448 inventory shows that it possessed three relics, furniture, ornaments, and some fine vestments, and the building itself was so large that "after the Dissolution, when the principal aisle had been pulled down, the remaining part sufficed for a parish church." *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: London* (London: Constable, 1909), 536.

140. Lisa Jefferson, ed., *Wardens' Accounts and the Court Minute Books of the Goldsmiths' Mistery of London, 1334–1446* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 71.

141. Ibid., 67, 71.

142. Inasmuch as medieval Christians generally associated usury with Jews, the foundational legend represents an interesting conflation of Muslims with them. Stories of Jews demanding Christian flesh as payment for debts, an obvious variant of the blood libel myth, were in circulation when the Quinze-Vingts legend appeared; one of those stories, from Ser Giovanni's late fourteenth-century *Il Pecorone,* was the likely source for Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (*The Riverside Shakespeare* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974], 250).

143. *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, 1405–1449,* ed. Alexandre Tuetey (Paris: Champion, 1881), 390.

144. Jean Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII* (Paris: Jannet, 1858), 2:67.

145. Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris,* 203–4. In his notes Geremek also quotes the original French text from MS X2a 25 in the Archives Nationales (fols. 34v–36v).

146. Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII,* 2:67.

147. Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris,* 204.

148. William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The A Version,* ed. George Kane (London: Athlone, 1988), 355–56; *Piers Plowman: The B Version,* ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone, 1988), 375; *Piers Plowman: The C Version,* ed. George Russell and George Kane (London: Athlone, 1997).

149. See also A.VII.90–94 and C.IX.169–74.

Chapter 3

1. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

2. Ibid., 60–65. This ceremony was instituted at the Third Lateran Council of 1179.

3. Ibid., 58–59.

4. On Augustine, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 19–22; on Aquinas, see John Y. B. Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). For a broader overview, see Elisa Narin van Court, "Socially Marginal, Culturally Central: Representing Jews in Late Medieval English Literature," *Exemplaria* 12, no. 2 (2000): 293–326.

5. For example, the bull *Sicut Judeis non,* which forbids forced baptism, vio-

lence against Jews, desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and other anti-Semitic activities, was issued "by six popes during the twelfth century . . . , by ten popes during the thirteenth, by four popes during the fourteenth (including an anti-pope), and by three during the fifteenth century"; Solomon Grayzel, "The Papal Bull *Sicut Judeis,*" in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation,* ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 231–59; the quotation is from 231–32. For other protective measures, see Edward M. Synan, *The Pope and the Jews in the Middle Ages* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

6. Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 189.

7. Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 50.

8. In *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (trans. James Strachey et al.; London: Hogarth Press, 1961), see his discussion of the Sandman in "The Uncanny," 17:232ff; *Totem and Taboo,* 13:130; "The Economic Problem of Masochism," 19:162, etc.

9. When deafness is mentioned, it is generally associated with blindness. See, for example, Matthew 13:10–17 and Mark 8:17–18, in which Jesus rebukes those who do not follow him for having neither eyes to see nor ears to hear. In his vitriolic *Adversus Judaeorum,* Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, said that Jews' "willful hardness of heart made them blind, deaf, and insane" (quoted in Karl Morrison, *Understanding Conversion* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992], 45–46).

10. Leviticus 21:18–21 forbids those with deformities and disabilities including blindness to offer sacrifices to God (quoted in Dufournet, *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle,* 51–52).

11. Nedarim, B (quoted in Dufournet, *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* 52).

12. Quoted in Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Semitism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 144.

13. *Tractates on the Gospel of John, 28–54,* trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1993); Tractate 44, 2; 175. This interpretation also appears in the *Glossa Ordinaria.*

14. Ibid., Tractate 44, 2; 177.

15. Bede, *On Tobit and on the Canticle of Habakkuk,* trans. Séan Connolly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 41–43.

16. Ibid., 43.

17. Ibid., 46.

18. Ibid., 58–59.

19. *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria, Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps, Adolph Rusch of Strasburg, 1480–81,* vol. 2 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992), 332. Peter Comestor's popular commentary, the *Historia scholastica,* also quotes Bede, but he does not reproduce Bede's allegory.

20. The edited Latin text of the *Tobias* appears in Mathei Vindocinensis, *Opera,*

vol. 2, ed. Franco Munari (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1982), 161–255; for an English translation, see Ronald E. Pepin, *An English Translation of 'Auctores Octo,' a Medieval Reader* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 79–148.

21. *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille,* vol. 1, ed. Alan E. Knight (Geneva: Droz, 2001), 87–90.

22. *Les Mystères de la Procession de Lille,* vol. 3, ed. Alan E. Knight (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 265–305.

23. Robert L. A. Clark and Claire Sponsler, "Othered Bodies: Racial Cross-Dressing in the *Mistere de la Sainte Hostie* and the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament,*" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 73.

24. In this context it should be noted that within a century after John's death (ca. 407), drama was banned in the Roman empire because of the disorderly, immoral nature of public performances. See David Bevington, *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 3.

25. Quoted in Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories,* 198.

26. *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and Translation,* trans. Marcus Bull. (Woodbridge, N.J.: Boydell Press, 1999), 169.

27. C. A. Robson, *Maurice of Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), 3.

28. Ibid., 97.

29. Lester K. Little, "The Jews in Christian Europe," 276–97, in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation,* ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 287. See also Alan Dundes, ed., *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

30. Quoted in John Y. B. Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 105.

31. Quoted in Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 214.

32. Ibid., 225–26.

33. *The Riverside Chaucer,* 3rd ed., ed. Larry Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 209.

34. For a more detailed examination of the royal protection of Jews, or *tuitio,* see Stow, 273–74.

35. Stiker, *A History of Disability,* chap. 4, "The System(s) of Charity," 65–90.

36. In the case of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, this resemblance would have been strengthened by the fact that the walled institution grew as donors provided funds for building and as residents built their own houses close to the original communal buildings. By the fifteenth century it had become "a veritable small city with residences, churches, a bell tower, a cemetary, a mill, a well, a bakery, a tavern, an infirmary . . . , schools for girls and for boys, a prison, and three courtyards" (Louis

Guillaumat and Jean-Pierre Bailliart, *Les Quinze-Vingts de Paris: Echos historiques de XIIIe au XXe siècle* [Paris: Société Francophone d'Histoire de l'Ophtalmologie, 1998], 6).

37. Mollat, 291. For a historical discussion of fourteenth-century antivagrancy laws in England, see Anne Middleton, "Acts of Vagrancy: The C Version 'Autobiography' and the Statute of 1388," 208–317, in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship,* ed. Stephen Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Middleton's section entitled "Visionary Legislation: The 1388 Statute, Its Contexts and Its Voices" (216–46) is particularly helpful.

38. Ibid., 290–91.

39. Brigitte Gauthier, "Les 'aveugleries' médiévales (XIème–XVème siècles)," *Cahiers d'histoire* (Lyon) 29, no. 2–3 (1984): 109. She also mentions that the residents of the Hospice des Six-Vingts in Chartres wore fleur-de-lys badges with an added crescent moon (116).

40. Quoted in Gauthier, 109.

41. Guido Kisch, "The Yellow Badge in History," *Historia Judaica* 19 (1957): 102.

42. Ibid., 105.

43. Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 291.

44. Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de arte praedicandi,* ed. Franco Morenzoni (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1988); for biographical information, see xxxi–xxxvii.

45. "Sepe colligunt elemosinas in magnam quantitatem pecunie, nec utuntur argento collecto, sed reseruant illud usque ad mortem cum magna auaritia." Ibid., 88.

46. *Anecdotes Historiques, Légendes, et Apologues d'Etienne de Bourbon,* ed. A. Lecoy de la Marche (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1877), 361.

