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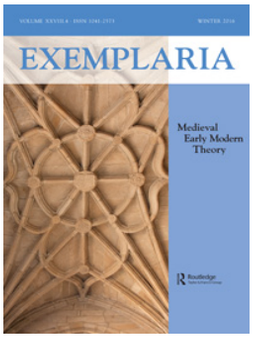

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Chaucer's Pardoner and the Jews

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The role of the Jews in Chaucer's *Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale* extends well beyond the few direct mentions of them. A focus on representations of Jews, both explicit and implicit, in *The Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale* reveals new connections between the Pardoner's sinfulness, his sexuality, and his relics. The essay begins with analysis of the tale's allusion to the figure of the Wandering Jew through the figure of the Old Man. I argue for the Wandering Jew as a type of relic and for the encounter between the rioters and the Old Man as an exploration of what Caroline Bynum calls the "dynamic of seen and unseen" that animates medieval Christian materiality. The essay extends this examination of the relationship between anti-Judaism and Christian materiality to the Pardoner's own "relics," the prevalent oaths in *The Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale*, Chaucer's depiction of the Pardoner's body, and, finally, to the bitter concluding exchange between the Host and the Pardoner. Through this analysis, I show how anti-Judaism both permeates and shapes Chaucer depiction of the Pardoner and the Pardoner's tale.

KEYWORDS Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale*, anti-Judaism, relics, Wandering Jew, Christian materiality.

Over the past twenty-five years medievalists have theorized the figure of the Jew in a wide range of ways. Gilbert Dahan presented the concept of the "theological Jew" in 1990; Jeremy Cohen's "hermeneutical Jew" followed soon thereafter.[1] Kathleen Biddick's "paper Jew" has added further nuance, as have Elisa Narin van Court's "divided Jew," Denise Despres's "protean Jew," Sylvia Tomasch's "virtual Jew," Steven Kruger's "spectral Jew," and most recently Kathy Lavezzo's "accommodated Jew."[2] Each of these formulations captures a different aspect of a multivalent and shifting representation, but the range of theorizations is striking in itself. How can we account for it? Heather Blurton and

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Hannah Johnson have recently suggested that this "proliferation" is "in part an attempt to pin down a meaning that keeps slipping away" (48). I would add that the profusion of theoretical types of "the Jew" also reflects just how much medieval Christians found Jews "good to think with."[3] Indeed, as I completed *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare*, it seemed to me that "the Jew" was something medieval Christians were almost incapable of thinking without.

The way that medieval Christians used the Jew "to think with" shaped even such foundational considerations as representations of temporality. Rather than generating something new to explore the way that the Jew functions in Christian temporalities, I want to turn instead to something very old: the legend of the Wandering Jew. The Wandering Jew was said to have insulted Christ on the way to Calvary and was then doomed by Christ to walk the earth until the Second Coming. The figure's English name and his French one, *le Juif errant*, emphasize his movement through space. In German, though, he is often called *der ewige Jude*, the "eternal Jew," a name that stresses his story's temporal dimensions. The Wandering Jew legend, I want to suggest, can yield important new perspectives on the temporality of "the Jew." In this essay, I will first explore the Wandering Jew legend in relation to the complex temporality of relics and then present a new reading of Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* that is informed by an understanding of the Wandering Jew himself *as* relic.

For over a century now, the Wandering Jew has been part of Chaucerians' quest to identify the mysterious Old Man in *The Pardoner's Tale*. We will begin by accepting the assertion of the preeminent scholar of the Wandering Jew legend, George Anderson: Chaucer's mysterious Old Man would be recognizable to a fourteenth-century English audience as an allusion to the Wandering Jew legend.[4] This allusion links, I will show, to the other explicit and implicit references to Jews in the Pardoner's *Introduction*, *Prologue*, and *Tale*, forming a constellation of meaning in which the Jew represents both spiritual blindness and a sinfulness tied to a debased corporeality, enhancing Chaucer's portrayal of these qualities in the Pardoner.

My approach to charting this constellation is still deeply informed by my same conviction that "the Jew" was something medieval Christians could not think without. To try to explain this pervasive and instrumental presence of the Jew, I concluded *Gender and Jewish Difference* with reference to Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, an examination of the fundamental role of the "Africanist presence" in U.S. literature, and Morrison's work still guides me here. Morrison shows how white American authors have used this Africanist presence to construct a vision of a normatively white American identity. She renders her initial moment of realization of this formative construction through a striking metaphor:

> It is as if I had been looking at a fishbowl — the glide and flick of the golden scales, the green tip, the bolt of white careening back from the gills; the castles at the bottom, surrounded by pebbles and tiny, intricate fronds of green; the barely disturbed water, the flecks of waste and food, the tranquil bubbles traveling to the surface — and suddenly I saw the bowl, the structure that transparently (and invisibly) permits the ordered life it contains to exist in the larger world. (17)

Morrison's metaphor captures how ideologies can operate in ways that are encompassing yet unseen, as well as the way that our understanding of them can be opened by a single insightful glimpse. The medieval figure of the Jew was "protean," to use Despres's term, coming to represent a range of ideas, concerns, and qualities, including spiritual blindness, depravity, materialism, evil, and sinfulness. Scholars' many formulations of the Jew are attempts to reveal the fishbowl, to make visible the invisible workings of ideology. Or, to draw again on Morrison, these theorizations reveal the myriad ways that "the Jew" functioned in the service of medieval Christian "self-definition," as we will see in Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*, in the medieval culture of relics it references, and in the broader development of Christian materiality of which relic devotion was a part.[5]

Playing in the Dark has remained significant for my scholarship, however, not only for its brilliant metaphor of the fishbowl and its insights into how "the Other" can be used to create a vision of the self, but also for Morrison's accompanying methodology of reading. Morrison leads up to her fishbowl image by revealing how, as a reader, she had routinely underestimated the importance of representation of black people in canonical American literature, seeing these instances as "decorative — displays of the agile writer's technical expertise" (16). When, however, she revisited these texts "[a]s a writer reading," she "came to realize the obvious: the subject of the dream is the dreamer" (17). While Morrison's method draws from her own experience as an African-American writer, the questions she asks of texts have, as I have argued before, implications that extend well beyond the context of U.S. literature. Her work encourages us to question the assumptions that shape the texts we analyze, as well as the critical approaches we use to analyze them.

Morrison reminds us of the importance of revisiting textual details that might seem superfluous. Sometimes, however, the significance of such details can be devilishly elusive. I have long wondered why the Pardoner hawks the power of a sheep bone that once belonged to a "hooly" Jew (VI.351)?[6] How does this detail about the bone's provenance relate to other references to Jews and Judaism, including the Pardoner's "glarynge eyes," and his reference to the Jews as Christ-killers (I.684)? Further, how do these details relate to some of the most important critical cruxes in Pardoner's tale scholarship, especially the vexed question of the Pardoner's sexuality? What connections exist between these elements in the text?

One way to begin to find these connections is through the time-honored practice of scavenging other scholars' footnotes. Many of the connections I will examine have long been latent in the large body of criticism on *The Pardoner's Tale*. In his "Claiming The Pardoner," an important call to "writ[e] queers (and women and Jews) back into the Middle Ages," Steven Kruger has already noted "moments" in which the figure of the Jew is tied to "bodily corruption."[7] Glenn Burger has noted parallels between the portrayal of the Pardoner's "absolute" alterity and that of Jews in *The Prioress's Tale* and Muslims in *The Man of Law's Tale* (1153 n.5). One can also discern the trace of the Jew in Carolyn Dinshaw's remark that the "world" of *The Pardoner's Tale* "is an Old Testament one, punitive and unredeemed" (177).

