MAKE WE MERRY MORE AND LESS
An Anthology of Medieval English Popular Literature

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Conceived as a companion volume to the well-received Simple Forms: Essays on Medieval English Popular Literature (2015), Make We Merry More and Less is a comprehensive anthology of popular medieval literature from the twelfth century onwards. Uniquely, the book is divided by genre, allowing readers to make connections between texts usually presented individually.

This anthology offers a fruitful exploration of the boundary between literary and popular culture, and showcases an impressive breadth of literature, including songs, drama, and ballads. Familiar texts such as the visions of Margery Kempe and the Paston family letters are featured alongside lesser-known works, often oral. This striking diversity extends to the language: the anthology includes Scottish literature and original translations of Latin and French texts.

The illuminating introduction offers essential information that will enhance the reader's enjoyment of the chosen texts. Each of the chapters is accompanied by a clear summary explaining the particular delights of the literature selected and the rationale behind the choices made. An invaluable resource to gain an in-depth understanding of the culture of the period, this is essential reading for any student or scholar of medieval English literature, and for anyone interested in folklore or popular material of the time.

The book was left unfinished at Gray's death; it is here edited by Jane Bliss. As with all Open Book publications, this entire book is freely available to read on the publisher's website. Printed and digital editions, together with supplementary digital material, can also be found at www.openbookpublishers.com.
Satire

Satire is a protean term.¹ Together with its derivatives, it is one of the most heavily-worked literary designations and one of the most imprecise. The great English lexicographer Samuel Johnson defined satire as ‘a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured’, and more elaborate definitions are rarely more satisfactory. No strict definition can encompass the complexity of a word that signifies, on the one hand, a kind of literature … and, on the other, a mocking spirit or tone that manifests itself in many literary genres but can also enter into almost any kind of human communication. Whenever wit is employed to expose something foolish or vicious to criticism, there satire exists, whether it be in song or sermon, in painting or in political debate, on television or in the movies. In this sense satire is everywhere.²

It certainly seems to be almost everywhere in medieval England. From this period, although much has been lost — or was never written down — there survives a mass of satirical writing, in both verse and prose. Alongside a tradition of popular satire there was of course a ‘learned’ one, rooted (remotely) in ancient classical satire and (more obviously) in that of the Old Testament prophets, their successors among

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¹ See Brewer, *Medieval Comic Tales* (2nd edn), p. xix: ‘Derision is a general attitude of humorous, superior contempt, very characteristic of medieval humour’; therefore it is a better concept than ‘satire’ in this context. See also Gray’s chapter Satire in *Simple Forms*.

² R. C. Elliott, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
the early fathers of the church, and the extensive and often brilliant satirical works in medieval Latin. This learned tradition in England includes writers like Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Dunbar and Skelton. The popular tradition, which overlaps and interacts with it, rarely has the wit or the precision shown by such writers: it prefers a direct, heavy blow, sometimes delivered ‘below the belt’. We seem to be in a world of homely taunts and stereotypes, mockery and invective. In its attempts to expose folly and vice it will employ ridicule and simple abuse. But it is a tradition not only vehement and aggressive, but also varied. The attitudes behind our examples show a remarkable range, from outright venom — sometimes close to the feared *nith* of earlier satire to a more relaxed and almost urbane attitude (as in *The Land of Cokaygne*),\(^3\) or in the high-spirited burlesque of the *Tournament of Tottenham*.\(^4\) Modern readers quickly become impatient with the general ‘complaints’ on the wickedness of the age, but we need to remember that such complaints could be telling and pointed if quoted in a particular context to an audience of receptive listeners. And if context is important, so is performance, whether in song or recitation or, visually, in the satirical ‘bills’ posted in public places. The simple, direct style of some pieces seems to bring us close to the style of the now lost satirical songs of the oral tradition, as we find it in the few fragments quoted by chroniclers. The popular flyting, an exchange of taunts, is known to us mainly through its appearance as a kind of courtly game in the writings of Dunbar and Skelton. But its oral antecedents could still be heard in medieval streets: Dunbar, addressing the merchants of Edinburgh, remarks that no one can pass through the city’s streets ‘for stink of haddockis and of scattis [skates], For cryis of carlingis [old women] and debbaittis [quarrels], For feusum [foul] flyttingis of defame’.\(^5\) It seems that Keats’s remark, that it was hateful to see quarrelling in the streets, but ‘the energies displayed are fine’, may have been as true of this period as it was of the eighteenth century.\(^6\)

In this chapter I have attempted to present examples which have something of the strange energy of satire, both destructive and creative.

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4 In *Middle English Verse Romances*, ed. Sands.


6 A letter from John Keats to George and Georgiana Keats, March 1819.
We begin with an introductory group of ‘snatches’: poems referred to or quoted by chroniclers (the words of these are the nearest we can come to the actual words of the oral song). These songs seem to have been common. Our no. (ii) is a poem attributed to John Ball at the time of the Peasants’ Revolt, a poem related to the general laments on the wickedness of the contemporary world, like the common ‘Abuses of the Age’, and which also shows how these ‘general’ poems may be given a pointedness in a particular political context. No. (iii) introduces us to the writing of satirical or threatening bills which could be displayed on doors or gates. Sadly, the verses in question — ‘englische billes rymed in partie’ (perhaps a reference to the doggerel verse sometimes used) — have not survived. A well-known example, ‘The Cat, the Rat, and Lovel our Dog Rule all England under a Hog’, was fixed to the doors of St Pauls.\(^7\) There follows a group of poems on various wickednesses, culminating in *London Lickpenny*, a satirical journey around the streets and institutions of London by one who lacks money; and brief examples of medical and religious satire. Poems against Scots and Flemings bring us to verses directed at individuals, like the hated Suffolk. We end with examples of parody and burlesque, where high spirits rather than satirical venom seem to rule. If Chaucer’s *Sir Thopas* is a witty and elegant literary burlesque of popular romance, *The Tournament of Tottenham* gives us a more forthright and boisterous example.