47. Stow, 299.

48. Ibid., 295.

49. Mollat, 291.

50. Dufournet, *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* 66.

51. Ibid., 67.

52. Bevington, *Medieval Drama,* 181.

53. Ibid., 183.

54. Norman Davis, ed., *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 64.

55. See Steven F. Kruger, "The Bodies of Jews in the Late Middle Ages," 301–23, in *The Idea of Medieval Literature: New Essays on Medieval Culture in Honor of Donald R. Howard,* ed. James M. Dean and Christian K. Zacher (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992).

56. The connection between the Jews of the Croxton play and the Lollards was first made by Cecilia Cutts in "The Croxton Play: An Anti-Lollard Piece" (*Modern Language Quarterly* 5 [1944]: 45–60), but she is so intent upon drawing this parallel that she denies the play's basic anti-Judaism.

57. In "Ritual, Church, and Theatre: Medieval Dramas of the Sacred Body," Sarah Beckwith stresses the importance of the reintegration of the body of Christ, i.e., the Christian community, at the end of the Croxton play (65–89, in *Culture and History, 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing,* ed. David Aers [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992]).

58. Anna J. Mill, "The York Plays of the Dying, Assumption, and Coronation of Our Lady," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 65 (1950): 867–68.

59. Ibid., 867–70; see also Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 290.

60. The image of the monkey dangling from a coffin is reproduced in Herbert Read et al., *English Stained Glass* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, n.d.), black-and-white plate 41.

61. *Sensuyt lassumption de la glorieuse Vierge Marie* (Paris: "la rue Neufve Nostre Dame" [Alain Lotrian], n.d.), n.p. This play has not been printed in a modern edition, but it is dated as a fifteenth-century text and partially summarized by L. Petit de Julleville in *Les Mystères,* vol. 2 (Paris: Hachette, 1880), 470–71. The online catalogue entry for this book at the Bibliothèque Nationale states that Alain Lotrian can be identified as the printer because of the address cited in the text; he operated there from 1525 to 1547.

62. See, for example, the Ironmongers' Play in *The Chester Mystery Cycle,* vol. 1, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills (Early English Text Society, s.s. 3; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 303–14. In this play the materialistic crucifiers crave disorder to the extent that they gamble for Jesus's clothing before crucifying him.

63. *Ludus Coventriae or The Plaie Called Corpus Christi,* ed. K. S. Block (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 297.

64. Ibid., 298.

65. Several examples appear in *The York Plays* (ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885]); see, for example, 338, l. 34; 346, l. 277; 351, l. 61; 353, l. 129.

66. *The Towneley Plays,* vol. 1, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 286 and 265, respectively.

67. Heather O'Donoghue, "What Has Balder to Do with Lamech? The Lethal Shot of a Blind Man in Old Norse Myth and Jewish Exegetical Traditions," *Medium Aevum* 72, no. 1 (2003): 95.

68. *Ludus Coventriae,* 39, ll. 144–45.

69. *The Holkham Bible Picture Book: A Facsimile,* commentary by Michelle Brown (London: British Library, 2007), 1, 9.

70. Ibid.; for the Anglo-Norman text and translation of the Lamech story in the Holkham Bible, see 37–38, where the blind man's guide is repeatedly called *garcion* and *valet* rather than any nomenclature representing kinship. The less developed text of the Egerton Genesis is legible in the reproduction of the Lamech/Noah folio in fol. 4, where the boy is called a child (*un enfaunt, l'enfaunt*) of undetermined parentage, with no possessive adjective indicating that he is Lamech's son.

71. *The Creacion of the World: A Critical Edition and Translation,* ed. and trans. Paula Neuss (New York: Garland, 1983), lxxiv.

72. Ibid., 121, ll. 1439–57.

73. *Le Mistére du Viel Testament,* ed. James de Rothschild (Société des Anciens Textes Français, Paris, Firmin Didot, 1878), 172.

74. Ibid., 173.

75. In her commentary on the Lamech episode in the Holkham Bible, Michelle Brown seems to assume that the poet responsible for the text was making a mistake in his identification of the blind man's guide. She writes, "Lamech is blind and needs the assistance of his son, who is here described as his servant boy," and she entitles her description of folio 7r, "Lamech kills his son; Noah warned of the flood." As my discussion of both the *Ludus Coventriae* and the Egerton Genesis demonstrate, in England a version of the Lamech story (that probably had more than only these three witnesses) did not identify the boy as related to Lamech, sparing the blind man the addition of infanticide to his impressive list of sins. Brown may thus have conflated identifiably English and French traditions of the story in her assumption that the version appearing in the French drama was necessarily "correct."

76. Ibid., 176–77.

77. Ibid., 182.

78. Ibid., 189.

79. Ibid., 190.

80. *Ludus Coventriae,* 41, ll. 195–96.

81. Quoted in Rose Jeffries Peebles, *The Legend of Longinus in Ecclesiastical Tradition and in English Literature, and its connection with the Grail* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst, 1911), 109.

82. Ibid., 110.

83. *Piers Plowman: The B Version,* ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone Press, 1975), 2:611, l. 82. Kane and Donaldson note a number of manuscripts of *Piers* that do not call Longinus a Jew; see the textual note for this line.

84. Ibid., ll. 81, 83–84.

85. Ibid., ll. 88–89.

86. *Ludus Coventriae, or the Plaie called Corpus Christi,* ed. K. S. Block, Early English Text Society, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), 310.

87. *York Plays,* ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 368.

88. Quoted in Peebles, 141.

89. L. J. N. Monmerqué and Francisque Michel, eds., *Théatre Français au Moyen Age* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1879), 13.

90. Arnoul Gréban, *The Mystery of the Passion: The Third Day,* trans. and intro. Paula Giuliano (Asheville, N.C.: Pegasus Press, 1996), xiii. Performance of the play continued into the next century.

91. Arnould Gréban, *Le Mystère de la Passion,* ed. Gaston Paris and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: Vieweg, 1878), 346.

92. Gréban, *The Mystery of the Passion,* trans. Paula Giuliano, 174.
93. *Mystère,* 347; *Mystery,* trans. Giuliano, 176.
94. *Mystère,* 348.
95. Dufournet, *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* 55.

Chapter 4

1. The text appears in *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle.* The English translation is mine. Further citations will be made by line number in the text.The play has been translated into English in *Medieval French Plays,* trans. Richard Axton and John Stevens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 197–206.

2. Erik von Kraemer, *Le type du faux mendiant dans les littératures romanes depuis le moyen âge jusqu'au XVIIe siècle* (Societas Scientarum Fennica: Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum XIII.6; Helsingfors, 1944): Part II, "Le mendiant aveugle et son valet dans les littératures française et espagnole depuis le moyen âge jusqu'au XVIe siècle," 41–83.

3. Ibid., 48–49. Von Kraemer identifies the blind man's sexual proclivities, along with his greed, drunkenness, and cynicism, as his most significant sins.

4. Dufournet, *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* 11.

5. Carol Symes, "*The Boy and the Blind Man:* A Medieval Play Script and Its Editors," in *The Book Unbound: Editing and Reading Medieval Manuscripts and Texts,* ed. Siân Echard and Stephen Partridge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 112.

6. Ibid., 112.

7. Ibid., 117–18.

8. Quoted in Dufournet, *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle,* 211, ll. 1–4.

9. Kathleen Forni, ed., *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Selection* (TEAMS Medieval Texts Online, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005). Forni gives the history of the proverb in the note to line 7.

10. *The Scandal of Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 60.

