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Gower and the Peasants' Revolt

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IN JUNE OF 1381 THE ENGLISH government briefly lost control of significant portions of the realm. Sometimes called the Peasants' Revolt, this concatenation of local insurrections was the largest rebellion of unenfranchised people in medieval England. It began as a tax rebellion: the first violent incident was against a royal commission investigating tax evasion in Essex and seeking to raise missing sums. In the following days, coalitions of peasants, laborers, and artisans in towns and villages across southeastern England organized themselves into a new authority directly opposed to the authority of the landlords and royal government. Properties belonging to the king's hated councilors were destroyed; legal documents were seized from landlords and county officers, carried to town squares, and publicly burned; prisons were broken open and prisoners released. Many of the insurgents' victims were directly involved in tax collection; others were well known as prominent officials of the county government. As news of the insurrection spread to neighboring counties, so too did insurrection itself. Meanwhile, detachments from Kent and Essex converged on London, where they hoped to present their grievances to the young king. When Richard retreated into the Tower and declined to hear the accusations against his councilors, the rebels struck out on their own. On June 14, at Tower Hill, the king's chancellor and his treasurer were summarily executed as traitors to the realm. The murder of these two men belonged to the same series as the first events of the rising: the chancellor had presented the government's enormous subsidy request at the Northampton Parliament the previous November; the treasurer had presided over collection of the tax. However, motives and grievances had now generalized well beyond matters of taxation. The demands that the rebels made to the bunkered king in London included regularization of terms of land tenure throughout the realm, removal of protective restrictions on the sale of agricultural produce, removal of the statutory prohibitions against free negotiation of wages, and abolition of serfdom.[1]

ABSTRACT This essay examines the moral and political thought of John Gower's poem on the English Rising of 1381, situating it within three contrastive fields: Gower's moral project, his Virgilian intertext, and the practices of moral community employed by the rebels of 1381.

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I

The insurrection was broken almost as quickly as it arose, though with greater loss of life.[2] Soon afterwards, the London poet John Gower wrote a new poem. A lawyer and rentier, Gower was distinguished from the principal targets of the rebels' violence by his physical remove from the peasants whose surplus he extracted, and by his apparent abstention from government service.[3] In 1381, Gower may already have been living in the Augustine priory of St. Mary Overie, situated at the southern end of London Bridge, over which the Kentish rebels crossed into the city on June 13.[4] Gower's poem on these events is named *Visio Anglie* in recent scholarship.[5] It joins the *Anonimalle Chronicle*, the *Westminster Chronicle*, and the chronicle histories of Thomas Walsingham, Henry Knighton, and Jean Froissart as the most substantial literary treatments of the largest popular rebellion in premodern England.[6] *Visio Anglie* is distinguished from these chronicles, however, by Gower's unbridled fictive imagination, beside which the inventions of Walsingham and Froissart appear tame. In a different way, the fictive imagination of this poem distinguishes it from Gower's own previous compositions. The poem on the rising is a vertiginous dream vision in Latin elegiac couplets. At the beginning, the Gower persona imagines he has taken a stroll into the fields to collect flowers on a pleasant summer day. He reaches the green space of aristocratic pleasure, only to find that "diverse hostile types of ordinary people were loitering in the fields in innumerable bands" (Diuersas plebis sortes vulgaris iniquas/Innumeris turmis ire per arua vagas).[7] The dreamer is dazzled by fear and contempt. God's curse falls upon the ordinary people and transforms them into animals. A second divine intervention causes each of the animals to abandon its own nature and take on the most homicidal qualities of wild, mythical, and scriptural beasts. They viciously presume to the status of noble animals, that is, of animals cultivated by nobility. They become fire-breathing, God-denying, property-thieving monsters. The rebel-animal-monsters unite under the leadership of a garrulous jay (the rebel leader Wat Tyler in Gower's roman à clef) and storm the walls of Troy (that is, London). The great city is betrayed; chaos and devastation ensue. The defeated aristocrats entrust themselves to a ship representing the Tower of London. It floats out to sea, now pursued by the rebellion in the form of an ocean gale. Against that final incarnation of rebellion all defenses are futile, excepting only prayer.

As even this brief sketch demonstrates, *Visio Anglie* delivers an intoxicating blend of topicality and fictionality. Modern understanding of the poem has been advanced by a distinguished series of studies bearing on three interrelated compositional features. First, Gower's depiction of rebels as deranged beasts has received astute commentary, clarifying the ideological

work performed in that representational choice.[8] The poet lingers over the braying, mooing, grunting, barking, howling, and screeching of the assembled rebel-animals (*Visio*, 799–830); he renders their political intentions utterly incoherent. A second node of scholarship, subtly qualifying the first, has attended to Gower's borrowings from earlier Latin poetry.[9] Gower routinely derived metrical phrases and whole lines from earlier poetry, especially Ovid. The poem is a dense texture of borrowed and repurposed language. Once scorned as "school-boy plagiarism," these procedures are now understood to activate alternate and expanded contexts for the poem's reported action.[10] The metamorphosis of persons into beasts remains a judgment about the character of the rebels; but attendant allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (inter alia) displace the whole represented action into a literary domain. The storehouse of Latin poetry accordingly attains an unlikely importance: it figures in Gower's poem as the mental equipment necessary for a proper understanding of contemporary events. The result is that the insurgents are again denied any possibility of self-understanding: for them, meaning is simply foreclosed. More significantly, Gower's citational procedures would seem to place limiting conditions on even the most qualified readers. The meaning of the rising will emerge only through and within an exercise in literary interpretation. Any such exercise would presumably need to account for the poem's violent transgressions of literary decorum as well, and this brings us to the third major line of inquiry in recent scholarship.[11] Thomme, Symme, Bette, and Iakke do not belong in a Latin poem in classical measures; their appearance in this one (*Visio*, 783–92) expresses, at the level of prosody, the offense committed by English laborers who forced their way into the homes and into the thoughts of their social superiors in June of 1381. The poem's mash-up of earlier Latin poetry; its surrealistic shifts in character, setting, and generic mode; its extravagant mélange of Christian and pagan allusion; and even the first-person speaker's bathetic indignity may all be read along similar lines: rarefied literary language resorts to self-harm at the limits of representation.

Representational technique, the texture of allusion, and the dialectics of literary (in)decorum: studies of these three aspects of literary composition have returned important insights into Gower's poem, and their potential to illuminate is not yet exhausted. In the following pages I extend each of these lines of inquiry. If Gower's representational technique is aggressively dehumanizing, as previous commentators emphasize, the animal shapes simultaneously function as heraldic emblems of occupational groups: they divide the mass of rebels into peasants, laborers, servants, and artisans—and thus encode a perception of the rebellion's breadth of support and its conditions of possibility. Regarding the matter of literary allusion, I will suggest that the peculiar density of recycled language in this poem has distracted us from

literary allusions of other kinds, and particularly those allusions that unfold at the scale of narrative episode. Verbal remembrances of Ovid are made to flow within a Virgilian channel: Gower used Ovid's language to recompose the *Aeneid*'s narrative of imperial foundation.

The significance of these interventions will emerge in due course. The problem of literary decorum requires more immediate treatment, for the peculiar extravagance of *Visio Anglie* stands out sharply against the background of Gower's earlier compositions. Prior to 1381, Gower had written two long poems, one in French octosyllables, the other in Latin elegiacs. They differ in style and tone, but correspond closely in message. Gower probably worked on them concurrently. In the French poem, titled *Mirour de l'Omme*, Gower assumed a courtly idiom to recount the origins and effects of sin in the world.[12] The poem is strongly penitential in inspiration and mode; the poet confesses his sins, details the sins of his contemporaries, urges repentance, and offers up an extended prayer to the Virgin Mary. The Latin poem, titled *Vox Clamantis*, is the work to which Gower would later affix his poem on the rising.[13] The pre-1381 version consisted of about eight thousand lines disposed into six books. The core of this composition joins *Mirour de l'Omme*, lines 18,421 to 26,521, as a formidable contribution to the medieval genres of moral complaint and estates satire: the speaker divides members of his society into conventional social stations—clergy, aristocracy, laborers, artisans, and merchants—and criticizes the conduct of each group in turn. All this is delivered in a voice that owes much to the pulpit genre of sermons against contemporary abuses.[14] An illustration entered in four early copies expresses the speaker's posture and alignment with his audience.[15] A man stretches a bow, aiming an arrow at a circular object representing the world. The drawing is accompanied by verses reading as follows:

> Ad mundum mitto mea iacula dumque sagitto
> At vbi iustus erit nulla sagitta ferit
> Sed male viuentes hos vulnero transgredientes
> Conscius ergo sibi se speculetur ibi

[I cast my spears at the world, and my arrows, too. They will not strike where a righteous man stands, but those who live badly—I will wound them as they step over the line. So let those who are self-aware reflect on themselves over there.]

