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THE RAVISHMENT OF BODY AND SOUL IN THE *FRIAR'S TALE* AND THE *SUMMONER'S TALE*

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ABSTRACT

Both the *Friar's Tale* and the *Summoner's Tale* allude consistently to the danger of being ravished in "body and soul" to hell when they are seen in this context of the late medieval vision of the afterlife. In the case of the summoner in the *Friar's Tale*, it is suggested that he is to undergo corporeal pain fully with his possibly somatomorphic body, as in *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*. In the *Summoner's Tale*, Friar John who claims to have witnessed a dead child borne to heaven in a "revelacioun", is in fact in the danger of being ravished himself "body and soul" to hell, as in *Visio Lazari*. The two tales tell how one is constantly in the dangerous liminal situation between damnation and salvation, between being physically ravished to hell by the devil and being carried to heaven by angels in mystical ravishment.

[1] See *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Cambridge, UK, 2002, 2005), 1:88–89.

[2] John V. Fleming, "The Summoner's Prologue: An Iconographic Adjustment," *The Chaucer Review* 2 (1967): 95–107 (p. 106).

[3] *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford, 2008). All quotations from and references to Chaucer are from this edition and will be cited in parentheses within the text.

The *Friar's Tale* of a corrupt summoner in the *Canterbury Tales* is apparently an exemplary tale about avarice and careless swearing. Analogues, in which a covetous man is carried off to hell by the devil, are found in various collections of exempla such as *Dialogus miraculorum* and the fragmentary *Libri miraculorum* by the thirteenth-century Cistercian prior, Caesarius of Heisterbach.^[1] In response, the Summoner tells an anti-fraternal satire, also centered around the sin of avarice, after the short but scathing vision of a friar who tours hell guided by an angel. With regard to these two tales, John Fleming has argued that they "form a kind of grotesque literary diptych on the subject of the orders of justice and mercy. In the first God's justice is prostituted by a corrupt and impenitent minister of justice; in the second his mercy is wrenched in the rude hands of a venal and wrathful minister of mercy."^[2] In that case the *Summoner's Prologue*, in which a friar is literally "ravished" (III.1676)^[3] to hell in a vision, can be regarded as a hinge of the diptych that holds the two wings together because this episode is actually flanked by two other cases of ravishment; it is preceded by the devil's seizure of the summoner at the end of the *Friar's Tale* and in turn followed in the *Summoner's Tale* by a vision of the soul of a dead child borne to heaven which Friar John falsely claims to have witnessed in ravishment with fellow friars. This paper argues that the two tales, despite their apparent preoccupation with this-worldly self-interest, allude quite vividly and consistently to what awaits the deceitful summoner and friar in hell, and shows that not only the summoner but also Friar John is in grave danger of being ravished in "body and soul" to hell. In fact, the *Summoner's Prologue* functions as a central panel of a triptych, rather than a diptych, providing a narrative context that firmly links the two tales together. If we pay attention to various connotations of "ravishen", contextualizing them particularly by medieval *exempla* narratives and visions of the afterlife, where analogues to these tales are often

[4] See, for example, Wiesje F. Nijenhuis, *The Vision of Edmund Leversedge: A Fifteenth-century Account of a Visit to the Otherworld* edited from BL MS Additional 14193 (Nijmegen, 1991), p. 83, line 36: "And my spyrit was raveschyd and departyd fro my body..."; *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*, ed. Robert Easting, EETS OS 318 (Oxford, 2002), pp. 41–43, lines 624–29: "Sothly, this was fro myd-night of Shere Thursday, the whiche endith in the mornynge of Good Fredaye, in whiche time Y was rauyshte in spirite as Y laye in the chap-tur-hows...."

[5] For a more or less comprehensive survey of medieval visions of the afterlife, see Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1981); Alison Morgan, *Dante and the Medieval Other World* (Cambridge, 1990); Peter Dinzelbacher, *Revelationes*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge Occidental, 57, A–VI D.3 (Turnhout, 1991); Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook* (New York, 1993); Claude Carozzi, *Le Voyage de l'âme dans l'au-delà d'après la littérature latine (Ve–XIIIe siècle)* (Rome, 1994); Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle English Literature, 3 (Cambridge, UK, 1997); Takami Matsuda, *Death and Purgatory in Middle English Didactic Poetry* (Cambridge, UK, 1997); Fabienne Pomel, *Les Voies de l'au-delà et l'essor de l'allégorie au Moyen Age* (Paris, 2001).

[6] Cf. "And as an angel ladde hym up and down, / To shewen hym the peynes that ther were,/... And unto Sathanas he ladde hym down." (III. 1678–79, 1686; my emphasis). See Takami Matsuda, "The Summoner's Prologue and the Tradition of the Vision of the Afterlife," *Poetica* 55 (2001): 75–82.

[7] *Peter of Cornwall's Book of Revelations*, ed. Robert Easting and Richard Sharpe (Toronto, 2013), pp.336–39.

[8] See the illustration in *The Iconography of Hell*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Thomas H. Seiler, Early Drama, Art and Music Monograph Series, 17 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1992), pl. 14.

[9] *St Patrick's Purgatory: Two Versions of Owayne Miles and the Vision of William of Stranton, together with the long text of the Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, ed. Robert Easting, EETS OS 298 (Oxford, 1991), pp. 14–15, stanzas 76–78. See, for other examples, Mabel A. Stanford, "The Sumner's Tale and St Patrick's Purgatory," *JEGP* 19 (1920): 377–81.

sought, we can unveil a thematic strand that runs through the two tales. Ravishment to hell is actually the veiled but sustained theme throughout the Friar-Summoner sequence, which is revealed either in advance or in retrospect, with the one tale providing a context for interpretation for the other.

I

In the *Summoner's Prologue*, "ravished" has the specific meaning of being transported to the other world in a vision (*MED*, ravishen 2(d)). In Middle English visions of the afterlife, the word is often used in this specific sense.^[4] The popularity of the vision of the afterlife reached its zenith in the twelfth century with the full-scale Latin visions of hell, purgatorial regions and the earthly Paradise, notably *Visio Tnugdali* (1149), *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii* (c. 1180–84) and *Visio Monachi de Eynsham* (1196), all of which were also known in later Middle English versions.^[5] As I have argued elsewhere, in view of the two-stage descent of the friar to the bottom of hell where Satan resides, the short vision in the *Prologue* can be contextualized specifically as a burlesque of such popular visions as *Visio Tnugdali* or *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, in which the visit to regions of purgatorial torments is followed by that to hell situated further below.^[6] In addition, while Purgatory and hell are often compartmentalized according to which of seven deadly sins the dead person is guilty of or in which sinful profession he was engaged while alive, the idea of the place specially reserved for the elect is also a motif in visions of the afterlife. In *Liber Revelationum*, compiled probably at the beginning of the thirteenth century by Peter of Cornwall, the Austin canon in London, a certain brother who specially loved Augustine begs God, by assiduous prayers and frequent sobbing, to reveal to him what reward Augustine enjoys in heaven. His wish being granted, he is taken by an angel to the court of heaven, but he does not find Augustine among the elect. He is then told by the angel that Augustine resides in the specially appointed place closer to the brightness of divinity.^[7] Such an episode can also be regarded as an inverted analogue to the *Summoner's Prologue*, another testimony to its dependence on the tradition of the vision of the afterlife.