11. Cortebarbe, *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne,* 109–20, in *Fabliaux français au Moyen Age,* vol. 1, ed. Philippe Ménard (Geneva: Droz, 1979), 109, ll. 3–6. Further references to the poem will be made by line number.

12. The basic plot of *Les Trois Aveugles de Compiègne* achieved some popularity. It was translated into German prose as one of the trickster Till Eulenspiegel's adventures, with a few variants from the French original, i.e., Till pretends to give twelve guilders to twelve blind men, and when the innkeeper learns that they have no money, he locks them in a pigsty until Till sets in motion the trick with the priest. This tale was rewritten as a play by Hans Sachs (*Till Eulenspiegel: His Adventures,* trans Paul Oppenheimer [New York: Routledge, 1991], 146–49).

13. *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse,* 53.

14. The opening of this fabliau, lengthier than most in the collection, states that its author was Phillip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. The Old French text is taken

from *Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles,* ed. Franklin P. Sweetser (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 31; the translation is from *The Hundred New Tales* (*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles*), trans. Judith Bruskin Diner (New York: Garland, 1990), 22.

15. In critical examinations of this tale I have not seen any suggestion that an otherwise inexplicably bizarre metaphor relating to the girl's hemorrhoids may rely on a rather weak pun. The writer says that the girl's disease is commonly called "broches" (which is the disease's only nomenclature in the text), and the next sentence reads, "La doulce maison fut treslargement troublée quand en la garenne que plus chere tenoient lesdictz parens, avoient osé lascher les levriers at limiers ce deplaisant mal, et que plus est, touché sa proye en dangereux et dommageable lieu" (*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles,* 32) [This worthy family was most perturbed when this most unpleasant malady dared unleash its greyhounds and bloodhounds on her privileged hunting reserve, attacking its prey in a dangerous part of her body, to her great detriment. (*The Hundred New Tales* [*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles*], 22)]. It seems very likely that the ground for the canine metaphor is the similarity between "broches" and "braches," which in both Old French and modern French mean "hunting dogs;" see *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français: Le Moyen Âge* (Paris: Larousse, 1992), 75. The pun satirizes middle-class pretensions to the aristocratic pastime of hunting, a satirical position that would have been appropriate to the aristocratic Phillip the Good, and it also demeans the girl by associating her rectum with a game preserve.

16. *The Hundred New Tales* (*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles*), 22.

17. Ibid., 22.

18. Ibid., 22

19. Ibid., 23.

20. Ibid., 23.

21. *Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles,* 35; *The Hundred New Tales* (*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles*), 24.

22. *Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles,* 37; *The Hundred New Tales* (*Les Cents Nouvelles Nouvelles*), 24–25.

23. For a summary of the church's concerns about friars becoming too closely involved with women that they were treating, see Angela Montford, *Health, Sickness, Medicine, and the Friars in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 123.

24. *The Scandal of the Fabliaux* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 62–63.

25. *Treatises of Fistula in Ano, Haemorrhoids, and Clysters,* ed. D'Arcy Power (Early English Text Society, O.S. 139; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), 64–72.

26. *Lanfrank's "Science of Cirurgie,"* ed. Robert V. Fleischhacker (Early English Text Society, O.S. 102; London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1894), 292–93.

27. Ibid., 122.

28. *Bérinus: Roman en Prose du XIVe Siècle,* ed. Robert Bossuat, 2 vols. (Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1931), 49.

Although *Bérinus* has no direct source, the episode of the lying Blandiens has several analogues that are related to the "Seven Sages" tradition. See *The Tale of Beryn,* ed. F. J. Furnivall and W. G. Stone (Early English Text Society, E.S. 105; Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprints, 1973), 141–59. These analogues all feature a one-eyed man rather than a blind man. The French writer's choice to make his visually impaired lying accuser completely blind allows him to draw upon some of the stereotypes discussed in earlier chapters.

29. *Bérinus,* 63.

30. Ibid., 83.

31. Ibid., 98.

32. Ibid., 98.

33. Ibid., 117.

34. Ibid., 123.

35. Ibid., 126–27.

36. See chap. 2, n. 42.

37. *Bérinus,* 130.

38. Ibid., 133. The subterranean flood is the subject of yet another tangential narrative: An Egyptian named Altercans has an incestuous relationship with his sister, who becomes pregnant. The devil (here called "li Ennemis") persuades Altercans to take her out to sea, murder her, and throw her body in the water. God sends the flood as punishment for this crime, but it simultaneously punishes Agriano. The paired narratives reflect the conjoined stories in Genesis 19, the destruction of the Sodomites and Lot's incest with his daughters. Centering on two kinds of unnatural sexuality that bring about the wrath of God, homosexuality and incest, the narratives also serve as mirror images of each other since Agriano rejects women that he should love, including his own mother and sister, while Altercans loves his sister "contre Dieu et contre droit" [against God and against the law] (131). For a more complete examination of this episode in its context, see Edward Wheatley, "A River Runs Through It: Disability, Homsexuality, Queered/Disabled Discourse, and the Isle of Blandie in *Bérinus,*" *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 19, no. 3 (2007): 386–401.

39. *Bérinus,* 134.

40. "Home habitoient deshonnestement contre nature li uns a l'autre," ibid., 119.

41. Ibid., 129, n. 148.1.

42. See David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 269; Arno Karlen, "The Homosexual Heresy," *Chaucer Review* 6 (1971): 53–55.

43. *Bérinus,* 63.

44. Ibid., 135.

45. See Edward Wheatley, *Mastering Aesop: Medieval Education, Chaucer, and His Followers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 20–31.

46. *Bérinus,* 64.

47. Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis,* 53–54.

48. For Gieffroy's initial description of the tree, see *Bérinus,* 69; for the narrator's description of it as the Romans file past it, see 134–35.

49. *Bérinus,* 64–65.

50. "The Canterbury Interlude and the Merchant's Tale of Beryn," 55–196, in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions,* ed. John M. Bowers (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), ll. 2644–45.

51. Ibid., ll. 2045–48, 2061–62.

52. Ibid., ll. 2077–80.

53. Ibid., ll. 2378–81.

54. Ibid., ll. 2510–16.

55. Line 3262 states that the citizens "had ful litill knowlech he was Geffrey the lame."

56. Ibid., ll. 2915–3004.

57. Ibid., ll. 2964–68.

58. Ibid., l. 3082. See also ll. 3052, 3117, 3160, 3200.

59. Ibid., ll. 3176–77, 3180.

60. Ibid., ll. 3181–82.

61. See Beryl Rowland, *Blind Beasts: Chaucer's Animal World* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1971), 21, 127–28. Rowland extends the scope of her examples of blind Bayard beyond Chaucer's work to such varied texts as *Cleanness, The Reply of Friar Daw,* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis.*

62. Ibid., 128.

63. "The Canterbury Interlude and the Merchant's Tale of Beryn," ll. 3193–98.

64. Ibid., l. 3694.

65. Ibid., ll. 3705.

66. Ibid., ll. 3716–20.

67. Ibid., ll. 3721–26.

68. Ibid., ll. 3739–41.

69. Ibid., ll. 3759–60.

70. Ibid., ll. 3869–74.

71. Ibid., ll. 3877–80.

72. Geoffrey is not the only character to feign disability in *Beryn.* Macaigne, the catchpoll who accuses Beryn of having murdered his father, dresses himself as a "man of contemplacioun" and carries a walking stick "as though he febill were" (ll. 2215–17). Presumably this disguise is meant to inspire both respect and pity in those who hear Macaigne's accusation.

73. Quoted in Dufournet, intro. to *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle,* 55–56.

74. *Narrative Prosthesis,* 8.

75. Dufournet, intro. to *Le Garçon et l'Aveugle,* 38.

76. P. L. Jacob, ed., *Recueil de Farces, Soties, et Moralités du Quinzième Siècle* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1882), 212.