An extraterrestrial archer stands outside the world in order to shoot at it: here is Erving Goffman's notion of "footing" illustrated with painful literalism.[16] In fact, the attitude depicted in this epigram is moderated somewhat in the body of the poem: the speaker there varies third-person description with occasional shifts into an inclusive first-person plural, acknowledging a moral condition shared with the targets of his critique. As Maria Wickert notes, the archer is a traditional figure of the preacher armed with the word of God.[17]

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In the final line of the epigram, the poet-homilist issues a redoubled appeal to the recipients of his discourse, to reflect upon and know themselves. It is a signature expression of moral protreptic and the leitmotif of Gower's *Vox Clamantis*. The locative adverb *ibi* (there) extends the speaker's conceit of separation from his addressees: let everyone over there in the world consider himself, he says, flexing his bow. However, that wording is notably strained by the epigram's leonine form, in which caesura and line-end must rhyme. Behind the rhyming *ibi* we might hear *hic* (here), that is, in this book. The word is not present in these verses, but the invitation it would extend is a staple of their genre. The same invitation is implied by the verb *speculetur*, which evokes the noun *speculum* (mirror), and so also the genre of moral literature supported by the great medieval metaphor of the book-as-mirror. (Gower employed that conceit in the title *Mirour de l'Omme* and would do so again when he retitled that work as *Speculum Meditantis*.) Thus the book emerges powerfully as a third actant, mediator between speaker and addressee: it is an arrow with which the poet-archer intends to strike the unrighteous, but also (via a chain of associations) a mirror in which readers are instructed to look at themselves and become better.

Gower's poetry has designs on readers: it aims to inform their experience and change the way they conduct themselves. *Mirour de l'Omme* and the pre-1381 *Vox Clamantis* are works that justifiably earn Gower the epithet bestowed on him by his friend and contemporary Geoffrey Chaucer: "moral." With his salute to "moral Gower," Chaucer presumably meant to recognize his friend's achievements as a teacher of moral precept, delivered in *Mirour de l'Omme* and *Vox Clamantis*.[18] In modern scholarship, the poet's didactic purpose has too often been treated as a liability: even Wickert passes over the estates criticism that makes up the bulk of the *Vox Clamantis*.[19] What relation is there, one might ask, between the poet's works of moral instruction and the exorbitant fictions of *Visio Anglie*? The question is raised by Gower's own curation of his oeuvre, for the poem termed *Visio Anglie* in modern scholarship is attested in manuscript exclusively as the first book of *Vox Clamantis*. As I have noted, Gower seems to have completed a version of *Vox Clamantis* books 2–6 before the rising of 1381. Book 2 of the received text shows clear signs of having been the opening book, as originally conceived. After the rising, the poet set the newly composed *Visio Anglie* at the head of the existing *Vox Clamantis*, and this is how he released the poem to scribes. That arrangement has been read as compensatory: it is tempting to think that the unprecedented event of popular insurrection was experienced by Gower as a challenge to the coherence and relevance of his moral project. *Visio Anglie* would then stand as Gower's response—successful or unsuccessful—to that felt challenge. Some version of this reading is probably inevitable, but one wants to know: what is the content of the response?

What did the teacher of morality say in reply to revolutionary insurrection—and why does his message take the form of an unhinged and wildly classicizing dream vision?

In an illuminating essay, Andrew Galloway argues that *Visio Anglie* is not, finally, about the rebels and their outrages, but rather about the moral condition of the dreamer-speaker.[20] In professing to recount what he has seen in a dream, the poem's speaker reveals that he himself has been insufficiently vigilant, for, in Gower's handling, the genre of dream-vision no longer supplies unmediated and unproblematic access to "suprahuman powers."[21] The speaker continues to claim transcendent authority for his dream, and his claims are not treated as trivial, but they are made to sit uneasily beside other, incompatible associations: dream as moral torpor, the sleep of reason, and the unfettered play of desire. Nor does the poetic act of composition escape the poet's censure: the incomparable outrages recounted in this poem resemble nothing so much as the compositional activity of the poet himself, who—in casting those outrages in such an egregiously literary idiom—left his fingerprints all over them. In Galloway's shrewd reading, *Visio Anglie* emerges as a severe exercise in *Selbstkritik*. The poet's persona joins his speaker, the dreamer, and the rebels, all of whom stand indicted of having put reason to sleep and permitted passions to run riot. No longer an archer who takes aim at immorality from afar, the poet now impersonates it. He becomes an "implicated speaking presence," present within and compromised by the secular happenings he narrates.[22]

Yet the profound change in Goffmanian footing expresses no deeper reorganization of moral thought. If *Visio Anglie* depicts subjects overcome by their own passions, as Galloway persuasively argues, the poem also invents a self-aware, reflective subject, a subject whose particular rights to the political and economic domination of other people are underwritten by his particular receptivity to moral criticism. In short, Gower invents the subject to be addressed in subsequent books of the *Vox Clamantis*. This invention occurs in the closing moves of *Visio Anglie*, near the point of its join with the pre-1381 *Vox*. The mechanics of this join are more sophisticated than previous commentators have noticed.[23] An examination of it will also enable me to make my case for Gower's Virgilian allusions.

II

In chapters 17–20, Gower figures the Tower of London as a ship packed with aristocratic refugees of the rising. The dreamer climbs aboard, but no sooner has the ship floated out to sea than it becomes enveloped in a sudden storm, turning the life vessel into a deathtrap. The ship's huddling

aristocrats are undone, powerless to save themselves from the winds, rain, lightning, and mountainous waves. At the height of the storm, the dreamer withdraws into himself and concludes that everything he has seen and suffered is, in fact, a punishment for his own sin: "Hec modo que pacior propria culpa tulit" (*Visio*, 1784). He offers up an extended penitential prayer, praises the Creator, acknowledges himself guilty, and beseeches divine mercy (*Visio*, 1793–1838). His companions join him, pouring out prayers to heaven (*Visio*, 1849–50 and 1695p). The passage is pivotal, as Wickert recognized: "God has mercy on the contrite sinners, removes his judgment of damnation, and the uprising collapses."[24] The aristocratic world regains its even keel; at the end of the poem, the nobles sail back to Britain, where the rebellious peasantry "had been bound in chains again and lies compliantly under our foot" (rusticitas fuerat religata cathenis / Et paciens nostro subiacet illa pede; *Visio*, 2093–94).

What has happened here? As a moment of lucid dreaming, the sequence makes a certain amount of sense. The dreamer wakes up within the dream and discerns that he is the origin of everything he has experienced. Galloway shows that a psychological explanation of this sort would not be out of place in *Visio Anglie*. Moreover, the dreamer of William Langland's contemporary poem *Piers Plowman* experiences similar flashes of lucidity; in one such episode he recognizes that his ejection from the Eden-like "myddelerþe" is a misfortune he has brought upon himself.[25] In the case of *Visio Anglie*, however, the dreamer's claim to be personally responsible for his nightmare is complicated by his equally insistent claim that his nightmare is a prophetic expression of events that will shortly befall the whole English realm in waking life. Within that prophetic frame, the dreamer's expression of moral responsibility lays blame for the rising on the realm's political class: their failures permitted the peasants and laborers to run riot. Moreover, a naturalistic explanation of the dreamer's epiphany arrives at the same conclusion, so long as it is not permitted to beg the question of guilt entirely, for the dreamer has aligned himself emphatically with the aristocrats. He speaks as one of them, and his penitential prayer is immediately taken up by them. The masters, Gower seems to say, have failed in the moral, economic, and political responsibilities entrusted to them, and these are the consequences.

Gower had already warned of this eventuality in the pre-1381 *Vox*, but the passage in *Visio Anglie* delivers a deeper mythography of power and subjectivity. This is achieved in an extraordinary poetic synthesis, articulating the dreamer's act of penitential prayer with a complex network of allusions to the Latin poetic topos of the sea storm. Gower draws heavily from Ovid's several storms, as David Carlson's notes demonstrate. Behind those storms, however, lies Juno's wrathful gale at the beginning of the *Aeneid*

(1.81–156)—the storm that causes Aeneas to lose all hope, raise his hands to heaven, and cry out that it would have been better to die a hero's death beneath the walls of Troy. Verbal reminiscences of that storm seem in every case to have reached Gower through Ovid's riffs on the same passages: Gower's language is always closer to Ovid than to Virgil.[26] Yet literary affiliation may be expressed by means other than verbal quotation, and the Virgilian storm tells the same story as Gower's: momentarily alienated rights of lordship are reclaimed. Wickert rightly noted the general correspondence, though without pursuing its implications.[27] I will suggest in what follows that Gower drew at least one element of his storm scene from the *Aeneid* itself.

In *Aeneid* 1, the relevant rights are not those of Aeneas and his companions, but those of Neptune. Moreover, it is his words, not theirs, that restore calm. Neptune notices disturbances, senses them to be an infringement on his right to govern the sea, and rises through the waters to confront the usurpers. He orders the winds to cease and desist; at his word, the raging seas grow calm. In an extended simile, the first in the poem, Virgil compares Neptune to an eminent man who, by his voice and appearance, calms a rioting urban mob (*Aeneid*, 1.148–52).[28] The storms of rebellion are calmed by the direct and authoritative intervention of a godlike noble who reaffirms his political right against the lesser men who have challenged it. Gower retained each of these elements: the semantic exchange between storm and insurrection, the cries of the despairing sailors, the theme of lordship alienated and restored, and Neptune. However, he placed the elements in a new configuration, the outlines of which may be read in the relocation of Neptune. The pagan god enters the narrative of *Visio Anglie* only after God has heard the aristocratic party's prayers; in return for calming the seas, he demands a human sacrifice: "Attamen ipse maris Neptunus qui deus exstat, / Vt mare pacificet, tunc holocausta petit" (*Visio*, 1853–54). The plot development is classical in outline but unparalleled in the Virgilian and Ovidian storm scenes. In *Aeneid* 1, the sea god's act of pacification is an autonomous defense of his own right; it requires no bartering. In the global deluge at *Metamorphoses* 1.274–347, Neptune is a willing agent of his brother. The pagan god's cameo appearance in *Visio Anglie* seems instead to rewrite a locus later in the *Aeneid*. At the end of book 5, Neptune drives an enigmatic bargain with Venus, agreeing to provide safe passage to Aeneas and his crew, at the price of one man's life:[29]

> unus erit tantum, amissum quem gurgite quaeres;
> unum pro multis dabitur caput.
> (*Aeneid*, 5.814–15)

[One only shall there be whom, lost in the flood, you will seek in vain; one life shall be given for many.]

