The Pardoner’s Body and the Disciplining of Rhetoric

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The term ‘disciplining’ in my title has a double value: it stands for the construction of rhetoric as an academic discipline, and it also suggests the way that rhetoric’s disciplinary power has always been subject to the most severe kinds of institutional regulation, or ‘discipline’. This double sense of discipline is dramatised in the figure of Chaucer’s Pardoner, in the homologous relation of his rhetoric, with its ambiguous content and transgressive morality, and his sexuality, with its bodily ambiguity and its transgression of gender boundaries. The Pardoner’s claims for the disciplinary autonomy of rhetoric are suppressed in the same way that his sexuality is subject to public correction through the Host’s virtual threat of (re)castration. The linkage that I want to explore here between sexuality, disciplining of the body, and the discipline of rhetoric is not something that I have manufactured for the sake of (rhetorical) argument; it is a linkage that is already there in the history of rhetoric itself.

Just as there is no historically transcendent category of the body, so there is also no unitary discursive category of bodiliness. As a symbolic domain the body is the expressive language through which many cultural discourses, including intellectual relations, aesthetics and science, define themselves.¹ In this essay I will examine how scientific or disciplinary classification in antiquity and the Middle Ages constitutes one domain or category of the body, and how notions of violent physical correction or ‘discipline’ to be enacted on the human body are transferred metaphorically to the realm of intellectual disciplines. This has particular implications for the institutional history of rhetoric; I want to give the disciplinary body of rhetoric a history.² In locating this historical inquiry at the literary site of Chaucer’s Pardoner I do not pretend here to advance on the innovative and important insights that recent work in feminist and gay theory have brought to Chaucerian texts, especially new readings of the Pardoner’s Tale as a site for the discursive conflicts of gender.³ Rather, what I offer is an attempt to understand how gender and sexuality are part of the political text of rhetoric’s institutional history.

As a science, rhetoric—from antiquity onwards—has been suspect, subject to regulation and control by dominant institutional interests. Ancient and medieval (as well as modern) practitioners and theorists of rhetoric have always to answer to question, first posed by Socrates to Gorgias: ‘does rhetoric constitute a legitimate study of its own?’ I want to recast this question in the terms of its most radical implications: ‘does rhetoric have a body?’ This is the question to which the disciplinary legitimacy of rhetoric was (and indeed still is)
linked; judgement of rhetoric’s disciplinary status is articulated through a discourse about its bodily status.

To begin we can turn for illustration to two modern perspectives on medieval rhetoric, one which denies rhetoric any disciplinary autonomy in the Middle Ages by denying it a body, and one which denies medieval rhetoric a disciplinary legitimacy by giving it a transgressive, fragmented body. The first of these, which denies rhetoric any disciplinary status in history by denying it a body, is well exemplified through a recently published account of an extraordinary professional exchange. James J. Murphy, the foremost modern historian of medieval rhetoric, recounts how in 1960 he sent an article on medieval rhetoric to the journal *PMLA*. The article was rejected with this response from the reader: ‘rhetoric is not a subject; and if it were, there would be no history of it’. Fifteen years later, after the appearance of Murphy’s *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, the reviewer was moved to apologise to Murphy and retract that opinion. The view that the reviewer first expressed, that rhetoric is no subject itself and has no history of its own, is in metaphorical terms a denial of rhetoric’s body, of its location in space or time; the reviewer’s later admission of ignorance or shortsightedness was itself predicated on the ‘embodiment’ of rhetoric’s disciplinary history in Murphy’s substantial volume, a physical codex that the reviewer and others could see and touch as evidence of a body of historical facticity. One other notable example of the model of denying the disciplinary ‘body’ of rhetoric is Richard McKeon’s influential article ‘Rhetoric in the Middle Ages’, which also argues that medieval rhetoric has no history of its own, but can be known to us as the imprint of the many other intellectual (and specifically philosophical) practices with which it was associated. McKeon proposes to write a history of rhetoric that accounts for its multiple, shifting, and ephemeral nature:

Such a history would not treat an art determined to a fixed subject matter (so conceived rhetoric is usually found to have little or no history, despite much talk about rhetoric and even more use of it, during the Middle Ages) nor on the other hand would it treat an art determined arbitrarily and variously by its place in classifications of the sciences (so conceived the whole scheme and philosophy of the sciences would be uncontrolled in their alterations and therefore empty). . . . Yet if rhetoric is defined in terms of a single subject matter—such as style, or literature, or discourse—it has no history during the Middle Ages.

Very possibly the reviewer of Murphy’s article (who was not, incidentally, McKeon himself) derived a point of view (as well as wording) from the *auctoritas* of McKeon’s study. McKeon’s language is virtually that of the body or bodily physics; rhetoric has no ‘fixed’ subject matter, nor does it have
a ‘place’ in classifications of the sciences. Interestingly McKeon’s language also betrays some anxiety about what would happen to the regulation of the sciences under classificatory schemes—a regulation that represents a coercive ‘discipline’ or control imposed on the sciences—if rhetoric were to be understood solely through its metamorphic and irregular appearances in those schemes; the entire system would be ‘emptied’ of its content and meaning and would no longer yield to our managerial control of its many and various parts. In other words, rhetoric shifts its position so often in medieval classifications of the sciences that it threatens to reduce the whole system to a meaningless jumble; rhetoric is so disruptive a force that it can only be historically and discursively managed, according to McKeon, by denying it a veritable scientific body of its own and treating its appearances in scientific classifications as merely suggestive illusions. The assumption behind this theoretical model that denies rhetoric a body is that rhetoric by its very nature defies the principles of solidity and stability attributed to the body; rhetoric is not substantive, it is not about or of anything, but is only a tool (in the Aristotelian sense of organon) that comes into being through application to other things.