77. Ibid., 228–29.

78. *Le Mystère de la Résurrection, Angers (1456),* ed. Pierre Servet (Geneva: Droz, 1993), 1:308, ll. 5460–65.

79. Ibid., 246, ll. 4008–4313.

80. Ibid., 256, ll. 4350–55.

81. Ibid., 278–79, ll. 4813–17.

82. "A Propos de Deux Chansons d'Aveugle," in "*Et C'est la Fin Pour Quoy Sommes Ensemble*": *Hommage à Jean Dufournet,* vol. 3, no editor (Paris: Champion, 1993), 1277.

83. Toward the end of the second day of the play, the messenger reappears, again swigging from a bottle (Latin stage directions indicate thrice in just over 100 lines; ll. 12595–698) and singing (ll. 12685–93, 12761–72).

84. *Le Mystère de la Résurrection, Angers (1456),* 294, ll. 5159–64.

85. For a discussion of the bowels in Rabelais, see Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* 148–54 et passim.

86. In Servet's B manuscript of the Angers *Résurrection,* it is Fictus who proposes playing "Broche en Cul" (919, ll. 3–6).

87. The scene plays somewhat differently in Servet's B manuscript of the Angers *Résurrection.* A boy working for the shopkeeper wants them to pay for what they have eaten, but the shopkeeper scolds him roundly for asking money of people who have nothing. Instead, the man asks for payment with a song, and the pair obliges (924–25). As in the scene in its other version, the tone of the dialogue between the beggars and their host is respectful and apparently genuinely charitable.

88. An analogous incident symbolizing spiritual filthiness occurs in the English morality play *Mankind,* which is roughly contemporaneous with the Angers *Résurrection.* At the climactic moment of the play when the vice figures have so thoroughly corrupted Mankind that he is ready to hang himself, the vice Nought defecates on his own foot ("Fy, fy, fy! I have fowll arayde my fote. . . . My fote is fowly over-schett"; Bevington, *Medieval Drama,* 933, ll. 784, 786)

89. Emile Mabille, ed., *Choix de Farces, Soties, et Moralités des XVe et XVIe Siècles,* vol. 1 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 103–12, ll. 1–2. Further references to the farce will be made by line number in the body of the text.

90. *La Farce du Goguelu,* 357–67, in *Recueil de Farces Françaises Inédites du Xve Siècle,* ed. Gustave Cohen (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1949), 357, ll. 17–28. Further references to this text will be made by volume and line number in the text.

91. Cohen was unable to translate the word *duquoys,* which the blind man supposedly has a thousand of (367, n., l. 483). The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that the English word descended from the French word *ducat,* the first surviving usage

of which appeared in 1395, so it is a possible translation that fits the context of the word in the play.

92. *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 148. Enders's reading of the play is compromised by the fact that she does not take into account the chambermaid giving piss to her master to drink; she therefore sees the woman as "the real victim of unjustified violence from her socioeconomic superior" (148), though actually none of the three morally questionable characters in this play is blameless.

Chapter 5

1. *Statius: Silvae, Thebaid I–IV,* ed. and trans. J. H. Mozley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 344, 345.

2. In his study of the Oedipus legend in the Middle Ages, Lowell Edmunds has explored some of the medieval variants of the narrative, especially those relating to incest; among the central figures in these versions are Judas Iscariot and St. Gregory. However, self-blinding does not appear in these texts. See "Oedipus in the Middle Ages," *Antike und Abendland* 22 (1976): 140–55.

3. For an analysis of the poem as well as both the Latin text and an English translation, see Thomas Hahn, "The Medieval Oedipus," *Comparative Literature* 32, no. 3 (1980): 225–37.

4. *Le Roman de Thèbes,* vol. 1, ed. Léopold Constans (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1890), 27.

5. *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes,* ed. Axel Erdmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), 43.

6. Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* vol. 1, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 148–49.

7. *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 101.

8. *Ovide moralisé: Poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle,* ed. C. de Boer (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1915), 322.

9. The biblical figure of Samson may seem appropriate for inclusion among those blinded for sexual transgressions, but the narrative does not closely tie his affair with Delilah to his blinding by the Philistines. Rather, the Philistines and Samson are enemies before Delilah is introduced, and she agrees to help the Philistines trap Samson. The blinding and his prison labor of grinding corn are basically political punishment, similar to Norman blinding of their enemies. Medieval commentators apparently understood the disjuncture between blinding and sexuality in the Samson story, because in medieval commentaries he generally represented the folly of suicide rather than sexual sin. In *De casibus virorum illustrium,* for example, Boccaccio closes the narrative of Samson by saying that he "inflicted on

himself an unworthy death" (trans. Louis Brewer Hall [New York: Frederick Ungar, 1965], 41).

10. For the relationship between blindness and castration anxiety, see *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (trans. James Strachey et al.; London: Hogarth Press, 1961), see his discussion of the Sandman in "The Uncanny," 17:232ff; *Totem and Taboo,* 13:130; "The Economic Problem of Masochism," 19:162; etc.

11. Among these is Bib Nat MS Lat 13418, which provides a lengthy commentary on the story of Lot and the destruction of the cities but does not specifically mention the blinding.

12. Quoted in Larry Scanlon, "Unmanned Men and Eunuchs of God: Peter Damian's *Liber Gomorrhianus* and the Sexual Politics of Papal Reform," *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 58–59.

13. *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript,* ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 148. The translation of the first two lines of the excerpt are taken from this edition; the remainder is my own.

14. See chap. 4, n. 61.

15. Trans. John Jay Parry (New York: Norton, 1941), 28.

16. Ibid., 33.

17. Ibid., 31.

18. John Blair, *Saint Frideswide, Patron of Oxford* (Oxford: Perpetua Press, 1988), 27. For the Latin text, see William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum,* ed. N. E. S. A. Hamilton (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1870), 315.

19. Ibid., 32.

20. Ibid., 34–35.

21. Ibid., 35.

22. *Annales Monastici,* vol. 4, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1869), 143

23. Ibid., 142–43.

24. Blair's *Saint Frideswide, Patron of Oxford* reproduces both the Latin and a translation (43).

25. When the knave Robin reports to John that the clerk Nicholas is locked in his bedroom in a trance, John responds, "Help us, Seinte Frydeswyde!" (*Riverside Chaucer,* "The Miller's Tale," 3448).

26. Robert M. Correale, "The Man of Law's Prologue and Tale," in *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales,* vol. 2, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 308–11.

27. The knight lusts after Custance because of the temptation of the devil ("temptacioun del diable . . .") , and he commits the murder because he is "caught in the devil's grip" ("tut . . . [pris] en la main al diable"); ibid., 309.

28. "Puis le roi, pur le grant amour q'il avoit a la pucele, et pur lez miracles par Dieux moustrez, le roi Alla lui fist baptizer"; ibid., 311.

29. Ibid., 335–36, ll. 874–85.

30. *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). Further references to this text will be made by line number in the body of the chapter.

31. Paul A. Olson, "The Merchant's Lombard Knight," *Texas Studies in Literature and Languages* 3 (1961), 260.

32. Jan Materné, "Bankieren voor behoeftigen? De maatschappelijke rol van joden en Lombarden in laat-middeleeuws Europa," *Spiegel Historiael* 29 (1994), 346. I would like to thank Mrs. Tina Oerlemans for translating this article.

33. Ibid., 346.

34. Olson, "The Merchant's Lombard Knight," 261.

35. *The Riverside Chaucer,* 320.

36. In *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde,* ed. Peter G. Beidler (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 91–103.