Soon thereafter, Palinurus, Aeneas's pilot, drifts asleep and tumbles overboard into the sea; Aeneas and his fleet proceed safely to the Italian coast. An echo of Neptune's promise might be discerned in Gower's line "Vna peribat avis, quo milia mille revivunt" (One bird died, by which many thousands are saved; *Visio*, 1863). Yet the similarity lies in concept, not lexis, and Gower's allusion functions most powerfully at the level of narrative shape. In both poems, a sacrifice to Neptune secures a storm-battered crew of Trojan refugees landfall in a country of promise.

Neptune's stipulation and Palinurus's death remain enigmatic, unexplained, in Virgil's poem. Commentators would supply the enigma with meaning. In an interpretation traceable to the sixth-century allegorist Fulgentius and renewed in the twelfth century, the *Aeneid* was read as the story of male ontogeny. According to this interpretation, Virgil's narrative begins with the chaos of birth and infancy (the storm in book 1), subsequently depicts a garrulous and peevish boyhood (books 2–3) and the erotic experiments of youth (book 4), before detailing the hero's decisive initiation into the wisdom of mature adulthood (book 6).[30] Within this scheme, Palinurus is taken to represent the time of youthful diversion: Fulgentius analyzed the pilot's name as *palon orus*, interpreted as "wandering eye" (*errabunda visio*).[31] So interpreted, the pilot must be disposed of; this accomplished, Aeneas/Everyman may proceed to the awful glories of philosophical and theological study, represented by Aeneas's journey through the underworld in *Aeneid* 6. The twelfth-century commentary attributed to Bernard Silvestris concurs, adding that "Palinurus formerly guided Aeneas's ships, that is, his inclinations; but when Aeneas is advised to see his father, Palinurus dies. That is, wandering vision departs."[32] Though Gower might well have known this reading of the *Aeneid*, my argument does not require that he did. What he shares with the allegorists is just a moralization of Neptune's demand for sacrifice. In *Visio* 1863, quoted earlier, the sacrificial victim is identified as a bird, *avis*. That is because the victim delivered to Neptune is the poem's garrulous jay, the rebel leader Wat Tyler.

Tyler was murdered during a conference with the king at Smithfield on June 15. That killing broke the back of the rebellion in London; afterwards, the aristocratic party moved quickly and efficiently to restore their imperium. In Gower's version of these events, the skies clear and the ship's passengers collect themselves; in time, they make landfall on a mysterious and unrecognized island. One of the friendlier inhabitants identifies this land for the dreamer as "the island of Brut the exile" (exulis . . . Insula Bruti; *Visio*, 1963)—that is, England. At the end of the poem, the exiled passengers have arrived (again) in their own land, the land in which they rightfully claim lordship. There is a general correspondence with Aeneas's landfall on the Italian coast, where he and his men are destined to found an empire.

Within this redoubled network of historical and literary correspondences, Gower devised a rationalization of Tyler's death vastly more sophisticated than anything the Virgilian allegorists were able to devise in the case of Palinurus. For, in making Tyler the sacrificial victim offered to Neptune, Gower separates *in intellectu* what remained inseparable *in re*: the restoration of lordship and the killing of rebels. The killing of rebels answers to the impetuous desire of a pagan god; the restoration of lordship is accomplished through the moral awakening of the Christian subject. In the sea storm of *Aeneid* 1 and the simile Virgil brought to bear on it, lordship was restored by its rightful holder, acting on his own account, confronting challengers with the combined force of his speech and physical presence. In Gower's rewrite, the challengers have no place other than as victims of lethal violence, sealed off in another dimension, answering to the obscure demand of an unacknowledged god. The speech act that restores lordship is not addressed to them, but to the heavens, and its efficacy is due not to resolved self-possession, but to confessional abjection.

With this fusion of *Aeneid* 1 and 5, Gower has brought his ship into precisely the harbor from which his pre-1381 *Vox* will depart. He has invented, in his own person, a self-aware, reflective subject capable of being an addressee of the moral admonishments delivered in the subsequent poem. Moreover, this performance of moral awakening joins a third-person variant of the same event, placed prominently at the opening of *Vox Clamantis* 2. There we read that people today generally blame Fortune for everything, as if she alone were guilty and they bore no responsibility for what happens (*Vox*, 2.41–46). On the contrary, the speaker affirms, the bad things we have been experiencing are punishment for our sins and will only abate once we take responsibility for ourselves. It is a telling reconfiguration of Boethian elements: the actions of other people and the actions of stupid chance are lumped into a single category, which is, in turn, asserted to have no reality apart from the sovereign subject's moral condition. In fitting his new poem to the pre-1381 composition, Gower transposed that moral call from the third person into the first; his speaker in the *Visio* models an awakening that he urges on others at the outset of the next book. Penitential introspection is the hinge between the two parts.

Near the beginning of *Aeneid* 7, after Aeneas and his crew have at last beached their ships on the shores of Latium, Virgil announces that the greater part is still to come: "maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, / maius opus moveo" (A greater sequence of events emerges before me; I begin a greater task; *Aeneid*, 7.44–45). At the end of *Visio Anglie*, having disembarked on the Island of Brut, Gower's dreamer likewise discovers that the future holds no respite from danger and hardship. The islander who informs him of his location also warns him that the natives are lawless, violent, and mercurial

(*Visio*, 1965–82). Following the addition of *Visio Anglie*, the moral admonishments delivered in *Vox Clamantis* 2–7 may take on the appearance of Virgil's *maius opus*, a long and costly war of imperial foundation. The dreamer's shipboard prayer defines the field of battle as the individual conscience. The delivery of Tyler to Neptune implies that the battles ahead are reserved for the masters alone.

That delimitation of moral community should lead us to reconsider the function of discursive address in *Vox Clamantis*. We have seen that the archer epigram and the accompanying illustration represent the poet as addressing the entire world. The title *Vox Clamantis* similarly implies expansive address: Gower assumes the voice of the anguished prophets—Isaiah and John the Baptist—who urge moral reform on their sinning contemporaries, *omnes et singulatim*. In the text itself, Gower repeatedly claims that his discourse only remediates, for the common good, the *vox populi* or *vox communis*.[33] Finally, at the outset of his class critique, he describes the poem as conforming to the model of three estates—cleric, knight, and laborer (*Vox*, 3, chap. 1)—implying a notion of moral community broad enough to include each of these estates. In these several schemes, *Vox Clamantis* convenes a public unbounded by the material considerations of Latin literacy and scribal text production: granted that the poem had a narrowly coterie circulation, it nevertheless interpolates readers into a larger collective.[34] That collective, however, corresponds only approximately to any of the catholic schemes of address reviewed in the preceding sentences. Though unbounded by considerations of language and medium, the poem's moral community is shaped by a logic internal to its discursive mode. The discourse of moral admonishment addresses itself to persons recognized as capable of the *Visio* dreamer's act of penitential reflection. In Gower's assessment, there is a class of people who, incapable of that basic moral act, are equally beyond address and beyond redress:

> Contra natura fiunt miracula, vires
>   Nature dietas frangere sola potest:
> Non est hoc hominis aliquis quod condicion[em][35]
>   Seruorum generis rectificare queat.
>
>   . . . .
>
> Hec est gens racione carens vt bestia, namque
>   Non amat hec hominem, nec putat esse deum.
> Hiis, nisi iusticia fuerit terrore parata,
>   Succumbent domini tempore credo breui.
>   (*Vox*, 5.625–28, 651–54)

[Miracles occur in violation of nature; only divinity can break nature's strength. It is not for men to try to correct the condition of the race of serfs. . . . This is a race lacking reason, like beasts. For it does not love men, nor does it think God exists. I believe that, unless justice is equipped with terror, the lords will shortly be defeated by them.]

As previous commentators have remarked, peasants and laborers are given short shrift in *Vox Clamantis* (*Vox*, 5.557–654; chaps. 9 and 10).[36] The speaker's complaints about them are much briefer than his complaints about the regular and secular clergy, lay aristocracy, merchants, or lawyers. More important, they differ in address. Where the speaker designates a recipient for his complaints about peasants and laborers, those recipients are emphatically not the people whose behavior is passed under critical review in these chapters. The peasants are the ones, the speaker says, who supply food to us by their sweat and toil, as God commanded ("Hii sunt qui nobis magni sudore laboris / Perquirunt victus, iussit vt ipse deus"; *Vox*, 5.561–62). Yet the peasant is such a wretch that, though honored with your favor, he comes to destruction and causes your destruction as well ("Sic miser ipse, tuo cum plus sit cultus amore / Rusticus in dampnum fallit agitque tuum"; *Vox*, 5.619–20). Meanwhile, the hired laborer is quick to grumble unless you give him roasted meat ("Ni sibi des assum, murmurat ipse statim"; *Vox*, 5.642). Elsewhere in *Vox Clamantis*, shifts into the second person generally serve to address the class whose faults are presently the theme of the speaker's discourse. For instance, members of the second estate are addressed emphatically, at the conclusion of the chapters dedicated to their faults, just a few lines before the turn to agriculturalists (*Visio*, 5.543–50). These acts of direct address are fictional, in the sense that the lay aristocrats here designated as recipients of the poem's discourse are unlikely to be actual readers of it; however, the speaker's acts of address nevertheless delineate a moral community, a community of subjects designated as competent to receive and assimilate moral criticism. By the same technique, Gower designates peasants and laborers as disciplinary charges of the morally capable estates. They are to be "directed under the rule of others" (sub aliorum regimine conducti), as Gower puts it in the prose headnote to *Vox* 5, chapter 10. The chapters devoted to the third estate accordingly form a sort of exergue to *Vox Clamantis*: though integral to the poem's design, they do not *stricto sensu* participate in its moral project. Rather than confront a status group with its own faults, these two chapters depict the darkness beyond the bounds of moral community. Gower's response to the rising of 1381 was to depict that darkness in detail and, more important, to depict the penitential subject's emergence from it: "Hec modo que pacior, propria culpa tulit."