What we need, however, to bring the connections into sharper focus is a kind of turn of the fish bowl, a "material turn."[8] The Pardoner's relics have been studied for as long as has

his Old Man, but these two critical cruxes have not been explicitly considered together in relation to the culture of relic veneration, nor in relation to the role of the Jew in Christian materiality. Examining these elements together reveals that Chaucer is not using Jewish references to "saffron" his text; these seemingly "decorative" elements are essential ingredients in what Alastair Minnis has called the tale's "ethical economy" (*Fallible* 99).[9]

In her influential work on "Christian materiality," Caroline Bynum explores its "complicated dynamic of seen and unseen" alongside how Jews were often seen as "creators (or, in theological terms, revealers) of holy matter" ("Presence" 23, 10). Acknowledging this relationship between Christian materiality and Christian anti-Judaism enables us to re-evaluate the Pardoner's sham relics and the tale's plentiful use of oaths, themselves surprisingly "material," in relation to the tale's references to Jews and even in relation to the Pardoner himself. From the Pardoner's "glarynge eyen" to his sham Jewish relic, Chaucer deploys traditional Christian representations of Jews as spiritually dead to deepen his portrayal of the Pardoner's depravity. Even the Host's vituperative attack on the Pardoner alludes to the Jewish role in Christian materiality through reference to the story of the finding of the True Cross. Anti-Judaism permeates Chaucer's portrayal of the Pardoner, which I read as an exploration of Christian materiality and of the nature of sin, an exploration that is also at the heart of the legend of the Wandering Jew.

The Wandering Jew as relic and the Old Man

The Old Man in *The Pardoner's Tale* has been interpreted variously as a personification of Death, a representation of *vetus homo*, of Old Age, and as the Wandering Jew.[10] None of these interpretations precludes the others and, indeed, I have given up (for now at least) on attempting to solve definitively the mystery of the Old Man's identity. In any case, it seems clear that a fourteenth-century English audience could and would have recognized in the Old Man an allusion to the Wandering Jew legend (Anderson 31–32). This allusion corresponds with the legend's temporal dimensions, as the Old Man also endlessly waits, in this case for death.

Who is the Wandering Jew? According to legend, this Jew taunted Christ at the time of the Passion. Some sources depict the encounter between the Jew and Christ as occurring in Pilate's court. Others describe it as happening on the Via Dolorosa, as Christ paused before the Jew's home and the Jew refused him rest. In each setting, the Jew cruelly tells Jesus to hurry on to his death. Jesus responds that he will go, but that the Jew must remain until he returns. The Jew is then fated to await Christ's return. Converted by his experience, he will tell anyone who asks the story of the Passion. While the Wandering Jew clearly signifies the Jewish people, seen by medieval Christians as doomed to wander because of their rejection of Christ, the Wandering Jew is also, I want to argue, a type of relic. The legend depicts him as a living, breathing remnant from the time of Christ, a material witness who can give eyewitness testimony about the Passion.[11] Transformed through his encounter with Christ, he becomes, according to the most important medieval written account of the legend, Matthew of Paris's thirteenth-century *Chronica Majora*, "one of the wonders of the world and a great proof of the Christian faith."[12]

FIGURE 1 Image of the Wandering Jew, created by Matthew Paris in the *Chronica Majora* Part II, from MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 16, fol. 74^{v}. Reprinted with permission from the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Studies of the Wandering Jew legend tend to treat Matthew Paris's *Chronica* account as a brief, albeit influential, marker on a very long road. Critics working on the legend's entire transmission history cannot afford to spend much time charting the lay of the land. If one does pause, however, to survey the rest of Matthew's *Chronica*, one finds that landscape veritably littered with relics. The Wandering Jew becomes one relic among many, another commodity from the East, brought through the storytelling of visiting Armenian bishops. Like the most important contact relics, the Wandering Jew has actually had physical contact with Christ.[13] As with the True Cross, or with the Crown of Thorns, the Wandering Jew was an instrument of suffering, but through his conversion he has become a Christian sign. In Matthew's second entry on the Wandering Jew, for 1252, he notes that the visiting Armenian bishops come from the site of yet another significant relic, Noah's ark, also a material sign of divine punishment and divine grace (5.340–41).

The Wandering Jew's connection to relics is emphasized not only through the details of his story, but also through Matthew's accompanying illustration of the Wanderer, believed to be drawn with his own hand (see Figure 1). In it the Wandering Jew, named Cartaphilus, encounters Christ on the Via Dolorosa, not in Pilate's court as described in the body of the text. An agile, almost balletic Christ turns backwards to face a hunched, older man with banners providing their dialogue.[14] Suzanne Lewis notes how Matthew's "emendations tend to interpret the encounter between Christ and Cartaphilus as the ineluctable unfolding of a predetermined sequence of events … infusing the legend with the gravity and ongoing efficacy of a scriptural text" (303). I would add that this temporal dynamic also reflects the sense of prophetic momentum that underlies belief in Christian supersession, a triumph over Judaism that leaves Judaism held in abeyance, awaiting redemption and release.

In the body of Matthew's text, and that of his source, Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum*, Cartaphilus is not specified as Jewish. Lewis and others have pointed to Matthew's accompanying illustration to make this association, not only through the Wanderer's bulbous nose, sometimes a feature of Jewish caricature, but also through his mattock, long associated with Cain and through Cain with the Jews.[15] The angle of the Wanderer's tool, with the heavy metal end dipping toward the ground, makes this figure look less energetic than Christ; he is older and fading. The implement's drooping slant creates a visual echo of the fallen or broken lance of allegorical representations of the Synagogue as well as a contrast to the cross, which is carried upright, even jauntily by Christ. The mattock represents the sin that Cartaphilus must eternally drag about with him; the cross appears to be practically borne aloft.

By drawing the Wanderer as older and lagging, Matthew not only visually reinforces the temporal dynamic of the pair's dialogue, but also taps into traditional representations of Jews and Judaism as old, tired, and defeated, their spiritual truth both fulfilled and superseded by Christianity and Christians. Cartaphilus' garb, however, adds a paradoxical twist to this depiction. Lewis describes the Wanderer's attire as that of a peasant (303), but his broad-brimmed hat recalls those associated with pilgrims. His mattock thus also seems like a perversion of the traditional pilgrim's staff, its iron end causing him to lag rather than helping him forward. The Wanderer's pilgrimage is hindered by his sin, which is linked to the first act of human violence and to the momentous act of violence allegedly perpetrated by the Jews against Christ. The Wanderer lingers in a strange liminal state, caught between Jewish and Christian identities. His encounter converts him, but he is still always — eternally, as the German name for him emphasizes — a Jew. He is forever trapped in what Steven Kruger calls the "and yet and yet and yet" stage of conversion ("Times" 24). His state reflects how medieval Christians typically regarded their Jewish contemporaries: he exists in a state of suspended spiritual animation. From the perspective of his own journey, however, he is a kind of pilgrim, wandering endlessly as he awaits a repetition of the moment when he encountered the Savior, as well as awaiting a chance for redemption. His entire existence becomes the penitent journey of the pilgrim, even while he serves as a contact relic of Christ to those who encounter him.