A. Snatches: Popular Satire in Action

\(\text{i)\(^8\)}\)

Maydenes of Engelande, sare may ye morne,
For tynt\(^9\) ye have uoure lemmans at lost
\quad Bannokes born\(^9\) Bannockburn
\quad With hevalogh.
What wende\(^9\) the kyng of Engeland have thought
\quad ygete\(^9\) Scotlande taken
\quad With rombylogh.

\(^7\) In *The Oxford Book of Medieval English Verse*, no. 329 (and see note): Catesby, Ratcliffe, and Lovell were among Richard III’s supporters.

Now raygneth pride in price,\(^9\) high esteem
Covetise is holden wise
Lechery without shame,
Gluttonie without blame,
Envye raygneth with reason,
And sloath\(^9\) is taken in gret season. sloth
God doe boote\(^9\) for nowe is time. bring remedy

(iii) Scottish Derision\(^10\)

Longe beerdys hartles,
Paynted hoodys wytles,
Gay cotis graceles,
Makyth Englande thryfteles.

B. The Wickedness of the World

iv) Now the Bisson Leads the Blind [vv. 1–24]\(^11\)

Fulfyllyd ys the profesy for ay
That Merlyn sayd and many on mo\(^9\) more
Wysdam ys wel ny away,
No man may knowe hys frenf fro fo\(^9\) foe
Now gyllorys\(^9\) don gode men gye,\(^9\) deceivers guide
Ryght\(^9\) gos redles\(^9\) all behynde, justice without counsel
Truthe ys turnyd to trechery,
For now the bysom\(^9\) ledys the blynde. purblind

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\(^9\) Part of a letter attributed to John Ball; see *Historical Poems*, ed. Robbins, no. 17 (John Ball’s Letters, I; 1381), p. 54. See also *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, pp. 160–1 (and notes) for another part of the letter.

\(^10\) See *Simple Forms*, p. 207.

\(^11\) This verse, from London, BL MS Harley 5396, is printed in *Reliquiae Antiquae* eds Wright and Halliwell-Phillipps (vol. II), p. 238 ff.
Now gloserys full gayly they go.  
Pore men be perus of this land —  
Sertes sum tyme hyt was not so,  
But sekyr all this is synnys sonde —  
Now mayntenerys be made justys  
And lewde men rewle the lawe of kynde,  
Nobull men be holdyn wyse,  
For now the bysom ledys the blynde ....

v) Where is Truth?

God be with trewthe qwer he be —  
I wold he were in this cuntre!

A man that shuld of trewthe telle,  
With grete lordys he may not dwelle —  
In trewe story, as klerkes telle,  
Trewthe is put in low degree.  
God be with trewthe ...

In ladyis chaumberys comit he not —  
Ther dare trewthe settyn non fot;  
Thow he wolde, he may not  
Comyn among the heye mene.  
God be with trewthe ...

With men of lawe he haght non spas —  
They loven trewthe in no plas,  
Me thinkit they han a rewly grace,  
That trewrthe is put at swych degree.  
God be with trewthe ...

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In holy cherche he may not sytte —
Fro man to man they shuln hym flytte;
It rewit me sore, in myn wytte —
Of trewthe I have grete pete,
God be with trewthe …

drive, pass on
it grieves me sorely
for

Relygius that shulde be good —
If trewthe cum ther I holde hym wood!
They shuldyn hym rynde cote and hood,
And make hym bare for to fle.
God be with trewthe …
those in religious orders
mad
tear from him
flee

A man that shulde of trewthe aspyre,
He must sekyn esylie
In the bosom of Marye.
For there he is forsothe.
God be with trewthe …
long for
quietly
truly

vi) Abuses of the Age

Bissop lorles,
Kyng redeles,
Yung man rechles,
Old man witles,
Womman ssamles,
I swer bi heven kyng
Thos beth five lither thing,
without learning
lacking counsel
heedless

vii) Sir Penny is a Bold Knight

Go bet, Peny, go bet, go
For thou mat makyn bothe frynd and fo.
better
may

13 Ibid. no. 283.
14 Ibid. pp. 441–2, no. 196.
15 In this anthology, ‘go bet’ is glossed as ‘get on’.
Peny is an hardy knyght,
Peny is mekyl of myght,
Peny, of wrong he makyt right
   In every cuntre qwer he goo.
   Go bet, Peny ...

Thow I have a man islawe\(^a\)  \(killed\)
And forfetyd the kynges lawe,
I shal fyndyn a man of lawe
   Wil takyn myn peny and let me goo.
   Go bet, Peny ...

And if I have to don\(^b\) fer or ner  \(things to do\)
And Peny be my massanger,
Than am I no thing in dwer\(^a\) —  \(doubt\)
   My cause shal be wel idoo,\(^b\)  \(done\)
   Go bet, Peny ...

And if I have pens bothe good and fyn,
Men wyl byddyn me to the wyn —
‘That I have shal be thi[n]!’
   Sekyrly\(^c\) thei wyl seyn so.  \(certainly\)
   Go bet, Peny ...

