Hanna Salmi

Early English Debate Poetry as Conflict Talk

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by
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Tutkimukseni käsittelee konfliktipuheeseen liittyviä piirteitä keskiajan ja uuden ajan alun englantilaisessa kiistarunoudessa. Aineisto käsittää 30 keskeistä tekstiä. Teoreettiselta viitekehykseltään työ kuuluu historiallisen diskurssilingvistiikan ja dialogianalyysin alaan; vaikutteita on otettu myös vuorovaikutuslingvistiikan tutkimuksesta. Kiistarunouteen perehtynyt aiempi tutkimus on ollut pitkälti kirjallisuustieteellistä, ja näin ollen työni tarjoaa uusia oivalluksia niin konfliktin aikana tehtävistä toiminnoista eli ’siirroista’ kuin myös yhteenoton kirjallisessa esittämisessä hyödynnettävistä konkreettisista kielellisistä ilmiöistä. Lähestymistapani perustuu pääasiassa lähilukuun, mutta täydennän laadullisia menetelmiä usein esiintyvien kielellisten piirteiden kvantitatiivisella analyysilla (esim. modaaliverbit ja kieltosanat).

Kiistarunoudessa esiintyvät lähes kaikki nykykieleen liittyvässä aiemmassa tutkimuksessa tunnistetut siirrot. Tutkimukseni lisää näihin kaksi uutta siirtoa: ennusteet ja aggressiivisiin tarkoituksiin käytettävät formulaatiot. Myös omakehu on aineistossani varsin yleistä, ja väitteitä voidaan tukea hyvin monenlaisiin auktoriteetteihin viitaten. Kiistarunon alussa hyökkäävä osapuoli on etulyöntiasemassa, eli syntyy paikallinen voimaepätasapaino, mikä on yleistä myös nykypäivän konflikteissa. Konflikti voidaan päättää joko antautumalla, mikä vaatii oman erehdyksen tunnustamista ja lupauksen olla toistamatta samaa virhettä jatkossa, tai pyytämällä etukäteen sovittua tuomaria julistamaan tulos. Keskustelu voidaan päättää myös käytettävissä olevan ajan rajallisuuteen viittaamalla. Myös määrällisessä analyysissa korostuivat konfliktia kärjistävät strategiat. Vastustajan argumentteja liioitellaan, ja puhujan omat näkemykset esitetään ainoina mahdollisina, muut vaihtoehdot häivyttäen. Evidentiaalisuus ja keskustelijoiden neuvottelut siitä, mitkä todistelut voidaan katsoa hyväksyttäviksi, nousevat tässä keskeiseen asemaan.

Löydökseni tukevat aiempia kirjallisuustieteen tuloksia, mutta nostavat esille kielellisiä ilmiöitä ja lisäävät näin ymmärrystämme konfliktiin liittyneistä käsityksistä ja sen kirjallisesta esittämisestä. Joillakin tuloksilla on merkitystä myös nykyään: aggressiivisia formulaatioita ja ennusteita esiintyy todennäköisesti myös nykyajan ristiriitatilanteissa.

Asiasanat: konfliktipuhe, kiistarunous, keskienglanti, varhaisuusenglanti

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This study examines conflict-related features in a corpus of English debate poems from ca. 1250–1650. The dataset includes 30 central texts of varying lengths from the medieval and early modern periods. The theoretical framework is that of historical discourse linguistics and dialogue analysis, with input from studies of present-day speech-in-interaction. Earlier research on this genre has been largely literary, and the present work provides new insights both into the types of moves found within the conflict sequence and the actual linguistic building blocks used to represent conflict interaction. The approach is mainly based on close reading, but qualitative methods are complemented with a quantitative analysis of frequently appearing linguistic items such as modals and negatives. The study begins with a survey of the earlier tradition of academic and literary debates, and a review of how conflict talk has been conceptualised in previous research.

Most of the conflictive moves established in earlier research on modern English were also found in debate poetry. This study identified two additional moves: predictions and formulations used for aggressive purposes. In terms of self-oriented moves, self-praise seems to be common in my material, and the methods of backing a claim are quite varied. The beginning phase of the conflict sequence was found to have a localised asymmetry which replicates that found in present-day conflicts: the attacking party has an initial advantage. As for the ending sequences, it emerged that a successful submission apparently required a full admission of error and a commitment not to repeat it. Other ways of negotiating a termination of conflict included mentioning time constraints and requesting a ruling from an arbitrator. The quantitative analysis also shows strategies that would tend to highlight the conflict element: the opponent's statements are made to seem more extreme, and the speaker's own arguments are represented as the only available option. The analysis also foregrounds the notion of evidentiality and the centrality of negotiating what constitutes acceptable proof.

This is the first study to explore both medieval and early modern debate poetry in detail. The findings support those of earlier literary criticism, while shedding light on the linguistic aspect and thereby enhancing our understanding of how conflict was viewed and represented at the time. Some findings have relevance for today: the conflictive use of formulations and predictions may well be present also in everyday conflicts, even if it is less salient there.

Keywords: conflict talk, debate poetry, Middle English, Early Modern English

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List of abbreviations

AND = The Anglo-Norman Dictionary
CA = Conversation Analysis
DIMEV = The Digital Index of Middle English Verse
EEBO = The Early English Books Online database
MED = The Middle English Dictionary
OED = The Oxford English Dictionary
STC = Short-Title Catalogue

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Acknowledgements

When I began my studies at the Department of English, I knew that studying languages at the university would be different from my earlier experiences at school, but I was not sure if it would be different in a good way. These doubts were soon put to rest, however: studying English at university proved to be much more interesting than studying English at school. An enthusiastic reader of Tolkien from an early age, I was particularly keen to learn more about the history of English, and the legendary Historical Dimension course provided the opportunity to begin doing so. Although the road from HiDi to a finished dissertation involved many false starts and detours, and my theoretical framework and research questions have mutated beyond recognition during the process, this fascination with early English has remained.

I was very fortunate to have two such excellent external examiners for this work: Professor Merja Kytö from Uppsala University, who also agreed to act as opponent, and Professor Gabriella Mazzon from the University of Innsbruck. Not only has their work been a continuing inspiration, but the feedback they provided was also a model of constructive criticism, and any remaining shortcomings are mine alone.

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Turku, November 2017 Hanna Salmi

1 Introduction

This study, belonging to the field of historical discourse linguistics and dialogue analysis, focuses on representations of conflict in the debate poetry of medieval and early modern England. Debate poetry was a popular genre throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, with great numbers of texts surviving both in Latin and most vernaculars – the most famous English example of the genre is *The Owl and the Nightingale.* A typical debate poem juxtaposes two characters, often allegorical figures and usually some kind of natural opposites (e.g. summer and winter), who engage in a dialogue with the goal of winning the debate. While some debate poems are relatively calm in tone, the conflictive nature of the interaction is often quite striking.

Conflict is everywhere; it has always been a central element in culture. Probably partly due to increasing tension in the political arena, conflict is also of increasing interest to linguists, as evidenced by the establishment of the *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict,* published by John Benjamins, in 2013. Ranging from international conflicts to family squabbles or even intrapersonal emotional conflicts, differences of opinion and clashes of interest are an unavoidable part of life. In extreme cases, these conflicts may lead to physical violence, but in most cases they are primarily realised verbally, through conflict talk. Describing conflict as so pervasive may seem like a very depressing portrayal of human nature, but while not necessarily pleasant, conflict is not always only a negative thing. The presence of a conflict identifies a problem, and if handled skilfully, it may also lead to discovering a solution.

One way of resolving conflicts is to formalise them into some kind of verbal contest. Debates are one type of institutional talk developed for this purpose; for example, Weijers describes disputation as a method first developed by Greek philosophers "as a means of finding the truth" about some question where two alternative answers are possible (2013: 11). Indeed, debating was considered such an important skill that it was a central school exercise for much of the medieval period. Ideally, a debate will allow the participants to fully explore the implications of the two competing viewpoints, making an informed decision possible. However, in reality the competitive impulse is often too strong for this to happen, and this too was a fact recognised by contemporaries. For example, the French theologian Peter the Chanter (d. 1197) implies that this is a constant danger, warning that not all questions are worth discussing at all, but those that are, are to be debated "with modesty of discussion and without altercation"[1] (Book 1, 3). This is in a chapter "On the manner of disputing: Against foolish and vain disputators",[2]

[1] "[C]um modestia discutiende et sine altercatione" (Boutry 2004: 15–16).
[2] De modo disputandi. Contra stultos et uanos disputatores.

and the following chapters are aimed against other types of wrongful disputing: Chapter 4 against those who are rash and presumptuous,[3] and Chapter 5 against those who are quarrelsome.[4] All this strongly suggests that the dangers of disputation were well known, even though the practice of debating was so central to medieval schooling.

However, in spite of these known risks, debating was such a popular exercise in the Middle Ages that literary imitations of it became a popular and widespread genre, drawing inspiration from the academic and philosophical procedures of disputing (see 2.2 below). Already then, people had expectations about debate as a way to discover the truth, and like today, those expectations were often disappointed. Indeed, debate poems make use of this clash between reality and ideals. Unlike academic or political debates (where the aim is winning or convincing the audience), the primary function of debate poems is to entertain. Because of this, they often imitate the features of real-life conflict talk (as opposed to more academic, genuinely truth-seeking types of disputation) to achieve their goals, whether through parody or in a more serious vein. How, then, are conflict interactions manifested in medieval debate poetry? Here is an example from my materials, to illustrate the type of text this study is focused on. This extract is in many ways typical of early English debate poetry: the narrator reports a combative exchange which he claims to have overheard. It is set in an idyllic natural setting, the interlocutors are birds, and they are discussing the virtues of women.[5] This is the beginning of the dialogue sequence in *A Dialogue Defensive for Women* (1542).

(1) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 73–96

As in this place pleasaunt, my selfe I dyd comforte with sauours soueraygne, and colours good for syght A Fawcon and a Pye, to the same dyd resorte And ouer my heade, in the Cypresse they dyd lyght Great stryfe was betwene them, with argumentacyon Theyr opynyons contrary semed vnto me The Pye prated fast, with moche contencyon And sayde that her sentence, nedes trewe must be.	As I comforted myself in this pleasant place, with sweet smells and colours good to see, a falcon and a magpie retired to the same place and alighted in the cypress above my head. There was great strife and argumentation between them: Their opinions seemed to me to be contrary. The magpie chattered fast, with much rivalry, and said that her opinion must necessarily be true.
The Fawcon. The Fawcon moste gentyll, with sober behauour Sayde ianglynge wordes, the trouth do nat trye	The Falcon The most gentle Falcon said, with solemn demeanour: "Spiteful words are no proof of truth,

[3] Contra temerarios disputatores.
[4] Contra litigiosos disputatores.
[5] Of course not all English debates had birds as participants, but the bird debate is often seen as a specially English sub-genre. For example, Utley notes that "the confining of the debate to two specific birds is, so far as I know, peculiar to the English" (1944: 42). See also Hilgers (1973) and Walker (1974).

And fewe wyse men, I thynke do fauour The lyghtnes of a pratynge Pye.	and I think few wise men listen favourably to the frivolity of a chattering Magpie."
The Pye. The Pye than answered, with wordes full of yar And sayde, my sayinges I wyll neuer denye Of women I loke, to haue no hyar Nought is theyr nature, theyr wyttes nat worth a flye.	The Magpie The Magpie then answered, with words full of anger, and said: "I will never deny what I have said! I have no use for women. Their nature is good-for-nothing, and their intellect not worth a fly!"
The Fawcon. All thynges sayde the fawcon, of Goddes creacyon As scrypture recordeth, be perfyt in theyr kynde woman was create, by dyuyne operacyon Perfyt in body, in reason, wyll, and mynde.	The Falcon "All things," said the Falcon, "in God's creation, are perfect by nature, as scripture records. Woman was created by divine operation, perfect in body, reason, will, and mind."
The Pye. Perfyt? who there sayde the Pye I the pray Perfection in woman, shall neuer take place Vnperfyt she is, and rude alway In body, and in soule, voyde of all grace.	The Magpie "Perfect? Whoa there!" said the Magpie. "I ask you! Perfection shall never be found in a woman. She is imperfect and always lacking refinement in body, and her soul is void of all grace."

Whether or not the reader is familiar with early English debate poetry, it is easy to recognise the type of interaction the two bird characters are engaged in. Whether we label it as debating, arguing, wrangling, disagreeing or something else, we can see that the birds are having a verbal conflict. This is an activity that most people will perform on a regular basis, and everyone intuitively knows how to do it from a very young age onwards. However, in spite of its ubiquity, the linguistic mechanisms of conflictive interaction remain under-researched.

This lack of research is even more acute in the case of debate poetry specifically: there have been very few linguistic studies focusing solely on debate poetry in English (Spanish medieval debate poetry has been studied in an article by Leal Abad, 2011). It is mainly the editors of the few canonical debate poems (first and foremost, *The Owl and the Nightingale*) who have performed linguistic analyses on some of these texts, and those analyses have naturally focused on questions of editing, such as dialectal provenance. The more in-depth studies of the genre have been in the field of literary criticism (e.g. Reed 1990, Hume 1975, and Burt 2014). Historical pragmaticians have generally preferred to focus on materials considered to be closest to genuine spoken dialogue, trial proceedings and dramatic dialogue being typical examples. So, for instance the CED (*A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760*) distinguishes two main categories: authentic dialogue and constructed dialogue. The latter may well contain some debate-like elements, but the subcategories (Drama Comedy, Didactic Works, Prose Fiction and Miscellaneous) are much broader. In any case, the CED corpus was

designed to exclude verse dialogues, as it was built to include materials with the closest resemblance to genuine face-to-face spoken interactions (Culpeper & Kytö 2010: 25).

Debate poetry is a very interesting genre particularly for the purposes of studying conflict talk, since conflict is its whole *raison d'être*. Of course dramatic texts may also contain conflict sequences, but in a debate poem conflict is even more central, for without a conflict, there would be no debate. In this study, I shall examine a corpus of ca. 100,000 words of debate poetry to explore the ways in which the fictional debates are construed as conflict talk, examining questions such as the following:

- How is disputing portrayed in early debate poetry?
- What are the typical actions performed by the speakers during the conflict?
- How are these actions responded to, and how are they combined to form sequences?
- To what extent do they resemble those found in face-to-face interaction?
- How can insights from analyses of present-day talk-in-interaction be usefully applied to early debate poetry, given the differences in medium and the institutionalised setting of the debate?

In order to begin answering these questions, a definition or at least a selection procedure for data is the first thing required. The following section explains the rationale for analysing debate poetry as conflict talk.

1.1 What is debate poetry?

Until recently, most scholars working on early debate poetry seem to have taken for granted that their audience knows what a debate poem is: only rarely does one find a definition of what, exactly, it takes for a text to count as a debate poem (exceptions being Cartlidge 2010, Burt 2014). The classic definition is by Walther, who saw debate poetry as verse in which "two or sometimes more people, personified objects or abstractions" carry out a dispute (1920: 3).[6] Beyond citing this definition of Walther's, if the problem of definition is mentioned at all, the normal approach is to note that it is difficult to distinguish between debates and other types of dialogue. An oft-cited example is Utley's comment on this difficulty. In the introduction to his bibliography of dialogic texts, he remarks that he follows his predecessor Wells (1916) in making this distinction, but that "[o]ne does not know why one poem is a dialogue and another is a debate – if there is supposed to be a sharper element of conflict in the debate this is not objectively measurable" (Utley 1972: 672). Similarly, Conlee, who edited a selection of debate

[6] "Ich nenne hier Streitgedichte im eigentlichen Sinne Gedichte, in denen zwei oder seltener mehrere Personen, personifizierte Gegenstände oder Abstraktionen zu irgendeinem Zweck Streitreden führen [...]". My translation.

poetry, notes that the genre "resists simple definition" but that the central element of the genre is confrontation (1991: xii). This is undoubtedly true, but it is not a straightforward criterion, as Utley's comment above demonstrates.

Taking the concept of debate poetry more or less for granted, scholars have classified debates into a varying number of subcategories: Walther (1920) has eight thematic categories in his seminal study of the genre across European vernaculars, while Reichl (2000: 229) finds the most important distinction to be between debates on ideas and debates on questions of love, a division which is potentially relevant but insufficient. Conlee (1991), on the other hand, divides his materials into Body and Soul debates, alliterative debates, didactic and satiric disputations, bird debates and pastourelles. All of these categorisations can be seen as broadly thematic, although Conlee also includes the formally defined sub-genre of alliterative debates.

Utley himself divides his bibliography into *dialogues, debates* and *catechisms,* although as we saw above, he admits that he does not always find it clear what the distinction between dialogue and debate is supposed to be (1972: 672). This threefold division is more satisfactory than the thematic categorisations, but it would be crucial to examine further the distinctive elements of debate. This lack of a clear definition may not be a problem for editors of the few canonical medieval works such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, but if the focus is extended beyond the central parts of the canon, for example looking for early modern printed material in the *Early English Books Online* database, the problem of definition immediately looms large: there are nearly two thousand works labelled 'dialogues', and one may assume that not all works containing dialogue were explicitly labelled as such.