The second modern perspective also challenges rhetoric’s claims to disciplinary legitimacy, but in this case by giving it a body: an unruly, fragmented body that confirms rhetoric’s illegitimacy. This is the view propounded quite explicitly by Brian Vickers in his recent book In Defence of Rhetoric, which is argued through an unabashed bias of classical humanism. Vickers’s chapter on the Middle Ages is entitled ‘Medieval Fragmentation’: the Middle Ages represent a falling away from rhetoric’s integrity of purpose in antiquity, and are characterised by atrophy, reduction to mere tropology, a loss of the whole aesthetic picture, and a decline of function in favour of an endless pursuit of form. The Middle Ages fragment rhetoric into the repetitive mechanics of abbreviation and amplification. Medieval rhetoric is externally fragmented in that the classical rhetorical texts survive ‘in a damaged and haphazard state’; it is internally fragmented in that ‘readers atomized what had been transmitted to fit their own needs’ (p. 220). The emergence in the Middle Ages of three specialised arts of rhetoric (poetria, dictamen, and the ars praedicandi) represents a ‘dismemberment’ (p. 236) of what had once been (in Vickers’s humanist view) a coherent and homogeneous lore. This view (which Vickers also extends to poststructuralist criticism as a twentieth-century fragmentation of rhetoric) can be seen as a consequence of the logic of the ‘bodiless’ model exemplified by McKeon and the PMLA reviewer. Rhetoric’s transmutative heterogeneity makes it incapable of possessing a stable or healthy body; but those institutional interests that abhor a vacuum and that would manage that instability can nevertheless assign rhetoric a body, a body that symbolically confirms and justifies that imposition of coercive management. In the interests of
institutional discipline rhetoric is given a body, a transgressive, atrophied or fragmented, illegitimate body that by its very nature invites corrective regulation. In the limited case of Vickers's book, the long-range project of institutional management of rhetoric is the moralised chronology that he aims to produce; here, operating in the same symbolic sphere of language that (as we will see) Quintilian also uses, Vickers invents a bodily image for rhetoric in order to discriminate between his ideal models of rhetoric (classical and Renaissance) and its fallen forms (medieval and modern). Thus the real purpose of giving rhetoric a body is to identify the transgressive tendencies of rhetoric when it is unguarded or unregulated (as Vickers believes it was during the Middle Ages), and to enclose it within a managerial paradigm of organic stability which can monitor its propensity for resistance.

These two modern perspectives on medieval rhetoric are very close to views of rhetoric that were propounded in antiquity and especially in the Middle Ages. In their views of medieval rhetoric, Vickers and McKeon actually voice the terms of censure that were used in the Middle Ages to vilify and marginalise rhetoric; indeed, their view of the Middle Ages is produced by the Middle Ages themselves, and through the institutional power of their voices is continually reproduced. In the metaphorical language about rhetoric from antiquity to the Middle Ages we see an opposition between a bodiless and an embodied rhetoric. These contradictory models reveal the enormous ideological stakes in this metaphorical discourse. Rhetoric by its very nature defies the principles that attached to ideas of the integrated body and, by extension, to ideas of a disciplinary body of knowledge. As I will argue here, rhetoric for this very reason had to come under some institutional and discursive regulation, and so a ‘body’ had to be invented for rhetoric to allow it to be ‘disciplined’. The body invented for rhetoric was a transgressive, unlicensed body that would justify the severest regulation or discipline.

The relationship between scientific disciplinarity and the body as an object of punishment or discipline emerges in the history of the Latin word *disciplina*, which constitutes the larger framework for my investigation here. The extraordinary history of this word has been documented by Henri Marrou, to whose philological research my account here is indebted. 9 *Disciplina* is related to *discere*, ‘to learn’, although in classical usage it can also mean ‘teaching’, as in the teachings of a master. In classical antiquity, the broadest meaning of *disciplina* (in the plural) is intellectual culture or scientific knowledge. These meanings passed into patristic and early medieval use. Here we find the application of the word still familiar to moderns; *disciplina* designates a particular science, such as rhetoric, dialectic, astronomy, geometry, or music. 10 In the plural it designates all the various sciences together as a group. 11 Other words that are used synonymously with *disciplina* in this sense, sometimes
with slightly different emphases, are *doctrina* (for which Marrou finds a more
general and abstract connotation, the broader sense of study, intellectual work,
or knowledge), *ars* (which early on was the preferred term for the elements of
the trivium), and *scientia*.\(^{12}\)

Thus in this application, *disciplina* is a particular body of knowledge. In
signifying an individual branch of knowledge, it is a term for differentiating
between kinds of scientific discourse and for delimiting and containing each
branch of knowledge according to the rules that pertain to (or inhere within) a
given discipline.\(^{13}\) What *disciplina* really signifies is a set of rules which im-
pose order. Here the rich semantic field of the word *disciplina* comes into play,
for it has a much wider range of meaning than its synonyms, including *doc-
trina*. In classical use, *disciplina* is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *paideia*,
acquiring the sense of rules imposed by a master on a student, especially
moral rules aimed at the conduct of one’s life. In this respect ancient usage is
very informative. In classical Latin, *disciplina* is applied to military life, to
designate the rules and principles that are used to maintain order, in other
words, military discipline.\(^{14}\) From this we need not look far to find the word
used to designate the imposition of rules or order in the civil domain. Cicero
speaks of ‘*disciplina civitatis*’, and Tacitus speaks of the ‘most severe disci-
pline and laws’ of Sparta and Crete.\(^{15}\)

These various senses of *disciplina* were carried over into early Christian
use. The practical, moral orientation of *disciplina* finds expression in the idea
of a rule of Christian life: for Augustine, Christian discipline is the ‘law of
God’, the wisdom and knowledge that constitute a rule of Christian living.\(^{16}\)
*Disciplina* is also the rule imposed by the Church on believers, and later by ec-
clesiastical authority on clergy. Along these lines we arrive at the notion of
monastic discipline, the order and submission to authority that are required by
observance of the rule within the monastic community.\(^{17}\) Thus the discipline
of civil law becomes the self-regulation of an enclosed religious community.

Finally, there is one meaning of *disciplina* unknown in classical usage, a
meaning introduced in the language of the Septuagint and the New Testament:
punishment, correction, pain inflicted for a transgression. Of course, ancient
pedagogical practice involved corporal punishment, but the terms *paideia* in
Greek and *disciplina* in Latin were not used to signify this aspect of instruc-
tive correction (even though corporal punishment would be understood as part
of the educative system denoted by these terms).\(^{18}\) In the Greek and Latin
scriptures, however, the terms were extended to include this sense, taking on,
moreover, the idea of the punishment that God reserves for correction of the
sinner.\(^{19}\) In the language of the Church Fathers, the punitive connotation of
*disciplina* is associated with an educative function, corporal punishment as
deterrent or correction. Here the term *disciplina* becomes linked with verber-
are, ‘to flog’, and with *vapulare*, ‘to get a beating’.

The term inevitably acquires civil and legal dimensions: physical punishment by secular authority; the power to inflict punishment; and punitive law itself.

Out of its association with flogging and beating it also takes on the specialised meaning of flagellation, both in the sense of punishment under law and of self-inflicted scourging.