III

In an essay published in the first issue of this journal, Stephen Greenblatt analyzed the peculiar ambivalence of Albrecht Dürer's design for a monument to commemorate a victory over rebellious peasants: "What

is poignant and powerful about Dürer's design is that the identical signs can be interpreted as signifying both the radical irony of personal dissent and the harsh celebration of official order. This uncanny convergence," Greenblatt continued, "is . . . the contingent condition of certain signs at particular historical moments, moments in which the ruling elite, deeply threatened, conjure up images of repression so harsh that they can double as images of protest."[37] Gower's poem on the rising contains many such images, and for the same reason. The lines that answer most precisely to Greenblatt's description are perhaps those in which the dreamer, having now woken from his slumber, celebrates the defeat of the peasants and urges a policy of preemptive disciplinary terror:

> Sic cum rusticitas fuerat religata cathenis
>   Et paciens nostro subiacet illa pede,
> Ad iuga bos rediit, in aruis semen aratis
>   Creuit, et a bello rusticus ipse silet.
> Sic ope diuina Sathane iacet obruta virtus,
>   Que tamen indomita rusticitate latet.
> Sempter ad interitum nam rusticus insidiatur,
>   Si genus ingenuum subdere forte queat.
> Nam fera rusticitas nullo moderatur amore,
>   Corde sed aduerso semper amara gerit.
> Subditus ipse timet, nec amat seruilis arator;
>   Fedat et hunc cicius qui magis ornat eum.
> Forcius ergo timor stimulans acuatur in ipsos,
>   Et premat hos grauitas quos furit illa quies.
> Qui premunitur non fallitur ingeniosus:
>   Per mala preterita dampna futura cauet.
>   (*Visio*, 2093–2108)

[So, when the peasantry had been bound again in chains and lay compliantly under our foot, the ox returned to the yoke, the seed grew in the tilled fields, and the peasant himself refrained from war. Thus Satanic force lies defeated by an act of God, yet it hides still in the ungovernable peasantry. For the peasant is always plotting destruction, hoping to displace the well-born class. Indeed, the wild peasantry is restrained by no affection; always bitter, it bears a stubborn heart. The unfree plowman feels fear when defeated, but never love; the more one favors a peasant, the more quickly one spoils him. Therefore let them feel stabbing fear and let severity weigh upon those whom leniency provokes. The nobleman who protects himself is not deceived: by former ills he avoids future destruction.]

Like Dürer's design for a commemorative monument, Gower's lines mix images of military triumph with images of agricultural economy. Like Dürer, Gower depicts the violence of counterinsurgency with notable frankness. The first couplet stands out especially: "when the peasantry had been bound again in chains and lay compliantly under our foot." Yet, what interests me

about this statement and the passage as a whole is less the possibility of misconstruing it as an image of protest than the fact that it exaggerates. Gower's speaker indulges in imaginative overreach, projecting a concentration of power and intensity of domination unattainable within contemporary structures and techniques of government.[38] Gower is correct that the suppression of the rising was brutal. The ruling elite had memorable ways of killing people, they could employ muscle when the violence sanctioned by law proved insufficient to their needs, and they could, on special occasions, run a military campaign through the countryside. However, the aristocracy and their affiliates did not have the capacity to enforce class power in so unmediated and continuous a manner as Gower's speaker imagines. They were too small in number, their institutions of law and order were insufficiently developed, and they were too fully occupied in the cultures of consumption to devote themselves to the work of consistent, minute, and direct domination. Historians of medieval English economy and government emphasize that the ordinary operations of law enforcement and economic extraction could only be performed in medieval communities if peasant villagers were themselves engaged in those tasks.[39] Although there was a great deal of local variation in administrative arrangements, the agents of king and landlord were typically itinerant: this was not an age of panoptic power. Lordship could not distribute itself over its full territory or maintain a standing presence in each of the distributed locals where it claimed obeisance; it could only delegate and visit.

The topic is a complicated one. However, the small peasants who, in Karl Marx's famous account, formed the French nation "by the simple addition of isomorphous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes" belong, like the potato itself, to a later era and different regime of governmentality.[40] Marx considered the situation he described to be a recent development, the result of changes in the structure of the French state and in methods of rural exploitation. That point was understood with clarity by Thomas Pettitt, in a study dedicated primarily to the question of affiliations between popular rebellion and folk festival: "In the centuries before the Agrarian Revolution," Pettitt wrote, "[the peasantry] had experience of local administration—manorial, parochial, hundredal—which they could exploit for rebellious purposes. Later, the pauperized rural and urban labourers, deprived of any participation in the administration of local affairs, had no such experience to turn to when the call to rebellion came."[41] Similarly, one of Steven Justice's signal achievements in *Writing and Rebellion* was to show how the grounds of possibility for the rising of 1381 were supplied by ordinary village life.[42] There was, in Justice's phrase, an "idiom of rural politics," but not just an "idiom": rather, an array of techniques and practices for organizing communal life and a notion of moral community different from the one articulated by Gower.

For an illustration, one might consider tax collection. The connection between the rising and the "third poll tax" is well documented, especially in a series of important studies by E. B. Fryde.[43] However, this connection ought to be reconceived from the perspectives of peasants and other commoners who were regularly brought into contact with the lower reaches of government, were obligated to contribute to its functioning, and were significantly responsible for organizing ordinary life within their own communities. News of tax levies might reach villages through the county courts, institutions that regularly assembled men from across the county and whose composition extended far down the social scale.[44] Discontent might coalesce around the knowledge that communities on the other side of the county were also discontented. Tax returns were typically certified by the village constable and two other respected men from the village, or by the mayors or bailiffs of towns. These local authorities were answerable to the collectors appointed to each county or, more often, to their assistants.[45] During the decade before the rising, the nobility's renewed military adventures in France had occasioned sharply higher and almost annual levies of direct taxation. Even in this context, however, the chancellor's subsidy request at the Northampton Parliament in November 1380 was extraordinary: it came distressingly close on the heels of the last parliamentary grant, while the requested sum was well out of proportion with previous payments.[46] John of Gaunt's attack on the Good Parliament, four years previously, presumably closed off the possibility of any serious parliamentary challenge. Records indicate that representatives of the Commons grumbled—the tax, they said, was "moelt outrageouse, et oultrement importable"—but then complied with their charge, which was to select the instrument and terms of the exaction.[47] Their selection on this occasion testifies to their desire to comply with the government's request, but also to their disinclination to engage concrete details of administration.[48] They rejected the intricate graduated scale employed in the 1379 poll tax—which had proved difficult to assess and collect—in favor of the simpler flat-rate poll tax successfully collected in 1377. (The traditional tax on movable goods might have been an attractive alternative, had this type of tax not been levied by the previous parliament and collected that spring.) To bring revenues closer to the government's present requirements, Parliament simply multiplied the 1377 rate by a factor of three, from four pence to one shilling per adult.[49] The resulting tax was both heavy and heavily regressive, structured such that the majority of revenues would come from those for whom the fixed rate represented the greatest proportional burden. The parliamentary grant appealed to the "strong" to help the "weak" in their community and provided some general guidelines to this effect. Actual redistribution was, however, left to the discretion of individual towns and villages. This was not unusual. The traditional tax on movable goods had been fixed since 1334; in

subsequent levies of this tax, towns and villages were held accountable for their 1334 assessment and expected to raise the fixed sum from among their members as they saw fit. Communities were experienced at taking up collections. However, the 1380–81 tax was new and heavy. Silent and resigned payment was impossible: in the absence of a fixed schedule of the sort Parliament had supplied for the poll tax of 1379, communities necessarily took up the question of whether, and how, they should redistribute their per capita liability. The discussions that must have transpired are lost. However, their results may be read in the exceptionally detailed tax returns produced by some communities (many of the returns record taxpayers' occupational status, making them an indispensable data source for demographic study); in the widespread evasion of the tax (visible to exchequer clerks who compared the 1380–81 returns with those of the 1377 poll tax); and, finally, in the rapid spread of rebellion the following June.[50]

The government's mechanism for enforcement of labor laws supplies a similar—and similarly apposite—example of devolved responsibility. After the first wave of plague, the central government had sought to freeze wages at pre-plague levels, prevent laborers from moving between employers, and press free persons into compulsory agricultural labor.[51] Infractions against the Statute of Labourers were to be heard by justices who rotated through the realm's counties under royal commission. There were several different arrangements for this.[52] However, throughout the successive higher-order reorganizations, responsibility for identifying and reporting violations necessarily fell to the manor and village, including the village constables. The men selected to serve as constable, reeve, and other minor officers were typically among the wealthier villagers, distinguished from their neighbors by comparatively more extensive lands and goods. As Lawrence Poos shows, this arrangement was not, on the whole, conducive to peasant resistance and solidarity: the interests of village officers would align in important respects with the interests of the authorities who had invested them in office, and they tended to act accordingly.[53] Poos's point holds as well for tax collection and assessment.[54] However, if villagers and minor officials approached their situation strategically, the advent of the rising opened up a new strategic field, one in which petty enforcers of the labor law and petty violators of it might both call for elimination of the law. In 1353, at a court leet in Pentlow, Essex, a jury accused Richard Warde of assaulting Richard Bridder in the church at Pentlow and drawing blood from him.[55] Warde was constable of the neighboring town of Cavendish; the court record states that he had sought to apprehend Bridder for violations of the Statute of Labourers, and that he intended to bring him before the itinerant justices empowered to hear and decide cases involving that law. For the wound he suffered in the church at the hands of the constable, Bridder raised the hue and cry. During

the rising of 1381, all the individual elements of this incident might be rearranged within a new strategic field. Rather than attempting to enforce the Statute of Labourers as his office required, the town constable might lead his neighbors in targeted attacks on the archives and properties of the county sheriff, justice of the peace, royal councilor, and manorial lord. Rather than swear laborers to obey the terms of the legislation, a constable and his neighbors might swear one another to oppose the government's rule. If constable and laborer made the trek into London, they might both raise the hue and cry against the king's councilors.