And quan I have non in myn purs,
Peny bet\(^d\) ne peny wers,\(^d\)  \(better\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ worse\)
Of me thei holdyn but lytil fors\(^d\) —  \(take little account\)
   ‘He was a man; let hym goo.’
   Go bet, Peny ...

\(^{a}i\)slawe: killed
\(^{b}d\)on: things to do
\(^{a}d\)wer: doubt
\(^{b}d\)oo: done
\(^{c}c\)ertainly
\(^{d}b\)etter\ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ worse
\(^{d}t\)ake little account
viii) London Lickpenny$^{16}$

To London once my stepps I bent,
    Where trouth in no wyse should be faynt,
To Westmynster-ward I forthwith went,
    To a man of law to make compleynt.
I sayd, ‘For Marys love, that holy saynt,
    Pyty the poore that wolde proceede!’
But for lack of mony I cold not spede.

And as I thrust the prese amonge,
    By froward chaunce my hood was gone,
Yet for all that I stayd not longe,
    Tyll at the Kynges Benche I was come,
Before the Judge I kneled anon,
    And prayd hym for Gods sake to take heede —
    But for lack of mony I myght not spede.

Beneth them sat clarkes a gret rout,
    Which fast dyd wryte by one assent;
There stoode up one and cryed about,
    ‘Rychard, Robert, and John of Kent!’
I wyst not well what this man ment;
    He cryed so thycke there in dede —
    But he that lackt mony myght not spede.

Unto the Common Place I yode thoo,
    Where sat one with a sylken hoode;
Dyd hym reverence for I ought to do so,
    And told my case as well as I coolde.
How my goodes were defrauded me by falsehood.
    I gat not a mum of his mouth for my meed —
    And for lack of mony I myght not spede.

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Unto the Rolls I gat me from thence,
Before thee clarkes of the Chauncerye
Where many I found earning of pence,
But none at all once regarded mee.
I gave them my playnt uppon my knee.
They liked it well, when they had it reade —
But lackyng mony I could not be sped.

In Westmynster Hall I found out one,
Which went in a long gown of raye,\textsuperscript{o}
I crowched and kneled before hym anon —
For Maryes love, of helpe I hym praye.
‘I wot not what thou meanest,’ gan he say;
To get me thence he dyd me bede\textsuperscript{o} —
For lack of mony I cold not speede.

Within this hall nether rych nor yett poor
Wold do for me ought, although I shold dye;
Which seing, I gat me out of the doore,
Where Flemynge began on me for to cry,
‘Master, what will you copen\textsuperscript{o} or by?
Fyne felt hates, or spectacles to reede\textsuperscript{o}?
Lay down your sylver, and here you may speede!’

Then to Westmynster gate I presently went,
When the sonn was at hyghe pryme;\textsuperscript{o}
Cookes to me they tooke good entent,\textsuperscript{o}
And proffered me bread with ale and wyne,
Rybbes of befe, both fat and ful fine\textsuperscript{o}
A fayre cloth they gan for to sprede —
But wantyng mony I might not speede.

\textsuperscript{17} The first of the daytime hours, about 6 am, and the second of the canonical hours (\textit{OED}).
Then unto London I dyd me hye,
   Of all the land it beareth the pryse.º
‘Hot pescodes!’º one began to crye.
   ‘Strabery rype!’º and ‘cherryes in the ryse!’º
One bad me come nere and by some spyce;
   Peper and safforne they gan me bedeº —
But for lack of mony I might not spede.

Then to the Chepeº I gan me drawne,
   Where mustch people I saw for to stand;
One ofred me velvet, sylke, and lawne;º
   Another he taketh me by the hande,
‘Here is Parys thred, the finest in the land!’
   I never was used to such thynges in dede,
And wanting mony I myght not spede.

Then went I forth by London stone,¹⁸
   Throughout all Canwykeº Streete;
Drapers mustch cloth me offred anone;
   Then comes one, cryed, ‘hot shepes feete!’
One cryde, ‘makerell!’; ‘ryshesº grene!’ another gan
greeteº.
   On bad me by a hood to cover my head —
But for want of mony I myght not be sped.

Then I hyed ne into Estchepe,º
   One cryes, ‘rybbs of befe, and many a pye!’
Pewter pottes they clattered on a heape;
   There was harpe, pype, and mynstrelsy.
‘Yea, by cock!’º ‘Nay, by cock!’ some began crye;
   Some songe of Jenken and Julyan for there mede —
But for lack of mony I might not spede.

¹⁸ London Stone stood in the middle of Cannon Street.
¹⁹ Rushes were used as floor-covering.
B. The Wickedness of the World

Then into Cornhyll\textsuperscript{0} anon I yode, \textit{Cornhill}\textsuperscript{20}

Where was mutch stolen gere amonge;

I saw where honge\textsuperscript{0} myne owne hoode, \textit{was hanging}

That I had lost amonge the thronge.

To by my own hood I thought it wronge —

I knew it well as I dyd my crede;

But for lack of mony I could not spede.

The taverner tooke me by the sleve,

‘Sir,’ sayth he, ‘wyll you our wyne assay?’\textit{\textsuperscript{0} try}

I answerd, ‘that can not mutch me greve;

A peny can do no more than it may.’

I drank a pynt, and for it dyd paye,

Yet sore ahungerd fron thence I yede,

And wanting mony I not spede.