The temporality of the *Chronica* image is further complicated by Matthew's visualization of the Cross carried by Christ. Suzanne Lewis argues that it resembles a processional cross and that this detail makes "the instrument of the Passion … traverse time and space from the Crucifixion in Jerusalem to the medieval present in a visible reflection of the legend's central temporal juxtapositions" (303). In creating this visual link between the Cross borne by Christ and the processional crosses borne in rituals throughout Christendom, Matthew reinforces the dynamic temporality of the relic which, as a material remainder of a past event, brings that sacred past into the present.

The Cross's dark green echoes other illustrations of the Cross in the *Chronica*, creating a nexus of visual connections among the important relics of Christ featured in the text (MS Corpus Christi College Cambridge 16, fol. 74^{v}).[16] Matthew provides detailed and illustrated accounts of King Louis IX's acquisition and installations of the relics of the True Cross and the Crown of Thorns at Paris. These entries tie into the *Chronica* account

of Henry III's elaborate installation of a relic of the Holy Blood at Westminster in 1247, an event which King Henry himself asked Matthew to witness and record (4.641–44). The prominence and importance of relics in the *Chronica* inject an enduring and numinous Christian materiality into the great flow of events recorded in Matthew's expansive chronicle.

The Wandering Jew is a fitting figure for a work with the *Chronica*'s scope, ambitions, and apocalyptic preoccupations. As a living embodiment of Christian history, the Wandering Jew's constant anticipation of the End-times keeps the longed-for (and feared) end of that history in sight. The Wandering Jew's unique and uncanny state makes him not only a reminder of human sinfulness in general, and purported Jewish crimes in particular, but also a model for hope and redemption. He continually cycles between the ages of thirty and one hundred, a pattern that invokes the Christian promise of resurrection. Thirty was posited as the ideal age at which the bodies of the righteous would be resurrected in glory at the End of Days (Bynum, *Resurrection* 98).

By staying in his own changeable body, the Wandering Jew is like and unlike a relic of a saint. Saints' bodies transcend decay and achieve a state akin to that of the resurrected body before the End-times. The Wandering Jew has attained a state of immortality, but is cursed to remain part of a world of sin and decay. At the time of Christ, the Wandering Jew stood in the presence of the divine but could not recognize it, instead choosing to malign and attack. As a result of this inability to see the truth, he must live in the memory of that shameful moment until the end of time. The Wandering Jew is a reminder and a sign, not of holiness, but of a sinfulness that can only be redeemed through suffering and only by those who can interpret and understand the truth correctly.

Seeing and (not) believing

Failure to interpret signs correctly, an inability to understand the world as a Christian, forms the core of *The Pardoner's Tale*. "*Radix malorum est Cupiditas*" describes a sin that stems from a fundamental misinterpretation of values: an inability to value the immaterial over the material (VI.334).[17] And because the young rioters cannot discern the truth in the signs around them, because they are mired in the literal and subject to greed, their encounter with the Old Man leads them to their deaths.

This encounter occurs very soon after the rioters leave the tavern: "Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile" (VI.711). The Old Man greets the rioters first: "This olde man ful mekely hem grette, / And seyde thus, 'Now, lordes, God yow see!'" (VI.714–15). This opening salutation is, on one level, a blessing — "may God see you" — but these words also sound a warning note. Believers know that God can, of course, see this meeting between reckless youth and warning age; these young men, however, are oblivious to God's presence in the world. The rioters can only perceive what stands directly before them: a strange old man. Blinded by arrogance, the rioters respect nothing and respond to the Old Man's greeting with impertinent questions: "'Why artow al forwrapped save thy face? / Why lyvestow so longe in so greet age?'" (VI.718–19). Before the old man explains his cursed state, he peers squarely at his interlocutor: "This olde man gan looke

in his visage" (VI.720). The Old Man recognizes the importance of vision, but the young rioters are blind to the true meaning of the signs before their eyes. Their encounter engages a metaphor of spiritual understanding as a type of vision that had already for centuries been associated with a representation of the Jews as blind to Christian truth.[18]

The pervasive charge that Jews are stubbornly, even inexplicably, resistant to seeing and hearing Christian truth has roots in interpretations of 2 Corinthians 3.15–18, which depicts Jewish understanding as veiled. The Old Man is wrapped everywhere except for his face, a configuration that makes him like those who Paul says behold "the glory of the Lord with open face." These wrappings invert traditional visualizations of the allegorical figure of Synagoga, whose blindness, often represented by a blindfold, contrasts to the clear vision of her upright counterpart, Ecclesia.[19] As a Jew converted, the Wandering Jew finally gains true vision.

Other points in the tradition of representing Jewish blindness include Augustine's image of the Jew as a blind man looking in a mirror or his critique of Jewish perception as seeing with the eyes of the flesh, as opposed to seeing, as a Christian, with the eyes of the heart: "It is no great thing to see Christ with the eyes of the flesh, but it is great to believe in Christ with the eyes of the heart."[20] The Wandering Jew legend encompasses this posited dichotomy between Jewish and Christian perception. If we look through an Augustinian lens, we see that when the Wandering Jew first rejects Christ it is because he sees with the eyes of the flesh and cannot perceive Christ's holiness. After his conversion, the Wandering Jew can see with the eyes of the heart and becomes the eternally living, eternally witnessing figure of the legend.

The rioters are not Jews, but they act like Jews as represented in the Christian tradition. They exhibit literal-minded, stubborn, and greedy behavior at every turn. Deaf and blind as the Jews in Peter the Venerable's infamous charge against Jewish spiritual handicap, the rioters continually seek literal rewards when they should be seeking spiritual ones.[21] The rioters were deaf to the tacit warning of the knave in the tavern when he shared with them his mother's admonishment. To those who can interpret through the spirit, the boy's words are obviously a caution always to be ready to meet God's judgment. The rioters, though, can only understand the boy's words literally and make ready for physical combat with a "privee theef men clepeth Deeth" (VI.675). Like the rioters — and the Wandering Jew — the Old Man appears at one time to have been unable to read the signs. He seems to have sinned in the past, only then to become a (misunderstood) sign of sin himself. In this way the Old Man, as a version of the Wandering Jew, is both a warning to the rioters and a mirror to their behavior. The Wandering Jew saw Christ with his own eyes and heard him with his own ears, but could only respond with arrogance and, in some versions, even with violence: he is sometimes depicted as not only insulting, but striking Christ. The rioters, in refusing to heed the Old Man's warning, follow in the footsteps of the Wandering Jew. Had the young men chosen to inquire *how* the Old Man came to exist in such a unique state, they might have listened and properly understood and been saved both physically and spiritually.