Thus by the early Middle Ages the idea of intellectual regulation, of observing a rule or scientific order, is identified semantically with the idea of physical punishment, *disciplina corporis*, disciplining of the body to correct or guard against vice, whether imposed by parent, teacher, monastic rule, civil law, or self.

From *disciplina* as a metaphorical body of knowledge we have arrived at *disciplina* as physical regulation and correction of the body. The implications of this semantic association for the discourse of scientific classification are readily apparent. To call a form or body of knowledge a discipline is to mark off its boundaries from another form of knowledge, and through this process of division to constitute that knowledge as an object. But it is not simply that disciplines create knowledge as a discursive object; as Foucault reminds us, the disciplinary order itself also becomes the object to be surveyed and regulated.

From antiquity onwards we see that discussions of the disciplinary relations between the sciences often carry corrective and restrictive overtones. In the *Institutio oratoria*, for example, Quintilian places firm restrictions on the territory of the grammarians, lest their work overlap with, or trespass into, the territory of the rhetoricians (1.9.6; 2.1.4-5). Even Quintilian’s attempts to promote a broad-based ‘liberal’ education for the orator are predicated on precise taxonomies and hierarchical differentiations between the domains of the various arts (1.10.1-12.7). We find similarly deterrent boundaries placed around the individual disciplines in Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis Philologae et Mercurii*. Grammar’s discourse is interrupted at the moment when she is about to discuss figures and tropes and introduce the question of metre (§ 326), subjects which are within the competence of grammatical teaching but which are normally governed by the disciplines of rhetoric and music respectively. Minerva also stops Dialectic from proceeding to the discussion of sophistic arguments, asserting that such a subject will dishonour the discipline of dialectic (§ 423). As these examples suggest, disciplinary structures function to contain and regulate bodies of knowledge, just as the human body is often subject to corrective discipline as a guard against moral or physical transgression. But disciplinary formations in turn are also subject to such corrective measures, so that it is not simply raw knowledge that is embodied as an object of control, but the construction of the discipline itself. The discourse of intellectual taxonomy, classification of the sciences, carries a clearly restrictive imperative that can be understood both in terms of the interests of territoriality,
to mark off one intellectual property or domain from another, and of subjugation, to ensure the manageability of individual scientific systems.

The obvious link between *disciplina* as a science and *disciplina* as punishment is correction. But metaphorically the link is the body. It is this deep and secure metaphorical linkage that rhetoric, with its particular claims to disciplinary legitimacy, seems always to unfix. We see this in the important statements of Plato and Aristotle on rhetoric. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, the sophist Gorgias argues that rhetoric’s disciplinary power lies in its open borders; the art of persuasive speech comprises or overlaps all other arts. For Socrates the permeability of rhetoric makes it no science at all, but a mere knack gained from experience, a counterfeit of true science that panders (like cookery and cosmetics) to gratification and pleasure. In identifying rhetoric with the temporal contingencies of experience and the arts of the pleasure-seeking body, Plato’s text suggests that rhetoric is a kind of incontinent body that does not know its own boundaries. The discipline that Socrates imposes on the transgressive, permeable body of rhetoric is to condemn it to the realm of bodily provisionality from which it can make no claim to scientific integrity. Aristotle’s rigorous programme of scientific classification recasts the Platonic hierarchy of knowledge in more pragmatic institutional terms. In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle says that rhetoric, like dialectic, is a tool (*organon*) of inquiry, not a science; rhetoric and dialectic ‘are concerned with such things as are, to a certain extent, within the knowledge of all people and belong to no separately defined science’. But for Aristotle, the permeability of rhetoric positions it, not only outside any disciplinary category, but in opposition to the body. Rhetoric is a system of artifice, of construction or invention of the modes of persuasion; the body is a natural site of truth which furnishes preexisting (‘inartificial’ or ‘extrinsic’) proof in the form of evidence extracted from slaves under torture. In Athenian judicial discourse, as Page duBois argues, the slave represents a primordial form of bodiliness, and the slave body is a secret repository of truth to be yielded up (and possessed by free men) through the application of torture. In this context Aristotle uses the body to describe a coherent realm of truth in counterdistinction to the artificial system of representation that is rhetoric.

In neither of these models is the body represented within the discipline of rhetoric. For Plato rhetoric is only body and thus a counterfeit discipline; for Aristotle, rhetoric is outside disciplinary order and in opposition to the body. It is Roman teaching on the art that places the body securely within the disciplinary order of rhetoric and judges rhetoric through its bodily manifestations. The political and pedagogical institutions of Roman culture confer on rhetoric a privileged status as the highest of the arts because of its application to the pragmatic interests of civic oratory. But because rhetoric holds so crucial a

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cultural position it is the more subject to severe containment, monitoring, or scrutiny. It is here that rhetoric is truly invented as a discipline; it becomes a body capable of yielding up valid knowledge provided that it is successfully managed. Most importantly, to regulate rhetoric is to control its artificial excesses; in this context artifice, and especially ornamentation, is identified with mere bodily form, comparable to Plato’s notion of counterfeit gratification. Whereas for Aristotle artifice is bodiless, in Roman theory artifice is inscribed on the body, as the possibility of monstrous or corrupt disfigurement; it is only by subjecting rhetoric’s body to a disciplinary regime that its transgressive potential can be channelled into the production of truth. Significantly rhetoric here registers its own unrestrained artifice and permeability in terms of the disfigured body and the sexually ambiguous body. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which was to become the main authority on style in the Middle Ages, represents style that has gone out of control in terms of the tumorous or disjointed body:

Nam ita ut corporis bonam habitudinem tumor imitatur saepe, item gravis oratio saepe inperitis videtur ca quae turget et inflata est, cum aut novis aut priscis verbis aut duriter aliunde translatis aut gravioribus quam res postulat aliquid dicitur. . . . Qui in mediocre genus orationis profecti sunt, si pervenire eo non potuerunt, errantes perveniunt ad confine genus eius generis, quod appellamus dissolutum, quod est sine nervis et articulis; ut hoc modo appellem fluctuans, eo quod fluctuat huc et illuc nec potest confirmate neque viriliter sese expedire.