37. In a more recent article, James M. Palmer, who was apparently unaware of Everest's work, discusses January's blindness in specific relation to Benvenutus Grassus's medical treatise *De probatissima arte oculorum;* Palmer echoes Everest's assertion that sex complicated by January's age leads to his visual impairment, but he adds that Grassus also believed blindness could be caused by overeating and excessive drinking, sins of which January is also guilty. See "Your Malady Is No 'Sodeyn Hap': Ophthalmology, Benvenutus Grassus, and January's Blindness," *Chaucer Review* 41, no. 2 (2006), 197–205.

38. Guillaume de Saint Pathus, *Les Miracles de Saint Louis,* ed. Percival B. Fay (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1932), 180–81.

39. Mosche Barasch, *Blindness: The History of a Mental Image in Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 104. For a discussion of the motif in painting that begins with medieval examples but focuses largely on Renaissance ones, see Kahren Jones Hellerstedt, "The Blind Man and His Guide in Netherlandish Painting," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 13 (1983): 163–81.

40. Vol. 1, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 61.

41. Ibid., 61–62.

42. "Sir Launfal," 201–62 in *The Middle English Breton Lays,* ed. Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001). References to the poem will be made by line number in the text.

43. See, for example, ll. 848, 883, 891, 926, 929, 945, 954; these instances of verbs of looking and seeing all occur before the final judgment of Tryamour's surpassing beauty.

44. *Robert Henryson: The Poems,* ed. Denton Fox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 115.

45. Numerous Web sites list the symptoms of leprosy; for a reliable one that

mentions the possibility of blindness, see http://www.merck.com/mrkshared/mmanual_home/sec17/182.jsp

46. For Criseyde's loving gaze upon Troilus, see *Troilus and Criseyde,* book II, 610–65 (*The Riverside Chaucer,* 497–98).

Chapter 6

1. Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., "The Concept of *Christus Medicus* in St. Augustine," *Traditio* 10 (1954): 2, 7.

2. Serm. 87.11.14 (PL 38.5380, quoted in Arbesmann, 17.

3. Raymond St-Jacques, "Langland's *Christus medicus* image and the Structure of *Piers Plowman,*" *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 5 (1991): 125.

4. William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The B Version,* ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: Athlone Press, 1975), 16:109–10.

5. Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Vita et Miraculi S. Godrici, Heremitae de Finchale* (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1847), 397.

6. See André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages,* trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 155–56.

7. Although miraculous chastisement by blinding was rare in Anglo-Saxon texts, it was deployed occasionally. See, for example, the martyrdom of St. Alban in Bede's *History of the English Church and People* (trans. Leo Sherley-Price; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), where, "as the martyr's head fell, the executioner's eyes dropped out on the ground" (I.7; p. 47). This miracle appears in later vernacular versions of the saint's life, including the thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman *La Vie de Seint Auban,* ed. A. R. Harden (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 25, and John Lydgate's *Saint Albon and Saint Amphibalus,* ed. George F. Reinecke (New York: Garland, 1985), 122. Reinecke's edition of Lydgate's hagiographic poem provides a comprehensive history of the St. Alban legend (xviii–xxiv). I am grateful to Christopher Baswell for the reference to Bede.

8. *The Book of Sainte Foy,* trans. and ed. Pamela Sheingorn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). 46.

9. Ibid., 48.

10. Ibid., 50.

11. Ibid., 50.

12. Ibid., 54.

13. Ibid., 55.

14. Ibid., 113–14.

15. In the four books of miracles of St. Foy, nearly one-sixth—sixteen of ninety-seven—are miracles of chastisement.

16. Ibid., 162–63. Miracle 3.10 presents another incident in which Robert, an enemy of St. Foy's monks, is blinded for attacking them. He is cured after his men keep candlelight vigils by him for a week (158–59).

A miracle of chastisement structured very similarly to Renfroi's appears in the section of the multiauthored miracles of St. Benoît that was written by André, one of the monks of Fleury, in the mid–eleventh century. André tells of a certain nobleman Gaufridus who enters into a dispute with the monks of Fleury over ownership of a wooded area that they rightfully own; when Gaufridus declares the land his, he is struck blind by a very dense mist over his eyes ("densissima . . . caligine"), and his right eye is gouged out by a tree branch as he leaves the area. Although his men learn a lesson from his mistakes, the text does not indicate that Gaufridus himself is cured of his blindness (*Les Miracles de St. Benoît,* ed. E. de Certain [Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1858], 204–6).

17. *The Book of Sainte Foy,* 67–68.

18. Ibid., 184.

19. J. Earle and C. Plumner, *Two of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles Parallel* (Oxford: 1892, 1899), 1:287–92.

20. S. J. Ridyard, "*Condigna Veneratio:* Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons," *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 9 (1987): 205–6. Ridyard singles out David Knowles's *The Monastic Order in England* and R. W. Southern's *Saint Anselm and His Biographer* for criticism.

21. Ibid., 205.

22. Rosalind C. Love, ed. and trans., *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miraculi S. Kenelmi, and Vita S. Rumwoldi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), xci.

23. Ibid., 63–64.

24. Ibid., 73.

25. Ibid., 77.

26. Ibid., 79.

27. Ibid., 85.

28. Geoffrey of Burton, *Life and Miracles of St. Modwenna,* ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), xi–xviii.

While Modwenna is alive, a curious incident occurs in which it is possible that she miraculously blinds a nun in her convent, though the narrative is clouded by ambiguities. Brigna, who spends her nights in wakeful prayer, is led one night by "divinely sustained daring" ("diuine confidentie") to look into Modwenna's apartment, where she sees two angels who have been talking to the saint, "like the most beautiful swans leaving the apartment by the roof and flying to the highest heaven with great brightness." After spending the rest of the night in fearful contemplation of her unworthiness to see such a vision, Brigna tells Modwenna of her misbehavior. The saint, speaking "most graciously," prophesies the young woman's future, which will include founding a monastery and converting many people. Modwenna also says that because Brigna has seen the secrets of God when gazing on the angels, she will "remain (*manebis*) deprived of the light of the eyes of the flesh" but will see with spiritual eyes (132–37). The incongruous use of the verb *maneo* ("to remain, to

stay") paired with the description of Modwenna's gracious speech as prophetic rather than punitive suggest the possibility that Brigna was blinded by the angelic vision itself, which she had no right to see. Furthermore, the text does not mention that Brigna goes blind because of Modwenna's words, though generally such miraculous moments are very precisely described (see, for example, Modwenna's instantaneous transformation of a beautiful young nun into a "grave and venerable old woman" in order to avoid the attentions of young men; 30–33). So in recounting the miracle of Brigna's blinding Geoffrey may have used sources that were themselves unclear, or he simply forgot or failed to mention that Brigna's espionage blinded her.

29. Ibid., 191–93.

30. Ibid., 204–6.

31. Marcus Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and Translation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), 146–47.

32. Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Vita et Miraculi S. Godrici, Heremitae de Finchale,* 477–78.

33. Ibid., 479, 480–81.

34. Eadmer of Canterbury, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald,* ed. and trans. Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (Oxford: Clarendon: 2006), lxix.

35. Ibid., 207.

36. Jean Gobi l'Ancien, *Miracles de Sainte Marie-Madeleine,* ed. and trans. Jacqueline Sclafer (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1996), miracle 25, 92–93.

37. Ibid., miracle 17, 82–83.

38. Broken vows ("irrita voti") also cause the relapse into blindness of a girl cured in the miracles of St. Benedict; see *Les Miracles de St. Benoît,* ed. E. de Certain (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1858), 212.

39. "The Digby *Conversion of St. Paul,*" 164–85, in *Early English Drama,* ed. John C. Coldewey (New York: Garland, 1993), ll. 190–95.