Burt (2014) grapples with this problem in her recent doctoral dissertation, and attempts to define the genre in a more satisfactory way. She points out the many problems with the existing definitions, arguing that the definitions previously proposed are too restrictive (2014: 14). Her solution involves two models of debate, the "commentary model" and the "sermon model". Argumentation is central to both models. Indeed, Burt prefers the term *verse argument* to that of debate poem, and seems to include any verse text containing dialogic argumentation as representative of the genre. I find the definition proposed by Burt problematic – it is simply too comprehensive. Her analysis is successful in taking into account many previously unconsidered sources for the debate poem, such as sermons and grammar textbooks. However, while such a broad definition no doubt enhances our understanding of the development of debate poetry, it is less useful for linguistic analyses, as it forces texts that are really very different under the same label. Until there is a clear understanding of what a debate is, it seems there is always a risk of including too much and too varied material under the heading.

In his article approaching the genre through the example of *The Owl and the Nightingale,* Cartlidge (2010) argues that the difficulty with the genre label *debate poem* is partly due to an incorrect application of Walther's seminal work on the genre (1920). According to Cartlidge, "a significant proportion of the texts that he [Walther] discusses are not debate-poems at all – by any standard, including his own" (2010: 238). Instead of a cohesive 'tradition' of debate poetry, he argues that there was a small number of highly influential texts and that perhaps we should see the tradition as a "nexus of genres" rather than a single one (2010: 244). One should note, however, that Cartlidge is mainly concerned with the debate genre as an explaining factor in the genesis of *The Owl and the Nightingale,* and the question of whether the author intended his work as a contribution to the genre. The audience of the poem may not have found the notion of debate poetry very useful in classifying texts. Cartlidge suggests that the simple fact that they are dialogues may have been a more significant consideration. The "genre polyphony" in *The Owl and the Nightingale* has also been noted by Fletcher (2005: 252), although he remarks that this poem may be atypical in its complexity. There may be some truth to this, but a categorisation on the level of dialogue versus non-dialogue is hardly sufficient for the needs of the scholar who wishes to focus on the linguistic realisation of debate exchanges.

In sum, while both Fletcher and Cartlidge have noted the complications in defining the genre, they have failed to provide well-defined alternatives, partly because their focus was on interpreting a single text. On a similar note, it has even been argued (Cannon 2004) that the debate form is a "feint", as the Owl and the Nightingale really agree on everything important. This is an interesting comment, as I wish to argue that this is precisely the point, and it is applicable to debate poetry more widely: the authors were at least as interested in the conflict interaction itself as in solving the questions debated. The process of debating is typically represented not as a process of disinterested and dispassionate truth-seeking, but as an emotionally charged, personal exchange, and even the less creditable particulars are reported with relish. As a result, approaching the texts from the angle of conflict should prove useful.

The problem of definition is partly, of course, due to the fact that researchers in different fields have different needs. The editor of a collection of debate poetry, the literary scholar of debate poetry, and the historical pragmatician have very different interests and require a different type of definition. So far these texts have mostly been examined from the literary and editorial viewpoints. However, the problem of distinguishing between debates and dialogues is one which, I believe, can be fruitfully approached by using methods and insights from studies of present-day talk-in-interaction, mostly influenced by conversation analysis (CA). Historical pragmatics and dialogue analysis have often been quite theory-oriented, focusing on speech act theory, impoliteness theory and so on,

but it seems to me that there could be more input from more data-oriented studies of face-to-face interaction. Conversation analysis is one good source for such input, and the main obstacle inhibiting the development of a 'historical conversation analysis' is largely ideological. From the beginning, conversation analysts have insisted that the proper focus of their study is "naturally occurring" data, usually interpreted as synonymous with spoken face-to-face interaction. There are good justifications for such a focus within sociology, since it was argued that social scientists should examine "common sense knowledge of social structures" (Garfinkel 1967: 76), and this common knowledge could only be observed within everyday interaction. However, this need not mean that some of the methods and insights from conversation analysis could not be applied in historical studies as well. Person, in his study of the use of *oh* in Shakespeare, makes the following remark:

> Although I certainly agree that the field of conversation analysis must be grounded first and foremost on observations of contemporary talk-in-interaction with the use of modern recording devices, in my opinion this does not completely exclude the use of other naturally occurring data, including literary discourse as institutional talk. This is certainly the case for any study of conversation that includes some historical interest. **However, those studies that incorporate written texts for the purpose of historical pragmatics must continue to engage closely with studies of contemporary talk-in-interaction.** (2009: 104–105, my emphasis)

Admitting that it may be natural for researchers of historical materials to overlook the findings of conversation analysis, given the traditional insistence of conversation analysts on genuine spoken data, Person nonetheless argues in favour of applying our knowledge of contemporary spoken conversation to historical written data, comparing and contrasting the two. I fully agree with his point that "written texts can be understood as another form of naturally occurring data within an institutional setting" (2009: 84) and the conclusion that conversation analysis, and studies of talk-in-interaction more broadly, may have insights to offer historical pragmaticians. After all, even in the present day, analysts can only study arguments and conflicts if they can identify conflict sequences within a mass of other data. Similar techniques can be used to distinguish between debate poetry and other forms of dialogic verse, which is not to say that debate poetry is identical to spoken dialogue or that it necessarily tells us how actual face-to-face debates were carried out.

Thus, in contrast to the approach of Burt (2014), whose stated aim was to develop a definition broad enough to encompass a wide range of texts and styles, I shall apply methods established in studies of present-day talk-in-interaction to identify those verse dialogues containing the "sharper element of conflict" mentioned by Utley (1972: 672). Specifically, I shall adopt the concept of *conflict talk*, arguing that one of the features

distinguishing debate poetry from many other types of dialogue is that genuine debates contain sequences of conflict talk. Below, I shall first discuss the distinctive structure of conflict talk (Section 1.2), then expand on the argument for using concepts and methods developed for present-day talk-in-interaction to analyse literary data in Section 1.3. The selection criteria for materials are outlined in Section 1.4, and the structure of this study is explained briefly in Section 1.5.

1.2 What is conflict talk?

The term *conflict talk* comes from the title of the volume edited by Grimshaw in 1990. There are many alternative terms for this activity: Millar et al. (1984) prefer the term *verbal conflict*; Muntigl and Turnbull (1998) refer to the same activity as *everyday arguing*, but explicitly note that they see it as similar to e.g. *conflict talk, disputing* and *oppositional argument* (1998: 225). I prefer Grimshaw's term, as it is not too restrictive in terms of the speech activity referred to, and emphasises talk as the primary activity through which conflict is engaged in. As Grimshaw notes in his introduction, there are many different labels for types of conflict talk: participants may refer to "altercations, arguments, bickering, contentions, debates, disputes, dissension, fights, quarrels, quibbling, squabbles, and wrangles" (1990a: 11). The subtitle of the volume equates conflict talk with "arguments in conversations". Many of the early studies on conflict talk focused on children's conflicts, perhaps because such data was easier to obtain, but perhaps also due to a presupposition that conflictive language use was more typical of immature speakers, who had not yet mastered alternative methods of dealing with conflict situations. The aim of Grimshaw's volume, in contrast, is to "maximize variability" in terms of the participants and settings of conflict examined (1990a: 3), thus demonstrating a full range of real-life conflictive interactions, including work on both adults' and children's interactions, but also fictional representations of conflict (Tannen 1990).

The generally accepted structural definition of verbal conflict (adopted, for instance, by Maynard 1985; Muntigl and Turnbull 1996, 1998) is that the interaction should contain a minimum of "three consecutive one-up maneuvres" (Millar et al. 1984), i.e. opposing moves of some kind, designed to get the better of an opponent. For an ordinary conversation to enter a conflict phase, one of the participants must first perform an *arguable action* (Maynard 1985): a verbal or non-verbal action which the other participant finds objectionable in some way. Crucially, almost any action can be *made* arguable by the simple expedient of objecting to it: Spitz points out that it is impossible to predict what actions will initiate a conflict sequence (2006: 90), and indeed arguable actions can only be identified based on the reaction to them, i.e. the initial opposition (2006: 91). Arguable actions are therefore different from what Sacks has termed *accountable* actions (Sacks 1989). His example of an accountable action is a phone call:

after the initial greetings, the caller normally volunteers an account of why they are calling, and the recipient also expects this. In the case of an arguable action, on the other hand, accounts may also be offered, but typically only after someone has objected to the action. The nature of the arguable action is likely to affect the response to the objection: if the arguable action is generally frowned upon, the objection is more likely to be received apologetically. However, objecting to something that is usually considered acceptable may provoke very different reactions – in some cases it can even be seen as a more or less intentional challenge to verbal combat.

The arguable action is not in itself part of the conflict sequence, which begins to unfold only afterwards, but it is a necessary precondition to it. The structure of the interaction then follows the pattern defined by Millar et al. (1984): Speaker A makes a "one-up maneuver", i.e. attempts to claim superiority by opposing a previous statement or action. This then in turn challenged in some way by Speaker B, and in turn 3, A continues with an opposing move. This structural definition of conflict talk is also taken as starting point in the present study.

Let us take another look at the example from the beginning of this chapter, focusing more specifically on the conflict sequence. From the Falcon's first turn, it appears that the arguable action is the prior 'ianglynge wordes' of the Magpie: it soon becomes clear that the Magpie has been criticising women.

(2) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 81–92

Fawcon. The Fawcon moste gentyll, with sober behauour Sayde ianglynge wordes, the trouth do nat trye And fewe wyse men, I thynke do fauour The lyghtnes of a pratynge Pye.	The Falcon The most gentle Falcon said, with solemn demeanour: "Spiteful words are no proof of truth, and I think few wise men listen favourably to the frivolity of a chattering Magpie."
Pye. The Pye than answered, with wordes full of yar And sayde, my sayinges I wyll neuer denye Of women I loke, to haue no hyar Nought is theyr nature, theyr wyttes nat worth a flye.	The Magpie The Magpie then answered, with words full of anger ("ire"), and said: "I will never deny what I have said! I have no use for women ("hire"?). Their nature is good-for-nothing, and their intellect not worth a fly!"
Fawcon. All thynges sayde the fawcon, of Goddes creacyon As scrypture recordeth, be perfyt in theyr kynde woman was create, by dyuyne operacyon Perfyt in body, in reason, wyll, and mynde.	The Falcon "All things," said the Falcon, "in God's creation, are perfect by nature, as scripture records. Woman was created by divine operation, perfect in body, reason, will, and mind."

In his first speech turn, the Falcon opposes this arguable action by saying that such inappropriate criticism is no proof of truth. The Magpie in turn opposes this claim (and the implied requirement to cease) by insisting on his opinion that women are good for nothing. In the third turn, the Falcon responds by giving his own, contradictory understanding of women, which is that they are created perfect, and he further mentions that scriptural evidence supports his claim. Thus, the extract is a clear example of a conflict sequence as described above: an arguable action is first objected against, this objection is countered, and so the sequence continues.

While the present study adheres to the broader definition of conflict talk proposed by Millar et al (1984), it is worth briefly considering the way in which Rees-Miller (2000) defines *disagreement*:

> A Speaker S disagrees when s/he considers untrue some Proposition P uttered or presumed to be espoused by an Addressee A and reacts with an utterance the propositional content or implicature of which is Not P. (Rees-Miller 2000: 1088)

There are two main differences between the two definitions: firstly, Rees-Miller's definition is focused on truth-claims, while Millar et al's definition allows other types of opposition – the speaker may conceivably express an objection, for instance, to the manner in which something is said, or indeed the tone of voice it is said in. Rees-Miller's definition is also missing Millar et al's focus on conflict talk as a *sequential* activity, which is the key reason for preferring the latter approach in the present study. It could be said that a disagreement according to Rees-Miller's definition takes place at every one of the conflictive turns. For example, the Falcon first reacts to the antecedent action by disagreeing and producing his first speech turn. The Magpie does the same thing, and so it goes on.

Rees-Miller's definition illustrates certain implications shared by both definitions. First of all, as Rees-Miller points out (2000: 1088–1089), it is not necessary for the addressee to actually believe or even utter proposition P – it is sufficient for the speaker to believe that the addressee does so, for example because they have spotted an unintended implicature of A's utterance, misunderstood the reference of some term, or simply misheard a part of the utterance. Indeed, many everyday conflict sequences begin with people misunderstanding each other's intended meaning, taking a perfectly innocent utterance or behaviour and making it into an arguable action. Secondly, the definition only applies to disagreements that are verbally expressed, whether explicitly or by implication. Although there are non-verbal means of expressing disagreement, Rees-Miller notes that she "defines disagreement as an utterance because the focus of this study is verbal expression of disagreement" (2000: 1088). Of course conflict, defined as

a "state of opposition in a relationship between people who hold opposing opinions or desires" (Nelson 2001: 6), can well exist even without any explicit conflict talk. However, focusing on verbal expressions of disagreement is a sound approach to take in terms of methodology, since we have little, if any, direct access to anyone else's mental processes, and interpreting them without verbal evidence can be risky. Nonverbal signs (such as facial expression and body language) may naturally suggest that B has some problem with what A has said, but determining the exact nature of the problem can easily start to approach guesswork if nonverbal communication is our only evidence. Indeed, Millar et al. explicitly state that they consider the interactional sequence, rather than intrapersonal attitudes, to be the key in recognising conflict interactions:

> To posit that intrapersonal explanations of conflict are descriptive of occurrences of interpersonal conflict necessarily presumes that cognitions lead directly to behaviors [...] This presupposition relegates the study of communicative behaviors to secondary importance by denying the immanent nature of communication processes. (Millar et al. 1984: 233)

When working with historical and literary texts, our access to nonverbal signals is further limited by the fact that the medium of the manuscript or printed book only allows verbal (or in some cases, pictorial) descriptions of any nonverbal communication. Of course these can be given easily enough, for example when a narrator or the characters themselves describe their nonverbal reactions in words, but this is only possible to a very limited degree, as compared with the endless flood of non-verbal communication available in a face-to-face interaction (for example, facial expression and direction of gaze are constantly shifting during a conversation).

The definitions above do not require conflict talk to be aggressive (either verbally or physically) or impolite (in the sense of intentionally face-aggravating). In other words, *conflict talk* is not to be understood as a synonym for verbal aggression, disputing or bickering: these are all subcategories of conflict talk, but conflict talk can also contain constructive actions like apologising. While disagreeing is inherently face-threatening and conflict talk is strongly influenced by facework (Rees-Miller 2000: 1089; Muntigl and Turnbull 1998), speakers can make use of mitigating devices to soften the impact of disagreement. If such facework is performed in a suitable manner, it is perfectly possible to carry out a disagreement or conflict without insults or other forms of verbal aggression. However, although conflict does not necessarily entail aggression, aggression does imply conflict of some kind. For this reason, various forms of verbal aggression and impoliteness are discussed in the present study to tease out the mechanisms of conflict in medieval and early modern English debate poetry.

While three opposing turns are the minimum number needed to conduct an argument, many arguments naturally develop into much longer exchanges. On the other hand, Mazzon remarks that in spite of the standard structural requirement of three turns, conflict episodes in her material of the N-town plays are very frequently resolved in two moves (2009: 137). Clearly, then, Mazzon is operating with a different interpretation of what constitutes conflict talk: she does not give an explicit definition, but mentions "potential conflict or even open conflict such as that shown by refusal to comply" (ibid.). Indeed, such potential conflicts are not without interest: any observations on why a full-fledged conflict sequence fails to develop in these cases would be particularly useful. However, it seems to me that the three-turn sequence is significant in the sense that it represents a commitment from both participants to engage in a conflict, something that is not clear from most two-move sequences. For these reasons, I would propose classifying two-part sequences as a separate category, perhaps under the heading of *partial* or *incomplete* conflict sequences.

Studying debate poetry within the framework of conflict talk is warranted not only because it offers a new angle on a relatively little-studied medieval genre, but also because conflict in general has been marginalised in linguistics and discourse analysis for a long time. Kakavá points out that specifically "the linguistic means of conducting conflict" have been little studied (2001: 650). For instance, politeness has been an important topic of study in pragmatics at least since the 1970s, but there are very few studies on impoliteness until the late 1990s. The focus has been strongly on harmony, co-operation and rationality:

> Disagreement has been seen as a problem that language users must overcome, as marked, as something requiring explanation, as the abnormal in respect to the "normal" flux of cooperation and construction of agreement. (Pagliai 2010b: 63)

In their editorial to the first issue of the *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, the editors discuss the growing interdisciplinary interest in conflict talk, noting that especially linguistic analyses have so far not been very extensive, as conflict has mainly been researched in the social sciences. They point out that as a result, "these studies have seldom concentrated on actual language use per se, or provided the type of micro-analysis that characterizes discursive or other linguistic approaches" (Garcés Blitvich & Sifianou 2013: 1).