For just as a swelling often resembles a healthy condition of the body, so, to those who are inexperienced, turgid and inflated language often seems majestic—when a thought is expressed either in new or in archaic words, or in clumsy metaphors, or in diction more impressive than the theme demands. . . . Those setting out to attain the Middle style, if unsuccessful, stray from the course and arrive at an adjacent type, which we call the Slack because it is without sinews and joints; accordingly I may call it the Drifting, since it drifts to and fro, and cannot get under way with resolution and virility. 30

As this example suggests, rhetoric can legitimise itself as a true discipline if it can expose—and thus subject to severe disciplinary scrutiny—its own capacity for distortion. In other words, rhetoric needs its own potential for transgression in order to demonstrate its capacity for self-discipline. Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* is even more explicit on this point, registering the threat of an unlicensed artifice in terms of the sexually permeable body, the body that has crossed the acceptable bounds of gender identity into a kind of monstrous spectacle:
Corpora sana et integri sanguinis et exercitatione firmata ex iisdem his speciem accipiunt ex quibus vires, namque et colorata et adstricta et lacertis expressa sunt; at eadem si quis volsa atque fucata muliebriter comat, foedissima sint ipso formae labore. Et cultus concessus atque magnificus addit hominibus, ut Graeco versu testatum est, auctoritatem; at muliebris et luxuriosus non corpus exornat, sed detegit mentem. Similiter illa translucida et versicolor quorundam elocutio res ipsas effeminat, quae illo verborum volo esse sollicitudinem. . . . Maiore animo aggregienda eloquentia est, quae si toto corpore valet, unges polire et capillum reponere non existimabit ad curam suam pertinere.

Healthy bodies, enjoying a good circulation and strengthened by exercise, acquire grace from the same source that gives them strength, for they have a healthy complexion, firm flesh and shapely thews. But, on the other hand, the man who attempts to enhance these physical graces by the effeminate use of depilatories and cosmetics, succeeds merely in defacing them by the very care which he bestows on them. Again, a tasteful and magnificent dress, as the Greek poet tells us, lends added dignity to its wearer; but effeminate and luxurious apparel fails to adorn the body and merely reveals the foulness of the mind. Similarly, a translucent and iridescent style merely serves to emasculate [translating *effeminat*] the subject which it arrays with such pomp of words. . . . It is with a more virile spirit [translating *maiore animo*] that we should pursue eloquence, who, if only her [for *eloquentia*, feminine noun] whole body be sound, will never think it her duty to polish her nails and tire her hair.31

This remarkable passage, from Quintilian's prologue to his lengthy discussion of style, gives expression to what was always implicit in the condemnation of rhetoric; that the undisciplined body is a sexually wayward body, that pandering and gratification are tantamount to a weakening of sexual identity, and that the disciplinary permeability of rhetoric is nothing less than ambiguity of gender. Stylistic excrescence allows the well-trained, masculine body to sink into effeminacy (not femininity), counterfeiting its proper virility. It is interesting that rhetoric's anxiety about its corporeality is given the most striking expression in relation to style, that rhetoric admits its own propensity for unruly excess when it turns to consider its most visible aspect, *elocutio*. Style is the part of rhetoric that can be seen, and as such is always in danger of being considered merely deceptive surface, whether as dress on the body or as the bodily exterior itself. It thus also threatens to be taken for the body as a whole, to reduce by perverse metonymy the art of *eloquentia* to pandering style, the body to its appearance. But style is not an external excrescence that can be surgically removed and expelled from the realm of rhetoric. It is a function inherent to rhetoric. Rhetoric cannot deny or suppress the force of body as appearance,
for it operates through the persuasive appeal of appearance. Thus to constitute itself as a proper discipline, rhetoric repeatedly—almost ritually—re-enacts and enforces its self-discipline by exposing its continual struggle with its wayward body.\textsuperscript{32} It invents itself as a discipline by inventing a corrupt bodily image over which it can always be seen to be triumphing by determined self-discipline. And part of its self-discipline is to punish that counter-image of its body by exposing it to public condemnation as a kind of trophy of its agonistic victory over its own unruliness. This is borne out at wearisome length in nearly all rhetorical manuals from antiquity to the Middle Ages (and beyond), which illustrate precept through sharp castigation of defective practice.

Thus on the terms of its own construction, rhetoric, like the body, must be subjected to a healthy regimen, disciplined lest it lapse into license, disease, or disfigurement.\textsuperscript{33} The most familiar image of rhetoric is female excess. Martianus Capella's allegorical depiction of Rhetoric as a garish, physically imposing woman in martial attire whose swollen speech threatens to overrun the time allotted to it is not far removed from representations of rhetoric as a richly arrayed mistress or even a female courtesan.\textsuperscript{34} But the other common trope, which we have already seen in Quintilian, uses the male body to identify an undisciplined rhetoric with transgressive sexuality. In the Middle Ages, images of masculine licence are tied to the enforcement of social constraints on male clerical sexual behaviour.\textsuperscript{35} The most familiar medieval example of this is Alan of Lille's \textit{De planctu Naturae}, which describes the corruption of the language arts of the \textit{trivium} in terms of proscribed sexual practice, representing the effect of rhetorical figuration in terms of bodily disfigurement:

\begin{verbatim}
sic methonomicas rethorum positiones . . . Cypridis artificiis interdixi, ne si nimis dure translationis excursu a suo reclamante subiecto predicatum alienet in aliud, in facinus facetia, in rusticitatem urbanitas, tropus in uicium, in decolorationem color nimius convertatur.
\end{verbatim}

so too I banned from the Cyprian's [i.e. Venus'] workshop the use of words by the rhetors in metonymy . . . lest, if she embark on too harsh a trope and transfer the predicate from its loudly protesting subject to something else, cleverness would turn into a blemish, refinement into boorishness, a figure of speech into a defect and excessive embellishment into disfigurement.\textsuperscript{36}

The governing image of Alan's text (announced in metre 1) suggests that the vice of tropes, departing from the governance of grammar, has turned man into hermaphrodite.\textsuperscript{37} In the passage above, the perversion of rhetoric results
in the defilement of appearance. Here, as in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian, rhetoric displays the effects of perverse figuration.