Prior experience of resistance must also have played a role in the events of June 1381: one would not want to ignore longer histories of peasant resistance or underestimate the legacies of hope and experience that the rebels of 1381 may have derived from them.[56] However, it seems that the rising was effected in large part by turning the "traditional organizational framework" to new ends.[57] Legal records produced during the suppression of the rising include indictments against disproportionately large numbers of people who had previously served in the minor offices of manor and village: reeves, chief pledges, affeerers, ale-tasters, bailiffs, jurors, constables, and tax collectors.[58] All researchers who have studied this topic emphasize that the records are numerically skewed: indictments regularly state the names of only a few ringleaders, adding that they were accompanied by many other persons left unnamed. However, numerical skewing does not affect the basic finding, which is that individuals indicted as leaders of the revolt were often representatives of seigniorial or government authority in the years prior to the revolt. Networks of obligation were reversible. Villagers who had previously served seigniorial or government authorities joined—or led—their neighbors against those same authorities in the spring of 1381. As they did so, they made new use of traditional organizational frameworks. The rebels made and demanded oaths of allegiance.[59] They called on their experience of military array in defensive militias.[60] They raised the hue and cry.[61] By means of these operations, they assembled individuals into new, obligatory collectives with the authority to issue orders, mete out punishments, and pursue political objectives. Legal records describe these collective bodies variously as a band, covin, company, assembly, meeting, sworn alliance, or confederation (*societas, covina, comitiva, conventicula, congregacio, affidacio, allegancia*).[62] According to chronicles, the members themselves termed their collective body the "commons" or the "true commons." Oaths of allegiance were demanded in the name of the king and "truth"—that is, fidelity, or the honoring of communal obligations.[63] The party that extracted the oath might be a village notable, a current or former holder of petty office. Those extracting oaths and those swearing them were probably often known to one another, as members of the same or neighboring villages, but a prior social

connection was not necessary. Strangers encountered on the highway, including strangers of high social standing, could be met with the same obligation to swear their incorporation into the true commons.

Study of the legal records led Rodney Hilton to conclude that "the rising was one of the whole people below the ranks of those who exercised lordship in the countryside and established authority in the towns."[64] That characterization has been confirmed by subsequent and much more extensive studies.[65] Free and unfree agriculturalists were joined by wage laborers and artisans from both the countryside and the towns. The textile industry and clothing trades were prominently represented among the indicted rebels in Essex, Norfolk, and London. At least thirty-five of the accused are identified as clerics.[66] In a few provincial towns where municipal liberties were still withheld by monastic overlords (St. Albans, Bury St. Edmunds) or curtailed by the university corporation (Cambridge), city leaders themselves participated in the rebellion.[67] In London the rising drew support from members of "all those classes outside the oligarchy of the wealthiest merchants," from the smaller citizen craftsmen to apprentices and day laborers.[68] Assembly of this data has been accompanied in modern scholarship by a sharpened appreciation that the rising was not unitary. It was instead a concatenation of local events, following different logics in the towns than in rural Essex and Kent.[69]

At one level, the point of the preceding paragraphs is just that *Visio Anglie* comes to rest in a wishful simplification of the operations and distribution of power in late medieval English society. The poem is a document in the psychic life of itinerant power: the rising is defeated through a total effacement of peasant agencies, including the minimal exercises of agency necessary to ordinary operations of government and economy. Yet the poem's conclusive annihilation of peasant agencies can proceed only after some registration of them. *Visio Anglie* does this, and more pregnantly than previous commentators have noticed; one only needs to know how to read its twisted representational technique. John Fisher noticed that the different bands of animals code different conditions of people, but he did not pursue the topic further.[70] Gower decodes the dream's animal allegory in a prose note summarizing the argument of the poem's sixth chapter:

Hic dicit se per sompnium quintam vulgi turmam in mureligos et vulpes vidisse mutatam: dicit mureligos, vt seruos domesticos; dicit vulpes, quia fures ruptis vbique gaiolis, liberi tunc eos comitabantur. (*Visio*, 461p)

[Here he says that in his dream he saw a fifth group of the masses transformed into cats and foxes. By "cats" he means household servants. The foxes are criminals: once freed from the prisons that were everywhere broken open, the criminals teamed up with the servants.][71]

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The freeing of prisoners from jails was one of the rebellion's first actions, and often repeated. Foxes are typically a criminal element in medieval animal fables; perhaps cats struck Gower as a suitable animal emblem for independent-minded household help. The headnote to the next chapter glosses owls as thieves: "bubones, id est predones" (*Visio*, 505p). Eric Stockton's translation of *predones* as "birds of prey" is not wrong, but reduces the gloss to a bland ornithological identification ("owls are a kind of bird of prey") and obscures the dream-vision's coded social content.[72] The remaining headnotes assert no further identifications, but Gower's meaning is clear enough: the animals function at least in part as heraldic devices. Later, in his *Chronica Tripertita*, Gower would designate aristocratic personages as a swan, bear, horse, sun, crescent moon, boar, and castle, carefully identifying each device in the poem's prose glosses.[73] In *Visio Anglie*, he constructed a similarly heraldic system of signification, but with this important difference: the animal emblems represent neither individual aristocrats nor their family lineages, but instead nonnoble occupationally defined collectivities. The donkeys and oxen that make up the first and second bands are emblems of the agriculturalists who used these animals in their field work. Among the donkeys' crimes is their refusal to carry sacks of farm goods into the village for sale (*Visio*, 193–94), a kind of work that landlords extracted from their unfree tenants. Oxen were the preferred plowing animals in medieval England. Gower tells us that they have rebelled against their customary work, leaving the fields untilled, unplanted, and strewn with disused agricultural instruments (*Visio*, 277–84). The voracious pigs that form the third band are emblems of free laborers who, Gower complains, are demanding ever higher wages for their work (*Visio*, 367–68). In *Mirour de l'Omme* and *Vox Clamantis*, Gower had already complained that servants and agricultural laborers expected to eat better than their parents and grandparents had.[74] The dogs that follow the swine run from cottages, the bakery, the kitchen, the butcher's shop, the mill, and the stable (*Visio*, 397–404). They are presumably emblems of their owners. At the beginning of *Visio Anglie*, when Gower's dreamer first catches sight of the bands of ordinary people on the green, those people appear to him as an undifferentiated provincial mass ("tanta rusticitate"; *Visio*, 174). Their subsequent transformation into beasts materializes their separation from human reason and sentiment but simultaneously assigns them particularized statuses within a differentiated human society: "Diuersas turmas diuersaque forma figurat, / Quamlibet et propria condicione notat" (Different shapes transfigured different groups, marking each one with its own status; *Visio*, 179–80). The word *propria* in line 180 means not only "proper" or "right" but also "real." The new animal shapes imposed on each band of rebels express, Gower says, their real or actual social status.

The poetics of heraldry supplied Gower with another field for the old dialectic of (in)decorum. The donkeys provide an example. After their second transformation, the donkey-monsters prove swifter than deer and better leapers than leopards (*Visio*, 229–32). They also sport tails longer than those by which the lion is distinguished: "Longior in cauda fuerat tunc vilis asellus / Quam fuit insignis (prothdolor!) ipse leo" (*Visio*, 233–34). Gower drew this last touch from Nigel Witeker's *Speculum stultorum*, in which a donkey wishes for a long tail.[75] That detail becomes less bizarre when we recall that the royal arms of England displayed three highly stylized lions *passant guardant*, with long tails that fit within the escutcheon's frame only by forming a double loop over the animals' backs. Gower's demonic donkeys have acquired—as a royal encroachment—what was merely an asinine wish in Nigel's satirical poem. Usurpation emerges as an enduring theme in these passages, endlessly varied. There are, for instance, no horses among the rebel bands; they appear in the poem only as victims of the donkeys' presumptuous encroachments (*Visio*, 197–98). Oxen assume the fierce nature of lions, leopards, and bears (*Visio*, 293–94), and barnyard fowl presume to the status of falcons and eagles (*Visio*, 519–22). These animals are all heraldic symbols of nobility. By their polymorphous transformations, the animals commit meaningful offenses against the symbolic system of medieval heraldry and express the rebels' encroachments upon aristocratic right.