This criticism might seem to imply that there is a problem with the major theories of pragmatics and discourse analysis, for any theory that does not allow for the analysis of conflictive language use would be missing a major element. However, the problem does not lie with the theories as much as their application. For instance, the oft-cited Co-

operative Principle (Grice 1975) does indeed assume co-operation as the default in language use, but the whole point of the exercise is that floutings of this principle are where implicatures arise, and people constantly violate it in order to express their ideas implicitly. Similarly, Brown and Levinson's seminal work (1987) on politeness is highly concerned with conflictive language use in the form of face-threatening acts, and indeed it would be hard to discuss politeness without coming to consider its opposite, too (see section 4.4). However, applied research has all too often focused solely on cooperation:

> [T]he idealistic view on communication and the over-emphasis placed on context-dependency give a lopsided perspective on communication by focusing only on the positive features of the process. In fact, communication is more like a trial-and-error, try-and-try-again, process that is co-constructed by the participants. [...] Consequently, due attention should be paid to the less positive aspects of communication including breakdowns, misunderstandings, struggles and language-based aggression – features which are not unique, but seem to be as common of communication as are cooperation and politeness. (Kecskes 2010: 52)

There has also been some scholarly interest in conversational dominance and the ways in which power is manifested in conversation. For example, Itakura (2001) develops an analysis of conversational dominance as a multi-dimensional construct emerging through interaction, and sees control as the defining aspect of power, as does Locher (2004). The relationship of power and gender (e.g. Lakoff 2003) is another central topic in studies of conversational interaction. However, there has not been much research on the other functions that conflict talk serves in interaction. Yet people do not typically engage in conflict talk just for fun (although that too is possible), nor do they always do so out of meanness: conflict talk is a tool for negotiating important interpersonal issues, and participants have to collaborate in many ways to initiate and maintain a conflict. Nor is conflict necessarily a completely negative thing: "A fundamental feature of viable social relations, then, is the development and maintenance of interaction patterns that encourage yet constrain the occurrence of conflict." (Millar et al. 1984: 232). For example, Pagliai (2009, 2010a, 2010b) has found in her studies of Tuscan *contrasto* poets[7] that for performances to be successful and entertaining to their audience, the performers must engage in a particular type of impoliteness, insults and conflictive language use, yet carry them out in such a way that the shared goals of the performance can be achieved. It may be somewhat naive to think of argument as merely a way to discover the truth (questions of winning and protecting one's face are too central to allow such a simplified analysis), but the fact remains that conflicts are a necessary and more or less inevitable part of discovering the truth and solving problems in any society.

[7] The *contrasto* is a form of improvised verse debate found in Tuscany. It is performed by two poets in front of an audience, who usually provide the topic for the exchange.

1.3 Literary representations of dialogue as data

One reason for adopting some methods from studies of talk-in-interaction for my study of historical data is that within CA and interactional sociolinguistics, studies of conflictive interactions appeared relatively early (e.g. Millar et al. 1984, Pomerantz 1978, 1984), at a time when, for example, research on politeness focused almost completely on cooperation and harmony. However, while the insistence of conversation analysts on naturally occurring data is healthy on the whole, this preoccupation also leads to limitations: these fields very strongly favour types of discourse that have been considered to be exemplary of "ordinary" or "everyday" language use. Unfortunately, as Briggs (2008: 453) points out, the definition of *ordinary* was not the result of any analysis of the data, but instead was based on pre-theoretical assumption, again tending to stress elements of orderliness, harmony, cooperation, and politeness.

As early as in 1987, McHoul proposed that "fictional conversations be taken seriously as objects for conversation analysis" (1987: 83). In spite of this, using literary data for conversation analysis remains somewhat unusual, although not entirely unheard of: especially dramatic dialogues in written format have been the focus of conversation analytical studies. For example, Herman (1995) examined English dramatic texts from an interaction viewpoint; Londen (1989) compared Swedish dramatic interactions and face-to-face conversations on a general level, finding that both share many of the same mechanisms. Piazza (1999) studied repair mechanisms in contemporary plays. More specifically, she has analysed representations of conflict in Italian melodrama (2006), while Spitz (see section 4.6 for details) has examined mother-daughter disputes depicted in present-day dramatic texts in English (2006), and she later moved on to examine conflict interaction in a novel (2010). On the whole, however, conversation analysis is still not a methodology most people would think of when studying literary data (or indeed any data predating the invention of sound recording, since such data only survives in written form).

There are at least two reasons for this. Firstly, as mentioned above, conversation analysis has long been associated with specifically spoken data. For example, in his article on conversation analysis in a handbook of qualitative research practices, Peräkylä states explicitly and without qualifications that "[a]s their data, conversation analytic studies use video or audio recordings made from naturally occurring interaction" (2007: 153). He specifically glosses 'naturally occurring' as referring to non-elicited data, i.e. interactions that would have occurred even without the data collection process. So written data is not explicitly ruled out as 'unnatural', yet the reference to video or audio recordings make it clear that face-to-face spoken interaction is to be the focus. This would, then, constitute one reason for avoiding literary data (with the possible exception of oral 'literature', i.e. folk literature transmitted without the use of writing). The second

reason is the definition of the field of interest as "talk-in-interaction": as writing is often less interactive than speaking, it would appear to be less than ideal data for these purposes. Yet the rules of interaction followed in written communication have developed through a natural historical process just like those of spoken interaction, and with the exception of certain differences dictated by the medium, they are also largely similar on the macro-level.

I do not wish to argue that conversation analysis needs to broaden its scope to make literary data more central. However, I see no reason why methods established for studies of talk-in-interaction could not be used to examine features of written discourse, especially when the written text imitates speech to some extent, and it seems to me that historical pragmatics specifically could benefit from more input from conversation analysis, as is also argued by Person (2009, see previous section). For the purposes of analysing conflict talk specifically, increasingly even scholars working on present-day data have turned to untraditional sources for analysing conflict sequences. This is at least partly due to some purely practical problems with collecting naturally occurring conflict sequences, as people are often extremely reluctant to share such material with researchers. This has led to the acceptance of e.g. staged televised debates, talk shows and the like as research material (e.g. Hutchby 1996, Hess-Lüttich 2007, Luginbühl 2007). Hess-Lüttich, in his article on pseudo-argumentation in TV debates (2007), points out that while televised talk shows are a relatively new genre, staged arguments have been practised at least since the times of ancient Greece. He further remarks on the stagedness of (political) debates on TV:

> The multiple asymmetric communicative relations between the participants themselves, between the participants and the show host who guides the discussion, between this group and studio guests, and finally between all these interactants and the television audience produces a specific structure of this type of discourse. In its components, this structure corresponds almost exactly to literary dialogue on the theatre stage (Hess-Lüttich, 1985, 2001b). Are we hence dealing with a fictitious dialogue? (2007: 1362–1363)

Literary representations of conflict, which are my focus in the present study, have also been studied (see p. 76). Literary material will obviously be somewhat stylised, in the sense that it follows specific conventions of its own, and the features of conflict talk found in it will not be the same as in genuine face-to-face spoken disputes. Speakers are not always conscious of the regularities of interaction, and written language does not provide standardised ways of representing features such as intonation (although tools such as italics can sometimes be used for these purposes, and phonetic transcription can be used for rendering speech into writing without information loss). No doubt, some

messy features such as false starts and repairs are eliminated from literary representations of any spoken interaction (not only conflict talk). In short, literary dialogues are idealised. However, this is not necessarily only a disadvantage: such representations of dialogue are likely to make use of the most psychologically salient features of conflict interactions. As Spitz puts it,

> By presenting crucial moments of interaction and highlighting and foregrounding features of ordinary conversation, scripted dialogue reaches a degree of condensation in the communicative mechanisms that can hardly be found in the everyday practice of interacting individuals, and that renders it a rewarding research object for discourse analysts. (2010: 200)

Naturally, the results from such studies cannot be generalised to actual historical conversations: we cannot say much about medieval day-to-day conflicts based on medieval debate poetry, since we have no way of accessing the actual primary speech event. However, as long as one does not indulge in this type of overgeneralisation, which would invalidate the results, written data has intrinsic value of its own, and indeed both written representations of interaction and other written texts are increasingly coming to be valued on their own merits (see Mazzon 2016: 61).

Although I use the concept of conflict talk to define the genre, I am not arguing that debate poems consist entirely of conflict talk. Depending on the poem, there can be a considerable amount of text that does not belong to a conflict phase of dialogue, nor is it even necessarily all dialogue. For instance, many debate poems contain a long introduction by the narrator (often a dream vision frame story, which among other things explains how non-human characters can be perceived as talking). The narrator is generally not a part of the conflict interaction, acting instead more as an eavesdropper (for participant roles, see Goffman 1981) who later reports their observations to the audience (although there are exceptions: for example, in *The Debate between Pride and Lowliness*, the narrator interacts with the characters and plays a large role in the selection of a jury). If the narrator is not a part of the conflict interaction, it should come as no surprise that their turns exhibit few features of conflict talk. However, poems that did not contain a conflict sequence were excluded from the present study even when they had labels marking them as debates or disputations (see Section 1.4 below).

While literature is in a way derivative of everyday interaction, it should not be forgotten that ordinary interactions can also incorporate elements from literature, making those interactions "constructed" to a degree (see Section 4.6 below for the concept of layering). Dynel (2011: 44) points out that even though literary dialogues must make use of the rules and conventions used in real-life interactions, the influence can go both ways:

"textual chunks" can be adopted by speakers and used as parts of genuine conversations to function as "allusion-based witticisms". Such intertextual usages are nothing new; in fact, one may surmise that they must have been very frequent indeed, considering how strongly medieval and early modern education was focused on memorisation of important texts and excerpts (Carruthers 2008). Such an education would lend itself very well to allusions and intertextuality, in conversation as well as writing. Even without allusions to literary text, everyday conversation can be seen as constructed dialogue to the extent that the participants engage in reporting the speech of others, as Tannen (1989: 110) has argued.

So the relationship of literary dialogue and genuine dialogue is by no means simple. To clarify the terminology, Culpeper and Kytö suggest three categories of speech-related genres: speech-like, speech-based and speech-purposed (2010: 17). A speech-like text is one that has features of communicative immediacy (Koch 1999, Koch & Oesterreicher 1985);[8] as texts can be more or less 'immediate', this category works as a continuum. Speech-based texts have a genuine speech event as their basis: for instance, trial proceedings (Culpeper & Kytö 2010: 17). Speech-purposed texts, finally, are texts meant to be performed aloud, like plays (ibid.). A debate poem can be speech-like in many ways (indeed, some are more speech-like than others), and debate poetry was also speech-purposed at least to a certain extent: some of the early modern texts were intended for singing, and their paratext therefore contains information about a suitable tune (see Section 3.1.27 below). In any case, until relatively recently all literary texts were commonly accessed through the medium of public reading in groups (Coleman 1996), partially because not everyone could read, and books were too expensive for everyone to have their own copy, but probably also because such a practice made reading a pleasurable social activity. Indeed, reading aloud was common enough even as late as the early 19th century, as suggested by frequent references to it in, for example, Jane Austen's novels (e.g. Miller 1985), and an unresolved debate could also provide the audience the entertainment of debating the matter for themselves. So it seems likely that debate poetry would have been recited as well.

A debate naturally differs from everyday conversation in a number of ways: for instance, the turns and their ordering are preallocated (Schegloff, Sacks and Jefferson 1978: 701),

[8] Communicative immediacy refers to a nexus of conditions typically found in informal, spoken everyday interactions: they are dialogic, the interlocutors know each other and communicate face to face, the themes of the discussion can be freely developed, the interaction is unplanned, involved, expressive/affective but not public (Koch & Oesterreicher 1985). The concept is useful in separating the medium (spoken/written) from the communicative situation (immediate/distant), and can thus be used, for instance, in describing how fictional texts can mimic certain features of spoken language.

in the sense that there is an expectation that both parties will have an opportunity to speak in turn, and will structure their arguments according to that expectation. A self-selection of next speaker, such as is commonly found in ordinary conversation, is questionable in a debate situation. Similarly, the topic is fixed to a greater degree than in conversation. These differences are all the more salient in early debate poetry, which is a representation of an institutionalised form of interaction (the scholastic debate, see Section 2.2). It should be noted, however, that a debate may touch on a number of quite different but related topics, depending on the formality of procedure adopted for the debate. In such cases the debate approaches, but never quite reaches, the rules of ordinary talk-in-interaction. An especially noticeable difference between debates and everyday conversations is the length of the turns: turns taken by debaters are often significantly longer than those found in genuine, everyday conversation. This makes them harder to analyse, as the number of distinct 'moves' or 'actions' within one turn increases along with the length of the turn.

Having argued for the validity of studying literary dialogues as interaction, the second defining element of the label *debate poetry*, i.e. that the material will all be verse, merits a brief discussion too. This can perhaps also be seen as controversial, since the language of formal poetry is in many ways more 'artificial' than the language of prose. For instance, Culpeper and Kytö constructed their Corpus of English Dialogues specifically to exclude texts in verse (2010: 25). This is not untypical, although they do not comment upon this choice. But even the assumption that verse is more artificial than prose depends a great deal on the complexity of the metre: it is possible to improvise lines in a simple metre at speeds that approach that of conversation. Examples of such simple metres might include iambic pentameter, or the octosyllabic four-stress couplets of *The Owl and the Nightingale.* This is not to suggest that the poem was improvised, but neither should one exaggerate the linguistic complexity created by the metre.

1.4 Selection criteria for materials

In 1.1, I proposed the conflict talk framework as a means of distinguishing between debate poems and other types of verse dialogue. In this section, I will begin by examining the definition of *dialogue,* and the problem of distinguishing between different types of conflictive interactions, before moving on to the selection criteria adopted for the present study. What, then, is a dialogue? The first requirement is, of course, that there has to be more than one participant for a dialogue to take place.[9] Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* comments that it is "[u]sually confined to a conversation between two people, probably through an association of the prefix *dia-* with *di-*" (s.v. *dialogue,* 2.a). Similarly,

[9] In literary texts, there are at least two layers of discourse (see 4.6 below): on the fictional layer, there may be several participants, all of whose voices are in reality produced by the author.

interactions between more than two people (sometimes referred to as *polylogues*) are often treated as a separate category, but in the present study, this distinction is not of central importance.

It has been argued that polylogues are considerably more complicated than dialogues between two speakers only (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004, Bou-Franch and Blitvich 2014). It is true that as the number of speakers increases, the turn-taking system becomes much less self-evident, and the potential for truly complicated interactions is greatly increased. However, most studies on polylogues have focused on contemporary data such as massive online polylogues on sites such as Youtube, where the number of participants is in principle unlimited, and provocative practices (e.g. trolling) are likely to attract new participants into the discussion. In such situations it is clear that the high numbers of participants transform the nature of the interaction. Medieval and early modern poetic dialogues are far from that level of complexity, so the number of participants has not been a criterion for text selection. This is especially important since in many cases there is a third participant acting as referee, and so all of those debates would technically qualify as polylogues even if the debate part itself is strictly between two participants. Utley also adopts this common interpretation of dialogue as referring to an interaction between two people only, although the reason he states is avoiding overlaps or clashes with other chapters or volumes in the series where his bibliography was published. For this reason, he excludes not only drama but also parliaments (such as Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*) and ballads, the latter on the grounds that they have "a clear narrative purpose" (Utley 1972: 671).

But to what extent are such modern genre classifications actually relevant? Battles mentions that genre criticism in Old English has been criticised for using classifications which are essentially retrospective, imposed by later scholars (2014: 2); and indeed Cartlidge's discussion of debate poetry expresses a similar concern that the texts might have been interpreted very differently by contemporary audiences (2010). Battles proposes that a solution for this problem is to examine evidence for *intrinsic* genres – categories which would have been recognised by contemporary audiences – located within the texts themselves. This term was initially introduced by Hirsch (1967), who argued that a reader must always infer the intrinsic genre of a work based on the evidence available from the text itself. Battles finds the opening of the text to be particularly informative for the purposes of genre analysis. Similarly, Grund (2012) urges compilers of corpora to pay close attention to text labels used by the producers of the texts.

How, then, did contemporary audiences perceive debate poetry? The authors, scribes, and printers producing these texts certainly did not use the term *debate poem.* The names used by contemporaries include Latin terms such as *altercatio* and *disputatio,* or French-

derived ones such as *plait*. Frequently a more general term such as *dialogue* or in one early case *carmen* ('poem') is used, with perhaps another word somewhere in the context suggesting that the dialogue is conflictive and includes a difference of opinion. Even the very basic (in some ways) distinction between dialogue and polylogue is not necessarily reflected in the titles, although sometimes all the main characters are listed. However, in many cases there is a clear allusion to the fact that the text contains conflict interaction, and such references have been used as a criterion for including a text in the present study, as explained below.

There is also the problem of how to distinguish between debate poetry and other types of conflictive poems (for a discussion of various conflict genres, see Chapter 2). One way of distinguishing between genres is by examining their communicative goals. Indeed, Dascal (1997, 1998), working on the concept of *controversy*, distinguished between three different but related types of polemic dialogues: discussions, disputes and controversies. All of these, according to Dascal, concentrate at least initially on a specific topic or problem, but differ in the way the problem is treated. The goal of a *discussion* is to arrive at a solution; the participants acknowledge that the disagreement derives from a problem or mistake with some concept or procedure, a correction of which allows the question to be settled to the satisfaction of all. In other words, a discussion is a search for truth. The goal of a *dispute*, on the other hand, is simply to win. Both participants insist that their viewpoint is the only correct one; since no mistake is admitted, no correction of an underlying problem can take place. A *controversy*, finally, is somewhere in between: the goal of the participant is to collect enough evidence to persuade at least an audience, if not the opponent, to adopt the viewpoint preferred by the participant.

Debates can also be seen as a type of verbal dueling: "the competitive use of language in focused interactions" (McDowell 1985: 203). This is a kind of dominance behaviour, concerned primarily with winning (friends and influence). In his study of heroic verbal duels in Ancient Greece and a number of other cultures, Parks (1990) has proposed four variables which should be taken into account in generic differentiation of verbal duel genres. These four variables are subject matter (focus on the participants produces a *contestant-oriented* duel, while *other-oriented* duels focus on external issues), referential mode (ludic or serious), locus of resolution (internal or external) and context (ingroup or intergroup) (1990: 166). Locus of resolution refers to the way in which the conflict is solved. An internal resolution is achieved through the verbal duel itself, while an external resolution takes place if the conflict escalates into a physical fight, so that the winner is decided by the result of battle rather than the verbal duel itself. The distinction between ingroup and intergroup contexts may be partially related to the locus of resolution, since duels between different groups are probably more likely to be resolved by fighting than duels taking place between members of the same group.