Then hyed I me to Belyngsgate,\textsuperscript{0} \textit{Billingsgate}

And one cryed, ‘Hoo! Go we hence!’

I prayd a bargeman, for Gods sake,

That he wold spare me my expence.

‘Thou scapst\textsuperscript{0} not here,’ quod he, ‘under .ii. pence; \textit{escape}

I lyst\textsuperscript{0} not yet bestow my almes-dede!’ \textit{wish}

Thus, lackyng mony, I could not spede,

Then I conveyed me into Kent,

For of\textsuperscript{0} the law wold Y meddle no more, \textit{with}

Because no man to me tooke enten.\textsuperscript{0} \textit{paid attention}

I dyght me to do as I dyd before.

Now Jesus that in Bethlem was bore,

Save London, and send trew lawyers there mede!

For whoso wants mony, with them shall not spede.

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\textsuperscript{20} Cornhill was noted for drapers and vendors of old clothing.
C. Particular Abuses and Wicked Deeds

Medical and religious satire: although quack doctors and their remedies figure in popular drama, both medieval and later, English satirical poems on them have not survived in great numbers. We include one simple burlesque example. Here the more learned tradition produced one little masterpiece in Henryson’s *Sum Pracysis of Medecyne*, a dazzling performance which unites the style of ‘flyting’ with a wonderfully wild sense of fantasy: the ‘remedies’ include ‘sevin sobbis of ane selche’ [seal] and ‘the lug of ane lempet’. The much more extensive surviving corpus of religious satire — Lollard attacks on the church, orthodox attacks on Lollards — also presents problems for an anthologist of popular literature, since many examples seem more learned and ‘literary’. We simply present two poems against friars.

ix) A Good Medicine for Sore Eyes

For a man that is almost blynd:
La hym go barhed all day ageyn the wynd
Tyll the soyne be sette;

At evyn wrap hym in a cloke
And put hym in a hows full of smoke,
And loke that every hol be well shet.

And whan hys eyen begyne to rope,
Fyl hem full of brynston and sope.
And hyll hym well and warme;
And yf he se not by the next mone
As well at mydnyght as at none
I schall lese my ryght arme.

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21 In *The Middle Scots Poets*, ed. Kinghorn; a note mentions the medieval belief that doves had no gall (see Animal Tales, above).
x) These Friars

This poem is more lively than many anti-fraternal attacks, but it is sometimes obscure. The author seems to be thinking of wall-paintings in a church, such as are found in the large churches of the preaching friars.

Of thes frer mynors me thenkes noch wonder,  
That waxen are thus hauteyn, that som tyme were under,  
Among men of holy chirch thai maken mochel blonder  
Nou He that sytes us above, make ham sone to sonder!  
With an O and an I, thai praysen not seyt Poule,  
Thai lyen seyn Fraunceys, by my fader soule!  
First thai gabben on God that all men may se,  
When thai hangen him on high on a grene tre,  
With leves and with blossemes that bright are of ble, That was never Goddes son by my leute.  
With an O and an I, men wenen that thai wede,  
To carpe so of clergy that can not thair crede.  
Thai have done him on a croys fer up in the skye,  
And festned in hym wyenges, as he shuld flie.  
This fals, feyned byleve shal thai soure bye,  
On that lovelych lord, so for to lye.  
With an O and an I, one sayd ful still,  
Armachan distroy ham, if it is Goddes will.  
Ther comes one out of the skye in a grey goun  
As it were a hog-hyerd hyand to toun;  
Thai have mo goddess then we, I say, by Mahoun,  

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23 A short version of this is in *Medieval English Lyrics* (ed. Davis), pp. 141–2, no. 59; the note (p. 331) says it is frankly rather puzzling. See also *Historical Poems*, ed. Robbins (no. 66, on the Minorites).

24 Who do not know their Creed; this, and the Lord’s Prayer, were the two prayers that everybody was expected to know by heart.

25 This was Richard Fitzralph, who preached against mendicant abuses.

26 ‘Saracens’ and other ‘pagans’ were thought to swear by Mahomet.
All men under ham that ever beres croun,\(^9\)
With an O and an I, why shuld thai not be shent?\(^9\)
Ther wants noght bot a fyre that thai nere\(^9\) all brent!

Went I forther on my way in that same tyde,\(^9\)
Ther I sawe a frere bled in myddes of his syde,
Bothe in hondes and in fete he had woundes wyde;
To serve to that same frer, the pope mot abyde.\(^9\)
With an O and an I, I wonder of thes dedes,
To se a pope holde a dische whyl the frer bledes.

A cart was made al of fyre, as it shulde be,
A gray frer I sawe therinne, that best liked me
Wele I wute thai shal be brent, by my leaute —
God graunt me that grace that I may it se.
With an O and an I, brent be thai all,
And all that helps therto faire mot befall.\(^9\)

Thai preche all of povert,\(^9\) but that love thai noght —
For gode mete\(^9\) to thair mouthe the toun is thurghsoght;\(^9\)
Wyde are thair wonnynges\(^9\) and wonderfully wroght —
Murdre and horedome ful dere has it boght.\(^9\)
With an O and an I, for sise pens, er\(^9\) thai fayle,
Sle\(^9\) thi fadre and jape\(^9\) thi modre, and thai wyl the
assoille!\(^9\)

xi) Thou that Sellest the Word of God\(^27\)

Thou that sellest the worde of God
Be thou berfot,\(^9\) be thou shod,
Cum nevere here;
*In principio erat verbum*\(^28\)
Is the worde of God, all and sum,\(^9\)