Alan’s text represents an indictment of rhetoric from outside the borders of the discipline. But as we see elsewhere, the figural relationship of rhetoric to the transgressive body is so ingrained in discourse about the art that rhetoric even teaches its own precepts through this trope. In the *Ars versificatoria* of Matthew of Vendôme, one of the models of rhetorical *descriptio* takes as its subject the depravities of Davus (a stock figure of ancient comedy). Here the pedagogical occasion of exemplifying rhetorical *descriptio* through the attributes of the person becomes the vehicle for exposing the vices of rhetoric.\(^3\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Ne per se patiatur idem consordeat [or cum sordeat] intus} \\
\text{Et foris, in Davo methonomia parit . . .} \\
\text{Vergit ad incestum, Venus excitat aegra bilibres} \\
\text{Fratres, membra tepent cetera, cauda riget.} \\
\text{Metri dactilici prior intrat syllaba, crebro} \\
\text{Impulsu quatiunt moenia foeda breves.} \\
\text{Nequitia rabiem servilem praedicat, actu} \\
\text{Enucleat servae conditionis onus.} \\
\text{Urget blanda, furit in libera terga, rebellis} \\
\text{Naturae vetito limite carpit iter.} \quad \text{\(39\)}
\end{align*}\]

Since he is foul both inside and out in Davus metonymy falls flat [literally: ‘metonymy is made equal’].\(^4\) . . . He inclines to lewdness; his sickly libido (Venus *aegra*) excites the Brothers Testicles (they weigh two pounds), the related members warm up and he gets a hard on. The first syllable of the dactyl enters; with repeated batterings, the foul short syllables shake the ramparts. His baseness foretells his slavish frenzy and the act declares the work of a slave. He presses hard upon alluring backs and rages against the backs of freeborn men. A rebel to nature, he goes the route to forbidden borders.\(^4\)

In this extraordinary and explicit passage, the body that knows no boundaries is one with a debilitated rhetoric; impossible metonomy is the attribute of Davus, and Davus embodies impossible metonymy. The ostensible subject here is not the nature of rhetoric, but the nature of Davus. The real subject, however, is the technique of rhetorical *descriptio* which this passage teaches through exemplification. But the vehicle of this particular pedagogy is the image of the incontinent sexual body, where the breaking of (hetero)sexual correctness is the sign of unlicensed permeability and of lawless metonymy (Davus is ‘foul’ outside and within, so that there are no borders between container and contained). Here the transgressive body is used to teach rhetorical
*descriptio*, and within that corrective teaching is identified with an ‘incorrect’ rhetoric.

As these examples suggest, rhetoric is invented through constructions of sexual transgression. As a sexual body, rhetoric can be disciplined from within its own system through a kind of enforced purity, in which it is compelled to expose, and therefore be purged of, its excesses. This is the model that we see in Quintilian and Matthew of Vendôme, who teach rhetoric through the proscription of sexual-rhetorical vice. Or, as we see in Alan of Lille, rhetoric can be disciplined from outside its own system, through subordination to external governance, such as the balanced structure of the *trivium*, which maintains the ‘body’ of science in a ‘normative’ or prescriptive (sexual) order. In both cases we see the operation of what Jonathan Dollimore has called, after Foucault, a ‘politics of containment’. Giving rhetoric a sexual body establishes a discursive construct through which institutional power can work. Rather than simply eliding the sexual body, the institutional powers of pedagogy, literature, and intellectual tradition continually stage their repression of the body, and it is in this drama of its own correction that rhetoric willingly participates.

This is the nexus of ideas that lies behind Chaucer’s Pardoner. As Robert Payne has acutely recognised, the Pardoner is more than a figure of corrupt preaching in the particular context of late-medieval anti-fraternalism; in the form of corrupt preacher he is a figure out of long traditions of theoretical contest about rhetoric as a science, of debate going back to the *Gorgias* about rhetoric’s appeal to appearances, contingency, appetite, will, and belief. But it is the Pardoner’s bodily presence, the sexual ambiguity of his bodily appearance, that most clearly associates him with the representation of rhetoric in the tradition that leads from Quintilian to the medieval language arts. The narrator’s description of him in the *General Prologue* as either ‘a geldyng or a mare’ (1.691), pointing either to a disfiguring absence or a transgression of gender boundaries, can be taken as a realisation, a making literal, of the figuring of rhetoric as an emasculated or effeminate male body. In this, of course, Chaucer’s Pardoner has his most direct literary forebear in Faus Semblant of the *Roman de la Rose*, whose incarnation of false preaching takes the form of indeterminate gendering; as Carolyn Dinshaw points out, Faus Semblant is both man and woman. Both Faus Semblant and the Pardoner are products of the metaphorical tradition of rhetoric as unregulated sexuality. But with the Pardoner’s embodiment of rhetoric, the metaphors of rhetoric as body achieve a crucial and complex articulation. The social politics of sexuality and the institutional politics of rhetoric meet with renewed force in the performance of the Pardoner and the claims that he makes for the disciplinary autonomy of rhetoric.

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The Pardoner’s performance is realised through images of the disabled, fragmented body and unruly appetite. As recent readers of the text have pointed out, the Pardoner professionally associates himself with the purveying of false relics, which are merely fragments of animal bodies cut off from reference to any symbolic unity beyond themselves; he even submits his own body to a figurative dismemberment when he describes his physical gestures during his preaching in terms of a grotesque choreography of nodding neck and busy tongue and hands (6.395-9). His own body, of course, is fragmented or dismembered, and the text continually plays with the linguistic and symbolic substitution of relics and other objects, such as the bag of pardons in his lap (General Prologue, 686-7), for the ‘coillons’ or testicles that the Pardoner apparently lacks. But beyond the force of these visual emblems of fragmentation, the Pardoner’s discourse is linked with and follows from the Physician’s Tale, a story which offers the choice of a defiled maidenhead or a decapitation. The Physician’s Tale leaves us with the headless body of Virginia, the patriarchal vindication of Virginius, and the punishment of the lascivious judge Appius whose violent and wayward bodily appetites have moved him to violate the girl’s virginity and the family honour that places so much emphasis on her intact virtue. There is not much left intact at the end of this story, save a rigid social code predicated on male power over the female body; the transgressive will of the prospective rapist and the violent defence of the girl’s bodily integrity. Such a story scarcely brooks interpretative intervention from its listeners; their response is that of powerlessness. Indeed, the tale told by the Physician makes the audience sick. Harry Bailly says that the story so grieves him that he thinks it will almost give him cardiac arrest: ‘But wel I woot thou doost myn heare to erme/ That I almoost have caught a cardynacle’ (6.312-13). Unless he has a drink or hears a merry tale, he tells us, ‘myn heare is lost for pitee of this mayde’ (6.317). Harry’s threatened heart attack is as vivid a rhetorical response as we could want; both inside and outside the Physician’s Tale there are bodies fragmented, dead, or dying, from the decapitated Virginia to Harry’s ‘cardynacle’ or chest pains.