The brief description of hell in the *Prologue* is apparently carried over to the beginning of the *Summoner's Tale* itself where we meet an equally brief reference to "infernalized" tortures in Purgatory, with the mention of flesh-hooks and awls: "Ful hard it is with fleshhook or with oules / To been yclawed, or to brenne or bake." (III. 1730–31). The flesh-hook by which "a soul is impaled in hell or purgatory" (*MED* hōk, 5(b)), is one of the typical implements used by demons in hell to torture souls.^[8] *Owayne Miles*, a Middle English version of *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, provides a graphic description of the use of such implements, both iron hooks and a furnace.^[9] This is a rather specialized usage of the word "hōk," which is more commonly used to denote a fishhook (*MED* hōk, 2(a)). The word is in fact used first in this sense at the beginning of the *Friar's Tale*, where it draws out a series of associations with regard to catching with a hook:

But certes, lecchours dide he grettest wo;
They sholde syngen if that they were hent;
...
For smale tithes and for smal offrynge
He made the peple pitously to synge,

For er the bishop caught hem with his hook
 They weren in the erchedeknes book. (III. 1310–11,
 1315–18)

The hook, used here as a metaphor for the bishop's staff, suggests a fishhook, which goes back to Matthew 4:19 where Christ promises to make the apostles (and subsequently the clergy) "piscatores hominum". A fishhook is also a traditional image of "Christ's defeat of the Devil in the scheme of redemption" as it is used in the *Legenda aurea*, or in the Middle English *Stanzaic Life of Christ* that is based on it, where Christ sets a hidden hook to catch the devil.^[10] This positive image of the triumph over sin and the devil, however, turns ambiguous when we realize that "syngen", here meaning "to lament" or "to cry out in pain" (*MED* *singen* 1(d)), is also used to describe the damned souls being punished by demons in hell, as in *Owayne Miles* where backbiters cry out in pain.^[11] The archdeacon serves the bishop as a severe punisher of crimes and misdemeanors, especially of sexual nature, just as does the summoner in his service, who blackmails the accused with the promise of erasing scandalous names from his book (III. 1363–66). They both resemble the petty Titivillus who assiduously writes down venial sins in the Book of Life,^[12] and by this association help to build up the narrative for the entrance of the devil himself.

If the summoner himself already presents some devilish features and is figuratively a devil in disguise, the devil himself, who is in disguise, does the same. It is suggested that his appearance as the yeoman dressed in green carrying a bow and arrow and his dwelling far in the north point to his devilish nature well before he identifies himself as such.^[13] It is then significant that he explains at some length that the devil is a shape-shifter when he reveals his identity. The disguise is a chief device demons use to tempt man, as Augustine warns in the Book 12 of *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, which is a *locus classicus* for the discussion of *discretio spirituum*. The discernment of the spirits "is certainly a most difficult task when the evil spirit acts in a seemingly peaceful manner and, without tormenting the body, possesses a man's spirit".^[14] There are a number of exempla in which the devil appears in seemingly benevolent guises, including an angel and the Virgin Mary.^[15] The summoner tries to show that he is not intimidated, switching back from *you* to *thou* in addressing him (III. 1504–6, 1520–29),^[16] and claims that the devil is his peer and brother. The devil readily concedes, casually pointing out that they will be together a long time if the summoner so wishes; the summoner, on the other hand, does not realize that this friendliness may be another disguise to tempt him to act sinfully, so that he himself becomes the target of ravishment to hell.

We then come to potential cases of ravishment with the two corresponding episodes of the encounter with a carter and the visit to a widow. In the case of the cursing carter, it was possible for the devil to seize his prize then and there, just as the summoner urged. In that case, the episode would have become one of the exemplary anecdotes against rash swearing. For example, a child was seized by the devil and lost his arm because his parents cursed him, as is narrated in the popular conduct book of Geoffrey de la Tour Landry.^[17] In another exemplum, a sorceress who commended herself to the devil is instantly seized by the devil and carried off.^[18] But in the *Friar's Tale*, the devil respects the true intention behind the carter's curse, and taking the circumstance of sin into consideration, leaves him unharmed.

The devil also respects the intention of the swearer in the case of the widow they visit next, but with a different outcome. When the summoner swore "the

[10] C. W. Marx, *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge, UK, 1995), pp. 45–46; *A Stanzaic Life of Christ*, ed. Frances A. Foster, EETS OS 166 (Oxford, 1926), lines 6345–52.

[11] Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory*, p.15, stanza 81.

[12] See, for example, *the Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Sidney J. H. Herrtage, EETS ES 33 (Oxford, 1879; repr. 1962), p. 392, no. 73; *The Towneley Plays*, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley, EETS SS 13 (Oxford, 1994), 1: 409–16, lines 300ff.

[13] See explanatory notes to III. 1380–83 in *Riverside Chaucer* (p. 875); Clarence H. Miller, "The Devil's Bow and Arrows: Another Clue to the Identity of the Yeoman in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 30 (1995): 211–14 (p. 211).

[14] XII. 13. 28; St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, *Ancient Christian Writers*, 42 (New York, 1982), p. 196.

[15] Cf. *Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales*, ed. F. C. Tubach (Helsinki, 1969), nos. 1529–73.

[16] Martha Powell Harley, "Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *Explicator* 46.2 (1988): 4–5.

[17] *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*, ed. Thomas Wright, EETS OS 33 (Oxford, 1906; repr. 1969), p. 108. The woodcut depicting the scene in Geoffrey de la Tour Landry, *Ritter von Turn* (Basel, 1493) is reproduced in V. A. Kolve, *Telling Images: Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative II* (Stanford, CA, 2009), p. 69.

[18] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, XI.60, in *Caesarii Heisterbacensis Monachi Ordinis Cisterciensis Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne, 1851), 2: 311–12.