Parks notes that for example academic debate and heroic flyting are serious, while sounding and other name-calling competitions are basically ludic. He further remarks that one of the ways in which this is reflected in the conflict sequence is whether or not the participants will stop to deny the allegations made by the opponent (1990: 169). If the accusations are not meant to be taken seriously, there will be no need to defend against them, and the exchange is little more than a series of insults. On the other hand, if the participants take the truth-claims of the insults seriously, they will have to react to them somehow, because not doing so might mean losing the contest. It is therefore crucial to examine the ways in which the participants react to each other's moves: not only are these reactions an important part of the interaction, but they may also be indications of genre differences. Parks defines academic debate as an other-oriented, serious, internally resolved and ingroup verbal duel (1990: 177). I would argue that debate poetry typically tends to be contestant-oriented to some degree, but never completely. As for the continuum between serious and ludic duels, the participants on the fictional level are always completely serious, although this may result in a comical effect on the audience. Usually the conflict is internally reserved and ingroup, but there are some exceptions. However, if one ignores the ludic experience of audiences, debate poetry shows at least a tendency towards the distinguishing features of academic debate, and the differences can be seen as due to the satirical approach to debating often shown in debate poetry.

I will now describe the actual selection procedure, taking into consideration the distinctions reviewed above. For the Middle English period, the starting point is an established canon of texts, based on various listings of potential debate poems (Utley 1972, Conlee 1991 and Burt 2014). For the purpose of refining this selection further and expanding it with early modern material, the following criteria have been adopted, resulting in a dataset of approximately 100,000 words. First of all, there is the question of form: while prose debates can be found at least from the early modern period, such texts have been excluded from the present study, to keep the focus on debate poetry. Secondly, the debate must be between fictional characters. The intention behind this criterion is to exclude non-fictional matter like verse controversies and flytings between poets. Such controversies would undoubtedly also be interesting from a conflict viewpoint, but their goals are different enough from debate poetry that conflating the two genres would be problematic: especially the ways in which participants react to accusations are completely different, suggesting that they should be treated as separate genres. In poets' flytings, the participants do not make defensive moves, suggesting that they are operating in a basically ludic mode, while the characters in debate poetry take the interaction seriously, as argued above. Early modern religious controversies were sometimes also written in the format of a verse dialogue, but again the goals of such texts are very different from debate poetry: they are serious on the audience's level, and

the aim is converting the audience (perhaps through giving the opponent a bad reputation).

The third criterion is that the text should include an actual conflict sequence, as proposed above. This is not always the case even in texts that have been labelled as disputes. Fourth and finally, attached to the text there should be a contemporary textual label referring to the conflict aspect of the text. Such labels can be found in the title, the introduction or on the title-page – the exact location is not of great importance.[10] This criterion is partially a search heuristic, helping me to locate debate texts in the Early English Books Online database, and partially intended to ensure that the texts included were seen as debates by contemporary audiences as well as modern scholars. This fourth criterion was not as strictly applied to medieval debates, however, since there are some medieval debates which contain a clear conflict sequence but lack headings or incipits clearly highlighting their conflictiveness. As textual labels were more copiously used in the early modern period, this criterion is more suitable for use with later material (see e.g. Genette 1997: 37 on how book titles in medieval manuscripts were "buried" within the text). Still, an overwhelming majority even of the medieval texts contains such a label somewhere in the text, at least in an oblique form, the only exception being the incomplete *Clerk and the Nightingale I,* which was included in the corpus on the basis of similarity with *The Clerk and the Nightingale II* (see 3.1.14 below). Admittedly, this leads to some unevenness in the material selection, as the early modern part of the corpus could also have been extended to include textual labels within the body text. However, the easier availability of materials and the lack of an existing canon for the early modern period were judged to justify a slightly different interpretation of this criterion for the two parts of the dataset. Parliaments, on the other hand, have been excluded from the present study on the grounds that they do have a specific textual label which suggests that these texts were seen as forming a separate group. Dramatic texts have also been excluded for the same reason.

The texts forming the corpus for this study will be described in more detail in Chapter 3; here are some examples of the kinds of textual labels that can be found in my corpus (the labels are given in bold type).

(3) *The Body and the Worms*

A **Disputacione** betwyx the Body and Wormes	A disputation between the body and the worms

[10] In some of the medieval texts, the characters name the type of speech activity in a kind of summary at the end of the interaction: for example, *Nurture and Nature* includes the remark "thus to stryve alle day I hold vs not wise" (l. 30).

(4) *The Owl and the Nightingale*

ICH was in one sumere dale, in one suþe diȝele hale, iherde ich holde grete tale an hule and one niȝtingale. Þat **plait** was stif & starc & strong, sum wile softe & lud among; an aiþer aȝen oþer sval, & let þat vuele mod ut al.	I was in a summer-valley, In a really out-of-the-way retreat, When I heard an owl and a nightingale Having a huge dispute. This controversy was fierce and ferocious and furious, sometimes calm and sometimes noisy; And each of them swelled up against the other and vented all her malicious feelings

(5) *Pride and Lowliness*

The **debate** betweene Pride and Lowlines, pleaded to an issue in Assise: And hovve a Iurie vvith great indifferencie being impannelled, and redy to haue geuen their verdict, were straungely intercepted, no lesse pleasant then profitable.	The debate between Pride and Humility, pleaded at court; and how a jury, although formed with great objectivity and ready to give their verdict, was strangely intercepted. As pleasant as it is profitable.

(6) *Saint Bernard's Vision*

Saint Bernards Vision. OR, A briefe **Discourse (Dialogue-wise)** betweene the Soule and the Body of a damned man newly deceased, **laying open the faults of each other**: With a speech of the Divels in Hell. To the Tune of, Fortune my Foe.	Saint Bernard's Vision. OR, a brief discourse (in dialogue form) between the soul and the body of a damned man recently deceased, exposing the sins of each other. With a speech of the Devils in Hell. [To be sung] to the tune of Fortune my Foe.

The first two examples are medieval, while the second two are early modern. Example (3) is a heading, labelling the text as a disputation, while (4) is the beginning of the text itself (*The Owl and the Nightingale*). The narrator refers to the interaction as a *plait* – 'argument, discussion' or in a legal sense 'action, plea' (AND s.v. *plai*) and further depicts it as a very intense conflict (*stif & starc & strong*). Example (5) is a simple one, since the word *debate* is actually used on the title-page, while (6) demonstrates how a text labelled 'dialogue' can still be demonstrably conflictive, as it characterises the participants as "laying open the faults of each other".

1.5 The structure of the study

In the following chapters I shall first examine the context in which debate poetry developed. Chapter 2 examines the general socio-historical background, and Chapter 3 discusses the selection of materials, describing the texts and their individual histories. In Chapter 4, I shall proceed to elucidate the theoretical framework within which the present study will operate. Chapter 5 focuses on acts or 'moves' which are aggressive in

the sense that they focus on highlighting the opponent's shortcomings, while Chapter 6 is a study of 'defensive' moves, or moves which attempt to strengthen the speaker's positive image. Chapter 7 focuses on the opening of the debate, Chapter 8 on its closing, and Chapter 9 contains a quantitative analysis of some conflict-related lexical features.

It is next to impossible to give examples in their full context: that would require reproducing the whole text. However, I have done my best to give enough context for each particular case. The translations provided are mine, with some exceptions: for *The Owl and the Nightingale,* I have used Cartlidge's prose translation (2001); for *The Disputation between the Body and the Worms,* Rytting's verse translation (2000); for *Winner and Waster,* the translation by Millet from Wessex Parallel Webtexts (2014), and for *The Thrush and the Nightingale,* the (2003) translation from the same source. As for the line numbers given, I have generally checked them with printed editions for those texts that have them; for some of the early modern texts, where no edition was available, I have numbered the lines myself, excluding headings and such paratexts. For *A Dialogue Defensive* and *The Spectacle of Lovers,* there is a separate line count for the prologue in verse, and the line numbers cited for the text begin from the first line after the front matter.

In the next chapter, I shall outline the historical background of the genre of debate poetry. I shall begin with a brief sketch of the classical debating tradition, and then examine the contexts in which debates appeared in the Middle Ages, focusing especially on educational and academic uses of debating. Having examined such real-life influences on the genre, I shall review the history of the English tradition of debate poetry, including its various antecedents (and derivatives) across Europe, and touching upon some influences from other genres. I shall finish with a brief consideration of the audiences and functions of debate poetry.

2 Historical background

2.1 Introduction

Many scholars see the medieval and early modern dialogue as an overwhelmingly didactic discourse form. There is some evidence from early sources to support such a view. For example, Daniel Newhouse began his navigation manual of 1698 with the following note to the reader:

> "This is not to beg your excuse for the plainness of this Work, for, as it is chiefly designed for Beginners, (although many Pilots may want it,) I have endeavoured to make it so, to render *Navigation* **as easie and intelligible as possible I could: that is the reason that I chuse to make it by Dialogues** […]" [Wing (2nd ed.) / N922, sig. b1r]

Similarly, William Bullein's handbook on matters of health, from 1558, was described on the title-page as follows:

> "A newe booke Entituled the Gouernement of Healthe, wherein is vttered manye notable Rules for mannes preseruacion, with sondry symples and other matters, no lesse fruiteful then profitable: colect out of many approued authours. **Reduced into the forme of a Dialogue, for the better vnderstanding of thunlearned**." [STC (2nd ed.) / 4039, sig. A1r]

Many other comments are slightly more oblique, describing dialogues as easy and pleasurable, without explicitly stating that it is the dialogue format which makes them appear so. Still, there is good reason to suppose that dialogues were seen as easy to follow, suitable for beginners and those unaccustomed to assimilating information through the written medium (see also Taavitsainen 1999 on medical dialogues). So at least for the early modern period we can assume that debate poetry, like other dialogic texts, would be intended for a popular audience, not just learned scholars. For the medieval period, I have yet to find any such metatextual comments. However, there is some evidence that the medieval debates were also aimed for a non-elite audience. For example, we may not have conclusive evidence that *The Debate of the Carpenter's Tools* was written for performance at a feast of the carpenter's guild, as Wilson suggested (1987), but it certainly seems to presume an audience familiar with the different tools, and concludes with an admonishment to carpenters. None of the debates in my dataset appear too technical for a general audience. So one function of these texts may indeed have been to educate the reader on questions of general interest, such as woman's position in society.

However, this didactic purpose should not be taken to straightforwardly imply that the characters in dialogic poems necessarily re-enact a teacher-student dynamic: Sweeney (2015: section 2.5) remarks that "while the standard form of a philosophical dialogue is between a teacher and student figure, a number of medieval dialogues ignore this convention." If this is so even for learned philosophical treatises, there is all the more reason to suppose that more popular dialogues were didactic in the sense of 'easy to follow', but not necessarily in reproducing a master-pupil relationship which may have been part of some disputations in real life. In this chapter, I shall discuss whether and how the procedures of the academic disputation are reflected in debate poetry.

The formalisation of this discourse type into the institutional debate can be tracked back to ancient Greek philosophers, and the rediscovery of Aristotle in the twelfth century has been seen as a strong influence in the development of medieval disputation practices used at schools, universities and law courts (e.g. Novikoff 2013: 6). For this reason, I shall begin this chapter with a very brief discussion of some basic concepts of Greek dialectic and rhetoric.

2.2 Debating in real life

2.2.1 The classical tradition

In ancient Greece the skills of dialogical and argumentative thinking (ἡ διαλεκτική τεχνή, the art of dialectic), were held in great respect and developed by philosophers like Socrates, Plato and especially Aristotle in his *Topics*. The ideal goal of the dialectician was to discover the truth through a discussion between two opponents who represent contrasting propositions; in practice dialectic was the art of discovering believable arguments (Stump 1986: 131).[11] This classical tradition was transmitted to later generations via Boethius, as Aristotle's works were not directly available, with the exception of *Categories* and *De interpretatione* (Stump 1986: 128). The tradition was known as the *logica vetus*. For Boethius, dialectic was the part of logic that was not concerned with irrefutable deductive demonstration, but merely arguments that were convincing; however, in the Scholastic period *dialectic* was used as a synonym for logic in general (Stump 1986: 126–127). The remaining parts of the Aristotelian corpus became available again in the twelfth century. This *logica nova* was mainly concerned with fallacies and sophistical reasoning (Stump 1986: 128). Along with grammar and

[11] The idealistic view of argumentation as truth-seeking is still common: for instance, in the pragmadialectics developed by van Eemeren et al. (2007), the researchers base their description of argumentative language and moves in argumentation on the assumption that this is the goal. In reality, of course, other interpersonal goals, such as gaining dominance over the opponent, may be more important to the participants (see Stein & Albro 2001: 117–118).

rhetoric, dialectic was the third branch of the trivium, the first part of the liberal arts taught to students.

Rhetoric, or the art of persuasive public speaking, also had a great influence. However, medieval rhetoric was much less Aristotelian than dialectic, as Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was not very well known (Camargo 1986: 100). The most influential Roman orator was Cicero, whose *De inventione* formed the basis of the medieval art of rhetoric, along with the pseudo-Ciceronian *Ad Herennium* (Camargo 1986: 97). These works discussed the invention and disposition of arguments, *elocutio* or expressing them properly, memorising the matter and, finally, suitable delivery. The latter work also introduced the famous division into three styles: the grand, the middle, and the simple (Camargo 1986: 99). The changes in the political system, from the (albeit limited) democracy of the Greeks and early Romans to medieval absolute monarchy, meant that there were less opportunities for demonstrating rhetorical prowess in the Middle Ages. This led to a steady decrease in the prestige of rhetoric as a part of the trivium, as dialectic gained more and more ground (Camargo 1986: 101). Tropes and figures started to be seen as parts of grammar, while invention was assigned to dialectic (Russell 1998: 51).

Central to the development of the medieval dialectic was the rediscovery of Aristotle's system of logic and its reintroduction to the western European tradition of studies between c. 1150 and 1250 (Cobban 1988: 12). This had a great influence on the development of scholasticism. For instance, Thomas Aquinas attempted to develop Aristotle's philosophy in such a way as to accord with Christian theology. One of the main methodological ideas medieval authors adopted from Aristotle was the theory of the categories, and the *differentiae* or differences between them (Gracia and Newton 2012). This was a crucial concept for argumentation, since clarity in disputing requires a very clear definition of what the disputed topic is: if we are discussing two separate things under the impression that they are one and the same, there is little hope of reaching an understanding. Russell (1998: 40–44) points out that learning Latin, which lacks articles to signify (in)definiteness, would encourage scholars to pay attention to the distinctions between common and discrete, absolute and relative, natural and accidental, and so on. In the following example (7), the narrator reproaches one of the combatants for failing to make such a distinction. At this point in the text, the debaters (two pairs of breeches) are in the process of selecting a jury, and the breech of (plain) cloth has objected to the idea of including an informer, on the grounds that the profession has a bad name in general. The narrator, acting as a referee, objects:

(7) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 1304–1317

Ye speake (quod I) without discression.	"You speak", said I, "without discretion

And in your iudgement are preposterous.	And are making preposterous arguments.
That for an euill member twoo or thre, Or more or lesse that be degenerate: And fallen from their office and degre, Condemneth all the bodies whole estate.	That for two or three evil members, or more or less, which are corrupt and fallen from their office and rank, you condemn the whole body and all its properties.
And geueth priuate faulte, a blame publicke, I meane the office for his Officer: Alas yet the common sort so wicke, Of Innocence to make a trespasser.	And assign general blame for an individual fault, I mean you blame the office instead of the officer. Alas! Yet it is a common evil to make an innocent seem a trespasser.
This wickednesse is not of yesterday, That priuate faulte doth geue publick offence For one yll man of thousandes to myssay, Of callinges and Estates of reuerence.	This wickedness is not a new thing, that isolated instances of error cause a general outcry: because of one evil man, thousands of respectable calling and status are reproached.

Thus the narrator demonstrates that he can make the distinction of one member of a class from that class in general, a typical example of the type of categories taught by dialecticians.

While early medieval rhetoric was strongly dependent on the models developed in late Antiquity, from the eleventh century onward rhetoricians started developing more innovative arts of rhetoric in manuals focusing on preaching, poetry and letter-writing – *artes praedicandi*, *artes poetriae* and *artes dictamini* (Purcell 1996: 35). The teaching of rhetoric focused largely on style. *Copia* or abundance, the ability to find various ways of saying essentially the same thing, was one of the important rhetorical skills of the period, aimed to develop *facilitas* (Camargo & Woods 2012: 116–117). Many school exercises were designed to develop this skill of rephrasing and expanding; as Camargo and Woods point out, it must have been a good antidote to writer's block (2012: 117). Erasmus dedicated a whole book to this topic only (*De Copia*, 1512), but the concept goes back to Cicero and Quintilian.

Ironically, while Cicero's rhetorical treatises were intended to be applied at the Roman courts, and medieval understanding of rhetoric was based on these works, there were very few opportunities for secular legal debates in the earlier medieval period. The field of law remained an important influence on debate poetry, however: many scholars have recognised the legal influence in debate poems such as *The Owl and the Nightingale* and others (see Makdisi 1974, Pearsall 1977, Jacobs 1985, Holsinger 2002, Matlock 2010). Another debate which plays with legal procedures and terminology is *The Debate betweene Pride and Lowliness.*

Preaching was another important field where eloquence could be practised. Peter the Chanter listed reading, disputation and preaching as the three parts combining to form Bible study (Roberts 2005: 83). A priest should also be able to win a disputation about matters of theology, as there are many seemingly quite convincing arguments in favour of most sins (as can be observed from *The Good Man and the Devil,* see 3.1.7). So disputation skills were useful not only in church councils and ecclesiastical courts, but also for battling heretics and convincing sinners.