The Host’s call to the Pardoner to supply a pleasant diversion, ‘som myrthe or japes’, and the protesting call from the ‘gentils’ of the company for ‘som moral thyng’ (6.319, 325), move us from the power, in the Physician’s Tale, of an arbitrary and rigid law which requires obedience without interpretation, to the affective power of rhetoric, which requires only belief. Indeed, it is one of the powers traditionally ascribed to rhetoric to be able to fulfil the opposing demands of mirth and morality, to offer something that is moral and edifying but at the same time pleasant and entertaining. The Pardoner’s brief here is to offer something curative for the Host’s disabled body, and by extension for the whole company, in this sense the social body constituting the audience and
judge of a rhetorical performance. The Pardoner achieves his curative effects, however, not through his tale, but through his very presence as an embodiment—literally a bodying forth—of the danger of rhetoric. If the horrible rigidity of the *Physician's Tale* strips the audience of its interpretative power and ethical leverage, of its capacity to make sense of an uncompromising law that permits (in Virginia's words), 'no grace ... no remedye' (6.236), it seems that the community can regain its ethical and interpretative bearings when it learns how to govern and contain the force of rhetoric. The Pardoner's disquisition on rhetoric, his lecture on his own *techne* in his Prologue, teaches not just a body of rhetorical theory, but the means of controlling this body, how to make the body of rhetoric yield up its dangerous truths about itself so that it can be regulated from outside. The Pardoner's 'medicine' is to deliver up his professional secrets into the company's disciplinary control. As we know, it is in the act of threatening the Pardoner with corrective violence at the end of his tale that Harry Bailly springs back to life, miraculously cured.

My discussion here focuses on the Pardoner's Prologue. The Prologue dramatises in a very concentrated way something that I have described earlier in this essay as one of the key characteristics of rhetoric's discourse about itself: its compulsion to perform its disciplinary instabilities by performing the exposure of its own vices, thereby inviting (or establishing the need for) disciplinary correction. The Pardoner's Prologue is a consummate performance of rhetoric's self-exposure of its transgression and counterfeit. There are, of course, a number of ways in which the Pardoner's text differs in its dynamics from traditional rhetorical texts. Most obviously, the Pardoner does not himself demonstrate the self-governance of rhetoric from within its own text; unlike Quintilian, who stages rhetoric's vices in order to show how rhetoric can redeem itself by monitoring its own transgressions, the Pardoner simply stages the incontinence of his rhetoric, and leaves it to the dramatic response of his audience (in the person of Harry Bailly) to complete the work of punishing and containing his waywardness. Along more complex lines, the Pardoner's discourse does not need to make explicit the identification of a transgressive rhetoric with 'distortion' of the sexual body; this has already been accomplished dramatically through the person of the Pardoner, who embodies the sexual (dis)figuring of rhetoric. Thus while the Pardoner's discourse is yielding up the 'truth' about rhetoric's persuasive appeal to mere appearances, his bodily appearance and attributes—his high voice, his beardlessness, his playing at male fashion ('hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet', *GP* 682), as well as his excessive 'stylistic' display of both heterosexual and homosexual roles —are yielding up or pointing to the 'truth' about his body, that is, his alienation from the masculine, heterosexual norm of patriarchal cultural power. One way of reading the truth about his body, as Dinshaw
notes, is that we cannot know; the Pardoner may or may not be a eunuch, his exterior may or may not be consistent with his interior. All we have is the narrator's judgment or belief, based on his appearance: 'I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare' (GP 691). The appearance of the Pardoner's body produces, not conviction of truth, but mere belief. This is also the very mechanism by which the Pardoner, as a latter-day Gorgias, describes the efficacy of his rhetoric; as the sophist must admit to Socrates, oratory produces only belief based on provisional appearances, not conviction based on knowledge of truth. But another way of reading the question of his 'truth' is that his body, in conjunction with his rhetoric, becomes a locus of truth for others to know and possess, that his body and rhetoric together confess or yield up the truth about themselves into the corrective possession of his audience. The 'truth' is that his body is permeable, without definable gender identity, just as his permeable and ambiguous rhetoric defies proper disciplinary identity; because he cannot be known, he must be contained the more severely. Thus at the end of his Tale, when the Pardoner singles out the Host as the one 'moost enveloped in synne' (6.942) and tries to purvey to Harry the very relics that he has just finished describing as false, the Host's threat of violent (re)castration, 'I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hon . . . Lat kutte hem of' (6.952-4), directs itself at the incontinence of the Pardoner's rhetoric through the ambiguity of the Pardoner's sexual body.

In his Prologue, the Pardoner describes how he gains the trust of gullible crowds by preying on their fears and displaying false relics, and he asserts the alienation of his own moral condition from the moral effect of his preaching:

For though myself be a ful vicious man,
A moral tale yet I yow telle kan
Which I am wont to preche for to wynne.

(6.459-61)

From a technical point of view, the Pardoner's speech is a careful manifesto on ethos or ethical proof, the Aristotelian principle of a speaker's representation of his own character as part of his material for persuasion. Aristotle's model of ethical proof survives in the Middle Ages in some attenuated forms in the artes praedicandi which recommend persuasive appeal to audiences. But Robert Payne's crucial insight into the Pardoner's discourse is that it represents, within the terms of Chaucerian poetics, a forceful new articulation of the theory of character as a form of persuasion. The Pardoner speaks de arte, that is, about the mechanics of his rhetoric, and describes in some detail how he invents an authoritative character for himself when he preaches, how he constructs a credible persona through his techniques of delivery and through the
his personal and professional display. When preaching in churches, he says, ‘I peyne me to ban an hauteyn speche/ And rynge it out as round as gooth a belle’ (6.330-1); he always announces from where he has come, shows his papal bulls along with the authorising seal on his letter patent (in order, he says, ‘my body to warente’ [6.338]), and then proceeds to display the paraphernalia of his trade (indulgences and relics), all the while sprinkling his speech with a few words of Latin to impress the crowds and ‘stire hem to devocioun’ (6.346). The construction of character for the purpose of persuasion is certainly efficacious, even on the terms of his vicious mockery of the enterprise: ‘Thus spitte I out my venym under hewe/ Of hoolynesse, to semen hooly and trewe’ (6.422-3; my emphasis).