This characterization of the rioters as unable to recognize spiritual truth can also be applied to the Pardoner himself, but his depravity seems even deeper than that of the

men he describes. Chaucer depicts the Pardoner as willfully refusing to follow Christian teachings. The Pardoner appears to know what death and eternal damnation are and nevertheless rushes head on to meet them, duping others into following. He uses physical objects to foster this sinfulness, in the hope that it will lead to his own material gain even if the souls of those he ensnares "goon a-blakeberyed" (VI.406). The most important of his physical lures are the Pardoner's false "relikes," including his "pigges bones," a pillowcase passed off as Our Lady's veil, and his shoulder bone of a "hooly Jewes sheep" (I.700, VI.351). He relies on misrecognition of the sanctity of these "relics" to swindle gullible believers. These material props in the Pardoner's spiritual charade underscore the tension between the material and the spiritual that runs through relic discourse itself and also reveal a point of intersection between relic discourse and anti-Jewish representation.

Relics, relic discourse and anti-Judaism

The term "relic discourse" comes from Robyn Malo, who defines it as "the technical terminology, together with the metaphors and commonplaces, that writers in the later Middle Ages drew upon to construct the meaning of relics" (*Relics* 5). These metaphors and commonplaces intersect with anti-Jewish discourses in *The Pardoner's Tale* and beyond. Although Malo does not remark upon it, her analysis of relic discourse in medieval English texts, including *The Pardoner's Tale*, often focuses on texts that are also significant to medieval anti-Jewish discourse, such as Thomas of Monmouth's *Life and Passion of William of Norwich*, the first ritual murder accusation narrative, and the narratives of the Grail.[22]

It is not simply that relic discourse and anti-Jewish discourse share key texts; they also share a fundamental vision of the relationships between the material world and the truth hidden in that world. We can recognize this dynamic through the mandating, from the early thirteenth century, that relics be displayed not "naked," but in reliquaries (Bynum, "Presence" 23). As Malo observes: "The interplay between inside and outside … shares a lot in common with the concerns of relic discourse, including the preoccupation with whether outward artifice (or a spectacular shrine) resembles inward intention (or, say, rotting saints' bones)" (*Relics* 127). The practice of enshrining the relic in a reliquary calls upon a Christian to discern the sacred relationship between the reliquary's dazzling material exterior and the humble but truly precious and incorruptible holy matter within. Christian tradition represents Jews as unable to interpret properly sacred texts and those signs of the sacred that are present in the world more generally. Proper viewing of relics requires exactly the kind of Christian discernment of inner truth that the Jews are said to lack.

These intersections between "relic discourse" and Christian discourse about the Jews demonstrate a fundamental role that the Jew plays in Christian theology, spirituality, and cultural production, including relic discourse. In her discussion of Christian relics, Ora Limor has noted the repeated portrayal of "the Jew as the preserver and revealer of the Christian truth, or, in other words, the relationship of the Jewish authority to the things sacred to Christianity" (63). Caroline Bynum and Mitchell Merback have shown how

representations of Jews and Judaism (as well as the fates of actual Jewish communities) were central to the creation of relic shrines and to relic veneration in the later Middle Ages.[23] While their studies focus primarily on German-speaking regions, representations of Jews as agents of violence against Christians and the further association of Jews with materiality and physicality were part of cultural discourses in late medieval England as well, even in the absence of a Jewish community. In a world in which literal bits and pieces of people can endure and signify and where only a thin veil separates the living and the dead, Jews and Jewish bodies, real or imagined, figured continually into representations of forms of Christian materiality, including relics.[24]

The Jews have been portrayed throughout the Christian tradition as blind to the truth of Christ that played out before their very eyes. Tales of host desecration, in which the Jews are seen as torturing and as testing the holiest of holy matter, also engage in a very material "tug of war over truth and vision, matter and spirit, knowledge and faith" (Lipton 199). The Wandering Jew, who rejected the suffering Jesus who stood before him, keeps with this tradition, his sin and his witness acting as (eternally) living proof of the truth of Christian faith, a living relic. And the most sacred contact relics of Christ, such as the Crown of Thorns and the Holy Cross, are material remains of the creation of holy matter intimately associated with Jewish perfidy. As a type of contact relic, the Wandering Jew is part of a tradition of figuring the Jews as the originators of the perverse method of revealing the sacred through desecration.

Creating perverse relationships between the sacred and the profane is at the very center of the Pardoner's enterprise. His "relics," foul rags and bones passed off as holy objects, exemplify the corruption at the heart of his dealings. If the Pardoner demonstrates, as Dinshaw argues, the "inadequacy of the very categories —masculine/feminine, letter/spirit, literal/figurative," he also demonstrates the inadequacy of easy differentiation between Christians and Jews — as in the failings of the rioters (160). And yet while "easy passage" between these categories may be "confounded," to borrow from Dinshaw's formulations about the Pardoner, I would argue that it is nevertheless so much a part of how Christian thought is constructed (these categories are so "good to think with") that they are worth considering in Chaucer's depiction of the Pardoner's relics (160). In relic discourse the Jews are themselves "confounding"; they are figured simultaneously as authenticators and deniers of Christian truth.

The General Prologue has already exposed the Pardoner's sham relics by the time he presents his shoulder bone from "an hooly Jewes sheep" (VI.351). When laved in a well, he claims, this relic will cure the ailments of livestock. Like the stone-studded cross that the Pardoner is described as carrying in *The General Prologue*, the bone is encased in "latoun," a coating of brass gilding the ancient animal remains much as how a reliquary would enshrine an actual relic (I.699, VI.350). This shoulder bone is not a Christian relic, but a supposedly Jewish one dating from the time before Christ.[25] This Jewish origin could be read as an exoticism meant to add spice to the Pardoner's deceptive scheme, thus viewing the reference to Jews as "decorative," to harken back to Morrison's discussion in *Playing in the Dark*. Such a reading, however, obscures a glimpse of the confounding role of the Jew in the relic discourse in which the character of the Pardoner is immersed. The

Pardoner's use of a "Jewish" relic to swindle the unwitting reveals the Jewish element in how medieval Christians understood the relationship between materiality and Christian belief that relics embody: Jews function as signs of unbelief, and as revealers of the holy.

The Pardoner's claims for the shoulder-bone relic emphasize not a spiritual power, but a material one, exploiting a connection between Jews and magic that goes along with the persistent association of the Jews with a debased carnality and materiality.[26] This Jewish relic comes not from a human saint, but from a sheep. Indeed, this object has power because it was once possessed by a holy Jew, himself a kind of ossified remnant of a superseded Jewish faith. Like the Wandering Jew, the holy Jew himself is an object. The bone is a relic of a relic that can be used for ends mired in the "debased physical world," such as curing livestock and increasing wealth (Kruger 22).[27]

With his depiction of the Pardoner, Chaucer explores how Christian materiality can be exploited if Christians lack the ability to judge what is false and what is true. An ability to discern the truth is, after all, precisely what this relic can destroy. The Pardoner claims that the shoulder bone holds a cure for the jealous husband, blinding him to a wife's infidelity even if she has "taken prestes two or thre" (VI.371). The fate of a husband treated with this holy well water resembles that of January in *The Merchant's Tale* (Jordan 28). January's figurative blindness, we might recall, becomes literal. He has been blind to the true meaning of marriage and to the desires of his wife and is then blind to the adulterous act he views. His blindness resembles the spiritual blindness explored metaphorically in *The Pardoner's Tale*, linked, through this ancient ovine relic, to the Jews. *The Pardoner's Tale* is one part of a constellation of references in *The Canterbury Tales* in which metaphors of sight and belief intersect with a range of medieval Christian discourses about the Jews.