\(^{27}\) In *The Oxford Book of Medieval Verse*, pp. 410–11, no. 171.
\(^{28}\) In the Beginning was the Word, the opening of John’s Gospel.
That thou sellest, lewed frere, ignorant

Hit is cursed symonie
Ether to selle or to bye
Any gostly thinge; spiritual
Therfore, frere, go as thou come,
And hold the in thi hows at home
Tyl we the almis brynge. alms

Goddes lawe ye reverson, overthrow
And mennes howsis ye persen, get into
As Poul berith wittnes,29
As mydday develis goynge abowte,
For money lowle ye lowte, bow
Flatteringe boythe more and lesse. great and small

D. Against Particular Groups or Individuals

Satirical verses against foreigners: a number have survived, mostly against Flemings and Scots. Those against the Scots are more numerous, and also more eloquent; and there are some sharp Scottish ripostes: Scots and English seem to have exchanged ‘males chansons’.

xii) Against the Rebellious Scots [1296]30

Tprut Scot rivelling (exclamation of contempt) rascal (lit. a rough boot)
With mikel mistiming
Crop thu ut of kage. you crept

29 This may be I Peter 5:8–9 (not an epistle of Paul). The Bible was well known in the Middle Ages, but Bible books and authors were often confused. The ‘noonday devil’ was the sin of sloth, ‘the destruction that wasteth at noonday’ (Ps. 91:6 in the Authorized Version, Ps. 90 in the Latin and Douay bibles).
30 In Pierre de Langtoft’s Chronicle, see note (on p. 391) to v. 156 (on p. 283); The Political Songs of England, ed. Wright.
xiii) A Scottish song against Edward I when he besieged Berwick

Wenes kyng Edward, with his longe shankes
Forto wyn Berwik, al oure unthankes?
Gas pikes him!
And when he hath hit,
Gas diche him!

xiv) Black Agnes at the siege of Dunbar [1388]

An English soldiers’ song recorded by a Scottish chronicler

… Off this ilk sege in hething
The Ingillismen maid oft carping:
‘I vow to God, scho beris hir weil,
The Scottis wenche with her ploddeill,
For cum I airly, cum I lait,
I fynde ay Annes at the gate!’

xv) The Execution of Sir Simon Fraser

Sir Simon Fraser (or Frisell) was captured by the English at the battle of Methven or Kirkencliff (1306). He was taken to London and executed in that year. Perhaps the poem was written shortly after the execution, by a professional ballad-maker; it seems generally similar to the ‘news ballads’ found in later popular literature. [vv. 169–208]

For al is grete poer, yet he wes ylaht:
Falsnesse and swykedom al hit geth to naht.
D. Against Particular Groups or Individuals

Tho he wes in Scotland, lutel wes ys thoht when
Of the harde jugement that hym wes bysoht sought, demanded
In stounde, time
He wes foure sithe perjured forswore times
To the kyng ther bifore, brought down
And that him brohte to grounde.

With feteres and with gyves ichot he wes todrowe, I know drawn
From the Tour of Londone, that monie myhte so that many be aware
knowe,
In a curtel of burel tunic of sackcloth strange a selkethe wyse.
Ant a garland on ys heved of the newe guyse, through Cheapside
Thurh Cheepe.
Moni mon of Engelond thither did run
For to se Symond
Thideward con lepe. thither

Tho he com to galewes, furst he wes anhonge, when
Al quic living though it byheveded, thah him thohte seemed to him
living
Seththe he wes yopened, is burnt bowels ybrend;
The heved to Londone Brugge wes send shame
To shonde. may prosper
So ich ever mote the: once expected
Sum while wende he
Ther lutel to stonde —

He rideth thourh the site, as I telle may, they city
With gomen and wyth solas that wes here pay games and fun
To Londone Brugge hee nome they took the way —
Mony wes the wyves chil that theron loketh a day, by
And seide alas,
That he was bore born
And sovilliche forlore vilely undone
So feir mon as he was.
Nou stont the heved above the tubrugge,\textsuperscript{9}
drawbridge
Faste bi Waleis,\textsuperscript{9} soth forte sugge;\textsuperscript{9}
Wallace say
gaze
After socour of Scotlond longe he mowe prye.\textsuperscript{9}
gaze
And after help of Fraunce wet halt it to lye,\textsuperscript{9}
what profits it to lie
Ich wene.\textsuperscript{9}
I think
Betere him were in Scotlond
With is ax in ys hond,
To pleyen o\textsuperscript{9} the grene.
on

xvi) Revenge for Bannockburn\textsuperscript{34}

The Englishman Laurence Minot wrote a series of poems celebrating the deeds of Edward III against the Scots and his other enemies. This vigorous example is occasioned by the English victory at Halidon Hill (1333), which he sees as a triumphant revenge for the Scots’ defeat of the English by Robert the Bruce at Bannockburn (1314). Minot sees the Scots as rough and boastful — and untrustworthy.