[19] It may be significant that it is by the word of the helpless widow that the empowered summoner is “ravished”, in contrast to the ravishment or *raptus* of a maid by a knight in the preceding *Wife of Bath’s Tale* (III. 873–81). In this respect, the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* also prepares the reader for a series of ravishments to follow in the Summoner-Friar sequence, with a pointed remark about lecherous “limitours” who replace an elf. For the thematically linked reading of the two tales, see also Penn R. Szitty, “The Green Yeoman as Loathly Lady: The Friar’s Parody of the Wife of Bath’s Tale,” *PMLA* 90 (1975): 386–94.

[20] *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), p.494 (V.12); *John Mirk’s Festial Edited from British Library MS Cotton Claudius A. II*, 2 vols., ed. Susan Powell, EETS OS 334, 335 (Oxford, 2009, 2011), 1: 6–7, lines 121–45.

[21] *Die Vision des Bauern Thurkill*, ed. P. G. Schmidt (Weinheim, 1987), p. 22; Nijenhuis, *The Vision of Edmund Leversedge*, p. 83, lines 23–25.

[22] Johannes Herolt, *Promptuarium exemplorum*: “Ac rapuit eum in ipsa hora diabolus”, in *The Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. W. F. Bryan and G. Dempster (London, 1941), p. 271; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Libri VIII miraculorum*, II.17: “Et rapuit eum diabolus in ipsa hora”, in *Die Fragmente der Libri VIII Miraculorum des Caesarius von Heisterbach*, ed. Aloys Meister (Rome, 1901), p. 91.

[23] “Qualiter quidam monachus, cum raptus esset ante tribunal Domini, et de eo dixisset Dominus ut deleteretur de libro uite, per beatam Mariam redditus est corpori.... Affuit et multitudo maxima tam bonorum quam malorum angelorum undique in circuitu meo, illi uidelicet ut me defenderent, isti autem ut raperent.... Demonibus autem ad hanc uocem me rapere paratis, ego miser oculis lacrimosis ad misericordie matrem respexi.... (How a certain monk, when he was rapt (“raptus esset”) before the tribunal of the Lord, and the Lord had said of him that he would be deleted from the book of life, was restored to the body by Blessed Mary. ... And a huge crowd of both good and evil angels was everywhere in a circle about me, the former to defend me, the latter that they might seize me (“ut raperent”).... With the demons ready at this word to seize me (“me rapere”), I looked back, in my misery, with tearful eyes at the Mother of mercy....)” Easting and Sharpe, *Peter of Cornwall’s Book of Revelations*, pp. 294–96.

[24] Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Les revenants dans la société féodale,” *Le Temps de la réflexion* 3 (1982): 285–306 (p. 293).

[25] Jean-Claude Schmitt, “Le spectre de Samuel et la sorcière d’En Dor. Avatars historiques

foule feend me fecche / If I th’excuse” (III. 1610–11), this was also intended simply as an oath but it is then countersigned by the widow’s curse that gives his body and her precious pan to the devil (III. 1622–23). When the devil confirms the intention of the widow and the summoner flatly denies his intention to repent, the widow’s curse takes effect and the ravishment by the devil really occurs.^[19] What follows, however, is not just the ironic reversal of the previous episode of the carter but forebodes the nature of ravishment in a specific way. The passage here deserves attention on two accounts: the summoner will visit hell with the devil “tonight” and he is ravished by the devil in both body and soul:

Thy body and this panne been mine by right.
 Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight,
 Where thou shalt knowen of oure privetee
 Moore than a maister of dyvynytee.”
 And with that word this foule feend hym hente;
 Body and soule he with the devel wente
 Where as that somonours han hir heritage. (III. 1635–41)

“Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight” actually sounds like an address of the guide to a visionary in visions of the afterlife even though, unlike the friar in the *Summoner’s Prologue*, the summoner probably has no chance of coming back. Such visions are typically experienced at night. A visit to Saint Patrick’s Purgatory requires the pilgrim to remain overnight in the cave that leads to Purgatory. In *Visio Thurkilli* (1206), a visionary is visited by the guide, St. Julian, in the evening. Other visions, from the *Vision of Drythelm*, originally recorded by Bede but also cited in the late fourteenth-century *Festial* by John Mirk,^[20] to the fifteenth-century *Vision of Edmund Leversedge* in Middle English, also take place mostly at night while one is in bed.^[21] The verb “hente” is used here, possibly to underline the apparent parallel with the case of the carter (III.1553), but in Latin analogues to this episode, “rapere” is used to convey a sense of ravishment.^[22] One of the visions in *Liber Revelationum* also uses *rapere* in senses both of ravishment to the other world and of physical seizure by the devil; a certain monk is rapt before the tribunal of the Lord, being transported there in a vision, where he faces the danger of being seized by bad angels.^[23]

While these details suggest the ravishment to hell as in a vision, it is also stated that the summoner will go to hell “body and soul” together. The devil seems to be quite specific about this point because he raised the issue of the dichotomy of body and soul in a person quite consciously earlier in the tale. The devil dwells at length on how sometimes he has permission to afflict the body only, or both body and soul, or the soul only (III. 1489–1500). While he cites Job as the example of the first case, he gives no examples of the latter two, but implies that he afflicts the soul by assuming a disguise. This includes such cases as when man is tempted by some *phantasma* which is diabolic in origin;^[24] the case of the prophet Samuel raised from the dead by a sorceress, to which the devil refers soon after (III. 1507–12), may be regarded as one such example. Just as the devil says so himself, the case of Samuel was a subject of theological controversy not unrelated to the dichotomy of body and soul, as to whether the ghost is the soul returning from Purgatory to this world, or the revived flesh without the soul, or the trick of the devil. In the late Middle Ages, it was usually regarded as a diabolic illusion.^[25]

Another case in which only the soul is afflicted, is actually the vision of the

d'un récit biblique: I Rois 28," *Études rurales*, 105–106 (1987): 37–64; *Les Revenants: les vivants et les morts dans la société médiévale/i* (Paris, 1994), p. 30.

[26] "Sunt quidam," inquit, "qui dicunt quod aulam intrantes primo fiunt in extasi et hec omnia in spiritu uidere. Quod omnino sibi miles ita contigisse contradicit, sed corporeis oculis se uidisse et corporis oculis se uidisse et corporaliter hec pertulisse constantissime testatur." (Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory*, p. 150, lines 1103–4); "There are people who say that when they enter the hall at the beginning they fall into ecstasy and they see all these things in their minds. But the knight denied adamantly that this had happened in his case; on the contrary, he testified very consistently that he had seen these things with his own bodily eyes and that he had endured the torments in the flesh." (Picard, and Pontfarcy, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, p. 73).