How the Pardoner's sheep-bone relic works — by being laved in a well — may call to mind the biblical figure of Jacob, long associated with a well, adding to the suggestive resonance of the relic, as well as associations with numerous wells tied to figures such as David, Job, and Miriam in the holy land. Homegrown English superstitions around wells and their potentially magical or healing properties may also intersect here with an association between Jews and magic that dates back to antiquity. And yet, I suspect that a rather sinister joke lurks in this description. That the Jews were believed to have caused the pestilence through well-poisoning adds another ironically malignant dimension to the Pardoner's sham relics.[28] He recommends that the holy Jew's relic be dipped in a well in order to unleash its healing effects on the diseases of livestock. These ills — "pokkes," scabs, and sores — evoke symptoms of plague in humans (VI.358). Given the shadow of plague in *The Pardoner's Tale* and the accusation of Jewish well-poisoning that accompanied the Black Death, a sheep's bone with a Jewish source, even a holy one, might well be the last thing a prudent Christian would want to dip into his well. The Pardoner attempts to entice by claiming for this Jewish sheep's bone relic the power to increase wealth, an enticement that could perhaps lead the greedy taker to a fate eerily resembling that of the three rioters.

The materiality of oaths

This Jewish relic, like the rest of the Pardoner's stock, is a fake, its falseness perversely highlighted by a pervasive swearing on the most revered relics in Christendom. The Pardoner's tale is blown in on a hot wind of oaths that does not abate until the kiss of reconciliation between the Pardoner and the Host. The opening gust accompanies the Host's emotional response to the previous tale, told by the Physician:

> Oure Hooste gan to swere as he were wood;
> "Harrow!" quod he, "by nayles and by blood!
> This was a fals cherl and a fals justise." (VI.287–89)

The Host continues this lament over Virginia's death by swearing on "corpus bones," and on a "Seint Ronyan" whose identity has long been debated by scholars (VI.314, 310).[29] These oaths and all those that follow allow Christian materiality to permeate not only the imagery surrounding the Pardoner, but the very language used to create him. Oaths transform the verbal into the material.

The Pardoner responds to the Host's opening volley of oaths by preaching that "[g]ret sweryng is a thyng abhominable" (VI.631). He reasons that swearing is even more transgressive than murder itself since the commandment against it precedes that against homicide: "Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng / Than homycide or many a cursed thyng" (VI.643–44). This comparison between swearing and murder calls attention to the physicality of oaths; they have power that extends into the material world and that can inflict violence upon it.

Having thus set up swearing as the worst kind of sin, the Pardoner then perversely engages in it:[30]

> "By Goddes precious herte," and "By his nayles,"
> And "By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles,
> Sevene is my chaunce, and thyn is cynk and treye!"
> "By Goddes armes, if thou falsly pleye,
> This daggere shal thurghout thyn herte go!";
> This fruyt cometh of the bicched bones two,
> Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide.
> Now, for the love of Crist, that for us dyde,
> Lete youre othes, bothe grete and smale. (VI.651–59)

The Pardoner's choice to swear on the Holy Blood at Hailes is an interesting one. This controversial blood relic was believed only to be visible to the penitent, a claim reminiscent of the Pardoner's own methods of manipulation as he cleverly discourages those who have sinned grievously or cuckolded their spouses from making offerings.[31] Both the Pardoner and the Hailes relic operate at the outer boundaries of faith. If a "ful vicious man" can work good, is the Hailes relic potent though false (VI.459)? False relics confound the intimate relationship between the material and the spiritual and foreground questions concerning the "entente" of those who believe and those who would manipulate this belief.

The Pardoner's sermon within a sermon against vices such as swearing concludes with the grotesque rattle of the "bicched bones," conjuring an image of the body just before the arrival of a corpse begins the action of his tale (VI.656). The three rioters are in their cups early in the morning when they hear a bell announcing "a cors … caried to his grave" and they inquire into the corpse's identity (VI.665). This dead body eerily connects to other uncanny materialities in the tale to create its otherworldly atmosphere. The evocation of a "privee theef men clepeth Deeth," the mysterious Old Man, and even the ominous oak tree use grisly corporeality to tie the sin of avarice to the sullied flesh of human beings and to the material instruments through which they attempt to fulfill fleshly desire (VI.675).

Against this backdrop of mortal bodies whose flesh is all too vulnerable to sin and decay stands the paradox of God made flesh. Christ is pure, but when he took on the body of man, he took on the vulnerability of the body. His sacrifice bought human redemption. Yet in the world of the tavern, in all of its sinful indecency, Christ's body is tortured again through the rioters' oaths. This re-torturing of Christ creates a temporal paradox; as Christ suffers once again, he is thrust back to his time on earth, suffering this time not for human salvation, but, in the case of a gambler swearing on his dice, for the sake of filthy lucre.

The quotidian sin of swearing was typically associated with the very types of dissolute young men that Chaucer depicts in *The Pardoner's Tale* and the sins of the tavern that the Pardoner describes, indulges in, and hypocritically attacks (Gill 149). The curses the young men hurl throughout the tale are strong and violent, they swear by "Goddes armes!" (VI.692), "Goddes digne bones!" (VI.695), "By Goddes dignitee" (VI.701), "By Goddes precious dignitee" (VI.782), "by Seint John!" (VI.752), and "By God and by the hooly sacrement!" (VI.757). The Pardoner comments as he discusses their pledge to slay Death that "many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn, / And Cristes blessed body they torente" (708–9), thus linking the rioters to those who tormented and murdered Christ.

The Pardoner has already explicitly linked these violent oaths and the originary violence they conjure to the Jew as Christ-killer:

> Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable
> That it is grisly for to heere hem swere.
> Oure blissed Lordes body they totere —
> Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough. (VI.472–75)

The Pardoner here also invokes the "Warning to Swearers" tradition, in which the Jews are both the ultimate perpetrators of sinful violence and the model for all future sinners.[32] When Christ walked among us, this logic of belief dictates, the Jews did him violent injury. All subsequent sinners continue this pattern of offense, sinning against Christ despite the fact that he has sacrificed himself for them.[33]

Chaucer's Parson also invokes the "Warning to Swearers" tradition and we can find it as well in other texts.[34] In Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne*, in an exemplum known as the "Bleeding Child," the Virgin appears to a man who continually swears bearing a brutally torn infant Jesus in her arms. She informs the oath maker that he is responsible

for this brutality, likening him to the Jews and proclaiming that his wickedness exceeds even theirs: "þyn oþys done hym more greuesnesse / þan alle the Iweys wykkednesse. / Þey pyned hym onys, & passed a-way, / But þou, pynest hym euery day" (719–22).[35] Here, the sin of swearing is even more grievous than Jewish violence against Christ; their action occurred only once, but swearing occurs every day.