40. MED, *pité,* definitions 1 and 3.

41. Off all vyces and foly, pryde ys the roote;
Humylyte may not rayn ner yet indure.
Pyte, alak, that ys flower and boot,
Ys exylyd wher pryde hath socour. (516–19)

42. "The Digby *Conversion of St. Paul,*" 171.

43. Ibid., 173, ll. 252–53.

44. Graham A. Runnals, ed., *Le Cycle de Mystères des Premiers Martyrs* (Geneva: Droz, 1976), 88.

45. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* vol. 1, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 61–62. Two other posthumous miracles of Saint Thomas are similarly lighthearted: one centers on an evaporating pitcher of water and the other on a talking bird.

46. Jacques de Voragine, *La Légende Dorée: Edition Critique de la revision de 1476 par Jean Battalier, d'apres la traduction de Jean de Vignay (1333–1348) de La Legenda Aurea,* ed. Brenda Dunn-Lardeau (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997), 179; *The Gilte Legende,* vol. 1, ed. Richard Hamer and Vida Russell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 64.

47. Pseudo-Odon, *De Reversione beati Martini a Burgundia Tractatus,* quoted in Gustave Cohen, "Le Thème de l'Aveugle et du Paralytique dans la Littérature Française," no editor, *Mélanges Offerts à M. Émile Picot,* vol. 2 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969), 396–97.

48. In Jacques de Vitry's early thirteenth-century exemplum, the men are made healthy against their will ("sanati sunt contra voluntatem suam"), and Jacobus uses only slightly more elaborate language ("ambo contra eorum voluntatem continuo sunt curati"). Quoted in Cohen, "Le Thème de l'Aveugle et du Paralytique dans la Littérature Française," 401.

49. *Speculum Sacerdotale,* ed. Edward H. Weatherly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 238.

50. *Altenglische Legenden,* ed. Carl Horstmann (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1881), 155.

51. *Mirk's Festial: A Collection of Homilies,* Part 1, ed. Theodor Erbe (Millwood, N.J.: Krause Reprints, 1987), 274.

52. *The Book of Sainte Foy,* 54.

53. Ibid., 202.

54. Bernard rarely used verse in books 1 and 2, but the writer of book 4 has recourse to it more frequently. Even so, the alternating verse-prose-verse form of the miracle of the blind widow remains unique even in book 4.

55. Ibid., 203.

56. Ibid., 151–52.

57. Ibid., 99.

58. Love, *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives,* 79.

59. Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and Translation,* 116–17.

60. Eadmer of Canterbury, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald,* 169.

61. Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich,* ed. A. Jessopp and M. R. James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 208.

62. Jean Miélot, *Vie et Miracles de Saint Josse de Jean Miélot,* ed. Nils-Olof Jönson (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 84.

63. On the menstruating Jew, see Steven F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 82–83.

64. Two of the three cures of blindness in *Les Miracles de Saint Louis* by Guillaume de Saint-Pathus involve blameless people who both bleed and experience pain: Thomas de Voudai, who went blind when he was twelve (27–30), and Agnés de Pontoise, who went blind around age fifteen (179–84).

65. Tobias 11:14.

66. Acts 9:18.

67. *Les Miracles de St. Benoît,* ed. E. de Certain (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1858), 325. This miracle appears in book VIII, written by Raoul Tortaire shortly after 1117, when he gave up writing secular poetry (xxii).

68. Thomas of Monmouth, *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich,* 208.

69. Gerald of Wales, *The Life of St. Hugh of Avalon,* ed. and trans. Richard M. Loomis (New York: Garland, 1985), 53, 55.

70. Eadmer of Canterbury, *Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald,* 165–67.

71. All information about Thomas of Elderfield comes from the online *Medieval Sourcebook.* Translations of the plea roll and the so-called Worcester Story of the miraculous cure are by Paul Hyams.

72. Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe,* 175–76.

73. N. S. Thompson, "*The Merchant's Tale,*" 479–534, in *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales,* vol. 2, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2005), 484.

74. "*Il Novellino*" in Thomson, "*The Merchant's Tale,*" 518, 519.

75. Chaucer, "The Merchant's Tale," ll. 2057–61.

76. Chaucer, "The Man of Law's Tale," 447–48.

77. Chaucer, "The Merchant's Tale," ll. 1818, 1722–28.

78. "*Il Novellino*" in Thomson, "*The Merchant's Tale,*" 518–21.

79. "*Il Novellino*" in Thomson, "*The Merchant's Tale,*" 520.

80. Quoted in Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe,* 56. Metzler traces the genealogy of this idea through later patristic writers as well.

Chapter 7

1. Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe,* 140–41.

2. Michael R. McVaugh, *Medicine Before the Plague: Practitioners and Their Patients in the Crown of Aragon, 1285–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3. Although Aragon is beyond the scope of this study, McVaugh's generalizations about trends in medicine in medieval Europe are applicable to France and, perhaps to a lesser extent, England.

3. David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 11.

4. Ibid., 16.

5. Ibid., 64.

6. Ibid., 74.

7. Ibid., 67, 69.

8. Ibid., 99.

9. Ibid., 251, n. 1.

10. Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 74.

11. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler,* 113.

12. Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages,* 77.

13. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler,* 112.

14. Ibid., 118.

15. David C. Lindberg, *John Pecham and the Science of Optics: Perspectiva communis, Edited with an Introduction, English Translation, and Critical Notes* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 29.

16. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler,* 122.

17. See Lindberg, ibid., for diagrams of the eye that appeared in Arabic and Latin manuscripts of Alhazen (fig. 7, p. 68; fig. 8, p. 70; fig. 9, p. 72); for a diagram of the eye in Roger Bacon's *Opus majus,* see Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages,* fig 3.1, p. 80.

18. David C. Lindberg, *Roger Bacon and the Origins of Perspectiva in the Middle Ages: A Critical Edition and English Translation of Bacon's Perspectiva with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), bk. 2, chap. 3, 171.

19. Fuller discussions of developments in medieval optics are available in Lindberg's *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (58–146), to which I am deeply indebted in this chapter, and in his chapter entitled "The Science of Optics," in *Science in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 338–68. An equally helpful summary of medieval optics and the field's connections to religious discourse and experience is offered in Susanna Biernoff's *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages,* 63–107. For discussions of medieval theories of vision in relation to the work of Chaucer, see V. A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), and Norman Klassen, *Chaucer on Love, Knowledge, and Sight* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 39–74.

20. Quoted in G. Henslow, *Medical Works of the Fourteenth Century* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), 94.

21. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend,* 1:86.

22. Peter Murray Jones, "Harley MS 2558: A Fifteenth-Century Medical Commonplace Book," 35–54, in Margaret R. Schleissner, ed., *Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine* (New York: Garland, 1995), 47.

23. *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum,* vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 632. More clearly indebted to the book of Tobias is the topical use of medicines containing animal gall, which the angel Raphael efficaciously prescribes in order to cure the blindness of the elder Tobias; see McVaugh, "Cataracts and Hernias: Aspects of Surgical Practice in the Fourteenth Century," *Medical History* 2001 (45): 331.

24. McVaugh, "Cataracts and Hernias," 325–26.

25. Julius Hirschberg, *The History of Ophthalmology,* vol 2: *The Middle Ages, The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Bonn: J. P. Wayenborgh, 1985), 250.

26. All of the medieval surgeons quoted in this chapter delineate the anatomy of the eye in terms of the number of its tunics or layers, but surgeons evidently made no use of this information. McVaugh says of medieval writers of surgical treatises, "Their accounts of the eye's structure say nothing about its pathology, and their accounts of cataract are not related to their anatomical descriptions" ("Cataracts and Hernias," 334).