Through his articulation of appeal to ethos or character as a means of persuasion, the Pardoner makes a strong claim for the disciplinary autonomy of rhetoric. According to the Pardoner, the efficacy of rhetoric should depend on nothing except its own art; its success need be tied to no moral system, no verification of truth beyond the belief that it produces. The most immediate contexts for the Pardoner’s pronouncement that ‘many a predicacioun/ Comth ofte tyme of yvel entencioun’ (6.407-8) are scholastic debates about the efficacy of immoral preachers and the proper fulfilment of the office of preaching. But his question, the relation of a speaker’s character to his speech, has a much longer history in rhetorical theory, in the anxiety of rhetoricians such as Quintilian to differentiate a ‘responsible’—that is, institutionally validated—rhetoric from the ‘debased’ or institutionally discredited theory of the sophists. I would like to read the Pardoner’s pronouncements about the autonomy of rhetorical techne as a kind of staging—however historically unlikely it may be—of the momentary possibility of a sophistic rhetoric. The Pardoner gives a view of rhetoric that is very much like that of the sophists, a view of a world to be negotiated through language and skilful argument rather than through a priori truth value, and in which there need be no coherence between the moral content of the message and the moral character of the speaker. This is the epistemology of an autonomous rhetoric which emerged the loser in ancient debate, which Plato’s institution of philosophy discredited, and the history of which came to be written by its adversaries.

Whether or not Chaucer knew anything directly or indirectly about the sophists is not important here; the mechanics of suppression, Socrates (Plato) of Gorgias, the Host (or even Chaucer) of the Pardoner, are almost the same. Just as Socrates condemns Gorgias’ rhetoric to the realm of mere bodily fragmentation from which it can make no claims to disciplinary integrity, so the Pardoner is condemned to make his claims for rhetoric in the person, in the body, of an unwhole man. It is here that his manifesto on ethos is subsumed by the dramatic manifestatio of the ‘truth’ about rhetoric that he is compelled to
perform. More than a system of ethical proof, the Pardoner’s Prologue is an exercise in rhetorical *descriptio* designed to manifest character, such as Matthew of Vendôme exemplifies in his description of Davus. The corruption or moral vacuity of character that the Pardoner manifests—his pronouncements on his bald avarice, his indifference to the ‘correcioun of synne’ (6.404)—is metonymic for the deficiency or permeability of his sexual body and the incontinence of his rhetoric. The Pardoner’s performance or *manifestatio* of his character is nothing less than a ritual exposure of the vices and transgressions of the body of rhetoric. Any claims for the disciplinary autonomy of rhetoric that the Pardoner may make through his exposition of *ethos* will be immediately invalidated by the self-admitted transgressiveness of the character that makes the claims.

Yet it is through his confessional exposure of his vices that the Pardoner’s discourse stages the invention of rhetoric as a discipline. As a figure of rhetoric the Pardoner differs from Gorgias in one significant way: where the fragmentary body of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* consigns it to the sphere of non-science, of mere knack like cooking, the Pardoner represents the tradition of rhetoric that I have traced here from later antiquity to the Middle Ages, in which rhetoric comes into being as a discipline by offering up its corrupt or counterfeit body to be disciplined. The production of scientific truth here about the body and about rhetoric is enabled through the ritual of confession; and the Pardoner’s confession differs only in dramatic degree, not in kind, from the compulsive self-exposure that we have seen rhetoric undertake in its various pedagogical and technical appeals, from Quintilian to Matthew of Vendôme. At the end of his *Tale*, where the Pardoner turns to his audience and, as if mechanically compelled to complete his whole routine, invites the Host to kiss the relics that he has just proclaimed to be false, it is not that he has forgotten his audience; rather, it is that the dynamic of rhetoric is to confess and perform itself continually, to display and stage its wilful excess.

The Pardoner’s manifesto on *ethos* and his larger *manifestatio* of rhetoric have already given the pilgrims the key to his *techne* by showing them how the art of persuasion works. Now that they understand how rhetoric works as a professional system they are in a position of power to regulate it. The Pardoner has theorised and performed a powerful rhetoric that threatens to exceed its proper limits; what is important is that the necessity to contain and thereby discipline rhetoric is expressed by the Host as a threat of violence against the Pardoner’s body. The Host enacts the disciplining of rhetoric by naming the Pardoner’s bodily deficiency. The Host, rebounding from his ‘cardynacle’, wishfully threatens to castrate the Pardoner, swearing in the optative mood that he would like to cut off the Pardoner’s coillons:
I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond
In stide of reliques or of seintuarie.
Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem cade;
They shul be shryned in an hoggys toord!

(6.952-5)

The denunciation and threatened assault is a public humiliation tantamount to
public punishment. It is a punishment directed at the Pardoner’s rhetoric
through the Pardoner’s body, for his body, ambiguous, transgressive, probably
already emasculated, reproduces the nature of his crime, rhetoric. Foucault’s
observations about the value of public torture and execution are strikingly (if
anachronistically) relevant here: through those public procedures of criminal
discipline,

the body . . . [produces] and [reproduces] the truth of the crime—or rather it consti-
tutes the element which, through a whole set of rituals and trials, confesses that the
crime took place, admits that the accused did indeed commit it, shows that he bore
it inscribed in himself and on himself, supports the operation of punishment and
manifests its effects in the most striking way.62

It is through this kind of public display at the end of the Pardoner’s Tale
that the containment of rhetoric, and thus its induction into disciplinary order,
takes place. Just as the Pardoner has exposed the capacity of rhetoric for dis-
tortion, the Host now exposes the Pardoner’s bodily disfigurement. For the
Host to want to castrate a man who is already a eunuch is to want to punish
him for the crime of monstrous distortion that his body has already commit-
ted, to reinscribe that crime in a public, ritual way. On the logic of its own tra-
dition of self-representation, rhetoric does become a genuine discipline here;
even the kiss that Harry gives to the Pardoner to mend their rupture inscribes
the Pardoner and his rhetoric in a system of discursive control. Under this re-
gime, rhetoric will produce the truth about itself.

Rhetoric and its disciplinary formation may be apprehended through intel-
lectual history and textual analysis; but we cannot forget that rhetoric is a dis-
course of the real world, of temporality, circumstance, shifting interests and
fragmented experience; in other words, a discourse of the body itself. The Par-
don and his sophistic forebears hold out the possibility of a critically de-
tached knowledge ‘in the subjunctive mode’, as Nancy Strueter has described
rhetoric’s shaping of language as contingent experience, feeling and desire.63
But its very capacity for such a contingent detachment inevitably places rheto-
ric in conflict with hierarchical disciplinary interests that would seek to con-
strain its epistemological permeability. Thus in the Middle Ages, rhetoric’s
**Notes**

1. See Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Ithaca, NY, 1986, which offers a materialist examination of the relationship between the 'cultural categories of high and low, social and aesthetic. . . . the physical body and geographical space' (p. 2).


5. This exchange is recounted by Murphy in the published transcript of a conference panel, James Berlin et al., 'The politics of historiography', *Rhetoric Review*, VII, 1988, p. 33.