As Anthony Bale argues in his analysis of the "Warning to Swearers" tradition, in such representations of the violence of this type of sin "the Passion goes on anew, 'ever redy', repeated, redone, in the everyday curses and games of late medieval English people" (59). In discussing an example of the Warning to Swearers tradition found in Broughton, Bale notes that men depicted playing dice in the painting are garbed in particolored clothing, which could be viewed as "symbolic of the Jews at the Passion" (59). Gill has argued that this form of polemic against swearing "relies on a prior familiarity with Passion images and an awareness of the sort of pious responses they are intended to prompt" (148). Imbricated in this devotion to the Passion is the depiction of the Jews as cruel tormentors.[36] Christians are to remember in patience, faith, and fear the violence wrought by the disbelieving Jews and to avoid imitating it. The violent oaths sworn by the rioters make them "assistant torturers" at the Passion, but we are never meant to forget which masters they assist (Miller and Bosse 179). The Jews were never the only actors against Christ at the Passion, nor were they involved in every subsequent Christian martyrdom, and yet, just as *imitatio Christi* came to stand as the model for all subsequent Christian suffering, so too did the Jews become the quintessential perpetrators of anti-Christian violence.[37] If men like the rioters swear every day, the violence of the Jews at the Passion is re-invoked every day as well.

In this way, the rioters' blasphemous oaths both shape and bend expectations and experiences of the material world. If an oath sworn on Christ's body can re-enact the Crucifixion, then it bends time, collapsing the sacred past to the profane present in the same way that the consecrating words of the Mass generate the Real Presence.[38] Through this swearing on holy matter, the verbal becomes material and curses act like physical blows. These oaths possess a distinctly material reality that stands in sharp contrast to that of the Pardoner's "pigges bones," literal pieces of matter with a signification that is empty at best and damning at worst.

Chaucer's depictions of the Pardoner's Jewish relic and of the Pardoner's invocation of the Jew as Christ-killer deepen his portrayals both of the rioters' depravity and of the Pardoner's. These references resonate with other anti-Jewish representation in *The Canterbury Tales*. Not only figured as tormentors of the body of God, the Jews are also tied to carnality and to the body itself, specifically to a body figured as disgusting.[39] Kruger, Cuffel, and Resnick have explored the "rhetoric of disgust" in medieval inter-faith polemic and found in medieval Christian writings figurations of Jewish bodies as diseased, deformed, and linked to a feminizing bloody flux. These beliefs lingered well into the early modern period and beyond. We can find traces of them in *The Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale* that link to other parts of *The Canterbury Tales* as well. The Pardoner's description of the glutton's throat as a privy — "That of his throte he maketh his pryvee" (VI.527) — with its vivid evocation of the way that food and drink pass through the

glutton's body echoes a central image from *The Prioress's Tale*. There the Jews have a little Christian boy thrown into a privy with his throat slashed after having travelled through a Jewish quarter as "free and open at eyther ende" as the disgusting body of the glutton (VII.494). The ultimate physical permeability manifests itself through bodies of the Jews torn apart in punishment at the end of *The Prioress's Tale*, their severed flesh contrasting starkly with the jewel-like body of the boy they murdered, his body evoking Christ's. The Jews in *The Prioress's Tale* are aligned with the filth excreted through the orifices of the human body, an association that is a mainstay of medieval Christian representation of Jews and that links to the Pardoner's words and to his ambiguous and repellent person.

The Pardoner

What of the Pardoner himself? Like the Old Man in his tale, the Pardoner has been subject to much critical speculation concerning his identity. Is the Pardoner a type of eunuch, a hermaphrodite, a homosexual? As with the Old Man, pinning down a definitive identity for the Pardoner seems futile; the proliferation of "Pardoners" could be seen as comparable to the theoretical proliferation of types of "the Jew." And, indeed, the complex and multivalent nature of the Pardoner is precisely why he is still such a significant literary character. But while the answers concerning the Pardoner are elusive, the questions are important. Steven Kruger's directive seems most instructive here: "we need to show how the Pardoner's challenge to medieval heterosexist notions of signification — and Chaucer's anxiety about that challenge — lays bare the constructed nature of those notions" (138). Laying bare these constructions is, to return to Morrison, trying to recognize the contours of the fishbowl. Consideration of how different members of Chaucer's original audience might have understood the Pardoner and his tale can offer insights into a tradition that continues to have cultural force. In trying to assess the "scale" of the Pardoner's risk of eternal damnation we need to see how the Pardoner's sexuality and his spirituality, both material and immaterial, come together.[40]

These elements conjoin in Chaucer's depiction of the Pardoner's body. We are told of the Pardoner that "[s]wiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare" (I.684), a comparison usually, and rightly, I believe, taken as evidence of indulgence in sins of the flesh, including gluttony and lechery.[41] Critics, drawing on Boswell's careful examination of both Christian and pre-Christian sources, have shown that the hare was associated with hermaphrodism, sodomy, and pederasty. These associations are compounded with the other animals to which the Pardoner is compared: goats, geldings, and mares all point to "sexual deviancy."[42]

But the metaphor of the hare in *The General Prologue* is, we must remember, specifically linked to the eyes, a feature of the hare that medieval Christians used as yet another way to figure Jewish blindness.[43] Hugh of St. Cher reads the hare's reputedly poor vision as representing the weakness that the Jews are said to have in their understanding of scriptural truth. Schweitzer has traced a connection between the glosses on the prohibition against eating the hare in Leviticus and what is said of the Jews in the *Glossa Ordinaria* — "ruminant Judaei verba legis, sed … in Patrem et Filium non credunt, nec

Figure 2 Breviary of Renaud de Bar, Verdun, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 107, fol. 96^{v}. Reprinted with permission from the Bibliothèque municipale, Verdun.

duo testamenta recipiunt."[44] That hares were commonly believed to sleep with their eyes open was also tied to the long association between Jews and spiritual blindness. As Schweitzer eloquently puts it: "Eyes 'glarynge' like a hare's may therefore be the unseeing eyes of a soul spiritually asleep, shining in the darkness of the privation of grace" (25). Kruger points out that interpretive blindness was associated with homosexuality as well, as a type of sexual barrenness (Kruger, "Claiming" 127). These associations are not competing, but rather function synergistically.

We find a striking example of the representation of the hare functioning multivalently in the Summer volume of the Breviary of Renaud (ca. 1302–1305; see Figure 2). Without attempting to provide a definitive reading of this image, I want to call attention to its emphasis on vision. The hare, his own eyes "glarynge" in a fashion consistent with typical medieval iconography of this animal, makes contact with the eyes of a recumbent man with hands held in prayer. The contrast between the hare's eyes and the man's suggests a focus on spiritual sight, although which figure, if either, can truly see is open to interpretation. The line of chant above the image, "*si tu sustulisti eum,*" is from John 20.15, in which Mary Magdalene has mistaken Christ for a gardener.[45] Issues of spiritual recognition are clearly at play here, and the hare, associated with the Jewish lack of spiritual recognition, is the animal chosen for this representation.

Just a few leaves later (fol. 101^{r}; see Figure 3), we find an image in which the hare retains his staring eyes, but his hands engage in playing a tune on a bagpipe. The other figure,

FIGURE 3 Breviary of Renaud de Bar, Verdun, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 107, fol. 101r. Reprinted with permission from the Bibliothèque municipale, Verdun.

whose posterior that takes the form of a bear's head, its snout agape in the hare's direction, creates a scene that Jean-Claude Schmitt reads as a clear evocation of a homosexual relationship (346). The Breviary provides, then, a good example of multivalent meaning for the hare that encompasses association with sins of both body and soul.