2.2.2 Debates in the educational system: The procedures of academic disputation

While the fields of preaching and law no doubt influenced the development of debate poetry, the most important factor affecting the development of debate poetry is the school system of the time, which was very much centred around debating – Pellegrini remarks that the significance of this activity in the medieval curriculum cannot well be overestimated (1942: 15). In the formulation of Reed (1990: 46): "By the middle of the thirteenth century, students were instructed through disputation, examined through disputation, and, upon graduation, obliged to begin their statutory two years of teaching by riding out as presiding master a forty-day flood of disputations."

Of course university education was the privilege of a very limited group of people throughout the Middle Ages and well into the early modern period. Academic debate as carried out in universities was no doubt an institutional genre in the sense that one needed certain qualifications in order to participate actively. On the other hand, some debates were open to the general audience, which means that knowledge about the procedures was not limited to those who had participated themselves. Reed (1990: 61) has argued that from the early fourteenth century many posts in the royal administration, formerly occupied by knights, were populated by clerks with a university training. Such positions of power would allow the clerks, thoroughly drilled in the procedures of disputing, to move in the circles that formed the popular tastes in literature, likely influencing those tastes in favour of debate poetry. Reed also points out that even before that time, tutoring the sons of influential families was the job of university-trained clerks, who could form the literary tastes of their tutees already at this young age. So there are good reasons for believing that the fondness for debating, while originating at the universities, would easily have spread to wider audiences.

Dialectic was more central in higher education than rhetorics, which was mostly necessary for those students who would later become priests (Kurki & Tomperi 2011: 36). Indeed, it has been argued (Cobban 1988: 13) that the focus on logic or dialectic in the arts curriculum was a key factor in the development of universities as an important type of institution. It is certainly true that an inquisitive analytical approach is central to any kind of scientific study, and that the earlier educational system had focused instead

on a much more passive approach. In addition to the influence of Aristotelian logic, it has been argued that the rise of the universities and the formation of mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans, were two developments increasing the influence of disputation (Novikoff 2013: 132).

The role of debating was quite central in the processes through which knowledge was acquired by medieval scholars. As one scholar has put it: "All knowledge was recycled through public oral disputation and evaluated through combative oral testing" (Tannen 2002: 1654). Apart from informal schooling at a very young age at home, those children who were lucky enough to get a formal education could start their school experience at a grammar school. The main purpose of these schools was to instruct the pupils in Latin and its grammar – the first part of the trivium. The other two, logic (or dialectic) and rhetoric, could also be introduced already at the school stage: at St. Paul's Cathedral School and some other London schools of the late twelfth century, the scholars would hold disputations on feast days (Sylvester 1970: 15). In the Tudor and Stuart period, youngsters were expected not just to know the rules of grammar by heart, they also had to be able to carry out a dispute on the topic (Sylvester 1970: 114).

Having absorbed basic grammar and the rudiments of dialectic and rhetoric at school, some students would continue to university, where the methods of teaching in common use included the *lectio* or lecture and the *disputatio*. Normally, lectures would take place in the morning, and a disputation would follow in the afternoon (Cayley 2006: 16). Lectures were strictly based on facts: the lecturer was supposed to discuss only true propositions (Novikoff 2013: 135), while disputations could be more speculative. Lectures were divided into ordinary lectures on the one hand, and extraordinary and cursory lectures on the other. Ordinary lectures, which were given by regent masters on *dies legibiles* and lasted at least an hour, had to be attended to gain a degree (Cobban 1999: 170); they thus had an official standing and were set by the statutes of the university (Cobban 1988: 163). Extraordinary lectures were less formal and went beyond the set texts of the official curriculum but were still normally taught by masters or doctors, while cursory lectures could be delivered by bachelors (Cobban 1988: 166). At any of these lectures, the teacher would proceed through a *lectio,* a reading of a text with commentary. It is natural that at difficult points in the text, questions and doubts would arise. Having gone through the matter in detail, the teacher would discuss the problems rising from the text, and give rulings on them (Cobban 1999: 171). Such *questiones* and *dubia* later developed into separate genres (Teeuwen 2003: 322-5).

Regent masters would also organise public disputations, also divided into ordinary and extraordinary, on special 'disputable days' or *dies disputabiles* (Cobban 1999: 174). While the lectures had to focus on universal truths, disputations, in contrast, could accept

propositions that were true only *sub conditione* – the main consideration was the internal consistency of the discourse, for debates were seen as having two goals, the finding of truth and the exercising of argumentative skills (Novikoff 2013: 136). These public disputations soon became quite separate from the disputations on *quaestiones*, more strongly connected with the lecture (Cobban 1988: 167) and thus more private in character. At Oxford and Cambridge, regular disputations *de quolibet* were arranged at least in the theological faculty from the 1270s–80s onwards, and later on in the arts faculty (Cobban 1988: 170), while the ordinary disputations would have been in existence before that time. Quodlibetal disputations could be on any topic whatever (*de quolibet*), and unlike at ordinary disputations where the professor determined the topic matter, the topic could be proposed by any member of the audience (*a quolibet*) (Kenny and Pinborg 1982: 22).

The exact procedure followed at a formal academic disputation is not known, but some elements can be reconstructed. Kenny and Pinborg (1982: 23–24) outline the procedure of a disputation in the arts faculty as follows: based on what is known about final examinations (which included a formal disputation), the presiding master would begin by putting a yes-no-question, perhaps giving some arguments pro and con already at this stage. Another master would be assigned the role of *respondens*, giving a solution, along with a refutation of any opposing arguments. The presiding master, who functioned as an *opponens,* would then argue against the solution and refutations. The opponent must react to each premise by granting, denying, or making a distinction, i.e. pointing out different senses of an ambiguous term (Kenny and Pinborg 1982: 26). Each side may have had a final chance to answer to the opposition. Apparently it was normal for the respondent to get the last word (1982: 24). A resolution would usually then be pronounced, but perhaps not until the following day, and apparently the proceedings of the disputation would often be written down by the master in a more or less revised and condensed form (Kenny and Pinborg 1982: 22), and in some cases a copy would be stored at an office where it was available to the public (Weijers 2013: 131).

Kenny and Pinborg's description seems to assume that it was the masters who performed at these public debates, but bachelors were also allowed to participate as disputants (Cobban 1988: 168–169). There is evidence that in spite of the noble aspiration to discover the truth through rational and impartial discourse, formal disputations could turn personal and excessively contentious (Novikoff 2013: 102). There are statutes referring to misbehaviors like hissing, making noise, and throwing stones (Thorndike 1944: 237). Disputations were (at least in the case of the quodlibetal debates) open to the audience, and they were apparently a popular spectator-sport. When Elizabeth I visited Cambridge University in 1564, she heard a number of disputations, and was reportedly "muche pleasyd" on at least one occasion (Nelson 1994: 128). She was also present at a

"holiday" debate at St. Mary's, Oxford in 1592 where the topic debated was "Whether that the air, or meat, or drink, did most change a man?" (Reed 1990: 57).[12]

From the viewpoint of debate poetry, it is interesting to note that the roles of the participants in the academic debate were so fixed: the *respondens* would be chronically on the defensive, while the *opponens* was allowed to focus on the attack. This would tend to give the opposing party an advantage, at least assuming that there was no rule requiring them to give alternative solutions in addition to exposing the problems with the solution proposed by the defendant (on the advantages of the second position in argument, see Hutchby 1996: 50). Indeed, such rigid participant roles can also be found in some debate poems, for instance the debate between Mary and the Cross. However, for debate poetry it is much more typical that both parties make accusations against each other, and sometimes the participants complain if they do not get an opportunity for this. See Example (8) below, where the Owl asks the Nightingale if she has been convinced by her defensive speech:

(8) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 541–555

"[…] Hu þincþ þe? artu ȝut inume?	"[...]What do you say? Have I caught you out
Artu mid riȝte ouercume?"	now? Are you overwhelmed by what is right?
"Nay, nay!" sede þe niȝtingale,	"No, no," said the Nightingale,
"þu shalt ihere anoþer tale:	"Now listen to another argument.
ȝet nis þos speche ibroȝt to dome.	This debate hasn't come to judgment yet.
Ac bo wel stille, & lust nu to me	Just shut up and listen to me now!
ich shal mid one bare worde	With just a single speech,
do þat þi speche wurþ forworþe."	I shall utterly confound your arguments!"
"Þat nere noht riȝt" þe hule sede,	"That wouldn't be fair," said the Owl,
"þu hauest bicloped al so þu bede,	"You've made your allegations just as you
an ich þe habbe iȝiue ansuare.	proposed, and I've given you an answer.
Ac ar we to unker dome fare,	But before we both go to be judged,
ich wille speke toward þe	I'm going to speak against you
al so þu speke toward me;	In just the way you've spoken against me –
an þu me ansuare ȝif þu miȝt.	Now answer me if you can!
Seie me nu, þu wrecche wiȝt,	Tell me, you wretched creature,
is in þe eni oþer note	What function you serve
bute þu hauest schille þrote?	Except that you've got a shrill voice?

The Nightingale is confident that she can refute all the Owl's accounts with "one bare worde", but the Owl protests (*þat nere noht riȝt*): she has answered all the Nightingale's arguments as they agreed, and now she wants to get a chance to ask the Nightingale some challenging questions in her turn. She insists that "I will speak toward you exactly as

[12] A doctor at the faculty presented as evidence his own sizable belly, challenging anyone to present evidence of a person similarly affected by air.

you have spoken towards me", demanding that the Nightingale must answer her if she can.

In conducting the debate itself, the classical rules of dialectic and rhetoric could be used. It was important to think ahead and try to anticipate the arguments of the opponent; debaters could also organise their arguments in such a way as to be deliberately misleading. For instance, Aristotle suggested (*Topics* 8.1, [1960: 681]) that when going through a step-wise list of arguments, it was a good idea to ask them in a less logical order, so that the opponent would not see in time where the questions were heading. Also the categories could be used to spot a fallacy in the opposing side's argument. However, some rather questionable strategies were also recognised, such as giving an argument that would take too long to disprove (*Topics* 8.10, [1960: 717]). In order to refute the opponent's standpoint, each argument would have to be examined in the order in which they were originally presented, and counterarguments would have to be presented for each individual point (the principle of point-by-point refutation, see Fritz 2008: 116). The opponent could either admit their defeat, or else be silenced when they could no longer find reasonable counterarguments. This silencing is a cliché often found in debate poetry as well.[13]

Later on, this tradition of academic disputation led to the development of the *viva voce* defence of a thesis written to gain the degree of doctor or master (Kurki & Tomperi 2011: 36). In countries such as Finland, the doctoral defence is still performed publicly, although the debate element is surely less significant than in the medieval disputations which were the origin of this custom. Excepting the viva, however, few elements of the tradition survived past the seventeenth century. Weijers outlines the process through which public oral disputations were replaced with written dissertations (2013: 218–219): to begin with, the dissertation mainly served as a report of the disputation, but soon it became an independent argumentative text. However, the disputative system of education no doubt had an immense influence on the culture in general while it lasted, and on the popularity of literary debates in particular. Reed (1990) has emphasised the ludic, playful nature of Middle English debates, taking the number of unresolved debates as an indication of the fact that these texts were not a serious attempt to solve any problem. This is probably true, and one should not underestimate the possibility that the form itself was as important as the content: disputation would have been a game immediately recognisable to anyone with an education, and a satiric treatment of such a genre would no doubt have had an intrinsic attraction.

[13] "Als Zeichen der Niederlage gilt in vielen Gedichten das Verstummen eines Teils infolge fehlender Gegengründe." (Walther 1920: 187) [The silence of one participant, resulting from the lack of counterarguments, was in many poems the sign of defeat.]

Finally, it should be noted that of course there were many slightly different styles of debate. In this section, I have only given a general description, but legal, theological and scientific disputes (for example) all have their own quirks. Weijers distinguishes between *disputatio* as a specific form of debate and debating in general (2013: 15). She also correctly points out that debate poems are very different from serious academic disputations, since their main purpose is to entertain (2013: 54). However, the cultural background of academic disputation is what makes the debate poem possible.

2.3 The history of debate poetry as a literary genre

Debates can be found in many literatures around the world. For instance, there were "dispute poems and dialogues" (Reinink & Vanstiphout 1991) in the ancient and medieval Near East. Such texts are found at least "in Sumerian, Akkadian, Hebrew, Syriac and mediaeval Arabic, covering a period of three thousand years from the second millenium BCE to the end of the first millenium AD" (Holes 1995: 101).[14] The classical Greek tradition had certain genres, like the eclogues of Theocritus and later Virgil, a central topic of which was lovers' plaints in a pastoral setting (Watson 2003), and which thus had similarities with debates (Hanford 1911). In Latin literature, Aesop's fables already introduced many of the themes which were to become popular in medieval debates, such as the contrast between summer and winter (*De sole et vento*), various body parts (*De membris et ventre*), and even between different types of birds (Walther 1920: 13–14). An important genre in early Christian debates and throughout the medieval period was the *Adversus Iudaeos* debate, aimed to prove the superiority of the Christian faith over the Jews (see 3.1.6. for an example of this theme in my corpus).

However, these early poems were not yet fully developed debates. The medieval Latin tradition of debate poetry is often considered to begin with the ninth-century *Conflictus veris et hiemis*, a debate between Spring and Winter long attributed to Alcuin. In the Middle Ages, the debate poem became a very popular genre both in Latin and most medieval vernaculars. In the later debate literature, almost anything could be debated – in addition to common themes like Summer and Winter or Body and Soul, there were debates on the virtues of various flowers, (especially in England) birds, or comparisons between e.g. wine and beer. In Latin, there were even verse debates on whether homosexual love was preferable to heterosexual (*The Altercation between Ganymede and Helen,* Murphy 1995: 91).

There are two Old English Solomon and Saturn dialogues which are sometimes associated with the debate tradition. For example, Major refers to Solomon and Saturn

[14] Interestingly, Holes notes that while he is unaware of any modern debate poems in Standard Arabic, the genre remains "a living part of the dialectal poetic tradition in the more culturally conservative area of coastal Arabia" (2014: 103).

II as a 'debate' (2011: 301). This would make them the first verse debates produced in English, although they seem to be more concerned with praising the creator than with conflict. Indeed it is questionable to what extent they are even dialogic: although there are questions and answers, the speakers do not seem to react to each other in a dialogic way. The texts are cryptic: in *Solomon and Saturn I*, runic characters representing the letters of the paternoster are depicted as fighting with the forces of evil (Christie 2011), while in *Solomon and Saturn II*, a large part of the exchange consists of riddles. There is also an Old English dialogue between the Soul and the Body, found in slightly differing versions in the Vercelli and Exeter manuscripts: in the Vercelli Book, a blessed soul has the main speaker role, while in the Exeter Book, it is a damned soul that speaks (Davis 2008: 33). However, these contain no real conflict sequences, as they only contain the address of the soul to the body – the body never has a chance to respond. The Old English dialogues are therefore not included in the present study.

The Owl and the Nightingale, the first Middle English debate poem to survive to us, is longer than most of the other extant debate poems at just over 1790 lines. Many commentators have been astonished that a poem of such high literary quality could be written at such an early date in a relatively undeveloped vernacular literature (for a summary, see Cartlige 2001: XIII). However, the traditional dating to the late twelfth century (accepted by e.g. Atkins 1922: xxxviii, and Stanley 1960: 19) may be almost a century too early, and one should not underestimate the influence of similar texts extant in Latin and perhaps especially French. Under the guise of an argument between the two birds, the text discusses a variety of themes. Indeed, Cartlidge has pointed out that this single text manages to intertwine a number of the most common themes found in debate poetry: the Summer/Winter opposition and the comparison of maidens and wives, and the poem also manages to touch on the question of Body and Soul (2010: 244–252).

In any case, *The Owl and the Nightingale* started something of a trend, and bird debates are often seen as a subgenre of English debate poetry (e.g. Conlee 1991). All of these seem to include a Nightingale as one of the contestants, while the other can be a cuckoo, a thrush, or in the case of a late Dunbar poem, a merle (blackbird). Another thematic group of Middle English debates is the series of Body and Soul debates, based on the Latin *Visio Philibertis* tradition. Reworkings of this theme can be found quite late in the early modern period. Conlee (1991) created a further grouping of Middle English debates under the heading of "alliterative debates", of which *Winner and Waster* is the best-known example. He also gives the pastourelle as one type of Middle English debate poem. However, there are some problems with this categorisation: first of all, the texts are few (Conlee only cites four) and fragmented, and generally very short. Secondly, their argumentative element is not very significant, and thus they may be better categorised as lyrics containing a debate-like element (see Section 3.2, page 69). These

works will not be considered in the present study. The final thematic group given by Conlee is something of a catch-all category named "didactic and satiric disputations". The old theme of Christians and Jews surfaces here, as do debates between abstractions such as mercy and righteousness or nature and nurture. Some of the same themes also arise in the few influential parliament poems written in Middle English.