7. McKeon, 'Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', pp. 3, 32.
14. Vegetius, *De re militari*, ed. C. Lang, Leipzig, 1885, 2.3; 2.9; 3.1; 3.10; cited by Marrou, “‘Doctrina’ et ‘disciplina’”, p. 11.
27. Aristotle distinguishes between artificial proofs, which are provided by the rhetorician’s art or *techne* and take the form of appeals to ethical, logical, or pathetic argument (*Rhetoric*, trans. Kennedy, pp. 36-47), and inartificial (extrinsic or ‘nonartistic’) proofs, which are furnished at the outset of the judicial case, not constructed by the speaker’s *techne*; under inartificial proofs, Aristotle considers laws, the testimony of witnesses, contracts, oaths, and evidence or testimony extracted from slaves under torture (*Rhetoric*, pp. 109-18).
29. As duBois recognises, Aristotle also questions the reliability of evidence extracted under torture; see the *Rhetoric*, pp. 115-16, and duBois, *Torture and Truth*, p. 68. Jody Enders, in a forthcoming article entitled ‘Rhetoric and Drama, Torture and Truth’ (which posits and explores a striking relationship between judicial torture in classical rhetorical theory and the spectacle of torture in medieval drama), further suggests that the distinctions rhetorical theory preserves between
torture as extrinsic proof and the intrinsic proofs supplied by the speaker's invention are not so firm; both inventio and torture are described in terms of verisimilitude and the appearance of plausibility. In other words, evidence derived from the body can also be 'fashioned' by the speaker's artifice to appear the more plausible to a case. I am grateful to Professor Enders for showing me the typescript of her important essay.


31. Text and translation from Butler, 8. Pr. 19-22. In reproducing Butler's translation of this passage I have indicated where the choice of English words develops the sexual metaphors that are implicit or at least more ambiguous in Quintilian's Latin.

32. Todorov has remarked that rhetoric, faced with the contradiction of presiding over stylistic art but having to prefer discourse without the appearance of stylisation, practises its art with a guilty conscience (Theories of the Symbol, pp. 72-3). I would say instead that rhetoric confesses its anxieties about its techne so publically, submits itself to such critical scrutiny, that it can hardly keep any secrets of which to be guilty.

33. The idea that within the text of rhetoric the disciplining of the body and of discourse 'configure' each other is treated at length by Susan E. Shapiro, 'Rhetoric as ideology critique: the Gadamer-Habermas debate reinvented', Journal of the American Academy of Religion (forthcoming).

34. See, for example, Patricia Parker, 'Literary Fat Ladies and the Generation of the Text', in Parker, Literary Fat Ladies, pp. 8-35. John Alford has recently shown how these feminine figures of rhetoric, ranging from the garrulous to the promiscuous, find their way into the portrait of the Wife of Bath as an image of rhetoric in opposition to the Clerk's embodiment of dialectic. See 'The Wife of Bath versus the Clerk of Oxford: what their rivalry means', The Chaucer Review, XXI, 1986, pp. 108-32. Alford cites Lucian's The Double Indictment (second century AD) for an example of rhetoric depicted as a female courtesan. The image of rhetoric as a charming mistress is well exemplified in Dante's Convivio, book 2, where rhetoric as love poetry is identified with Venus. The more generalised image of rhetoric as a richly-adorned, beautiful (but not promiscuous) woman is also a medieval commonplace, from Alan of Lille's Anti-Claudianus to Stephen Hawes's Pastime of Pleasure. The medieval iconography of the Liberal Arts typically shows the influence of Martianus Capella's allegorical representation of Rhetoric in martial attire; see Philippe Verdier, 'L'iconographie des arts libéraux dans l'art du moyen âge jusqu'à la fin du quinzième siècle', Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge, Actes du quatrième congrès international de philosophie médiévale, Montreal and Paris, 1969, pp. 305-55.

35. See John Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century, Chicago, 1980, pp. 310-12 (with specific reference to Alan of Lille).


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40. The text is corrupt here, and I offer some alternatives for translation of this difficult but crucial passage: 'since he submits of himself just as he partners in filth (or: “even as he is befouled”) both inside and out."


45. All quotations of Chaucer's text are from The Riverside Chaucer, 3rd edn, ed. Larry D. Benson, Boston, 1987.


47. On these lines and the Pardoner’s identification with relics, see Dinshaw, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics, pp. 162-8; see also Eugene Vance, ‘Chaucer’s Pardoner: relics, discourse, and frames of propriety’, New Literary History, XX, 1989, pp. 723-45.


49. Lee Patterson has also argued, along very different lines, for the necessity of taking seriously the link between the Physician’s Tale and the Pardoner’s Tale. See Chaucer and the Subject of History, Madison, Wisc., 1991, pp. 368-74.

50. The Pardoner identifies himself with those ‘yonge men’ who would learn about wives and marriage from the Wife of Bath (3.163-87) and in his own Prologue claims to enjoy ‘a joly wenche in every toun’ (6.453); in the General Prologue he plays at a ‘love duet’ with the Summoner (GP 672-3).

51. Dinshah, Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics, pp. 157-8, especially on the significance of the Pardoner’s identification within the terms of heterosexual, androcentric patriarchy.


53. Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans. Kennedy, p. 38: ‘[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence ... character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion’. Cf. the survival of this concept in Quintilian, Institutio oratoria 6.2.8-19; here the speaker can appeal to ethos as a quality of emotional moderation to characterise the persons of whom he speaks, and for such appeals to work the speaker must also embody the virtue of moderation. For Aristotle, the speaker need only project a credible character; for Quintilian the speaker must possess a good character.

54. See, for example, Margaret Jennings, CSJ, ‘The Ars componenti sermones of Ranulph Higden’, in Murphy, ed., Medieval Eloquence, pp. 112-26.


57. See, for example, Institutio oratoria 12.1.32 (ed. and trans. Butler): ‘Hoc certe procul
eximatur animo, rerum pulcherrimam eloquentiam cum vitiiis mentis posse misceri. Facultas dicendi, si in malos incidit, et ipsa iudicanda est malum; peiores enim illos facit, quibus contigit' ('At any rate let us banish from our hearts the delusion that eloquence, the fairest of all things, can be combined with vice. The power of speaking is even to be accounted an evil when it is found in evil men; for it makes its possessors yet worse than they were before').


60. On the Pardoner's Prologue as an example of the rhetorical technique of *manifestatio* see Gallo's introduction to his 'Matthew of Vendôme', pp. 57-8.