Skottes out of Berwik and of Abirdene,
At the Bannok burn war ye to kene;\textsuperscript{9}
bold
Thare slogh\textsuperscript{a} ye many sakles,\textsuperscript{9} als it wes sene,
slew innocent
And now has king Edward wroken\textsuperscript{9} it, I wene,
avenged
It is wroken, I wene, wele wurth the while,\textsuperscript{9}
happy the day!
War yit with\textsuperscript{9} the Skottes, for thai er ful of gile.
still watch out for

Whare er ye, Skottes of saint Johnes toune?\textsuperscript{9}
Perth
The boste\textsuperscript{a} of yowre baner es betin al doune;
pride
When ye bosting wll bede,\textsuperscript{9} sir Edward es boune\textsuperscript{a}
offer ready
For to kindle yow care and crak yowre crowne.
He has cracked yowre crowne, wele wurth the while!
Schame bityde\textsuperscript{a} the Skottes, for thai er ful of gile. befall

Skottes of Striflin\textsuperscript{9} war steren and stout;\textsuperscript{9}
Stirling fierce and strong
Of God ne of gude men had thai no dout;\textsuperscript{9}
fear

\textsuperscript{34} This is printed in \textit{Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose}, ed. Sisam, pp. 152–3 (notes pp. 253–4).
D. Against Particular Groups or Individuals

Nou have thai, the pelers, priked about,
Bot at the last sir Edward rifild thaire rout.
He has rifild thaire rout, wel wurth the while!
Bot ever er thai under bot gaudes and gile.

Rughfute riveling, now kindels thi care,
Berebag with thi boste, thi biging es bare;
Fals wretche and forsworn, whider wiltou fare?
Busk the into Brig, and abide thare.
Thare, wretche, saltou won and wery the while;
Thi dwelling in Dundee es done for thi gile.

The Skotte gase in Burghes and betes the stretes,
All thisse Inglis men harmes he hetes,
Fast makes he his mone to men that he metes,
But fone frendes he finds that his bale betes.
Fune betes his bale, wele wurth the while,
He uses all threting with gaudes and gile.

Bot many man thretes and spakes ful ill.
That sum tyme war better to be stane-still,
The Skot in his wordes has wind for to spill,
For at the kast Edward sall have al his will.
He had his will at Berwik, wele wurth the while,
Skottes broght him the kayes — bot get for thaire gile.

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xvii) The Fall of Suffolk [1450]^35

Popular resentment at events in England and France had become centred on William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, ‘the Fox of the South’: he was blamed for the unpopular marriage of Henry VI to Margaret of Anjou, for recent defeats and losses in France, and for his suspected role

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^35 Cited in Gray’s Later Medieval English Literature, p. 337; see Historical Poems, ed. Robbins, no. 75.
in the death of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester (1447). He was indicted and held in the Tower prior to banishment. The poem was written at this point, probably in February 1450. Later in 1450 he set out for France, but was intercepted and murdered. Another satirical poem ‘celebrates’ his death. The ‘fox’ poem makes some play with animal names and heraldic imagery: Talbot ‘our dog’, the Earl of Shrewsbury, one of the great English generals (a talbot is a kind of hound); Jack Napes, a tame ape, suggested by Suffolk’s badge of clog and chain; John Beaumont, Constable of England, is ‘that gentill rache’ (hunting dog), and ‘beaumont’ was the name of a hound; ‘oure grete gandere’ is Duke Humphrey, whose badge was a swan.

Now is the fox drëvinº to hole! Hoo to hym, hoo, hoo! driven
For andº he crepe out, he will yow alle undo, if
Now ye han foundeº parfite, love well your game; have discovered game
For and ye ren countre,º then be ye to blame. in the opposite direction
Sum of yow holdith with the fox and rennyth hare;
But he that tied Talbot our doge, evyll mote he fare!
For now we mys the black dog with the wide mouth,
For he wold have ronnen well at the fox of the south.
And all gooth backward, and don isº in the myre, is put, or stuckº
As they han deserved, so pay they ther hire.
Now is tyme of Lent; the fox is in the towre;
Therfore send hym Salesburyº to be his confessoure. Bishop Ayscough of Salisbury
Many mo ther ben, and we kowd hem knowe,º make known
But wonº most begyn the daunce, and all com arowe,º one in a line
Loke that your hunteº blowe well thy chase;º huntsman pursuit
Butº he do well is part, I beshreweº is face! unless curse
This fox at Bury sloweoure grete gandere;
Therfore at Tyborn mony mon on hym wondere.
Jack Napes, with his clogge
Hath tied Talbot, oure gentill dogge,
Wherfore Beaumownt, that gentill raché,

36  MED ‘don’, a dun horse; it cites a similar line to this one, meaning ‘horse and cart are in the mire’, but neither is likely in this context (this poem is not cited). It may refer to a game which involved pulling on a log.
Hath brought Jack Napiis in an evill cache.\(^0\) pursuit
Be ware, al men, of that blame,
And namly\(^0\) ye of grete fame,\(^0\) especially
Spirituaull and temperaull, be ware of this,
Or els hit will not be well, iwis.
God save the kyng, and God forbade
That he suche apes any mo fede,
And of the perille that may befall
Be ware, dukes, erles, and barouns alle.

### E. Parody and Burlesque

Two examples of verse satire which make good use of the extensive and deep-rooted tradition.