[27] Easting, *St Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 150–51, lines 1106–27.

[28] *Jacob's Well, an English Treatise on the Cleansing of Man's Conscience*, ed. Arthur Brandeis, EETS OS 115 (Oxford, 1900; repr. 1975), pp. 186–87.

[29] Easting and Sharpe, *Peter of Cornwall's Book of Revelations*, pp. 334–36.

[30] Ronald B. Herzman, "The Friar's Tale: Chaucer, Dante and the *Translatio Studii*," in *Acta Vol. IX: The Early Renaissance: Virgil and the Classical Tradition* (Binghamton, NY, 1984), pp. 1–17 (p. 8). David Raybin also notes that the devil takes the summoner "on a journey reserved even by Dante for only the most heinous of sinners": "Goddess Instrumentz': Devils and Free Will in the *Friar's* and *Summoner's Tales*," *The Chaucer Review* 46 (2011): 93–110 (p. 100). The case of the corpse of the wicked man possessed by the devil, looking as if alive, is recorded in Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, XII. 3 (Strange, 2: 317).

afterlife as in the *Summoner's Prologue*. In most cases, while the soul leaves the body to tour regions of the afterlife led by a guide, the body lies rigid in a sort of coma though not lifeless. If, on the other hand, the summoner is literally ravished to hell in body and soul as the devil claims, this may be taken as an example of the case in which both body and soul are afflicted. Such cases of ravishment do exist in visions of the afterlife. In *Tractatus de Purgatorio Sancti Patricii*, demons themselves drag the knight Owein around various regions of torture, threatening to take him to the bottom of hell, though Owein defends himself by invoking the name of Jesus and returns unharmed to this world. When Owein narrates his journey, the corporeality of the experience is emphasized. When one in the audience suggested that the knight fell into ecstasy and saw everything in mind, the knight "testified very consistently that he had seen these things with his own bodily eyes and that he had endured the torments in the flesh."^[26] This claim is immediately followed by another anecdote that seems to be inserted to underline the physical rather than virtual nature of the experience which body and soul underwent together. Demons physically bore away ("corporaliter tulerunt") a certain monk from his bed and tortured him for three days before he was returned horribly wounded. The monk lived for fifteen years but wounds never healed during that period.^[27] Although this monk was put to bodily torture because demons resented his holiness, similar cases of ravishment are reserved for hardened sinners who consciously refused to repent. *Jacob's Well* includes an exemplum of the witch whose body was ravished by demons to hell because she died refusing confession.^[28] Peter of Cornwall narrates a terrible incident that took place in the district of Canterbury. A certain young man, who refused confession and was excommunicated, was seized alive by two demons while asleep, who led him out of the house in chains (leaving only his nightcap behind) as far as to Tilbury and forced some sailors to ferry him across the Thames.^[29] The summoner is presumably in the same category. By explicitly refusing to repent (III. 1630–31), the summoner gave himself to the devil of his own will and joined the group of the hardened unrepentant who were ravished "body and soul" to hell.

What awaits the summoner in hell is already implied by the devil earlier in the tale:

"Thou wolt algates wite how we been shape;
Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother deere,
Come there thee nedeth nat of me to leere,
For thou shalt, by thyn owene experience,
Konne in a chayer rede of this sentence
Bet than Virgile, while he was on lyve,
Or Dant also." (III. 1514–20).

While the references to Dante and Virgil (who descended to the underworld in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*) also imply the journey to hell, critics have been led to look for a more specific Dantean echo here, especially the fate of Frate Alberigo in *Inferno*, XXIII, 118–38, who feigned hospitality and murdered the guests.^[30] His soul was sent immediately to the frozen Ptolomea, the third division of the ninth circle of hell, even while his body still roamed in this world, possessed by the devil. However, in this episode only the soul is actually ravished to hell. The case of Frate Alberigo emphasizes immediacy of damnation for a heinous crime, that the ravishment of the soul to hell does not wait for bodily death. Rather, what the above

[31] Augustine, *The City of God*, XI. 13; Saint Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. David Wiesen, 7 vols., Loeb Classical Library (London, 1968), 3: 518–19.

[32] Hugh of St Victor, *De Sacramentis Christiane Fidei*, II. xvi. 5 (PL. 176: 589): “Gehenna, ... corporeus ignis erit, et cruciabit corpora damnatorum et hominum et daemonum; solida hominum, aëria daemonum, aut tantum hominum corpora cum spiritibus”. The translation is from *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis)*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA, 1951), p. 443. Also cf. Augustine, *The City of God*, XXI. 10.

[33] Manuele Gragnolati, *Experiencing the Afterlife: Soul and Body in Dante and Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame, ID, 2005), p. 40.

[34] Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York, 1987), p. 51. On corporeality of the soul, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York, 1995), pp. 290–96; Peter Dinzelbacher, “Il corpo nelle visioni dell’aldilà,” *Micrologus* 1 (1993): 301–26.

[35] See Gragnolati, p. 55; Bynum, pp. 279–305.

[36] “Quod et beatus Augustinus et beatus Gregorius incorporeos spiritus dicunt pena corporalibus ignis posse cruciari, ista uidentur etiam affirmari narratione.” (Easting, *St Patrick’s Purgatory*, p. 122, lines 60–62); *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory*, trans. Jean-Michel Picard, with introd. by Y. de Pontfarcy (Dublin, 1985), p. 45. Sources are Gregory’s *Dialogues*, IV. 30 and Augustine, *The City of God*, XXI. 10 respectively; see Easting, *St Patrick’s Purgatory*, p. 237 (note to lines 60–61).

[37] “hec omnia... non in rei ueritate corporaliter set ymaginarie spiritualiter ei contingant” (Sharpe and Easting, pp. 132–33). Hugh of St Victor also points to the virtual nature of pain as he explains that in the case of the vision of the afterlife, “certain signs similar to the corporeal are presented for the demonstration of the spiritual” (“signa quaedam corporalibus similia ad demonstrationem spiritualium”) so that the soul returned to the body can describe the experience. (Hugh of St Victor, *De Sacramentis Christiane Fidei*, II. xvi. 2 (PL. 176: 584); Deferrari, *Hugh of Saint Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, p. 437.)

[38] Easting, *St Patrick’s Purgatory*, p. lxxx; Robert Easting, “The English Tradition,” in *The Medieval Pilgrimage to St Patrick’s Purgatory, Lough Derg and the European Tradition*, ed. Michael Haren and Yolande de Pontfarcy (Enniskillen, 1988), p. 68.