27. L. M. Eldredge, "A Thirteenth-Century Ophthalmologist, Benvenutus Grassus: His Treatise and Its Survival," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 91 (1998): 48.

28. Ibid., 49.

29. Thomas F. Glick, Steven John Livesey, and Faith Wallis, eds., *Medieval Science, Technology, and Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 2005), "Lanfranco of Milan," 305–6.

30. *Lanfrank's "Science of Cirurgie,"* ed. Robert von Fleischhacker (New York: Kraus Reprint, 1975), 251.

31. Missing from this catalogue of important authors of surgical treatises is Henri de Mondeville, who may have been a student of Lanfranco and who later became surgeon to Philippe le Bel of France. De Mondeville's *Chirurgie,* written within the first fifteen years of the fourteenth century, would have described cataract surgery in its final book, but he died before completing it. See *La chirurgie de maître Henri de Mondeville,* vol. 1, trans. Alphonse Bos (Paris: Frimin Didot, 1897–98), iv–x.

32. *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* ed. Margaret S. Ogden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), v–vi.

33. Michael R. McVaugh, Introduction, Guigonis de Caulhiaco (Guy de Chauliac): *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 1:xi–xii.

34. *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 338; *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 459.

35. *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 338; *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 459–60.

36. *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 339; *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 460.

37. *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 343; *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 466.

38. *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 467.

39. *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 343–44.

40. *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 468; cf. *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 344.

41. *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 469.

42. Quoted in Michael McVaugh, *The Rational Surgery of the Middle Ages* (Florence: Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2006), 154. McVaugh also quotes from the writings of other surgeons such as Saliceto (164–65) and Arnau de Vilanova (165), who express similar skepticism about attempting such a dangerous operation.

43. Raymond Cazelles, *Jean L'Aveugle, Comte de Luxembourg, Roi de Bohème* (Bourges: Tardy, 1947), 243. For some of the historical references to Jean L'Aveugle,

I am indebted to to Julie Singer, "Lines of Sight: Love Lyric, Science, and Authority in Late Medieval and Early Modern French and Italian Culture" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2006), 120–42.

44. McVaugh, "Cataracts and Hernias," *Medical History* 2001 (45): 339.

45. Ibid., 339, n. 64, quoted from *Kronika Beneše z Weitmile* in *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum,* ed. J. Emler (Prague: Nakl. N. F. Palackého, 1884), 4:488.

46. Cazelles, *Jean l'Aveugle,* 257–58.

47. Michel Margue, ed., *Un itinéraire européen: Jean l'Aveugle, comte de Luxembourg et roi de Bohême, 1296–1346* (Brussels: Crédit Communal, 1996), 157–59.

48. *La Prise d'Alexandrie; ou, Chronique du roi Pierre Ier de Lusignan,* ed. M. L. de Mas Latrie (Geneva: J.-G. Flick, 1877), 24–25, ll. 779–92.

49. Margue, ed., *Un itinéraire européen,* 158.

50. Ibid., 160.

51. *Le jugement du roy de Behaigne and Remede de Fortune,* ed. and trans. James I. Wimsatt and William W. Kibler (Chaucer Library; Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 124–27, ll. 1292–1348; 132–35, ll. 1468–93.

52. *Le confort d'ami (Comfort for a Friend),* ed. and trans. R. Barton Palmer (New York: Garland, 1992), 152–53, ll. 2940–49.

53. Ibid., xiv; ll. 3083–86.

54. Ibid., xiv.

55. Armand Machabey, *Guillaume de Machaut, 1300?–1377* (Paris: Richard-Masse, 1955), 34.

56. Jean le Bel, *Chronique de Jean le Bel,* ed. Jules Viard et Eugène Déprez (Paris: Renouard, 1904), 108.

57. Jean Froissart, *Chroniques: Le Manuscrit d'Amiens,* ed. George T. Diller (Geneva: Droz, 1992), 3:19.

58. Ibid., 27.

59. For the most popular version of the Chronicles, see *Chroniques de J. Froissart,* ed. Siméon Luce (Paris: Renouard, 1872), 3:178–79. For a different version that exists in only one manuscript, see *Chroniques: Début du livre 1. Éd. du manuscrit de Rome Reg. lat. 869,* ed. George T. Diller (Geneva: Droz, 1972), 730.

60. Jean de Venette, *Chronique Latine de Guillaume de Nangis de 1113 à 1300, avec les Continuations de cette Chronique de 1300 à 1368,* ed. H. Géraud (Paris: Renouard, 1843), 1:xix–xxiii.

61. Ibid., 2:200–201.

62. Ibid., 203.

63. Kervyn de Lettenhove, ed., *Istore et Chroniques de Flandres,* vol. 2 (Brussels: Hayez, 1880), 44.

64. Froissart, *La Prison Amoureuse (The Prison of Love),* ed. and trans. Laurence de Looze (New York: Garland, 1994), 6–7, ll. 82–90.

65. The separation of Jean's blindness from his generosity saves the representations of the king from challenging the stereotype of the avaricious blind man that

we have seen in numerous French texts, though this is surely a historical accident rather than an intentional decision on the part of these writers.

66. Margue, ed., *Un itinéraire européen,* 173.

67. Jean des Preis dit D'Outremeuse, *Ly Myreur des Histors,* vol. 6, ed. Stanislas Bormans (Brussels: Hayez, 1880), 613.

68. Margue, ed., *Un itinéraire européen,* 174.

69. Although Gilles' nineteenth-century editors and some more recent scholars generally spell his name "li Muisis," the spelling "le Muisit" appears more frequently in contemporary documents, including his poetry manuscripts; see G. Caullet, "Les manuscrits de Gilles le Muisit et l'art de la miniature au XIVe siècle. Le relieur tournaisien Janvier," *Bulletin de Cercle historique et archéologique de Courtrai* 5 (1907–8): 200–225. This is also the spelling used in the Library of Congress catalogue.

70. Gilles le Muisit, *Chronique et Annales de Gilles le Muisit,* ed. Henri Lemaître (Paris: Renouard, 1906), 161, 164.

71. For a discussion of le Muisit's skills as a chronicler, see Albert d'Haenens, "Gilles li Muisis Historien," *Revue Bénédictine* 69 (1959), especially 266–67. If, as Bernard Guenée asserts, Gilles admired Jean so intensely that he wanted to be a "Benedictine avatar" of the king, the absence of Jean's blindness from the chronicle becomes even more curious (*Between Church and State: The Lives of Four French Prelates in the Late Middle Ages,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 77). Guenée's chapter on Gilles currently provides the best overview of his life.

72. *Chronique et Annales de Gilles le Muisit,* xxii.

73. Albert D'Haenens, "Li Muisis, Gilles (1272–1353)," *VOIR barré* 20 (May 2000): 10.

74. *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* vol. 1, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove (Louvain: J. LeFever, 1882), 1.

75. Ibid., 13.

76. The rambling, segmented nature of *Lamentationes,* which reaches 67 pages in the nineteenth-century edition, suggests either that Gilles created it intermittently over a considerable period of time, or that the monks who served as his literary executors, so to speak, collated disparate shorter works under a single title.

77. *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* 1:14, 65.

78. Ibid., 15.

79. Ibid., 65.

80. *Chronique et Annales de Gilles le Muisit,* 306–7.

81. Gilles reiterates his friends' doubts about the cataract operation in *Li Cure Gillion le Muysit,* which is largely a description of how to achieve a pure spiritual state that will bring about God's gift of good health. There he writes of his friends' reaction, "Moult de gens à che temps le tienrent à folage / Qu'il ot de chou souffrir et dou faire corage" (*Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* 2:257) [Many people at that time thought it folly that he would suffer that and have the spirit].