#### xviii) The Land of Cokaygne\(^37\)

This Early Middle English poem, with its witty combination of antimonastic satire and parody of the delights of the Earthly Paradise, manages to create a glorious vision of a comic utopia; and the (monastic) world upside down. [vv. 51–166]

\[\ldots\] Ther is a wel fair abbei
Of white monkes and of grei;
The bowris\(^0\) and halles — chambers
Al of pasteis\(^0\) beth the walles, pasties
Of fleis,\(^0\) of fisse, and rich met,\(^0\) meat
The likfullist\(^0\) that man mai et, most delightful
Fluren\(^0\) cakes beth the schingles\(^0\) alle of flour
Of cherche, cloister, boure, and halle;
The pinnes\(^0\) beth fat podinges\(^0\) — fastening pegs
Rich met to princes and kings.
Man\(^0\) mai therof et inogh\(^2\) one

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\(^{37}\) In *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*; see also Gray’s *From the Norman Conquest* pp. 352–5. Bennett describes it as the first fully comic poem in our literature (*Middle English Literature*, pp. 14–17).
Al with right and noght with wogh;⁰
Al is commune to yung and old,
To stoute and sterne, mek and bold.
Ther is a cloister, fair and light,
Brod and lang, of sembli sight;⁰
The pilers of that cloister alle
Beth iturned of⁰ cristale,
With har bas⁰ and capitale
Of grene jaspe⁰ and rede corale.
In the praer⁰ is a tre,
Swithe likful⁰ for to se —
The rote⁰ is gingevir⁰ and galingale,³⁸
The siouns⁰ beth al sedwale⁰
Trie maces⁰ beth the flure,
The rind canel⁰ of swet odur,
The frute gilofre⁰ of gode smakke;⁰
Of cucubes⁰ ther is no lakke.
Ther beth rosis of rede ble,⁰
And the lilie likful⁰ forto se
That faloweth⁰ never dai no night
This aght⁰ be a swet sight,
Ther beth .iiii. willis⁰ in the abbey,
Of treacle⁰ and halwei,⁰
Of baum⁰ and ek piement⁰ ...
[There are precious stones, and many birds.]
... Ther beth briddes mani and fale⁰ ...
The gees irostid⁰ on the spitte
Flees⁰ to that abbey, God hit wot,⁰
And gredith,⁰ ‘Gees, al hote! al hot!’
Hi⁰ bringeth garlek, grete plente,
The best idight⁰ that man mai se.
The leverokes,⁰ that beth cuth,⁰
Lightith adun⁰ to manis muth,
Idight in stu,⁰ ful swathe⁰ wel,

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³⁸ An aromatic root (see OED).
E. Parody and Burlesque

Pudridº with gilofre and canel.
Nis no spechº of no drink;
Ak takeº inogh withute swinkº …
… The yung monkes euchº dai
Aftiir metº goth to plai;
Nis ther hauk no fuleº so swifte
Bettir fleingº be the lifte,º
Than the monkes heigh of modeº
With harº slevis and har hode.
Whan the abbot seeth ham flee,º
That he holt forº moch glee;º
Ak natheles,º al ther amang,º
He biddith ham light to evesang.º
The monkes lightith noght adun,
Ac furreº fleeth in o randun.º
Whan the abbot him iseeth
That is monkes fram him fleeth,
He takith a maidin of the routeº
And turnith up har white toute,º
And betith the tabursº with is hond
To make is monkes light to lond.
Whan is monkes that iseeth,
To the maid dun hi fleeth.
And goth the wench al abute
And thakkethº al hir white toute.
And sith aftir her swinkeº
Wendith meklich hom to drink,
And goth to har collacione
A wel fair processione.
Another abbei is therbi —
Forsoth, a gret fair nunnerie,
Upº a river of swet milke,
Whar is gret plente of silk.º
Whan the someris dai is hote,
The yung nunnes takith a bote
And doth ham forthin that river,
Both with oris and with stere.\(^9\)
Whan hi beth fur\(^9\) fram the abbei
Hi makith ham naked forto plei.
And lepith dune into the brimme\(^9\)
And doth ham sleilich\(^9\) forto swimme.
The yung monkes that hi seeth,\(^9\)
Hi doth ham up\(^9\) and forth hi fleeth,
And cummith to the nunnes anon,\(^9\)
And euch monke him taketh on,\(^9\)
And snellich\(^9\) berith forth har prei
To the mochil grei\(^9\) abbei,
And techith the nunnes an oreisun\(^9\)
With jambleve\(^9\) up and doun ....

\(^{xix}\) The Tournament of Tottenham\(^{39}\)

A merry burlesque of a chivalric event, played out by humble locals rather than by armed knights. [vv. 1–90]

Of alle these kene conqueroures to carpe it were kynde,
Off fele\(^9\) feghtyng folk ferly\(^9\) we fynde.
The tournament of Totenham have we in mynde —
It were harme sich hardynesse were holdyn behynde.

In story as we rede
Of Hawkyn, of Harry,
Off Tymkyn, of Tyrry.
Off theym that were dughty\(^9\)
And hardy in dede.

Hit befell in Totenham on a dere day,
Ther was made a schartyng\(^9\) be the hy way —
Thider com alle the men of tho contray.

\(^{39}\) In Middle English Verse Romances. Sands has modernized the spelling slightly, compared with the version presented here.
Of Hyssylton, of Hygate, and of Hakenay.
And alle the swete swynkers.º
 Ther heppedº Hawkyn, 
 Ther dawnsed Dawkyn.
 Ther trumpedº Tomkyn,
 And alle were trewe drynkers.

Tyl the day was gon and evesong past,
That thay shuld rekyn ther skot and ther counts caste
Perkyn the potter into the pressº past crowd
And seid, ‘Rondol the refe,º a doghter thou hast,
Tyb thi dere,
Therfor wytº wold I, know
Whych of all this bachelery
Were best worthy
To wed her to his fere.’º consort

Upsterte thos gadelyngysº with ther lang staves fellows
And sayd, ‘Rondol the refe, Lo, this lad raves!
Baldely amang us thy doghter he craves,
And we er richer men than he, and more godº haves property
Of catel and corn.’
Then sayd Perkyn to Tybbe, ‘I have hyghtº promised
That I schal be always redy in my right
If that it schulkd be thys dat sevenyght
Or ellis yet to morn.’