[39] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Libri VIII mirac-*

passage refers to seems to be the nature of the experience body and soul undergo together in hell. The first line —“Thou wolt algates wite how we been shape”— points to the true shape of the devil without disguise, which according to Augustine, has the aerial body capable of feeling pain,^[31] and consequently to the corporeal nature of pains of hell to be experienced by those sent there. Hugh of St Victor states, on the authority of Augustine, that “[h]ell... will be corporeal fire and will torment the bodies of the damned, both of men and of demons, the solid bodies of men, the airy bodies of demons, or only the bodies of men along with their spirits.”^[32] The corporeality of the soul in hell, which the passage thus seems to underline, was a controversial issue among theologians, but the idea that the soul cannot be tormented by material fire was condemned in Paris in 1277.^[33] The soul is assumed to have what Carol Zaleski calls the “somatomorphic” body, capable of experiencing physical pain.^[34] Dante also dwells at length on this issue, offering his own explanation, so that there is certainly a specific Dantean echo here that includes the reference to Virgil who is Dante’s guide. In *Purgatorio* XXV, 79–108, Dante has Statius explain at length the concept of the aerial body the soul assumes, which he calls “ombra”, that is capable of feeling pain.^[35]

The corporeality of the soul was an issue with visions of the afterlife as well. Significantly, there is a difference of opinion as to the nature of the ordeal among several versions of the visit to St. Patrick’s Purgatory. The Latin *Tractatus* mentioned above confirms the physical nature of the experience; it says in the introductory part that “blessed Augustine and blessed Gregory say that immaterial spirits can be tortured by the torment of a material fire. Again, our account seems to confirm these facts.”^[36] On the other hand, in Peter of Cornwall’s account of the visit which is more or less contemporary with the *Tractatus*, the visitor is exposed to savage torments by demons and is totally debilitated, but it is stated that these torments “do not happen to him bodily but spiritually in the imagination.”^[37] The English prose account of the visit known as the *Vision of William of Staunton*, which supposedly occurred in 1406 or 1409, describes a series of pains of Purgatory in detail but at the same time leaves a hint that the whole experience was a dream, thus implying that a physical experience of hell itself, even if a virtual one, is unlikely.^[38] However, most of the visions assume the corporeality of experience. Bodily pain can be an effective weapon of fear to make one attrite, so that it was stressed without theological scruples that pain could be felt physically rather than virtually in imagination. The pain of the soul can actually begin with the separation from the body. In one of the visions recorded by Caesarius of Heisterbach, the devil slowly wrenches the soul of the damned out of the body by a trident.^[39] A popular twelfth-century Latin debate poem, *Dialogus inter Corpus et Animam*, also known in several Middle English versions, ends with the scene in which the separated soul is led to hell by demons in a series of tortures, while the body lies in the grave, harassed by worms.^[40] A visionary is not necessarily immune from pain even when accompanied by a benevolent guide; often, the guide temporarily abandons the soul to infernal tortures as in *Visio Tnugdali*, to teach him a lesson.^[41]

It is in this context of the vision of the afterlife that we can interpret what the devil says to the summoner. The *Friar’s Tale* itself provides little actual description of the infernal region; the narrator instead uses rhetorical *occupatio*, stressing that it takes a thousand winters to describe “[t]he peynes of thilke cursed hous of helle” (III. 1652). However, the vision literature provides enough allusions to guess what they might be like. For our summoner, whose guide is the devil himself, no ordinary tour of hell such as glimpsed in the *Summoner’s Prologue* is in store for him;

ulorum, 2: 37 (Meister, *Die Fragmente der Libri VIII Miraculorum*, p. 116).

[40] *The Latin Poems Commonly Attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. Thomas Wright, Camden Society o.s. 16 (London, 1841; repr. 1968), pp. 95–106. For Middle English versions, see *Desputisoun bitwen þe Bodi and þe Soule* (IMEV 351) in *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. John W. Conlee (East Lansing, MI, 1991), pp. 20–49, as well as the so-called Porkington 10 Debate (IMEV 3330) in *Early English Miscellanies in Prose and Verse*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1855), pp. 12–40.

[41] On the topos of the abandonment of the visionary, see Morgan, pp. 97–100.

[42] See explanatory notes to III. 1657–58 in *Riverside Chaucer* (p.876).

[43] *The Prymer or Lay Folks' Prayer Book*, ed. H. Littlehales, EETS OS 105, 109 (London, 1895, 1897; 1998), p. 58.

[44] Cf. *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy, CFMA 95 (Paris, 1973), 2: 119, line 12134.

[45] The analogue is found in another passage from *Le Roman de la Rose*, a long anti-fraternal sermon by "Faux-Semblant": *Le Roman de la Rose*, lines 11007–19; *The Romaunt of the Rose*, lines 6171–83. Cf. John Finlayson, "Chaucer's Summoner's Tale: Flatulence, Blasphemy, and the Emperor's Clothes," *Studies in Philology* 104 (2007): 458–59.

[46] Cf. note to III. 2126–28 in the *Riverside Chaucer* (p. 878) that points out the Wycliffite criticism of such letters of fraternity that "were but another deceptive way of obtaining money".

[47] Jay Ruud pointed out that Friar John "speaks continually of the Franciscan ideal" which "challenged friars to live lives emulating the first apostles after they had received the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost" and that his claim

it is the ravishment of both body and soul with no hope of return and the soul undergoes corporeal pain fully because it is still with the body even if a somatomorphic one.

The idea of physical ravishment can also be seen in the final moralization admonishing the fellow summoners to repent:

"The leoun sit in his await alway
To sle the innocent, if that he may.
Disposeth ay youre hertes to withstonde
The feend, that yow wolde make thral and bonde. (III. 1657–60)

The reference to a lion here is to Psalm 9:29–30 (AV, 10:8–9) which is also partially quoted in Latin in the margin of Ellesmere MS,^[42] but there is another reference to Psalm 7:3 (AV 7:2), "rapiat ut leo animam meam", which is about the ravishing of the soul by the devil. In the *Lay Folks' Prayer Book*, this is translated into Middle English as "he, as a lioun, rauysche my soule"^[43]. The lines that follow counsel spiritual prudence and faith in God because God sees that the devil will not tempt one beyond his capacity. The *Friar's Tale* ends by widening the scope and urging repentance to summoners in general -- "repente / Of hir mysdedes, er that the feend hem hente" (III. 1663–64) -- otherwise, one may incur a real danger of being ravished "body and soul" to hell.