More importantly, however, the animal emblems set the stage for subsequent and highly intentional acts of association. The bands join together. They swear alliances and consecrate treaties (*pacta, federa*) among themselves. Smaller groups are shown to unite into larger groups (the words are [*con*]*sociare, associare, comitare*, and *convenire*).[76] Like the chronicles and the legal records, *Visio Anglie* registers a special interest in the associative activities of the rebels. Before marching on London, the assembled rebel-animals "conclude reciprocal treaties with clasped hands" (ipsi / Complexis manibus mutua pacta ferunt; *Visio*, 725–26). Later, on the occasion of their triumphant entry into that city, "The unfree assembly seeks to join one victorious right hand with another" (Victricem repetit dextre coniungere dextram / Concio seruilis; *Visio*, 909–10). The clasped hands remind us that the dream's rebellious animals are people. They extend the dream-vision's blurring of human and animal.[77] However, more significant than the human hands themselves are their acts of solemnizing *mutua pacta*. The beasts of the fields have presumed to the august political forms of social organization ordinarily reserved for states and their governing families. Gower pitches the animal alliances at an absurdly elevated and official register; the associational techniques of the rising were presumably humbler, drawn from the life experience of its participants. Yet, if the alliance-motif rejoins the larger theme of usurpation, it nevertheless has its own specific logic. Gower

developed that logic in detail and assigned it an absolutely central place in his narrative.

One can, perhaps distinguish four principal features. First, the alliances are formal and political, as we have seen. Second, they supervene upon and suspend natural antagonisms. Dogs and foxes are ordinarily hostile to one another (inimici; *Visio*, 489); nevertheless, they now establish "reciprocal peace treaties" (mutua . . . federa pacis; *Visio*, 490). Similarly, owls and song-birds should not get along, but do:

> Nuper et hec volucrum bubones que solet ira
> Spernere, cessat, et est tunc amor inter eos.
>> (*Visio*, 555–56)

[Now the hostility ceases which generally causes other birds to spurn owls, and there is instead friendship between them.]

Freed from prison, the owl joins itself with the birds of the fields as their companion (*Visio*, 559–60). Animals that ought to be enemies throw their natures aside. Third, the alliances multiply individual strength and ferocity: domestic and wild beasts attain new destructive power from their federation. Gower says that the animal bands became more fearsome when combined: "Mixtaque sic pariter sunt metuenda magis" (*Visio*, 510). This is true of the individual bands as well:

> Federa cum socio dat verres iuncta nefrendo,
> Vt magis euertant congradiuntur humum.
> Scrophaque sus sociam porcam sibi consociarunt,
> Que magis vt noceant, plura maligna mouent.
>> (*Visio*, 307–10)

[The boar issued joint treaties with its toothless companion; they run together so that they might tear up more soil. The breeding-sow and hog allied themselves with a porcine ally and they perpetrate multiple evils in order to do more damage.]

The swine are terrifying not just for their mythologico-scriptural monstrosity (enormous size, flaming breath, spear-like bristles, possession by demons, and so on) but also, and more simply, because they have entered into alliance with the boar. Finally, the alliances herald the millennium. The rebel-animals are joined by biblical plagues of flies and frogs; in lines lifted from Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon*, they are joined by the progeny of Cain (*Visio*, 757) and by Gog and Magog (*Visio*, 767; compare Revelation 20:7–10). When the animals gather together, their number is said to be "like the sands of the sea," an allusion to Satan's gathered armies in Revelation (*Visio*, 680 and 749; compare Revelation 20:7). In sum, the alliance-motif in *Visio Anglie*

consists in formalized acts of political unification that suspend natural hostility, multiply force, and announce the end-times.

Taken together, these features form a point-by-point parody of Isaian messianic prophecy:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them. (Isaiah 11:6, Douay Rheims version)

Christian exegetes explained this prophecy as an animal allegory. According to standard interpretations, Isaiah refers, by means of the different animals, to the different conditions of people united in Christ. The leopard is a proud man and the kid a humble sinner in the church. Similarly, the wolf is Saul as persecutor of Christians and the lamb is Ananias (Acts 9:10–18) "et huiusmodi," that is, and any other analogous pair. This system of identifications was asserted by Jerome and transmitted in the *Glossa Ordinaria*.[78] Nicholas of Lyre extended it in his influential commentary: the wolves are vicious robbers, while the leopard is a person bearing the spots and stains (*maculas*, a common Latin pun) of many past mistakes.[79] Gower had already alluded to this Isaian prophecy late in the *Vox Clamantis*, turning it on its head:

> Custodit vulpis modo pullos et lupus agnos,
> Perdices nisus lignaque sicca focus.
> (*Vox*, 7.225–26)

[Now the fox guards the chickens and the wolf the lambs; the hawk guards the partridges and the fireplace guards dry wood.]

The couplet occurs in a rambling and vividly illustrated passage about how the whole world has become perverted. In the context of that argument, the reconciliation of predator and prey is evidence not of a glorious new order, but of the predators' corruption. There is, similarly, a whole network of dislocations between Isaiah 11 and the animal alliances of *Visio Anglie.* Isaiah's animal friendship announces the arrival of the Messiah; Gower's animal alliances herald the loosing of Satan. Isaiah proclaims the suspension of natural antagonism and reign of peace; Gower describes the displacement of natural antagonism onto a new enemy. In Isaiah's prophecy, the law of nature is superseded, replaced by a new law; in Gower's vision, the law of nature remains sublimely inviolate beyond all the injuries committed against it. Nature remains both the law by which the animal alliances are condemned and the condition to which the animals will return following the hiatus of rebellion. Finally, there is a difference in political organization. Isaiah instances the ancient shepherd-flock dyad: the One who leads the people differs in essence from them, just as a shepherd differs from his sheep.

By contrast with that pastoral model, the leaders of the animal bands in Gower's poem emerge from the masses whom they lead and differ from them in no essential respects: they are all squawking animals.

The parody of Isaiah registers, and repudiates, an alternate way of organizing life. Gower framed *Visio Anglie* as a report of how "unfree peasants [*seruiles rustici*] violently revolted against the realm's nobles and well-born persons" (Prol.1p). The opening chapters depict a social body split in two: a universal congregation of unenfranchised commoners is massed against the aristocratic party. When the different rebel bands unite and swear alliance to one another, the result is the most fearsome of all the poem's monsters: the self-organized political activity of unenfranchised people. Gower depicts this as a world-destroying catastrophe, but also as a mirage. When the siege of (New) Troy gives way to the perilous sea voyage, the rising is converted into tempestuous yet inanimate wind and rain. When the dreamer of *Visio Anglie* claims the storm as punishment for his own sin, the chain of attenuations is complete: from common people, to domestic animals, to monstrous beasts, to barbarian horde, to wind and rain, the rising has shrunk down into a matter of the governing class's conscience. The political agency of the unenfranchised commons is effaced, and the prospect that they could form a real agent of history is displaced by the familiar world in which the aristocracy is, through moral lapse, its own worst enemy. Society's destiny is not the product of a protracted war between two unequal and perpetually opposed blocs, but instead the product of the good or bad conduct of the classes that possess exclusive right to political intentions. It follows that the governing classes must be educated, encouraged, supported, and even prodded toward correct living. This is the project of *Vox Clamantis*.

Notes

 1. There is a vast literature on the Peasants' Revolt; see especially Herbert Eiden, *"In der Knechtschaft werdet ihr verharren—": Ursachen und Verlauf des englischen Bauernaufstandes von 1381* (Trier, 1995); Herbert Eiden, "The Social Ideology of the Rebels in Suffolk and Norfolk in 1381," in *Von Nowgorod bis London: Studien zu Handel, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im mittelalterlichen Europa. Festschrift für Stuart Jenks zum 60. Geburtstag,* ed. Marie-Luise Heckmann and Jens

Röhrkasten (Göttingen, 2008), 425–40; Nicholas Brooks, "The Organization and Achievements of the Peasants of Kent and Essex in 1381," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (London, 1985), 247–70; R. H. Hilton and T. H. Aston, eds., *The English Rising of 1381* (Cambridge, 1984); R. B. Dobson, ed., *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, 2nd ed. (London, 1983); Andrew J. Prescott, "London in the Peasants' Revolt: A Portrait Gallery," *London Journal: A Review of Metropolitan Society Past and Present* 7, no. 2 (1981): 125–43; and Rodney H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (London, 1973). Eiden offers the fullest account, an excellent bibliography, and astute discussion of earlier studies. Juliet R. V. Barker, *1381: The Year of the Peasants' Revolt* (Cambridge, MA, 2014) came to my attention too late to be consulted.

2. On the violence of the suppression, see Andrew J. Prescott, "'The Hand of God': The Suppression of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381," in *Prophecy, Apocalypse and the Day of Doom: Proceedings of the 2000 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nigel J. Morgan (Donington, UK, 2004), 317–41.

3. For biographical materials, see John H. Fisher, *John Gower, Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York, 1964), 37–69; and John Hines, Nathalie Cohen, and Simon Roffey, "*Iohannes Gower, Armiger, Poeta*: Records and Memorials of His Life and Death," in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. Siân Echard (Cambridge, 2004), 23–41.