Then seid Randolfe the refe, ‘Ever be he waryd,º cursed
That about thys carping lenger wold be taryed,
I wold not my doghter that sche were myscaryed,
But at her most worschypº I wold she were maryed, honour
Therfor a tournament schal begyn
Thys day sevenyght.
With a flayle for to fight.
And he that ys of most myght
Schal broukeº hur with wynne.’º enjoy pleasure
Whoso berys hym best in the tournament,
Hym shal be granted the greº be the common assent,
For to wynne my doghter with dughtyness of dent,º
And Coppeld my brodeº henne, was broght out of Kent,
And my donnydº cow.
For no spens wyl I spare,
For no catell wyl I care,
He schal have my gray mare,
And my spottyd sowe.’

Ther was many a bold lad ther bodyes to bede;
Than thay toke thayre leve, and hamward thei yede,º
And alle the woke afterward thay graythed ther wede,º
tyll it come to the day that thay suld do ther dede.
Thay armed ham in mattes;
Thay set on ther nollys,º
For to kepe ther pollys,º
Gode blake bollysº
For batryngº of battes;
They sewed tham in schepe skynnes, for they suld not brest,
And ilkon toke a black hatte instead of a crest.
A harrow brodº as a fanne abouneº on ther brest,
And a flayle in ther hande, for to fight prest.º
Furth gone thay fare.
Ther was kyd mekylº fors,
Who schuld best fend his cors.º
He that had no gode hors,
He gat hym a mare.

Sych another gadryng have I not sene oft,
When all the gret company come rydand to the croft:
Tyb on a gray mare was set upon loft
On a sekº full of feerysº for she shuld syt soft,
And led hur to the gap —
Forther wold not Tyb then
For crying of al the men,
Tyl scho had hur gode brode hen
Set in hur lap.

A gay gyrdyl Tyb had on, borwed for the monys, for the occasion
And a garland on hur hed ful of rounde bones.
And a broche on hur brest, ful of safer stones, sapphire
Wyth the haly rude tokening was wrethyn for tho nonys. No catel was ther spared.
When joly Gyb saw hure hare,
He gyrd so hus gray mere
That she lete a faucon-fare fart
At the rerewarde. at the back end

[The company proceeds to make vows, one after the other in the manner of Charlemagne’s knights in Voeux du Paon, vv. 145–71]

When thay had ther othes made, furth gan they hye hasten
With flayles and hornes and trumpes mad of tre. wood
Ther were all the bachelerys of that contre,
Thay were dyght in aray as thamselfe wold be —
Thayr baner was full bright
Of an pled raton fell, rat skin
The cheverone of a ploo mell plough mallet
And the shadow of a bell,
Quartered with the mone light.

I wot it ys no childer game whan thay togedyr met,
When ich freke in the feld on his felay fellow
And layd on styfly — for nothyng wold thay let,
And faghth ferly fast, tyl ther horses swet.
And fewe wordys spoken.

40 The Holy Rood was worked in, as well.
41 This was an immensely popular chanson de geste (c. 1312) by Jacques de Longuyon of Lorraine.
42 For breaking up clods.
Ther were flayles al to-slatred,
Ther were scheldys al to-flatred,
Bollys and dyschis al to-schatred,
And many hedys brokyn.

Ther was clynkyng of cart sadellys and clattiryng of connes, canes
Of fele frekis in the feld brokyn were ther fannes winnowing shovels
Of sum were the hedys brokyn, of sum the brayn panes.
And yll ware thay beseyn or they went thens, before
Wuth swyppyng of swepyllys, striking of flail-ends
The boyes were so wery for-fught, fought to a standstill
That thay might not fight mare oloft.
But creped then about in the croft,
As thay were crokid crypils.

[vv. 190–214] Perkyn turnyd hym about in that ych thrange,
Among thos wery boyes he wrest and he wrang,
When he saw Tirry away with Tyb fang,
And wold have lad hir away with a luf song,
And after hym ran
And of hys hors he hym drogh pulled
And gaf hym of hys flayle inogh.
‘We, te-he,’ quod Tyb, and lugh laughed
‘Ye ar a dughtly man!’

Thus thay tugged and rugged tyl yt was nere nyght,
Alle the wyves of Totenham come to se that syght,
With wyspys and kexis and ryschys ther light,
To fech hom ther husbandes, that were tham trouth-plight,
And sum broght gret harwes sledges
Ther husbandes hom for to fech;
Sum on dores and sum on hech, gratings
Sum on hyrdyllys and sum on crech, crutch
And sum on welebaraws.

43 Probably here being used as shields.
44 With lit straw, flax, and rush-lights.
They gaderyd Perkyn about everych syde
And grant hym ther the gre,\(^9\) the more\(^9\) was his pride.
Tyb and he with gret myrthe homward can they ride, 
And were al nyght togedyr tyl the morn tide, 
And thay in fere\(^9\) assent: 
So wele his nedys he has sped, 
That dere Tyb he had wed …

[And there is a rich feast …]\(^{45}\)

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\(^{45}\) Gray presents most of this text, breaking off at v. 214 (it ends at v. 234).