II

After the context of vision literature is developed in farcical details in the *Summoner's Prologue*, the Summoner begins his tale with the visit of a corrupt religious to a sick person, as if to parallel the summoner's visit of the sick widow. Also in his characterization, deliberate correspondence with details in the *Friar's Tale* is notable. The image of a hook that appeared at the beginning of the *Friar's Tale*, is repeated: "I walke and fische cristen mennes soules / To yelden Jhesu Crist his propre rente;" (III. 1820–21) It has been suggested that the first line comes from the sermon by Dame Abstinence in *Le Roman de la Rose*, which is rendered "To fyssh-en synful men we go" in Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose* (7490).^[44] If so, the irony is more pointed, since Abstinence is introduced as a figure in false disguise and Friar John himself, who preaches against gluttony, which he says is the original sin that led to the expulsion from the Paradise (III. 1915–17), is actually steeped in this deadly sin, as is obvious from his order for a sumptuous dinner.^[45] The reference to rent also echoes the one by the devil in the *Friar's Tale* (III.1451), while the act of erasing the names of donors from his wax tablet recalls the similar gesture of the deceitful summoner. Friar John is presented as possessing in himself all devilish features shared by characters in the previous tale.

Friar John visits Thomas, one of the members of the lay confraternity attached to his convent,^[46] whom he rebukes for being impatient and angry. He is at the bedside of Thomas because visiting the sick is one of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, the task also imposed on the Apostles (Luke 10:9).^[47] Canon 22 of the Fourth Lateran Council (*Cum infirmitas* [or *Quum infirmitas*]) imposed confession on the sick before medical treatment could take place. Here Friar John claims that he is the physician of the soul -- "a perfit leche" (III. 1956) as he calls himself --, and urges Thomas by his tedious sermon to appease anger and make a full confession before death (III. 2089–93).^[48] One Middle English version of the *visitatio*

not only echoes "Christ's promise to his first disciples to make them 'fishers of men...' but they also suggest that he has inherited the privilege of hearing confession and imposing penance as granted to the apostles": Jay Ruud, "My spirit hath his forsteryng in the Bible': the *Summoner's Tale* and the Holy Spirit," in *Rebels and Rivals: the Contestive Spirit in The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Susanna Greer Fein, David Raybin, and Peter C. Braeger (Kalamazoo, MI, 1991), pp. 126–29.

[48] Carl Phelpstead, "Th'ende is every tales strengthe': Contextualizing Chaucerian Perspectives on Death and Judgement," in *Chaucer and Religion*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge, UK, 2010), p. 102. Patrick J. Gallacher points out how Friar John, in eliciting self-scrutiny of the sick by his sermon, goes against the medical tradition that warned against "serious reflection and sorrow": "The *Summoner's Tale* and Medieval Attitudes towards Sickness," *The Chaucer Review* 21 (1986): 200–12.

[49] *Yorkshire Writers*, ed. C. Horstman, 2 vols. (London, 1895–96), 2: 450–1. Amy Appleford argues that this version, composed between 1400 and 1425 (Version E in Robert R. Raymo, "Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500*, ed. Albert E. Hartung (New Haven, CT, 1986), 7: 2360), expands on the earlier version (Version A) to emphasize the need of self-awareness for a sick person while indirectly criticizing the lack of good priests. See Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540* (Philadelphia, 2015), pp. 40–43. A version of the Middle English "craft of dying" in BL MS Harley 1706 also notes that patience in sickness can make satisfaction for all venial sins and a part of deadly sins; see David William Atkinson, *The English ars moriendi* (New York, 1992), pp. 6, 8.

[50] See, for example, *The Ars Moriendi (Editio Princeps, circa 1450): A Reproduction of the Copy in the British Museum*, ed. W. H. Rylands (London, 1881); *Ars Moriendi (1492) ou l'art de bien mourir*, ed. P. Girard-Augry (Paris, 1986), pp. 64–65; *Ars moriendi, das ist Die Kunst des heilsamen Sterbens: das deutschsprachige Blockbuch der Donaueschinger Hofbibliothek*, introd. Nigel F. Palmer (Rotthalmünster, 1995).

[51] Easting and Sharpe, *Peter of Cornwall's Book of Revelations*, p. 46.

[52] Gregory, *Dialogorum Libri IV*, IV. 8: Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, trans. O. J. Zimmerman (Washington, D.C., 1959), pp. 200–201. Also cf. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, XI.8 (Strange, 2: 243).

infirmorum, which has a section on "How a man schulde comferte a nother þat he grucche not whanne he is seeke", advises the sick man not to be angry and suffer all pains patiently because "alle bodiliche anoyes suffrid meekliche in this lyf maketh þe sowle fayre and stronge and rightliche to passe from purgatorie to heuene".^[49] Thomas, however, is not convinced, and as he lies in bed "ful of anger and of ire, / With which the devel set youre herte afire" (III. 1981–82), chiding his wife, the scene seems to convey another allusion to the ravishment by the devil. There is a visual analogy with the *ars moriendi* tract. In both blockbook and printed editions, the illustration for impatience, the fourth temptation of the dying man by the devil, shows an angry sick man kicking an attendant in frustration while a devil lurks beside him in triumph.^[50] Just as devils swarm at the bedside in the *ars moriendi* tract, references to devils are repeated throughout the tale, with Friar John stressing more than once that anger only pleases the devil (III. 1833–34, 1981–84, 2089–92).

Before Friar John embarks on his sermon on anger, Thomas's wife mentions the recent death of her child:

"Now, sire," quod she, "but o word er I go.
My child is deed withinne this wykes two,
Soone after that ye wente out of this toun."
"His deeth saugh I by revelacioun,"
Seide this frere, "at hoom in oure dortour.
I dar wel seyn that, er that half an hour
After his deeth, I saugh hym born to blisse
In myn avision, so God me wisse!
So dide oure sexteyn and oure fermerer,
That han been trewe freres fifty yeer;
They may now — God be thanked of his loone! —
Maken hir jubilee and walke allone.
And up I roos, and al oure covent eke,
With many a teere trillyng on my cheke,
Withouten noyse or claterynge of belles;
Te Deum was oure song, and nothyng elles,
Save that to Crist I seyde an orison,
Thankyng hym of his revelacion. (III. 1851–68)

This episode may carry an ironic echo of Christ's visit to Martha and Mary after the death of Lazarus; instead of the miracle of resurrection from the dead, Friar John rather opportunistically claims to have witnessed the child's departure in a "revelacioun" and uses it as an occasion to advertise the merit of his convent. This can in fact be regarded as another, quite different case of ravishment, the experience of being ravished into beholding a vision of the dead innocent child borne to heaven. Revelation and vision are often used interchangeably, but because the former is more elevated and restricted in meaning,^[51] the choice of the word may be intended to add a weight to the experience of witnessing the release of the soul of someone from distance. Gregory's *Dialogues* records several instances of such visions, including the case of St Benedict, who witnessed from afar the soul of the bishop of Capua being carried by angels to heaven while he was still miles away from Capua.^[52]