82. D'Haenens, "Li Muisis, Gilles (1272–1353)," 11.

83. The illumination is reproduced in Nicole Chareyon's article "Chirurgien et patient au Moyen Âge: l'opération de la cataracte de Gilles le Muisit en 1351," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 74, no. 2 (1996): 296.

84. *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* 2:230.

85. Ibid., 2:232.

86. Ibid., 2:234.

87. Historian Albert d'Haenens also reads this line as a reference to the mass. See "Li Muisis, Gilles (1272–1353)," *VOIR barré* 20 (May 2000), 12, n. 28.

88. *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* 2:234.

89. Ibid., 2:234.

90. See the discussions of *Le Garçon et L'Aveugle, Le Mystère de la Résurrection,* and *La Farce de Goguelu* in chapter 4.

91. *Poésies de Gilles li Muisis,* 2:235.

92. "Dou boin vin le milleur moult liement tantoit"; "Se donnoit de tel vin qu'il avoit cler sans lie" (ibid., 259).

93. "Boins vins, boine viande, compagnies apaise" (ibid., 262).

94. Ibid., 262.

95. Ibid., 2:264.

96. Ibid., 265. Gilles gives a more honest, detail appraisal of his limited vision in the *Annales:* "Visum recuperavi et vidi, non sicut in etate juvenili, sed sicut etas mea requirebat, quia jam eram octogenarius, et videbam celum, solem, lunam, stellas, non perfecte cognoscens gentes, et in omnibus michi bene providebam, excepto quod scribere aut legere non valebam" (307) [I recovered my sight and I saw not as in my young age but as my age demanded, because I was already an octogenarian, and I saw the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, though not perfectly recognizing people, and I saw everything at a distance from me very well, but I was not able to write or read].

97. "Neuerþelatter Rasis saith in speciall þat scharpe þinges forsoþe, as oynouns and garlik, mustarde and eruca (i. white piper) and lekes leden noyenge to the hede, and þay make þe eyȝen derke for a smeky hete þat þai haue, as Avenzoar saith. Abstynence forsothe helpeþ soche men, and namely at nyȝte, and sobrenesse in drynke and vse of fenel" (*The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* 464). For the Latin original, which is identical in its advice, see *Inventarium sive Chirurgia Magna,* 342.

Although Gilles does not mention onions in the two stanzas quoted here, in the previous fully quoted stanza he places them among the noxious foods that he ate unguardedly before being struck by cataracts.

98. Michael J. Bennett, "John Audelay: Life Records and Heaven's Ladder," in *My Wyl and My Wrytyng: Essays on John the Blind Audelay,* ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), 31. This essay is an augmented version of Bennett's first discussion of Audelay's life-record in "John Audley [*sic*]: Some New Evidence on His Life and Work," *Chaucer Review* 16 (1982): 344–55.

99. Bennett, "John Audelay: Life Records and Heaven's Ladder," 33–37. My description radically condenses Bennett's fascinating account of the ambush and its aftermath.

100. Ibid., 39.

101. Albert D'Haenens quotes several passages in which Gilles gives this reason for writing. See "Li Muisis, Gilles," 13–14.

102. Bennett, "John Audelay: Life Records and Heaven's Ladder," 35.

103. James Simpson, "Saving Satire after Arundel's *Constitutions:* John Audelay's 'Marcol and Solomon,'" 387–404, in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Ann Hudson,* ed. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005).

104. Susanna Fein, "Death and the Colophon in the Audelay Manuscript," in *My Wyl and My Wrytyng: Essays on John the Blind Audelay,* ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), 7–8.

105. *The Poems of John Audelay,* ed. Ella Keats Whiting (London: Oxford University Press, Early English Text Society, 1931), 55.40–43. In Audelay scholarship, references to Audelay's poetry are generally made by poem number in Whiting's edition, followed by line numbers. I have employed that form.

106. The locations of the instances of self-naming are listed in *The Poems of John Audelay,* xv, n. 5.

107. Ibid., 23.202.

108. Ibid., 15.27–32, 36.

109. Ibid., 12.64–66.

110. Ibid., 19.500–507. See also ll. 383–90 (where Christ rather than God chastises the poet; this is the penultimate stanza in the section), 15.201–8, and 16.358–65. In the passages analogous to the eight lines quoted here, Audelay changes the fourth through seventh lines to reflect the subject matter of the section that the stanza concludes, but the divine chastisement, self-naming, and the mention of blindness are identically positioned in all four examples.

111. James Simpson has discussed the paucity of scriptural translations in Audelay's works, ostensibly in response to Archbishop Arundel's anti-Lollard *Constitutions* of 1409, but in this instance, Audelay is not simply avoiding direct translation. He could have found a way to mention God's love—in English—if he had believed it integral to the chastisement, or he could have quoted the Bible verse in Latin, as he does in section headings in "The Counsel of Conscience." See "Saving Satire after Arundel's *Constitutions:* John Audelay's 'Marcol and Solomon,'" 388, 396.

Audelay fully translates Apocalypse 3:19 in the third person elsewhere in *The Counsel of Conscience* ("Fore wom He louys He chastest wele"; 11.111); however, he puts the words in the voice of St. Anselm, and he does not mention his own blindness.

112. Ibid., 4.91–96.

113. Ibid., 2.952–53.

114. Ibid., 42.993.

115. Ibid., 18.378–81.

116. Ibid., 18.127–30.

117. Tim William Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 103–4. Qtd in Eric G. Stanley, "*The True Counsel of Conscience,* or *The Ladder of Heaven:* In Defence of John Audelay's Lyrics," in *Expedition nach der Wahrheit: Poems and Papers in Honor of Theo Stemmler,* ed. Stefan Horlacher and Marion Islinger (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996), 137.

118. *The Poems of John Audelay,* 67.51–52.

119. Stanley, "*The True Counsel of Conscience,*" 137.

120. Jeremy J. Citrome, *The Surgeon in Medieval English* Literature (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 91. In his "Salutations to the Virgin Mary," Audelay shows a knowledge of the medical advances made in optics when he praises her as "berel þe blynd to ly3t" ("beryl to light the blind"; 20.59). In the Middle Ages spectacles were made of either glass or the semiprecious stone beryl, and among other writers to recommend these materials was Guy de Chauliac. See Edward J. Rosen, "The Invention of Eyeglasses, Part II," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 11 (1956): 203.

121. Robert J. Meyer-Lee, "The Vatic Penitent: John Audelay's Self-Representation," in *My Wyl and My Wrytyng: Essays on John the Blind Audelay,* ed. Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Insitute Publications, 2009), 76.

122. See, for example, Chaucer's *House of Fame,* l.1466, where Homer is named but not described as blind; *The Riverside Chaucer,* 365.

123. Stanley, "*The True Counsel of Conscience,*" 140.

Afterword

1. In *Vivre sans Voir: Les Aveugles dans la Société Française du Moyen Age au Siècle de Louis Braille,* Zina Weygand sketches the history of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts within a larger framework which it serves as an indicator of slowly changing attitudes toward blind people. The evolution of royal patronage features prominently in the centuries before the Revolution. At the time of this writing, Weygand's book has recently been translated into English under the title *The Blind in French Society from the Middle Ages to the Century of Louis Braille* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

2. One example will have to suffice here: Valentin Haüy opened the first school for blind children in Paris in 1785 (Weygand, *Vivre sans Voir,* 120–21), and Edward Rushton opened the Royal School for the Blind in Liverpool in 1791 (Ishbel Ross, *Journey Into the Light: The Story of the Education of the Blind* [New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1950], 138).

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