4. Robert Epstein, "London, Southwark, Westminster: Gower's Urban Contexts," in Echard, *A Companion to Gower*, 53.

5. David R. Carlson, ed., *John Gower: Poems on Contemporary Events: The "Visio Anglie" (1381) and "Cronica Tripertita" (1400)*, trans. A. G. Rigg (Toronto, 2011). For comment on the title, see 8. Among recent studies, the most significant are Maura Nolan, "The Poetics of Catastrophe: Ovidian Allusion in Gower's *Vox Clamantis*," in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature: Essays in Honour of Jill Mann*, ed. Christopher Cannon and Maura Nolan (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK, 2011), 113–33; Andrew Galloway, "Reassessing Gower's Dream-Visions," in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, and Tradition*, ed. Elisabeth M. Dutton, John Hines, and Robert F. Yeager (Cambridge, 2010), 288–303; and Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1993), 208–13. Maria Wickert's splendid 1953 study remains unsurpassed. I will cite the English translation repeatedly: Maria Wickert, *Studies in John Gower*, trans. Robert J. Meindl (Washington, DC, 1981).

6. For orientation within the chronicle accounts, see Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 2, *c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), 118–34, 166–69; and John Taylor, *English Historical Literature in the Fourteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), 319–24.

7. John Gower, *Visio Anglie*, ll. 171–72. All quotations of this poem are from Carlson, *Poems on Contemporary Events*. Future citations of line numbers in the poem will be made parenthetically in the main text. A line number followed by "p" means that the quoted text is a prose note preceding that line; in *Visio Anglie* these notes occur only at the beginning of chapters. Translations are mine, except where noted otherwise. For *Visio Anglie* I have consulted Rigg's verse translation (in Carlson, *Poems on Contemporary Events*) and Eric Stockton's prose, published as Eric W. Stockton, trans., *The Major Latin Works of John Gower: The Voice of One Crying, and The Tripartite Chronicle* (Seattle, 1962).

8. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 208–13; Susan Crane, "The Writing Lesson of 1381," in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt

(Minneapolis, 1992), 208; David Aers, "*Vox Populi* and the Literature of 1381," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), 441–43. For analysis of similar phenomena in the chronicle accounts, see Paul Strohm, "'A Revelle!': Chronicle Evidence and the Rebel Voice," in *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton, 1992), 34–51.

9. These compositional procedures are laid open to view in Carlson's excellent notes to *Poems on Contemporary Events*. For discussion, see Nolan, "The Poetics of Catastrophe"; David R. Carlson, "Gower's Early Latin Poetry: Text-Genetic Hypotheses of an 'Epistola Ad Regem' (ca. 1377–1380) from the Evidence of John Bale," *Mediaeval Studies* 65, no. 1 (2003): 307–10; and Andrew Galloway, "Gower in His Most Learned Role and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381," *Mediaevalia* 16 (1993): 329–47.

10. The quote is from Gower's great Victorian editor: G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The Complete Works of John Gower: Latin Works* (Oxford, 1902), xxxii.

11. Wickert, *Studies*, 27–67; Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 207–18; and Galloway, "Reassessing Gower's Dream-Visions," each present illuminating discussions of this topic.

12. G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The Complete Works of John Gower: French Works* (Oxford, 1899). References to *Mirour de l'Omme* are to this edition. There is an English translation: John Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme (The Mirror of Mankind)*, trans. William Burton Wilson (East Lansing, MI, 1992). For commentary see R. F. Yeager, "John Gower's French," in Echard, *A Companion to Gower*, 139–45; and Maura Nolan, "Agency and the Poetics of Sensation in Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*," in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus, OH, 2013), 214–43.

13. References to *Vox Clamantis* 2–7 are to Macaulay, *Latin Works*, and will be cited in the text parenthetically by book and line number. For the chronology of composition see Wickert, *Studies*, 1–26; and Fisher, *John Gower*, 101–9.

14. Wickert, *Studies*, 69–130.

15. The verses are printed in Macaulay, *Latin Works*, 19. For the manuscript attestations, see Wickert, *Studies*, 83–84. The illustration in British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iv, is reproduced as the frontispiece to Macaulay's edition and also in Derek Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," in Echard, *A Companion to Gower*, 85.

16. Goffman glosses his term as "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance"; Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia, 1981), 128.

17. Wickert, *Studies*, 83–89.

18. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus*, 5.1856, quoted from Larry Dean Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston, 1987). See the OED's notice of this instance, s.v. moral, *adj.*, sense 2b; and Siân Echard's concise review of the epithet's reception: Echard, "Gower's Reputation," in Echard, *A Companion to Gower*, 3–6.

19. Wickert, *Studies*, 131. This topic bears further study. See A. J. Minnis, "'Moral Gower' and Medieval Literary Theory," in *Gower's "Confessio Amantis": Responses and Reassessments*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1983), 50–78; Elizabeth Porter, "Gower's Ethical Microcosm and Political Macrocosm," in Minnis, *Gower's "Confessio Amantis,"* 135–62; and Michael P. Kuczynski, "Gower's Metaethics," in *John Gower, Recent Readings: Papers Presented at the Meetings of the John Gower Society at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, 1983–1988,*

ed. Robert F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), 189–207. Future studies might profit from exemplary recent essays on the ethical thought of *Piers Plowman*, and, more distantly, from Michel Foucault's studies of ancient and late antique ethical practices. For the former, see Anne Middleton, "Dowel, the Proverbial, and the Vernacular: Some Versions of Pastoralia," in *Medieval Poetics and Social Practice: Responding to the Work of Penn R. Szittya*, ed. Seeta Chaganti (New York, 2012), 143–69; and Ralph Hanna, "*Speculum Vitae* and the Form of *Piers Plowman*," in Grady and Galloway, *Answerable Style*, 121–39. Within Foucault's work see especially the lecture courses of 1979–80 and 1981–82: Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979–1980*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, 2014); and Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–82*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, 2005).

20. Galloway, "Reassessing Gower's Dream-Visions," 294–301.
21. Ibid., 302.
22. The phrase is Anne Middleton's, influentially applied to William Langland's *Piers Plowman* and to Gower's later poem *Confessio Amantis*. Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 102.
23. "At the point of transition between the *Visio* and the *V*[*ox*] *C*[*lamantis*], that is, in the prologue of the second book, in which—if anywhere—the juncture ought to have become visible, a clear allusion is absent from the text"; Wickert, *Studies*, 15. Wickert was looking in the wrong place: the juncture occurs within the narrative of book one.
24. Ibid., 52.
25. This recognition occurs when the dreamer wakes from an inner dream into the outer one. The relevant lines are 11.324 and 405–41 in the Athlone edition of *Piers Plowman* B: George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, eds., *Piers Plowman: The B Version: Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best. An Edition in the Form of Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17 Corrected and Restored from the Known Evidence, with Variant Readings*, rev. ed. (London, 1988).
26. Michael P. Kuczynski, "Gower's Virgil," in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millennium*, ed. Robert F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI, 2007), 161–87, finds surprisingly slight evidence that Gower knew Virgil firsthand. Yet it would be surprising if Gower did not know the *Aeneid* in some form. On the general availability of Virgil's epic and modes of access to it in Gower's time, see Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. 30–40, 136–67, 285–308.
27. Wickert, *Studies*, 45–48.
28. A medieval reader in Norwich glossed this simile with precise reference to the rising: Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, 143–46; also Christopher Baswell, "Aeneas in 1381," *New Medieval Literatures* 5 (2002): 23–24.
29. Text and translation from *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, Appendix Vergiliana*, ed. and trans. H. Rushton Fairclough and G. P. Goold, rev. ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1999–2000).
30. On this interpretive tradition see Peter Dronke, "*Integumenta Virgilii*," in *Lectures Médiévales de Virgile: Actes du Colloque organisé par l'Ecole française de Rome (Rome, 25–28 octobre 1982)* (Rome, 1985), 313–29; Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England*, 84–135; and Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C. J. Putnam, eds., *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (New Haven, 2008), 660–72, 726–39.
31. Ziolkowski and Putnam, *Virgilian Tradition*, 663. The standard edition of this text is *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii Opera*, ed. Rudolf Helm (Leipzig, 1898), 81–107.

32. "Hic hactenus naves Enee duxit, id est voluntates, sed dum ammonetur Eneas videre patrem, moritur Palinurus, id est demigrat errabundus visus"; J. Ward Jones and Elizabeth Frances Jones, eds., *Commentum Quod Dicitur Bernardi Silvestris Super Sex Libros Eneidos Virgilii* (Lincoln, NB, 1977), 28.

33. See in particular Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, 3.Prol.55–56, 4.19–20, 4.709–10 and the prose note at the head of book 2. For a conspectus of the passages and comment on them, see Wickert, *Studies*, 75–83; and Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 209–11.

34. On the notion of a work's "public"—as distinct from its readership—see Anne Middleton, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*," in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Cambridge, 1982), 101–23. On the manuscripts and circulation of *Vox Clamantis*, see M. B. Parkes, "Patterns of Scribal Activity and Revisions of the Text in Early Copies of Works by John Gower," in *New Science out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle*, ed. Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (Aldershot, UK, 1995), 81–121. Also Fisher, *John Gower*, 105–6.

35. My emendation for Macaulay's *condicionis*.

36. Notably, Wickert, *Studies*, 15–17. I do not find her interpretation persuasive on this point.

37. Stephen Greenblatt, "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre, the Representation of Rebellion," *Representations* 1 (1983): 11.

38. I am indebted to Anne Middleton's analysis of the 1388 Statute of Labourers for the notion of imaginative overreach, though I put this concept to different use than she does. Anne Middleton, "Acts of Vagrancy: The C Version 'Autobiography' and the Statute of 1388," in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia, 1997), 216–46.