Mystics provide a context to regard this kind of experience as ravishment. In

the Middle English version of Richard Rolle's *Incendium amoris* translated by the Carmelite prior, Richard Misyn, "ravished" is used to translate the original "raptus" or "rapitur". Here Rolle speaks of what Misyn describes as the "dobyllle rauschyn-gis":

¶ But rauschynge is als it is schewyd, in-t[w]o wys is vnderstande:
 ¶ O maner forsoþ in qwhilk sum man is rauschid oute of fleschly felynge, for þe tyme of hys rauschynge þatt playnly he feyll not in flesche, ne qwhatt ner qwhat is done of his flesch, & zit he is not dede bot qwhikk, for zit þe saule to þe body gifys lyfe— And on þis maner sayntis sum tyme ar rauschyd to þer profett & oþer mens lernyng, als paul, rauschyd to þe þird hevyn; And on þis maner synnars also in visyon sumtyme ar rauyshyd, þat þai may se Ioys off sayntis & paynes of dampnede for þer correccion, And oþer als we rede of many. ¶ Anoþer maner of rauschynge þer is þat is lyfting of mynde in-to god be contemplacion; And þis maner of rausching is in all þat ar parfyte lufars of god, & in none bot in þame þat lufys god. / & well þis is cald a rauschynge als þe todyr, ffor with a violens it is doyne & als wer agayns kynde, & truly it is abowne kynde þat, of a fowle synnar, may be a child fulfyld with gostly Ioy in to god borne. Þis maner of rauschynge is to be desiryd & to be lufyd.^[53]

[53] Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love, and the Mending of Life or the Rule of Living*, ed. Ralph Harvey, EETS OS 106 (London, 1896), pp. 85–86.

[54] Cf. "Uno quidem modo quo quis extra sensum carnis ita rapitur, ut penitus tempore raptus non sentiat quicquid in carne uel de carne agatur"; *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. Margaret Deanesly (Manchester, 1915), p. 254.

[55] Christ, John and Paul are mentioned as authorities that can describe hell (III. 1647). These references have been tentatively identified as referring to "crying and gnashing of teeth" in Matthew, the Last Judgement in the Apocalypse, and the *Visio Sancti Pauli*. See Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Friar's, Summoner's and Pardoner's Tales from The Canterbury Tales*, ed. N. R. Havely (New York, 1976), p. 134. However, they can also be regarded as the list of those who had intellectual visions, not only of hell but of something more profound. In the fourteenth-century Middle English version of the Apocalypse, the cases of Paul and John are explained, after Augustine, as examples of the intellectual sight, the third vision that comes after physical and spiritual sights. Cf. *An English Fourteenth Century Apocalypse Version with a Prose Commentary*, ed. Elis Fridner (Lund, 1961), p. 3. As one does not know whether Paul was taken up to the third heaven in body or in spirit (2 Cor. 12: 2–3), Paul qualifies as the example of both types of ravishment.

[56] "and after whanne he is visitid and is taken up from alle ertheli and fleisschli affeccionnes, from veyn thoughtis and veyn ymaginacions of alle bodili thynges, and as it were mykil ravysschid out of the bodili wittes and thanne bi the grace of the Holi Gost is illumyned for to see bi undirstoondynge soothfastnesse, whiche is God, and also goostli thynges, with a soft swete brennande love in hym, so perfightli that bi ravysschynge of this love the soule is ooned for the tyme and conformyd to the ymage of the Trinité"; Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000), p. 38 (I. 8); The passage is also discussed in Mary Dzon, "Margery Kempe's Ravishment into the Childhood of Christ," *Mediaevalia* 27 (2006): 27–57 (p. 28).

The first type of ravishment is when a person is ravished ("rapitur") out of bodily senses so that while he is rapt ("raptus"), he does not feel anything in the flesh, nor can anything be done by the flesh.^[54] This ravishment, which can happen to the sinner as well, applies to the vision of the afterlife in which the soul temporarily leaves the body. Paul, who is ravished to the third heaven where the earthly Paradise was thought to be relocated after the Expulsion from Eden (2 Cor. 12:2–3), is given as an example. This seems most appropriate because Paul was ravished not only to the third heaven but also to hell in *Visio Santi Pauli*, as is mentioned in the *Friar's Tale*.^[55] The second type of ravishment is "lyfting of mynde in-to god be contemplacion" ("eleuacione mentis ad Deum per contemplacionem") which is granted only to perfect lovers of God. Walter Hilton describes it as the third part of contemplation, by which one is enlightened to see spiritual things, as if ravished out of bodily senses.^[56] In both Rolle and Hilton, ravishment is used here as a metaphor for contemplation, rather than literally as the experience of being transported out of bodily senses. It is this privileged experience of contemplating the divine, of being granted a spiritual vision in this world, that Friar John claims he and some of his brothers experienced in tears.

Friar John further asserts that he and his brothers were awarded this vision for a life of prayer and fasting. They live as Lazarus, not as Dives, emulating the Apostles, and merited this elevated experience by abstinence, just as did Moses and Elias (III. 1885–93) who, like Paul, were both ravished to the third heaven. Elias was in fasting and contemplation before he was ravished in body "by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11). Elias is mentioned again as the origin of the mendicant order (III. 2116–17). By claiming the descent, Friar John protests the special quality of his vision as ravishment, as is granted only to the followers of the prophet.

However, when Friar John does embark on the exposition on anger, the examples he uses are rather misguided. The three illustrative cases of angry men are all probably taken from *Communiloquium sive summa collationum*, a preaching hand-

[57] Correale and Hamel, *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, 2: 458–61; Robert A. Pratt, “Chaucer and the Hand that Fed Him,” *Speculum* 41 (1966): 619–42 (pp. 627–31).

[58] Edward J. Gallagher, “The *Visio Lazari*, the Cult, and the Old French Life of Saint Lazarus: Overview,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 90 (1989): 331–39.

[59] “¶ Thyrdly sayd Lazarus. I haue seen in hell a grete caue tenebrous and obscure full of tables lyke bochers stalles or a grete bochery where as yreful men and women were throwe perced with trenchyng and sharpe glayues and groueden knyues wherwith the most horryble and ferefull bochers of hell hewed and detrenched them impyteuously without ceasyng. [F4v]” Quotations are from *The Kalendar of Shepherdes* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1516). STC judges that this edition (STC 22409) is presumably the second edition published in 1516 although the colophon erroneously copied that of the now lost, first edition of 1508.