2.3.1 Debating in other medieval vernaculars

There are many genres of debate verse in the world, but space here does not permit all of them to be discussed: I shall focus on genres known in the Western world, and possibly related to the medieval European tradition of debate poetry. As was mentioned above, debate poetry was widespread in Latin, but also most medieval vernaculars: I am aware of texts in English, French, Swedish, Czech, and even Arabic, and Walther mentions also Danish, Dutch, German, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish versions on the Body and Soul theme (1920: 60). However, there were also a number of related debate genres in various parts of Europe, which I shall shortly discuss in this section.

The Occitan *tenso* was an aggressive exchange between a lord and a troubadour/joglar, in which the poet could insult the lord, who would then answer. These tensos would apparently be performed publicly in front of the court in a rather dramatic and theatrical way. They were typically very critical and satirical in tone. *Sirventes* were also verse satires composed by troubadours, but unlike tensos, these did not necessarily include an answer and were not necessarily performed in public (Fèvre 2010: 212). The *partimen* is a sub-genre of sorts of the tenso, an exchange where two troubadours take sides and discuss a question or problem. In French this genre was known as a *jeu-parti*, and the starting point is different from that of the tenso, as the first speaker proposes two alternative solutions to the problem that is to be discussed, and the second speaker is allowed to choose which viewpoint to defend (Kay 2005). For the purposes of this discussion it makes little difference whether these were separate genres or different realisations of a single one, especially since contemporaries did not really make such a distinction consistently either. In any case the main topic discussed in such debates was normally love, as in troubadour literature generally.

English debate poetry was naturally influenced by the (Anglo-)French tradition of debates. Indeed, a few texts in my corpus are translated from French (see sections 2.1.6, 2.2.3, 2.2.6). In some cases, French debate poetry survives to us in the same multilingual manuscripts as the Middle English ones. For instance, the Bodleian MS Digby 86 contains – in addition to *The Thrush and the Nightingale* and an English Body and Soul debate titled in Latin as *Carmen inter corpus et animam* – a French debate between "ii dames". The common appearance of birds as debaters, a specifically English theme in

debates, can be explained by French influence, since Old French literature had "an extensive tradition" of birds as advocates of love (Cartlidge 2010: 242). Walker (1974: 64) lists "formal elements of nature introduction, appointment of judge and legal terminology" as features typically shared by both French and English bird debates, noting also that there is a small and early group of French bird debates the English associations of which are commented upon in the manuscript (1974: 54).[15]

However, Cartlidge argues that the French poems hardly contain sustained debate, and that the focus of the English poems on debating is "a significant departure" from the French model (2010: 243). He also points out that the French bird dialogues include several instances where the birds actually engage in a judicial duel (ibid.), making the rarity of such occurrences in English debates all the more notable (see Chapter 8 below). Cartlidge also compares *The Owl and the Nightingale* with the *Petit Plet,* a French debate found in both the Cotton and Jesus manuscripts of the English poem (2010: 252–256). He finds analogies in the topics discussed and the attitudes portrayed, also noting their similar use of proverbial wisdom. However, he also discerns differences in the arrangement, observing that while the English poem gives the appearance of spontaneity and freeranging discussion, the *Petit Plet* follows a rigid, programmatic structure, and seems less concerned with competition between the protagonists (2010: 255).

The Occitan tradition of the joglars was also adopted by Italians in the twelfth century: Tuscan poets wrote poetry in the dialogic troubadour genres of the *contrasto* (a verse battle between two poets) and the *alba* ('dawn song', where two lovers take leave of one another at daybreak). However, that literary tradition soon came to an end as the popularity of Occitan poetry waned. It is unclear whether the modern Tuscan genre of contrasto, performed in front of an audience, is a genuine folk development of the thirteenth-century genre or a separate tradition.

Parks equates flyting, a genre of poetical invective, with disputation: "In brief, heroic flyting is agonistically styled verbal disputation with martial overtones" (1990: 6). Indeed, flyting and debating share some central features: both often start with some kind of provocative display (with debates this is perhaps less central), and this leads to an exchange of boasting of one's own accomplishments while denigrating the adversary. However, while both flyting and debate poems are literary reflections of the group of linguistic games we might call verbal contests, the distinguishing feature between flyting and debating is that the rules of debate require *proof:* that is, the participants are expected to convey at least a semblance of rationality and give arguments in favour of their

[15] The Nightingale's call *oci! oci!* in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* is also very much based on French literary tradition.

position. Debaters may get away with bad arguments occasionally (in some cases quite often, particularly if the topic is one that tends to cause a strong emotional reaction), but they have to pretend to be reasonable up to a point, or they risk appearing mean and unfair and losing the goodwill of the audience. This was not the case in flyting, where the inventive use of insults alone, regardless of any proof of their veracity, could decide the winner: Parks defines flyting as "*verbal contesting with an ad hominem orientation*, as distinct from dispute whose subject matter is nonpersonal" (1990: 6). He then specifically focuses on the genre of "heroic" flyting (with serious truth claims, unlike in some of the later "ludic" flytings). In the case of "sounding" it has been argued that the more unbelievable the insults are, the better it is – an insult that sounds too convincing may be taken personally, which may lead to a change of framework from the ludic to the serious (Labov 1972: 347).

Icelandic examples of the Germanic tradition of flyting can be found in the *senna* and the *mannjafnaðr*, two genres "wondrously entwined in the literature" (Harris 1985: 82). The *mannjafnaðr* has been defined as a "literary man-comparison" (Frotscher 2002): it is a verbal duel between two warriors, each of whom claims to be superior to the other. The point was to determine, by means of a public dispute, who was the better man – although the comparison need not necessarily be carried out by the men themselves. Both were essentially hostile genres, with a great deal of boasting and insults directed at the opponent. Clover (1980: 445) argues that *flyting* is preferable as an umbrella term to either of these, and that while they may have started as separate terms, the *senna* and the *mannjafnaðr* are indeed impossible to distinguish by the time written documents appear.

2.3.2 Post-medieval developments in English and other vernaculars

A search of the EEBO database with the title keyword *dialogue* gives a list of 1791 texts; this number only includes those texts which were explicitly labelled as dialogues. The dialogue was a common form used by authors to discuss a variety of topics from theology to the theory of music, warfare or navigation. Common topics include discussions between representatives of different Christian sects: Catholics and Protestants, Quakers and Christians, those in favour of infant baptism and those against it. Most of these are prose, but there are also some verse treatises on such topics. A smaller number of texts can be found with the title keywords *debate* and *dispute.* Indeed, it is a common but slightly oversimplified notion that after the medieval period, the genre of debate poetry started to slowly lose importance: for example, Conlee called the debate poem a typically medieval genre (1991: xii). This may have been largely due to the disappearance of the scholastic tradition of education, since disputes gradually became a less central part of the school experience shared by all educated (male) members of society. However, the genre did not die off overnight, and debate poems can be found in printed sources at least up to the seventeenth century. These poems have not been the focus of many scholars,

in large part because their literary qualities often leave space for improvement.

What was perhaps even more common in the early modern period was the flyting between poets: a genre that no doubt shares many elements with genuine debate poetry, but is distinct in that the contestants there are not only literary characters, but also simultaneously real people striving for victory over a rival. One important theme in the debates found in the continental literature during this period was the battle of the sexes or *querelle des femmes;* however, according to Coldiron (2009: 23), no such poems were translated or printed in England during the early modern period.

While debate poems slowly disappeared from the mainstream of European literature in the early modern period, a similar genre, known as the *mūnāẓarah*, has survived in Arabic literature. This type of debate was common also during the Middle Ages (van Velder 1991). Holes has described the modern Bahraini and Omani representatives of the genre as follows:

> Two (occasionally three or four) disputants, which may be concrete objects, colours, concepts, towns, seasons of the year, or, as here, alternative ways of earning a living, suddenly come to life and take it in turns to argue the superiority of each over the other. The poet also normally participates, acting as a scene-setter at the beginning of the debate, interceding, if asked, on behalf of one or other of the combatants in order to ensure fair play, and issuing a verdict at the end. (1998: 87)

From the first sentence of this description, it should be obvious that these Arabic debate poems have much in common with the medieval genre. On the other hand, the role of the poet-narrator seems to be more central than in most English debate poems (although there are cases even in English poetry where the narrator plays a key role). Yemen also has its own tradition of tradition of debate poetry, where the debate between coffee and *qāt*[16] is one frequently recurring theme, perhaps partly because both stimulants were commonly used by poets (Wagner 2005). As with early English debate poetry, the treatment of the topic may be tongue-in-cheek, but underlying the light discussion are serious societal issues (in this case, the positive and negative effects of stimulants, and their permissibility for Muslims).

In Tuscan folk tradition, the debate poem still goes on in the form of the *contrasto*: a staged, improvised verse fight between two poets. Pagliai (2010a: 87) explains the

[16] *Qāt (Catha edulis)* is a medicinal plant commonly used in Yemen. It is "a shrub whose leaves are chewed in Yemen every afternoon for several hours, comparable to coca-chewing in South America. *Qāt* is a stimulant drug and contains alkaloids of the ephedrine type" (Hehmeyer et al. 2012: 139).

modern Tuscan genre as follows: "In the duels, each poet takes a side on a theme, usually given by the audience (e.g., Husband vs. Wife, Science vs. Nature, any two political figures, e.g., Berlusconi vs. Prodi), and proceeds to defend their point of view and attack the side of the other poet, who will retaliate in kind." Thus, both parties represent not themselves, but a viewpoint or an abstraction. The themes mentioned are not unlike the ones discussed in early debate poetry, with the exception that political themes were not encouraged in the age before democratic governments. Any such discussions would have been carefully veiled in allegory. A key aspect of *contrasti* is that they are a co-operative endeavour: to provide the highest quality of entertainment for the audience, the participants should help each other in the process of improvised composition by, for instance, ending their turn in such a way that the next speaker will easily find suitable rhymes for continuing. Sabotaging the supposed adversary will lead to an unsuccessful end of the performance; Pagliai reports a case where two poets did just this while maintaining an appearance of politeness (2010a: 93–94).

Poetic contests of wit are not unknown in Finnish folk tradition, either. The Finnish national epic *Kalevala* includes a scene where the old sage Väinämöinen is challenged to a duel of knowledge by the cocky young Joukahainen (Poem 3). The younger man keeps singing about the things he knows: the classifications of animals, the three big rapids in Finland and so on. The various items of knowledge are punctuated with Väinämöinen's comments on the insignificance of what the other contestant knows. Since the underlying idea is that knowledge gives (magical) power, the victor emerges very clearly as Väinämöinen literally sings his opponent into a swamp. Up to his neck in the bog, Joukahainen has no other option than to admit defeat. Such a distinct resolution is not very typical of other related genres, which lack the magical element.

Any type of poetic debate can be performed in front of an audience, either with a single reader playing all the roles or with different performers impersonating the sides of the argument. However, there is a subclass of verbal duels which are not only publicly performed, but improvised on the spot, in some cases based on a topic suggested by members of the audience. The *payada*, found mainly in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, belongs to this type of improvised verbal duel or debate performed in front of an audience. This performative aspect has been seen as the defining feature of the genre, since there is no poetic or musical structure that would set it apart from other similar genres (Isolabella 2012: 153). The performance of a payada involves guitar accompaniment, and generally takes the form of a *contrapunto:* there are two performers competing for victory. A winner emerges when one of the performers cannot find an answer to the other's argument. Topics can be requested from the audience or initiated by the participants; typically they are related to the participants, love, and the context where the payada is presented, which is often some festive occasion (Arias 2015: 6).

Another highly performative verbal duel genre is the freestyle rap battle, where participants display their skills in improvised rhyming, collaborating with each other and the audience to produce conflictive talk while positioning themselves along various types of hierarchies (Alim et al. 2011: 426). Inventive insults or "dissing" is a key part of the rap battle, allowing the participants to demonstrate their verbal creativity. The winner is decided by the reaction of the audience, as the best rhymes will get the biggest response. As a result, the participants will monitor audience members carefully, attempting to recruit their support (Alim et al. 2011: 431–432). The rap battle is therefore a highly interactive activity.

2.3.3 Influences from non-conflictive genres

Debate poetry also shows influences from and overlaps with many non-conflict genres. For example, many debate poems could be classified under the heading of dream visions. The typical debate poem opposes two (or more) characters that personify abstractions, and quite often the said abstractions are represented by non-humans such as birds, or even inanimate things like breeches or a carpenter's tools. Setting the events within a dream vision is a very convenient way of explaining how it is that such mute beings have suddenly acquired the ability to speak. Indeed, in one case the narrator comments on this very question, anticipating incredulity from his audience:

(9) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 209–220

Of cloth (I say) both vpper stocke and neather, Paned and single lyned next to the thie: Light for the were, mete for al sort of weather, Nowe paraduenture ye wyl thinke I lye.	Of cloth, I say, both upper stock and lower, paned and single lined next to the thigh, Light to wear, suitable for all sorts of weather. But now perhaps you will think I lie.
Then veluet breeches dyd begyn to say, To them of cloth, as ye shall after here: But lest ye maruayle how and by what way, These things dyd speake, that neuer speaken ere.	Then the velvet breeches started to speak to the plain cloth breeches, as you will soon hear. But if you marvel how it is possible that these things spoke, which have never spoken before,
Ye wot it is a dreame that I you tell, Whose demonstrations are very darke: And yet vnto the trueth accorden well, Admitted as they must be, therefore harke.	You know it's a dream that I am telling you, the portents of which are very obscure: And yet they correspond closely with the truth, admitted as they must be, so listen.

He goes on to recount the Biblical dream signifying seven good years and seven years of famine, pointing out that these, too, seemed strange on the surface, yet contained great truths. Indeed, the narrator goes to a great deal of trouble to remind his audience that although his story is strange, it is nonetheless quite believable because it happened in a

dream. In this way, the dream vision framework not only explains any strange events in the story, but it may also give an added authority to the text, considering that dreams were often thought to contain hidden wisdom (Bickley 2013: 1).

Many debate poems also have features of the animal fable in that the characters are nonhuman, although debates rarely have the straightforward moral lesson expected of the classical Aesopic fable. In the later medieval period, debates might show influence from "clamour writing" (Scase 2007) – the genre of lyrical complaints, which Scase connects with the practice of *ars dictaminis* and legal writing. This genre mixing is not really a problem, as any study focused on genre has to deal with the problem of mixing genres: it has been claimed, with not much exaggeration, that "genres hardly ever do anything *except* mix" (Gorman 2001: 857, italics in original). What mostly sets the dream vision apart is the frame story in the beginning, and since the focus of the present study is on the interaction within the debate proper, the presence or absence of a dream vision framework is largely irrelevant.

2.3.4 The authors and the intended audiences of debates

I have already argued above that at least for the early modern period there is evidence that dialogic poetry was often intended for a popular audience. I would suspect that the same reasoning holds for the medieval period, although the reading public is likely to have been considerably smaller. As for the authors of these texts, the earlier texts tend to be anonymous, and not much can be known about the social context of the writers. Some of them can be connected with monastic orders: Alan Fletcher makes a convincing case for the Dominican connections of *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Fletcher 2012), and there are reasons for believing that the *Disputation between the Body and the Worms* was somehow related to Carthusians (Brantley 2007). The Benedictine John Lydgate is one of the few known authors of the medieval part of my dataset.

Towards the early modern period, the situation changes, as we start to see more named authors: my corpus includes texts by Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, Robert Burdet, Thomas Feylde and William Walter. The first two are quite well-known names, while the remaining three are less illustrious. It is noticeable that many of these men had a connection with the law: Henryson was trained in canon law, Dunbar sometimes acted as a procurator or advocate, and Burdet was a member of Parliament and a justice of peace. I have not been able to find any information on the identities of Feylde and Walter, except that Walter served Sir Henry Marney at some point. Marney was a leading member of Henry VII's household, and was granted a peerage in 1523 (Gunn 2016: 13). His position also involved judicial duties (Gunn 2016: 53–58). In any case, a legal connection for four of the named authors would tend to add credence to the idea of legal

influence which is often mentioned in connection with medieval debate poetry (e.g. Reed 1990).

What would such legal influence then consist of? Reed recounts the procedure followed at the common law courts: the participants included five justices, who took quite an active role in the proceedings, the sergeant of the defendant, and the sergeant of the plaintiff, known as *narrator* (1990: 72). According to Reed, the *narrator* would begin by delivering an account of the facts in the case (known in Latin as *narracio,* in Anglo-French as *conte,* and in English as *tale*), which had to correspond exactly with the writ submitted; the justices would then debate this in detail, and the case would either be dismissed on a technicality or referred to a trial by jury (1990: 72). Reed further notes that the lawyers reporting the cases report the procedure in great detail, but the outcome is often not given (1990: 73), and that the arguments could be rather entertaining: "When a Sergeant Toudeby suggests that his client is a poor man and knows no law, his opponent, Sergeant Herle, retorts, 'It is because he knows no law that he has retained you.'" (1990: 74). Apparently, the lawyers would also entertain themselves with mock court proceedings during their holidays (1990: 77–80). Indeed, it seems quite likely that legal proceedings were one of the key influences on debate poetry.

All in all, however, it is probably fair to say that debate poems do not seriously attempt to follow the procedures of medieval scholastic debating (any more than legal procedure) with any kind of accuracy. Similarly, while I have argued that the purpose of a debate is winning, the end result of the disputation was apparently not a very central issue for the writers. Modern commentators are often surprised by the fact that many medieval debate poems lack a resolution (e.g. Reed 1990). After all, the medieval period is seen as a time when the authority of hierarchies (political and ecclesiastical) was greatly respected, and it is assumed that people were used to having a single correct way of thinking given to them from above. Even in modern times, discussions of argumentation often idealistically assume that the purpose of a debate is to find the truth of the matter. Indeed, Roman Jakobson argued that the resolution of a medieval debate poem was known a priori (Thomas 1998: 134); it should be noted that he was working on a medieval Czech poem, and unresolved debates were apparently less common in continental poetry than in England (see Reed 1990: 204–205).