39. Christopher Dyer, *Everyday Life in Medieval England* (London, 1994), 2–5; M. M. Postan, *The Medieval Economy and Society: An Economic History of Britain in the Middle Ages* (London, 1972), 95, 117–20; Helen Maud Cam, "The Community of the Vill," in *Law-Finders and Law-Makers in Medieval England: Collected Studies in Legal and Constitutional History* (London, 1962), 71–84. And generally, see Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850–1520* (New Haven, 2003).

40. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Political Writings*, vol. 2, *Surveys from Exile*, ed. David Fernbach (1973; reprint, London, 2011), 239.

41. Thomas Pettitt, "'Here Comes I, Jack Straw': English Folk Drama and Social Revolt," *Folklore* 95, no. 1 (1984): 7.

42. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 51–66, 140–92.

43. See especially E. B. Fryde's introduction to Charles Oman, *The Great Revolt of 1381*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1969), xii–xxii.

44. J. R. Maddicott, "The County Community and the Making of Public Opinion in Fourteenth-Century England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 28 (1978): 27–43; and see the discussion in Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 56–58.

45. Oman, *The Great Revolt*, 26–27, 183–85; and Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 216. More generally, Cam, "The Community of the Vill," 73; J. R. Maddicott, *The English Peasantry and the Demands of the Crown, 1294–1341* (Oxford, 1975), 6–15 and 51–53; and W. M. Ormrod, "The Politics of Pestilence: Government in England After the Black Death," in *The Black Death in England*, ed. W. M. Ormrod and Phillip Lindley (Stamford, UK, 1996), 159–67.

46. Fryde in Oman, *The Great Revolt*, xii–xiii. And see the data sets that accompany W. Mark Ormrod, "The West European Monarchies in the Later Middle Ages," in *Economic Systems and State Finance*, ed. Richard Bonney (Oxford, 1995), 123–60.

47. For record of deliberations see "Richard II: November 1380," in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson et al. (Woodbridge, UK, 2005), §§ 1–4 and 10–16.

48. Compare the remarks at H. G. Richardson, "The Commons and Medieval Politics," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 28 (1946): 21–45.

49. The terms are recorded in "Richard II: November 1380," § 15.

50. Oman prints and discusses sample returns in *The Great Revolt*, 26–31, 158–82. For additional interpretation see R. H. Hilton, *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages: The Ford Lectures for 1973 and Related Studies* (Oxford, 1975), 27–36.

51. The Statute of Labourers is printed in translation in Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381*, 63–68. For discussion and references see L. R. Poos, "The Social Context of Statute of Labourers Enforcement," *Law and History Review* 1 (1983): 27–52; D. L. Farmer, "Prices and Wages, 1350–1500," in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, vol. 3, *1348–1500*, ed. Edward Miller (Cambridge, 1991), 483–90; and Chris Given-Wilson, "The Problem of Labour in the Context of English Government, c. 1350–1450," in *The Problem of Labour in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. James Bothwell, P. J. P. Goldberg, and W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2000), 85–100.

52. Bertha Haven Putnam, *The Enforcement of the Statutes of Labourers During the First Decade After the Black Death, 1349–1359* (New York, 1908), 10–17.

53. Poos, "The Social Context."

54. Maddicott, *English Peasantry*, esp. 10–11 and 51.

55. "presentant quod Ricardus Warde constabularius de Cavendish prosecutus fuit Ricardum Bridder laborarium iusque ad ecclesiam de Pentelawe ad ducendum eum coram justiciariis laborariorum & eum verberavit & saguinem de eo traxit per quod dictus Ricardus levavit hutesium super dictum Ricardum juste"; quoted from L. R. Poos, *A Rural Society After the Black Death: Essex, 1350–1525* (Cambridge, 1991), 242n33.

56. See R. H. Hilton, "Peasant Movements in England Before 1381," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 2, no. 2 (1949): 117–36; Rosemond Faith, "The 'Great Rumour' of 1377 and Peasant Ideology," in Hilton and Aston, *The English Rising of 1381*, 43–73; and Rosemond Faith, "The Class Struggle in Fourteenth-Century England," in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London, 1981), 50–60.

57. The phrase is from Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 217.

58. Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 435–39; Christopher Dyer, "Causes of the Revolt in Rural Essex," in *Essex and the Great Revolt of 1381: Lectures Celebrating the Six Hundredth Anniversary*, ed. W. H. Liddell and R. G. E. Wood (Chelmsford, UK, 1982), 29–31; Christopher Dyer, "The Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381," in *Everyday Life in Medieval England*, 197–99, 211–12; and Christopher Dyer, "The Rising of 1381 in Suffolk: Its Origins and Participants," in *Everyday Life in Medieval England*, 225. For orientation within the legal records, see Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 20–34; and Andrew J. Prescott, "Writing About Rebellion: Using the Records of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381," *History Workshop* 45 (1998): 5–8, 10–16.

59. For the evidence of legal records, see André Réville and Charles Petit-Dutaillis, *Le Soulèvement des Travailleurs d'Angleterre en 1381* (Paris, 1898), 184, 187, and also the important indictments regarding a meeting in the first days of the

rising, quoted in part in Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 193n24; and Brooks, "Organization," 252n18. For reports of oath-swearing in chronicle accounts, see *The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1333 to 1381*, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, UK, 1927), 139; Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. Henry T. Riley (London, 1863), 1: 454–55; and *The Westminster Chronicle, 1381–1394*, ed. L. C. Hector and Barbara F. Harvey (Oxford, 1982), 2.

60. See discussion in Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 217–18, citing Réville and Petit-Dutaillis, *Soulèvement*, 216–17; Edgar Powell, *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381: With an Appendix Containing the Suffolk Poll Tax Lists for That Year* (Cambridge, 1896), 130–31; and W. E. Flaherty, "The Great Rebellion in Kent of 1381 Illustrated from the Public Records," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 3 (1860): 77. A. F. Butcher, "English Urban Society and the Revolt of 1381," in Hilton and Aston, *The English Rising of 1381*, 101, remarks that, as a result of regular military arrays, "townsmen and their neighbors possessed the organization for widespread insurrection, should discontent coalesce." Commissions of array were recorded in Patent Rolls; for examples, see *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Edward III*, 16 (1374–77): 496–500; and *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Richard II*, 1 (1377–81): 38–40, 471–74, 574, 575. Military service in the king's wars is also relevant here: see Cam, "The Community of the Vill," 72–73; and Brooks, "Organization."

61. David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, 1997), 152–53, suggests that the terrifying din that accompanied the rebels' activities in London was an amplification of this ordinary technique of communal self-defense. To Wallace's examples, add *The Anonimalle Chronicle* in which "une malveys femme" is said to raise a cry against Sudbury outside the Tower (the word used is *escrier*). Galbraith, *Anonimalle Chronicle*, 144. The instance of hue and cry cited by Justice (*Writing and Rebellion*, 65) seems to refer instead to the making of proclamations, another notably official act.

62. Réville and Petit-Dutaillis, *Soulèvement*, 177–99. For discussion see Alan Harding, "The Revolt Against the Justices," in Hilton and Aston, *The English Rising of 1381*, 188–93.

63. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 23, 182–89. On the rebels' loyalty to the king, see Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, 59–64; and Faith, "The 'Great Rumour.'"

64. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, 184.

65. See Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 35–36, 432–49; Prescott, "London in the Peasants' Revolt"; Dyer, "Social and Economic Background"; and Dyer, "The Rising of 1381 in Suffolk."

66. Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 446.

67. Ibid., 296–98, 363–64, 367–69.

68. Prescott, "London in the Peasants' Revolt," 133.

69. For illustrations see Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 213–14; Butcher, "English Urban Society"; and R. B. Dobson, "The Risings in York, Beverley and Scarborough, 1380–1381," in Hilton and Aston, *The English Rising of 1381*, 112–42. These showings do not, as is sometimes held, imply that the traditional historiographical designation "Peasants' Revolt" is unusable. See Dyer, "Social and Economic Background," 197; and Eiden, *Knechtschaft*, 32 and 434–39.

70. Fisher, *John Gower*, 171.

71. My translation expands Gower's verb *dicit*, used here in a sort of exegetical shorthand.

72. Stockton, *Latin Works*, 61.

73. Gower decodes the heraldic emblems in the prose headnote to *Chronica Tripertita* (248–49 in Carlson, *Poems on Contemporary Events*) and in later marginal notes. The same heraldic symbols appear in other contemporary accounts of Richard's attack on the Lords Appellant; more generally, animal symbolism had wide currency in fourteenth-century English political prophecy. See Wickert, *Studies*, 32–33; and Frank Grady, "The Generation of 1399," in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca, 2002), 202–29.
74. Gower, *Vox*, 5.637–48; Gower, *Mirour de l'Omme*, ll. 26,449–60.
75. On Nigel Witeker's poem, see Jill Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard: Beast Literature in Medieval Britain* (Oxford, 2009), 98–148. For Gower's borrowing, see Carlson's notes to *Visio*, ll. 201–18.
76. Gower, *Visio*, ll. 303, 307, 309, 404, 437, 461p, 490, 493, 505p, 560, 747p, 748, 778, 780, etc.
77. This is another effect Gower learned from Nigel Witeker. See the description in Mann, *From Aesop to Reynard*, 129–33.
78. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Esaiam*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 73 (Turnhout, 1963), 150–53; *Biblia Latina cum Glossa Ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, ed. Margaret T. Gibson and Karlfried Froehlich (Turnhout, 1992).
79. Nicolas of Lyra, *Postilla in totam Bibliam* (Strasbourg, 1492), http://www.umilta.net/nicholalyra.html.