The hare evokes sins of lechery and the sin of spiritual blindness simultaneously, demonstrating what Debra Strickland, in her study of the role of anti-Judaism in medieval bestiaries, has called "the contemporary Christian interest in constructing chains of sin" (210). Chaucer wraps his Pardoner so securely in such chains that he creates, as Pearsall beautifully puts it, a "sense of menace, of some stirring of unspeakable evil, the sense of death, … too strong and too universally apprehended to allow any easy fitting of the Pardoner to a literary scheme" (360). In Donald Howard's words, the Pardoner is "a mystery, an enigma — sexually anomalous, hermaphroditic, menacing, contradictory" (344–45).[46] For all of this complexity, however, the Pardoner may be a kind of zero sum of his parts. Pearsall has argued that with the Pardoner, "Chaucer is not so much writing unpsychologically as creating zero-psychology" (361). He writes perceptively of the Pardoner as a kind of automaton, someone who seems human, but who is dead inside, a state perhaps best reflected in his "glarynge eyen," those empty windows to his soul (Pearsall 361).

Jews in the medieval Christian tradition are also depicted as spiritually dead, because only the spirit gives life. The Jew that Shakespeare drew, I would suggest, hits the European canon of representation of Jews with such concussive force because Shylock displays glimpses of a living humanity; he is a "type," indeed he becomes one of the most important "types" in the anti-Semitic arsenal, but Shakespeare's depiction is not simply of a type but also of a human being. The shock of Shylock comes from the fact

that before his appearance we are hard-pressed to find representation of an unconverted Jew who is not simply a knot of unbroken chains of sin.

The Pardoner is, then, a hollow man and Chaucer draws upon the perceived spiritual emptiness of the Jews to amplify this portrayal. The Pardoner's sexuality, even while its particulars may be subject to interpretation, is clearly something debased, devoid of love, and even of reproductive purpose. So too did medieval Christians portray the rituals and the faith of the Jews as dead and pointless. The Pardoner's relics and even his sermon require living faith in order to effect good. The Pardoner's faith is empty and fruitless; Chaucer's references to the Jews evoke and reinforce that depiction of the Pardoner's barren state. The Pardoner and his relics lay bare the way that the relationship between the spiritual and material can be twisted and perverted; invoking the anti-Judaism that animates relic discourse deepens and reinforces this portrayal.

We can see another glimpse of these connections in the conclusion to the tale, one that some critics have made the object of a tug-of-war between readings which emphasize the tale's fake relics and those focused more on the Pardoner's ambiguous sexuality. After the Pardoner calls the Host to come forth and kiss his relics, the latter explodes:

> "Nay, nay!" quod he, "thanne have I Cristes curs!
> Lat be," quod he, "it shal nat be, so theech!
> Thou woldest make me kisse thyn olde breech,
> And swere it were a relyk of a seint,
> Though it were with thy fundement depeint!
> But, by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond,
> I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond
> In stide of relikes or of seintuarie.
> Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie;
> They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!" (VI.946–55)

Critics sometimes discuss this outburst in relation to a familiar passage in the *Roman de la Rose* that also mixes "coillons" and "reliques" in order to stress the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign.[47] Relics, we are told, could mean testicles or vice versa depending on our choice. Minnis has asserted that here "Chaucer's concern is not with linguistic substitution but rather with the substitution of a 'relyk' of debatable power for a genuine one" ("Into the Breech" 287). A true relic asks us to look beyond the surface to the meaning beneath, a hermeneutics central to this tale. Grasping true meaning, as the Pardoner's sermon shows, is the path to salvation. The Host, by threatening to create a new, false relic out of the body of a sinner who traffics in such fakeries, responds to the Pardoner's attempt to manipulate him with a violent, profane parody of the Christian belief of the presence of the divine in the material.

The besmeared breeches and testicles enshrined in turds imagined by the Host are not, however, the only "relics" in his tirade. The debased nature of these objects is emphasized by Harry's oath on the True Cross, of which Jacques Le Goff asserts, "there is no more sacred relic in Christianity" (108). The Host's oath references the Cross through its discovery: "by the croys which that Seint Eleyne fond" (VI.951). The Jews serve as

authenticators and guides in the narrative of Helena's recovery of the Cross to such a degree that Thomas Renna sees the narrative as a kind of "index of hagiographical attitudes toward the Jews" (138).[48] As Renna puts it, the story of the "Cross somehow became the story of the Jews" (139). When Constantine sent his mother to find the Cross, she began her quest by rounding up the Jewish wise men of Jerusalem, one of whom, Judas, had to be forced to reveal the Cross's whereabouts. Judas is converted through his experience and becomes Judas Cyriacus.

Judas Cyriacus's story bears similarity to the legend of the Wandering Jew in several ways, including through its temporality. The account of the finding of the True Cross in the *Legenda Aurea* refers to an enigmatic source stating that Judas Cyriacus has survived since the time of the Crucifixion, which would make him 272 years old. Perhaps, the *Legenda Aurea* posits, he is the son of someone from this time, or perhaps men of that age were long-lived, but, whatever his actual age, he and his fellow Jews are, if not eye-witnesses, still witnesses who can guide Christians to the sacred relic of their Lord, even though they are themselves unbelievers.[49] Harry Bailey's invocation of the story of the finding of the True Cross, then, is an invocation of the role of Jewish unbelievers in this quest, as desecrators who reveal the holy.

When Christians invoke holy matter, whether in earnest or in "pleye," they seem to need the Jews as witness to that holiness (VI.958). As Dominque Iogna-Pratt puts it, "Just as in the world of physical sciences matter presupposes antimatter, so … the Christian order postulated the disorder of the Jews" (315). In *The Pardoner's Prologue* and *Tale* we find a complex set of associations that structure this "antimatter": in the attack by the Host, in the subtle linking of Jews to lechery, specifically homosexuality in *The General Prologue* reference to the hare, through the vaguely sinister potential of the relic of the holy Jew's sheep, and, of course, in the shadow of the Wandering Jew in the enigmatic Old Man, whose wasting body seems both a sign of sin and a reminder of the complex nature of Christian materiality. These and other elements of Chaucer's creation of the Pardoner and his tale, especially his depictions of the Pardoner's body and sexuality and of his phony relics, are not competing with each other; they reinforce one another. Looking beyond individual references to the Jew to recognize the broader context of anti-Judaism, acknowledging it as a shaping force in the structure of medieval Christian thought, helps to reveal these connections. Another way to understand these connections is to return to Morrison's metaphor of the fishbowl. If we are trying, then, to discern "the structure that transparently (and invisibly)" frames Chaucer's world, we cannot do so without the figure of the Jew.

Like the Pardoner, "the Jew" might be, despite the many nuances that scholars have revealed, a zero sum. The Jew, like the Pardoner, confounds and this is perhaps why Chaucer includes the Jewish "details" in the Pardoner's portrayal. In relic discourse the Jews are confounding, yet also foundational, as they are figured simultaneously as authenticators and deniers of Christian truth. Chaucer's Jewish details further illuminate the paradoxes in Christian materiality that the Pardoner's sham practices call to the fore. The Jewish "stubborn" resistance to Christian supersession is also confounding. Actual believing Jews and a living, developing Jewish faith upset the Christian temporal frame

and thus the representation of "the Jew" is often associated with a bending of time. The "eternal" nature of the Wandering Jew attempts to lock the Jew into a state that is paradoxically liminal and static — always believing yet never redeemed — hoping endlessly for a redemption that can only come according to a Christian telos. These elements in anti-Judaic discourse deepen Chaucer's portrayal of the Pardoner, a man who seems to be throwing himself headlong — and willingly — into eternal damnation. The Wandering Jew and the other Jewish elements that haunt this portrayal come trailing clouds of a dark immortality that help to depict what the nature of such an eternity might be.