[60] Penn R. Szittyta, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), p. 236. On the Pentecost theme in the *Friar’s Tale*, see especially Alan Levitan, “The Parody of Pentecost in Chaucer’s *Summoner’s Tale*,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 3 (1971): 236–46; Bernard S. Levy, “Biblical Parody in the *Summoner’s Tale*,” *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 11 (1966): 45–60; Penn R. Szittyta, “The Friar as False Apostle: Antifraternal Exegesis and the *Summoner’s Tale*,” *Studies in Philology* 71 (1974): 19–46; V. A. Kolve, “Chaucer’s Wheel of False Religion: Theology and Obscenity in The *Summoner’s Tale*,” in *The Centre and its Compass: Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor John Leyerle*, ed. Robert A. Taylor, et al. (Kalamazoo, MI, 1993), pp. 265–96; Glending Olson, “The End of *The Summoner’s Tale* and the Uses of Pentecost,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 209–45; John V. Fleming, “The Pentecosts of Four Poets,” in *Speaking Images: Essays in Honor of V. A. Kolve*, ed. R. F. Yeager and Charlotte C. Morse (Asheville, NC, 2001), pp. 111–41; Finlayson, “Chaucer’s *Summoner’s Tale*,” pp. 455–70; Glending Olson, “Measuring the Immeasurable: Farting, Geometry, and Theology in the *Summoner’s Tale*,” *The Chaucer Review* 43 (2009): 414–27.

[61] Raybin, “Goddess Instrumentz,” p. 105.

book by the thirteenth-century Franciscan John of Wales, where they appear in the original context as exempla that warn rather pragmatically against the danger of meddling with an irascible man.^[57] Inappropriate examples as well as barely concealed self-interest only fuel Thomas’s anger more, so that this meddling friar acting like a devil in disguise, nearly succeeds in ravishing him to hell. Once again what would await him in hell can be inferred from visions of the afterlife, in this case in the fourteenth-century French *Visio Lazari*, which is based on *Elucidarium* often attributed to Honorius Augustodunensis.^[58] A Middle English version of this vision is included in the early printed editions of the *Kalendar of Shepherdes*, where the punishment for wrath is carried out in a great butchery and it is stated that “[t]he wrathfull man is semblable and lyke vnto a demonacle, the whiche hath the deuyl within hym” [F5r].^[59] Thomas, who is later referred to as a demoniac (III. 2240), is indeed in danger of becoming one, that is, being ravished in body by the devil, as he “wax wel ny wood for ire” (III. 2121) and willfully commits an act of blasphemy somewhat more serious than cursing one’s horse.

The blasphemous gift of Thomas can also be regarded as another instance of ravishment. While the parody of the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost at the end of the *Summoner’s Tale* has been much discussed, Penn Szittyta, demonstrating that the allusions to Pentecost extend to Moses and Elias, who were both regarded as Pentecostal figures, points out that “Thomas’s mock ‘yifte’ of wind is a parodic reversal of the gift bestowed by God at Pentecost, which also appeared in a wind”.^[60] With regard to this gift, we may refer to a passage in the *Prologue to Prioress’s Tale*:

O mooder Mayde, O mayde Mooder free!
 O bussh unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte,
 That ravyshest down fro the Deitee,
 Thurgh thyn humblesse, the Goost that in th’alighte,
 Of whos vertu, whan he thyn herte lighte,
 Conceyved was the Fadres sapience,
 Help me to telle it in thy reverence! (VII. 467–73)

The Virgin Mary “ravished” down the Holy Spirit from God by her humility, so that Christ, the Wisdom of God, may be conceived. In a similar manner, the gift of wind is here ravished down from the angry Thomas not by humility but by the pride and hypocrisy of Friar John.

While Thomas probably let out his anger to some extent by the hilarious revenge, the windy gift in turn makes Friar John almost bestial for anger, as “a wood leon” (III. 2152) or “a wilde boor” (III. 2159). The lion is a recurring image that first appeared at the moralizing end of the *Friar’s Tale* signifying the devil, and in the *Summoner’s Tale* it was used by Friar John himself to warn against anger and tyranny: “Withinne thyn hous ne be thou ne leon” (III. 1989). As Raybin indicates, “Friar John’s inability to gain control over his debilitating anger conforms to the idea of diabolic influence”.^[61] Unlike Thomas, Friar John has no opportunity to assuage his anger, because the lord and the lady to whom he speaks about the outrage are intrigued by the episode and are less disposed to share his anger. Because his wrath remains contained in himself, we may say Friar John is in danger of behaving worse than a demoniac, as *Visio Lazari* says:

the wrathfull man is tourmented by wrathe / and dooth often tymes

worse than the domynyacle / for without pacyence they bete the one with the other sayenge Iniuryes / reproches / velanyes / and gyue themselfe to the deuyll body and soule / and say and do many unlawfull and domageable thynges by wrathe. [F5r-v; my emphasis]

The *Summoner's Tale* closes with our realization that it is Friar John himself who is in the greatest danger of being ravished by the devil in body and soul, more so than the bedridden Thomas and at least just as much as the summoner was earlier. There is a systematic build-up to this final scene by a series of references to ravishment --from the *ars moriendi* iconography of an angry sick man, the ravishing vision of a dead child, and to the Pentecostal gift ravished down to the friar-- that culminate in the possibility of the angry Friar John being ravished body and soul to hell.

The *Summoner's Tale* stands as a wing of a triptych that is opened, facing the other wing which is the *Friar's Tale*, with the *Summoner's Prologue* as the central panel. The *Prologue* provides a brief but concrete example of the vision of hell that functions as a key narrative to allow the closely interrelated reading of the two tales as dealing with the immanent danger of ravishment in body and soul to hell. There is a constant presence of a devilish figure throughout the two tales; he has been there as dishonest servants of religion, the disguised devil who is also a guide to hell, the irritating friar at the bedside, and even as the angry sick man who pushes Friar John's wrath to the very limit by a hilarious trick. At the same time, every major character is faced with the inherent danger of being ravished; while some of them are actually ravished to hell, the others make a narrow escape without their knowledge. Though not dealing with the afterlife in descriptive details as did Dante or the popular genre of the vision of the afterlife, both tales tell how one is constantly in the dangerous liminal situation between damnation and salvation, between being physically ravished to hell by the devil and being carried to heaven by angels in mystical ravishment.

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