If such is the starting point from which one approaches debating, it should indeed be surprising that so few of the medieval debate poems are resolved in the end. However, a more realistic assessment of the goals of debating might be achieved by comparing them to games. Debates between real interlocutors are entertaining for the participants, much like chess, tennis or any other game: there is a pleasure to be gained by scoring points over the opponent and using all available strategies to achieve victory. Yet in the end,

keen as the participants may be to win, and as much as the audience may find themselves supporting one side over the other, ultimately it matters little who wins, as long as the game is well played. Cayley, in her monograph on Alan Chartier's late medieval French debate verse, speaks of (love) debates as "collaborative poetic games" which are engaged in for the enjoyment of the game, with no desire that the game should come to a resolution – in fact, the game could be deliberately prolonged by the participants by mutual requests of continuation (2006: 12). The urge to continue extending the game by mutual solicitations may be especially pertinent to love debates, but the needlessness of resolution probably extends to other types of debates: ultimately, it is the fight itself and how one wages it that matters more than who wins (cf. Luginbühl 2007: 1386).

In debate poems, the participants disputing a point are not real people, so the rationale for the debate will not be their wish to extend their "game". However, the fact remains that observing such conflicts is always entertaining. A similar case is that of modern talk shows (see Lauerbach & Aijmer 2007), where scoring points in front of the audience tends to be a central goal for the participants. The search for truth, while not completely excluded, is nonetheless not the central point of the exercise, and (like in early debate poetry) the hosts do not generally proclaim a winner. The audience may eventually decide on one, however, and this may have been true of medieval debates, too.

While debate poetry often involves a discussion of important topics, the entertainment function is obviously of central importance. Norrick & Spitz (2010) have examined the interrelationship of humour and conflict in modern spoken conversations, and they suggest that the typical structural features of conflict talk are so well-known to language-users that they can easily be exploited for humour. It is likely that something similar is going on in medieval and early modern debate poetry. As Culpeper (2005: 45–46) has noted, impoliteness may also have an intrinsic entertainment value. He also points out that this was already recognised by the ancient Greek philosophers. Indeed, the link between humour and conflict was also recognised by the early Church Fathers: John Chrysostom argued that laughter tends to lead to foul language and insults, which in turn often lead to violence, and eventually murder (Morreall 2013). This was a fairly typical orthodox attitude, and may well have been familiar to the authors of early debate poetry. Making conflict the topic of satire turns the perspective upside down in a rather daring way, but on the other hand, satirising various sins was also a well-established approach.

2.3.5 Conflict talk as entertainment

As we all know from political debates for instance, it can be much more entertaining to listen to an aggravated dispute than a mildly polite one. Discussing TV game shows, specifically *The Weakest Link*, Culpeper (2005: 45) lists a number of reasons why impoliteness might be entertaining: citing Myers (2001: 183), he argues that the

suggestion of violence is intrinsically thrilling; he also mentions a voyeuristic element. Further, as Plato long ago noted with disapproval, laughter can give the audience a satisfying sense of superiority (for a summary of Plato's view, see Morreall 2013). Combined with the fact that the audience is safe from becoming the butt of the joke themselves, all these factors add up to a high entertainment value. While Culpeper was referring specifically to impoliteness, similar factors may be at work with verbal conflict in general, and indeed impoliteness is most likely to take place in verbal conflict situations, although it is perfectly possible to carry out a verbal conflict in an impeccably polite manner.

Norrick and Spitz (2010) discuss how conflict can be used for entertainment purposes in scripted humorous performances such as Monty Python sketches or *The Simpsons*. Such humour arises from exaggerations of the stereotypical conflict sequence where disagreement has become the preferred alternative, and agreement tends to be marked with very strong hedging. It can be very difficult for the interlocutors to find a way out of such a sequence, as even attempts at reconciliation are often interpreted through the conflict lens. A humorous performance can also exaggerate the typical conflict exchange by having each participant repeat their own viewpoint in repeated short exchanges, much like a record that is broken.

Early English debate poetry does not make use of such strongly exaggerated conflict sequences, but some texts in particular appear to attempt a somewhat similar effect, although much milder. Take this exchange from *A Dialogue Defensive*, where the Magpie challenges the Falcon to name a single woman with all the 'gyftes' the Falcon has been praising. He suggests that the task is impossible (*Thou cannest reherse none, nother great nor small*):

(10) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 169–176

Pye What woman, I pray the than sayde the Pye These gyftes haue had, that effectes thou dost call Except thou be doubtles, dysposed to lye Thou cannest reherse none, nother great nor small.	Magpie "What woman, I ask you," then said the Magpie, "Has ever had these gifts which you call effects? Unless, no doubt, you're prepared to lie, you can't list any, whether great or small.
Falcon I can sayde the Fawcon, rehersall to the make Of mo suche women, than thou hast in the Condycyons gentle, wherfore good hede take And thou shalt here named, mo than two or thre […]	The Falcon "I can," said the Falcon, "give you an account of many more such women than the number of noble qualities in you! So pay attention, and you will hear me name more than two or three…

While the continuation of the Falcon's answer later dispels the effect, the *I can* at the very beginning, following directly after the Magpie's *thou cannest reherse none* seems to suggest a stereotypical sequence similar to that used in Norrick and Spitz's example. Similarly, many of the features of conflict discussed above do have a humorous effect.

While I have mostly treated debate poems as straight-forward examples of conflict talk, a debate poem is of course different from ordinary everyday disputes in the sense that it builds partly on the formal academic and legal culture of debating. Another possible source of entertainment can be found in parodying these established procedures, which will have been very familiar to contemporary readers. All in all, however, it is probably fair to say that debate poems do not seriously attempt to follow the procedures of medieval scholastic debating with any kind of accuracy, and by no means should the debate poem be seen as an institutionalised genre.

Provoking a debate among the audience would naturally be a good way to create involvement with the text. In some cases, the debate still goes on. *The Owl and the Nightingale* ends without a resolution:

(11) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1789–1794

Mid þisse worde forþ hi ferden,	With these words, off they went –
al bute here & bute uerde,	Completely without any host or army –
to Portesham þat heo bicome.	To Portesham; there they arrived,
Ah hu heo spedde of heore dome,	But I can't tell you any more about
ne can ich eu namore telle:	How they fared when the came to judgement.
her nis namore of þis spelle.	There isn't any more of this poem.

After decades of modern scholarly work on the text, scholars still disagree on the winner. If the aim of the anonymous author was to provoke a discussion which would keep audiences entertained after the reading of the work itself was over, then it seems that he has been even more successful than he can have expected.

2.4 Summary

There is a long tradition of academic disputation which reached its culmination in the Middle Ages, with disputation taking a central part in the education process. The exact rules and procedures of such disputation are not, however, always clearly explained in the surviving historical records. While debate poetry builds on this academic tradition, it is clearly not the same thing: it adopts certain features for the purposes of entertainment. The existence of many similar, but unrelated, literary genres all over Europe (and beyond) suggests that there is something universally, or at least widely, attractive or interesting about such stylised verbal duels.

In the following chapter, I shall describe the selection of texts forming the material for the present study, along with some texts which were not included in the dataset and the reasons for their exclusion.

3 Materials

The selection methodology outlined above (Section 1.4) yields a representative corpus of relatively homogeneous texts. However, I do not wish to argue that it is a complete corpus of all early English debate poems. Rather, using Wittgenstein's analogy of family resemblances, where members may share a varying selection of typical features, but none are common to all (1953: 31–34), I would suggest that this is the nuclear family, containing the most central and prototypical (see Lakoff 1987) texts belonging to the genre. There is variation in the details, as in the level of aggression expressed by the characters, but they are all dialogic, conflictive, and mostly also recognised as conflictive, as indicated by contemporary textual labels.

The materials of the present study, while members of the same genre of debate poems, present a considerable variety. Most of them are anonymous, but some are written by prominent authors. The medieval debate poems often seem to have survived in the context of verse miscellanies such as the BL MS Cotton Caligula A. ix or Bodleian Library MS Digby 86 – relatively well-known collections of texts. The early modern texts studied here, on the other hand, are mainly printed works from the *Early English Books Online* (EEBO). This is mostly because of accessibility: post-medieval manuscripts have not been extensively catalogued until recently, while virtually all printed works from my period can be accessed through EEBO. The selection of texts was based on an EEBO search of three title keywords: *debate, dispute* and *dialogue.* All three searches included variant spellings and forms. This yielded 1761 records with the title keyword *dialogue,* 369 records with *debate* and 323 records with *dispute* (the number of hits being slightly larger, as a keyword may be found more than once in a single record). The results were then examined manually to localise items that were in verse and contained a conflict sequence. Most of the hits were weeded out during this process, since these searches yield a great number of items such as descriptions of parliamentary debates, theological discussions and so on, and conflicts between nonfictional characters form a separate genre (see 1.4 above).

One guiding principle of the material selection was to include roughly comparable numbers of both medieval and early modern texts. While the early modern texts are definitely less studied, the medieval corpus is still the defining part of the debate canon, and has not been the object of much linguistic analysis. Including a sizable number of texts from both periods also allows for diachronic comparisons, which may be desirable for further use of the corpus, even if this element is not a focus of the present study. As for the medieval part of the dataset, earlier studies and bibliographical reference works gave a list of potential sources, which were then examined for conflict sequences. Utley (1972) and Burt (2014) were particularly useful for this purpose, since both contain a list

of potential texts. Both the medieval and early modern parts of the dataset should therefore be relatively comprehensive, although there is always the possibility that some individual text has been missed. I chose to include the complete texts, although long paratexts external to the debate were excluded (examples include the prayers printed with *The Soul and the Body* or the list of collective nouns appended to *Horse, Goose and Sheep*). It would perhaps have been preferable to extract the conflict sequence only, excluding the narrator. However, this was problematic in practice, since especially *Pride and Lowliness* tends to flow seamlessly from indirect to direct speech reporting, and it would have been artificial to separate the two.

The texts will be presented in a rough temporal order, although in many cases the dating is somewhat conjectural. The dates given are those of the actual manuscripts or printed books, not surmised dates of composition (unless otherwise stated). In some cases, as with *Death and Life,* the text surviving to us has a long and complicated history, where all parts of the text may have been modified in the process of copying, either because the copyist was working from an earlier version with words that were archaic and incomprehensible to him, or because he felt that he had the chance to improve on his original. As Stanley memorably put it, "in scribes[,] thinking may be as dangerous as not thinking" (1960: 6). However, this is a "bad data problem" that cannot be resolved – one can only hope to make the best use of the data one has (Labov 1994: 11). On the other hand, my study focuses on the textual and pragmatic levels, which are perhaps less likely to have been altered by the copying process. In any case, as scribal changes normally aim to make the text more understandable, any changes would tend towards reflecting a generally accepted concept of conflict talk. I would also argue that for such a study, it does not necessarily matter if the text is not the "best text": for literary criticism, a good text may be crucial, but for a linguistic analysis, almost any text that would have been read by contemporary audiences can be useful. After all, the majority of the readership may never have had access to the best-quality copies even then.

3.1 The dataset

The data given for each text includes the following information. First of all, I have chosen to list the texts with a short title in Present-day English, for ease of reference. The full titles are given in the table in Appendix 1. Below the title, I give the DIMEV number which identifies the entry for the text in question in *The Digital Index of Middle English Verse* (Mooney et al. 2010). For the works accessed through EEBO, I give an STC number or other catalogue reference. I shall also give brief plot summaries, information on the material context(s) of the texts, and, if the authors are known, some biographical information about them.

3.1.1 The Owl and the Nightingale

DIMEV 2307

In *The Owl and the Nightingale,* the two birds are debating which of them is more useful to people and, in short, which is the better bird. This debate is overheard and reported by a narrator, although it lacks the dream vision frame so common in debate poetry. The birds seem to harbour a deep personal antipathy against each other, as the only provocation leading to the conflict is the Owl's reportedly horrible singing. Many earlier scholars attempted to discover an all-encompassing allegorical meaning behind the poem. For example, Cawley (1951) argued that the poem is about the acceptability of astrological prognostications for Christians; Colgrave (1966), on the other hand, suggests that the overarching theme is the competition between Gregorian chant and the new troubadour-style music; Owst (1966) sees the debate as a rivalry between preaching styles – one that focuses on love and bliss, and another of the fire-and-brimstone variety. On the whole, allegorical interpretations are not very convincing: *The Owl and the Nightingale* is not unequivocally about any of these themes, nor does it focus solely on love or the status of women, unlike many later bird debates. Indeed, it would seem that the debate form is more important than the contents of the discussion.

The poem is extant in two manuscripts: London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A. ix and Jesus College, Oxford, MS 29 (II). Most editions are based on the Cotton (C) text, since it is the earlier and more conservative manuscript. The text used for the present study is from *The Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse,* based on Atkins (1922), although Cartlidge's edition (2001) has also been frequently consulted. The author of the poem is unknown, although many have argued that the Master Nicholas of Guildford mentioned in the poem might actually have been its author, seeing that his judgement and wisdom are highly praised in the poem. Personally I do not find this convincing; a more likely interpretation is that he may have been a patron, hiring the author to sing his praises. Recently Fletcher (2012), accepting Cartlidge's late dating for the text (see the next paragraph), has made a convincing case for supposing that the author may have been a Dominican monk at the priory of Guildford.

The dating of the poem has also been recently re-evaluated. Both the extant manuscripts date from the second half of the thirteenth century, but the date of composition was long thought to have fallen between 1189 and 1216 on internal evidence: the poem mentions a deceased "king Henri". It was argued that after the accession of Henry III in 1216, some "distinguishing mark" would have been necessary to differentiate between Henry III and his predecessor of the same name (e.g. Stanley 1960: 19). On the other hand, before the death of Henry II in 1189, the poet could hardly have mentioned a dead king of that name. However, Cartlidge, in his edition of the text, argues (2001: X) that the

poem may instead have been composed after the death of Henry III in 1272. His reasoning is that the transmission period between the extant manuscripts and the time of composition appears to have been short, and contemporary audiences would probably have been able to identify the correct Henry from the textual context, so there is really no reason to suppose a much earlier date of composition. The simplest and most elegant solution, therefore, is to assume a date of composition very close to the date of the surviving manuscripts.

Cartlidge is similarly dismissive of the traditionally assigned dialectal provenance of the poem, which was hypothesised to be in Kent or nearby regions. The evidence for this is mainly based on impure rhymes that work better translated into Kentish; the argument is summarised in Stanley (1960: 17–18). Cartlidge considers this to be insufficient, arguing that the place of composition could have been "almost anywhere in Wessex, the Home Counties or the south-west Midlands" (2001: xv–xvi).

3.1.2 The Thrush and the Nightingale

DIMEV 5052

The Thrush and the Nightingale is another anonymous early bird debate. The Nightingale speaks in favour of women, while the Thrush accuses them of deceit, citing the evidence of a number of historical and literary characters who were betrayed by women. The Nightingale is challenged to name five good women, but she responds by citing a single one – the Virgin Mary, which proves sufficient to win the debate. The topics covered by *The Thrush and the Nightingale* are rather more narrow than those in *The Owl and the Nightingale*: it concentrates on the value and virtue of women. The poem follows the conventional model of the French and Latin debate genre (see 2.3.1 above) much more closely than *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Conlee 1991: 237, Dickins & Wilson 1951: 71).

The text used for this study is from the Wessex Parallel WebTexts online edition, which is based on Bodleian MS Digby 86, ff. 136r (col. ii) – 138v (col. ii). The manuscript is a commonplace book written by two scribes (Tschann & Parkes 1996: xxxvi–xli). In addition to *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, the Digby manuscript contains 17 texts in Middle English, including a Body and Soul debate titled *Carmen inter corpus et animam* (see section 3.1.3 below). There is also a debate poem in French between "ii dames", so the compiler seems to have had at least some interest in the genre. A part of *The Thrush and the Nightingale* (75 verses only) is also available in NLS Advocates 19.2.1, f. 279va.

The date of composition is likely to be somewhere in the second half of the thirteenth century; it cannot have been much later, since the Digby manuscript is dateable to between 1272 and 1282 on internal evidence, a list of the kings of England (Tschann & Parkes 1996: xxxvi–xli). The heading is in French and refers to the text as a *cuntent;* this textual label means a disagreement or argument (AND, s.v. content). The language has been localised based on marginalia referring to places and family names in northern Gloucestershire and southern Worcestershire (Laing 2013–).

3.1.3 In a Thester Study I stood (Carmen inter corpus et animam)

DIMEV 2462

The Digital Index of Middle English verse lists this text as *In a thester study I stood a little strife to hear.* The title is often cited in its original form as *In a þestri stude I stode* (from the first line of the poem). This is a debate between the Soul and the dead Body. The Soul accuses the Body, reminding it of all its riches and the joys of earthly life, now lost forever. The Body admits its earlier misbehaviour, but soon loses patience and orders the Soul to go away, refusing to carry on the debate.