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Notes

[1] Cohen first discussed the hermeneutical Jew in "The Muslim Connection" (1996) and expanded the discussion in *Living Letters* (1999), as noted in the latter (3 n.3).

[2] See Biddick, "Paper Jews"; Narin van Court, "Socially Marginal"; Despres, "Protean Jew"; Tomasch, "Postcolonial Chaucer"; Kruger, *Spectral Jew*; and Lavezzo, *Accommodated Jew*.

[3] I first heard this formulation from Daniel Boyarin. See also Nirenberg's magisterial *Anti-Judaism* (the UK subtitle of which is, notably, *The History of a Way of Thinking*).

[4] Anderson's is the definitive work on the history of the Wandering Jew legend. He and other scholars believe the Wandering Jew legend circulated in England, likely in oral form, throughout the medieval period (31–32).

[5] On "self-definition," see Morrison 43. "Christian materiality" comes from the title of Bynum's 2011 book.

[6] All quotations from *The Canterbury Tales* are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., gen. ed. Benson. Citations refer to fragment and line numbers and appear parenthetically in the body of the essay.

[7] Kruger 139, 128 n.39. See also 122–23 n.21.

[8] On the "material turn," see Houtman and Meyer.

[9] For a different approach to the Jew in the *Pardoner's Tale*, see Krummel, *Crafting* 107–10 and "Semitic Discourse."

[10] For the Old Man as *vetus homo*, see Miller. Hamilton reads him as a figure for Old Age. Ten Brink was the first to connect the Old Man to the Wandering Jew. See also Bushnell; Richardson; and Pearcy; for additional sources see Sutton. Koff reads the Old Man in conjunction with Levinas. It would be interesting to read *The Pardoner's Tale* more specifically against explorations of Judaism and Jewish identity in Levinas's work, including his "Israel and Universalism." See the conclusion to Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare*.

[11] See Lampert-Weissig, "The Wandering Jew as Relic."

[12] Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, edited by Luard (abbreviated henceforth as CM), 5.340–41. All quotations are taken from Luard's edition, refer to volume and page numbers, and will appear parenthetically in the body of the text. Translation adapted from Anderson 21. See also Lewis, and Lampert-Weissig, "Wandering Jew as Relic."

[13] On contact relics in the CM, see Lewis 304–13; for a definition of contact relics, see Merback 194–95.

[14] Lewis transcribes the banners as: "Vade Jhesu ad iudicium tibi preparatum" and "Vado sicut scriptum est de me. Tu vero expectabis donec veniam" (303).

[15] See Mellinkoff, *Outcasts* vol. 1, 130, and Bale 65–89.

[16] The pagination here reflects recent changes to pagination due to digitization. The previous "official" pagination locates the Wandering Jew image on fol.

70v, as it is found referenced in works such as Lewis's. My thanks to Elizabeth Dumas of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, for her help with accessing this image.

[17] See Dinshaw 178.

[18] For an important discussion of metaphors of sight and seeing in relation to medieval representation of Jews and Judaism, see Lipton.

[19] On Synagoga and Ecclesia, see Rose; Rowe; and Seiferth.

[20] Augustine, *Sermo* 263, PL 38. Sant' Agostino: Augustinus Hipponensis <http://www.augustinus.it> Cited in Lipton 64, 304 n.27.

[21] *Adversus Iudaeorum inveteratam duritiem*, CCCM 58.10.

[22] See Malo, *Relics*. On Jews in grail narrative see Lampert-Weissig, "Knight"; for a different view on these representations, see Newman 70–83.

[23] See Bynum, "Bleeding," "Presence," and *Wonderful Blood*, as well as Merback, *Pilgrimage*.

[24] I owe this formulation to a private communication with Denise Despres. See also Lipton, especially 81–84.

[25] Jordan 29, 33.

[26] On Jews and magic, see Mesler.

[27] This relic must be meant to have belonged to an "Old Testament" Jew, its temporal provenance essential to its "holiness." As we can see from the debates associated with the burning of the Talmud in the 1240s in Paris, the idea that Judaism might continue to be a living, developing faith posed a deep threat to medieval Christian claims of spiritual supremacy. Judaism before the time of Christ can be remembered and revered in the service of Christian teachings and Jews themselves must be preserved for their future role in the End-Times. Believing Jews cannot, however, be imagined as coeval with Christianity. There literally is "no time" for these Jews and any texts, objects, or practices from this time in-between must be suppressed or even destroyed. On the Talmud trials, see volumes by Chazan, Friedman and Hoff.

28 On the accusation that Jews poisoned wells, see Foa 13, and Mesler 269–324. Violence against Jews during the Black Death epidemic was not as extreme in Flanders as elsewhere in Europe, but it did occur (Cohn 8). The chronicle of Gilles Le Muisit of Tournai (1272–1352) includes an image of Jews being burned alive in Flanders during plague time (see Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, MS 13076/7, fol. 12v; reproduced in Descatoire 23.) Interestingly, given the role of treasure in the tale, Jewish communities did bury treasure during times of persecution, including during the plague. On treasure buried by Anglo-Jews prior to the 1290 Expulsion, see Brooks, et al., and for Jewish plague-time buried treasure elsewhere in medieval Europe, see Descatoire.

[29] Miller associates "Ronyan" with "coillons" (194).

[30] The Pardoner "engages in villainous swearing by God and Lord Jesus … on the pretext of an attack on those who utter outrageous oaths" (Minnis, *Fallible* 138).

[31] On the Hailes relic as the object of doubt, see Storm 815. See also Vincent 137–54, and Baddeley.

[32] On the Jew as Christ-killer, see Cohen, "Christ Killer." That their swearing is "grisly," a word with OE roots that connect to rubbing or grating (OED, s.v. "grisly"), evokes a physical effect. My thanks to Charlie Wright for advice on this etymology.

[33] On the swearer as a "Jew," see Bale 62.

[34] *The Parson's Tale* X(I).590.

[35] Citation and translation from Russell 18.

[36] See Bestul.

[37] See Bale, and Cohen, "Christ Killers."

[38] Gill argues for swearing as "almost an inversion of transubstantiation that amplified Christ's suffering and wounded the speaker" (151).

[39] Kruger, in relation to a discussion of the Pardoner's body, notes that, "a bodily corruption is associated with Judaism" ("Claiming" 128 n.39).

[40] On the scale of the Pardoner's risk of damnation and its relationship to other aspects of his character see Minnis, *Fallible* 97.

[41] See note in *The Riverside Chaucer*.

[42] See Rowland.

[43] On Jewish appropriations of the hare as symbol, see Epstein.

[44] PL 113.464. Cited in Schweitzer 250.

[45] I am grateful to a private communication from Alison Stones for help understanding the Breviary images.

[46] Cited in Kruger, "Claiming" 124.

[47] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, edited by Lecoy, lines 7076–85. See Minnis, "Breech" 287.

[48] See also Limor.

[49] Jacobus de Voragine 281 of 277–84. See also Lipton 85–90.

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