This text, too, comes from the abovementioned Digby MS (Bodleian Library MS Digby 86, f. 195v–200r), which refers to it as *Carmen inter corpus et animam.* I have transcribed it from the facsimile edition of Tschann and Parkes (1996). There are two other manuscripts that also include the same text: Trinity College Cambridge MS 323 f. 29v and BL MS Harley 2253 f. 57v. The text varies a great deal according to the manuscript; in Digby "the poem is merged crudely with two additional poems, *Doomsday* and the *Latemeste Dai,* poems which usually occur as separate pieces" (Conlee 1991: 11). The three poems all share the same four-line rhyming scheme, so the scribe simply begins with the Body and Soul debate, and then just goes right on with *Doomsday* (DIMEV 6339) and then again to the *Latemeste Dai* (DIMEV 5640). The only transition markings are initials at the beginning of each poem. Indeed, even the first poem has two parts with a rather different feel: the first 56 lines contain a dialogic exchange, but then the soul launches into a monologic account of the signs of Doomsday, the beginning of which is again marked with an initial. The part analysed in the present study is lines 1–106.

3.1.4 As I Lay in a Winter's Night

DIMEV 605

Known in some sources as 'þe disputisoun betwen þe bodi and þe soule', this poem is another example of the tradition of Body and Soul debates. Unlike in the earlier version (see Section 3.1.3 above), where the Body accepts his guilt and focuses mainly on trying

to drive the Soul away, here the Body goes on attack: he claims that as the Soul was given "wyt and skil" by God to rule over the physical world, the Soul is the one to blame for their miserable fate.

The text examined here is from Garner's online edition (2006), which provides images and transcriptions of three different manuscripts of the poem. The one used for the present study is MS Laud Misc. 108, ff. 200r–203r, which is the earliest surviving text. The same poem can also be found in six other manuscripts: NLS Adv MS 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck manuscript), the Vernon MS (Oxford, Bodl. MS Eng. Poet. A.1) f. 286rc, Digby 102 f. 136r, BL MS Royal 18.A.x, f. 61v, BL Addit. MS 22283 f. 80va and BL Addit. MS 37787 f. 34r.

The manuscript was apparently added to for a long time, since it contains scribal hands that can be dated to different periods. There are two main scribes; *As I Lay in a Winter's Night* is the work of Scribe B, who writes in a late thirteenth-century Textura hand (Edwards 2010: 26).

3.1.5 Mary and the Cross

DIMEV 4319

In this debate, Mary accuses the Cross of having done wrong in allowing her innocent son to be crucified. The Cross answers that he had no choice in the matter, since everything he did was according to the divine plan. Mary gives up in the end and makes peace with the Cross. Similar debates also survive in French, Latin, Italian, Old Provençal and Middle Dutch (Fein 1998).

The earliest manuscripts containing this text, the Vernon MS (Oxford, Bodl. MS Eng. Poet. A.1) and the Simeon MS (London, British Library Addit. MS 22283), have both been dated to ca. 1390. There is one later manuscript as well, London BL Royal MS 18 A.x, dated to ca. 1450. The text used here is from TEAMS Middle English texts (Fein 1998). Fein bases her edition on the Vernon manuscript, with emendations from the two other manuscripts. See also Sections 3.1.6 and 3.1.7 below.

3.1.6 Jesus and the Masters of Law

DIMEV 3120

While I have excluded real-life debates between genuine people, the Jesus in this poem is clearly a literary character rather than a historical figure. It is an imaginative elaboration of the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, found in Luke 2:41–

51. The basic issue is whether or not Jesus is justified to teach at the temple, considering his young age.

The text used here is from Conlee's edition (1991), based on Oxford, Bodl. MS Eng. Poet. A.1, fol. 301r–301v (the Vernon Manuscript, see 3.1.5 above). It has been dated to c. 1390–1400. The same manuscript also contains the *Dialogue between the Good Man and the Devil* (see Section 3.1.5 above and Section 3.1.7 below). Other versions are found in BL MS Addit. 22283 and BL MS Harl. 3954. In the Harley MS, parts of the text are "embedded in a longer work on the infancy of Christ" (Conlee 1991: 168).

3.1.7 The Good Man and the Devil

DIMEV 5092

In this text, the debate is between a good man, who has just heard a sermon on the seven deadly sins, and the devil, who is questioning him on the sermon just heard and arguing that each of the sins is only human and normal. In the end, the devil runs out of arguments, and the man recognises him for what he is, commanding him in heaven's name to leave.

The text used for this study comes from the CMEPV, which in turn is based on *The minor poems of the Vernon ms. ... (with a few from the Digby mss. 2 and 86*), edited by Horstmann and Furnivall and published by the Early English Text Society. The text comes from the Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodl. MS Eng. Poet. A.1), see also Sections 3.1.5 and 3.1.6 above.

3.1.8 Mercy and Righteousness

DIMEV 923

The question debated in this text is whether or not sinners will be forgiven. The narrator is walking in a forest, and overhears a discussion between two men: a sinner worried about his fate, who feels he cannot ever be forgiven, and Mercy, who gives instructions on proper procedures for penance, arguing that mercy is greater than righteousness. Theologically, of course, it is clear that Mercy must get the upper hand in this dispute, and indeed the sinner agrees to confession and penance in the end.

The text is from Conlee's edition (1991), which is based on Lambeth Palace MS 853, pp. 66–73. The manuscript has been dated to ca. 1430. The compilers of the DIMEV note that this manuscript formats the text as prose. This particular manuscript does not label the text as a debate, as the text apparently lacks a title in most of the manuscripts. The only title cited by the DIMEV is *A Song how þat Mercy passeth Rightwisnes*, which does imply a contest situation, albeit rather vaguely.

3.1.9 The Cuckoo and the Nightingale

DIMEV 5299

The Cuckoo and the Nightingale, also known as *The Boke of Cupide,* is a short pseudo-Chaucerian poem attributed by one manuscript witness to Clanvowe. This probably refers to Sir John Clanvowe (d. 1391), a member of Chaucer's circle at Richard II's court; this would mean that the probable date of composition would be in the late 1380s. Some scholars argue that a certain Thomas Clanvowe is more likely to be the author (Conlee 1991: 249). It is a dream debate concerned with the theme of romantic love on St. Valentine's Day: the author wanders into the woods and is annoyed that the first bird he hears singing is the "lewd" cuckoo, rather than the nightingale, whom lovers think lucky. The nightingale is as distressed by the song of the cuckoo as the narrator, for he speaks against love. The birds go on to debate, and in the end the narrator drives the cuckoo away by throwing stones.

The text is extant in five manuscripts: Bodl. Library MS Tanner 346 ff. 97r–101v, Bodl. Library MS Fairfax 16, Bodl. Library MS Arch Selden B 24, Bodl. Library MS Bodley 638 and Cambridge Univ. Library MS Ff. 1.6. The text used for the present study is from Conlee (1991), who bases his text on the Tanner manuscript, a literary anthology. The Bodleian library catalogue dates the manuscript to the middle of the fifteenth century.

3.1.10 Winner and Waster

DIMEV 4918

The topic under dispute in this text is whether it is better to live thriftily, hoarding one's wealth (as Winner does), or to spend lavishly, thereby causing a trickle-down effect which will help spread the wealth around (the strategy preferred by Waster). In its concern with the acquisition of wealth, the poem is similar to *The Carpenter's Tools* (see 3.1.13), but whereas the latter is decidedly domestic in tone and concerned mainly with individual wealth, *Winner and Waster* has been argued to present a new theory of national economy (Roney 1994). Both of the main characters, Roney further argues, are therefore "bad examples", personifying behaviours which the audience should not emulate: Waster consumes but does not produce anything, while Winner produces a good many things but keeps them to himself. Neither of them, therefore, performs their part in sustaining the national economy, which profits from a combination of consumption and saving.

This alliterative debate poem is extant in a single manuscript: BL Additional MS 31042, mostly on paper (Stern 1976: 27). The manuscript is a miscellany copied by Robert Thornton in the mid-fifteenth century (Trigg 1990: xiii). Other texts found in this

compilation include *Cursor Mundi* and *The Siege of Jerusalem*; others represent genres such as religious history, verse romance and alliterative poetry. It is immediately preceded by *The Parlement of the Thre Ages,* and indeed the two poems were edited together by Ginsberg (1992). The dialect of *Winner and Waster* is closest to North Midlands, although it is possible to find both distinctive West Midlands and distinctively non-Western forms in the text (Trigg 1990: xx). While the manuscript can be dated with reasonable confidence, dating the composition of the text itself is more uncertain: Ginsberg argues that it was probably composed between 1352 and 1370.

The text is incomplete, since it is located at the end of the manuscript where pages are missing, and hence we only have part of the resolution. We do, however, have the beginning of the final statement made by the king who is acting as referee, and it appears that he is aiming at a compromise: both the adversaries are equally necessary to him. The resolution as we have it, then, would seem to support Roney's interpretation of the poem. The text used here is from TEAMS texts, edited by Ginsberg (1992).

3.1.11 The Clerk and the Husbandman

DIMEV 597

In this text, a clerk is languishing with love and a husbandman is trying to convince him to "let hyr goe", since that will save him from many a trouble. Percival (1998: 72) has pointed out that the clerk's arguments in favour of women are all based on book-learning, while the husbandman cites daily experience in support of his own viewpoint that women cannot be relied on.

This short dialogue is in the mid-fifteenth-century MS London, British Library Add. 38666, f. 174r–v. The bulk of the manuscript contains a religious poem; the dialogue between the clerk and the husbandman is a slightly later addition (Scase et al. 2009). The text used here is one published by Carleton Browne in 1918.

3.1.12 Nurture and Nature

DIMEV 1630

In this debate, the question is whether nature or nurture has the stronger effect on character. In an unusual plot development, the question is soon resolved empirically. Nurture, who has trained his (or possibly her?) cat Nyce ('Silly') to wait at the table, invites Nature to come and see how well the cat does as a servant. Nature agrees to this, but disrupts Nurture's plans by producing a live mouse out of his glove. Of course the cat cannot resist such a temptation, and proves Nurture wrong by pouncing at the mouse.

In spite of this, the narrator finishes by telling us that he has never been able to decide on the final winner of this case: nature and nurture are *both* needed.

This poem is found in a single manuscript: BL MS Harley 541, a fifteenth-century miscellany in English and Latin. The text used here is from Conlee's edition (1991). It is acephalous, but Conlee surmises (1991: 217) that only a few verses are missing. The first extant verse is missing four lines (assuming a regular verse structure); the remaining four present Nurture's declaration that "nurture passis kynd".

3.1.13 The Carpenter's Tools

DIMEV 5459.5

The main question under debate in this poem is whether or not the carpenter will ever prosper – the tools all agree that he spends rather too much on drink, but some of them feel they will be able to make him wealthy by their hard work, boasting of their prowess. Others disagree, arguing that the master will drink away any profits they might make. The debate concludes after the carpenter's wife joins the discussion, taking the side of the more pessimistic tools. The text has been of interest as a source for medieval carpentry terms (Shuffelton 2008).

Wilson suggests (1987: 448) that the work may have been intended for live performance, perhaps in a feast of the carpenters' guild; a humorous debate on such a topic would no doubt have entertained an audience of carpenters, and the poem ends with an address to 'wryghtys'. The long and narrow 'holster' format of the book may also support this conjecture, as the book could have been carried around easily (Wilson 1987: 445).

This text of 288 lines survives in a single paper manuscript, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61. The text has no title in the manuscript, and the title in general use was given by Halliwell (Matlock 2014: 110). The watermark evidence suggests that the manuscript was copied sometime after 1479 – after 1488 for the last quire (Shuffelton 2008). The manuscript is a verse miscellany of 41 texts, three of which are in Latin and the rest in English (Wilson 1987: 445). It was written by someone named Rate (he names himself 18 times, one of which occurs immediately after *The Debate of the Carpenter's Tools*), with dialect features pointing to north-east Leicestershire (Wilson 1987: 445). The text used for the present study is from Shuffelton (2008).

3.1.14 The Clerk and the Nightingale I & II

DIMEV 2451 and 500

The Clerk and the Nightingale I is a dream vision. The narrator, sleeping on a May morning, hears the nightingale ask him why he is so mournful. He explains that it is because of a fair lady, and the nightingale calls him a fool. The debate goes on with the clerk praising his loved one, and the nightingale listing all the faults of womankind. *The Clerk and the Nightingale II* proceeds along similar lines until the nightingale's claim that "woman schul neuer be trewe" drives the clerk to threaten her with violence. The nightingale then promises to start praising women instead, although she simultaneously makes some sarcastic comments suggesting that her recapitulation is not genuine.

Both of these texts are in the same verse form of abab quatrains and depict a dispute between a clerk suffering from unrequited love, and a nightingale arguing that women are no good in any case. The text used for this study is from Conlee (1991). Some scholars see these as parts of the same text (e.g. Hilgers (1973: 3); others argue that the two are unrelated (e.g. Williams 1997: 93). The texts do not have any shared lines, so the argument for regarding them as a single text relies on the shared verse form and characters.

Both manuscripts date from the latter half of the fifteenth century, and both texts are incomplete, one missing the beginning and the other the end. *The Clerk and the Nightingale I* comes to an end in mid-verse after 106 lines. It is found in Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poetry 34, ff. 5r–5v, an English paper manuscript. *The Clerk and the Nightingale II* is found in Cambridge University MS Ff.5.48, fols. 57r–57v. The manuscript has been located to the West Midlands. The manuscript also contains, among other things, *Robin Hood and the Monk* (the earliest known Robin Hood poem, DIMEV 2586), *The ABC of Aristotle* (an alphabetic poem containing aphorisms, DIMEV 6054), and Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* (DIMEV 1581). The text is acephalous, beginning in the middle of a verse.

3.1.15 The Merle and the Nightingale

DIMEV 2536

In this early modern debate poem, the merle (blackbird) defends earthly love – a role traditionally associated with the nightingale, while the nightingale in this poem speaks in favour of divine love. The debate is resolved at the end. It draws heavily on the earlier English debate tradition, and on Chaucer and Lydgate. The poem's author, William Dunbar (c. 1460–1520), is believed to have studied at the University of St Andrews; in 1500 he became a member of the household of James IV, possibly serving as a secretary

(Bawcutt 1998: 1–2). He became a priest sometime around 1504, and occasionally served in the law courts as an advocate (Bawcutt 1998: 3).

Authorship is based on the attributions found in both extant manuscripts, National Library of Scotland MS 1.1.6 (Bannatyne) and Cambridge, Magdalene Coll. Camb 2553 (Maitland Folio). A further lost copy is known to have existed: the Asloan manuscript (NLS MS 16500) contains a list of contents that mentions the text twice, but the poem itself is lost (Bawcutt 1998: 18). The text used for this study is from John Conlee's edition of 2004, published in the TEAMS Texts series.

3.1.16 The Body and the Worms

DIMEV 2625

The Disputation between the Body and the Worms is a variation on the typical medieval Body and Soul debate. The body, in this case a recently deceased woman, laments the loss of her beauty and begs the worms to leave her alone. The worms, however, refuse decisively, noting that they have devoured all the great heroes and legendary beauties of the past, including the fair Helen of Troy and queen Dido of Carthage. In the end, the body concedes that there is nothing she can do, even apologising to the worms.

The text survives in a single, heavily illustrated paper manuscript, BL MS Additional 37049, fols. 33r–35r. This manuscript is a miscellany containing poetry and chronicles, and a summary of *Mandeville's Travels*. There are several different hands, but the majority of the manuscript is apparently the work of a single scribe, who may also have drawn the pictures (Brantley 2007: 10). The compilation dates to 1460–1500 and is written in a Northern dialect, possibly in Yorkshire or Lincolnshire. The manuscript has Carthusian connections: the texts mention them with approval, and the illustrations show many Carthusians in their distinctive habits (Brantley 2007: 11). All the pages of this poem are illustrated, mostly with skeletons and charming fat worms which somewhat resemble a baguette. As the manuscript has been digitised, the text is here transcribed directly from the manuscript (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_37049_f033r).

3.1.17 Horse, Goose and Sheep

DIMEV 1075, STC (2nd ed). / 17018

Much like the earlier bird debates, this text purports to compare the value of the three different animals to man. In practice, the themes discussed seem to centre around war and peace: the horse, while also useful as a draught animal, boasts mainly of his prowess on the martial field. The goose, on the other hand, stresses that he is the source of feathers

for arrows and can warn of the approaching enemy. The sheep is so meek that she cannot even speak for herself, being represented by the ram instead, who concentrates on the wool trade and its importance to England. The debate is judged by the royal animals, the eagle and the lion, who announce that all three contestants are necessary for the realm. Lydgate was a monk at the Benedictine monastery of Bury St Edmunds, and a highly respected author in his own time, although modern scholars are less impressed with his work: Gillespie notes that he is "usually considered the first and the most dull of the dull Chaucerians" (2006: 19). The text originally dates from approximately 1436 (Withers 2011: 105), and is available in a dozen manuscript copies as well as several early printed editions (Bühler 1940: 563). The text used for this study is Caxton's edition from 1477 (STC (2nd ed.) / 17018).

3.1.18 The Heart and the Eye

DIMEV 2603, STC (2nd ed.) / 6915

This is a debate where the Heart accuses the Eye of having looked upon a beautiful lady for long enough for the Heart to fall in love, but not long enough for him to ascertain if the lady is interested. The debate is actually repeated three times: first, the Heart and Eye go through the argument on their own, the Eye insisting that they go to a marshal who will serve as a judge. The gist of the argument is repeated, and as the Eye again denies any wrongdoing, there is a duel. This fierce battle is interrupted by Dame Pity, a messenger from Venus, and the argument is repeated a third time to this highest court of all. Venus indirectly suggests a resolution in the form of a compromise, but does not explicitly pronounce such a resolution: the narrator ends with a request to all true lovers to "sende his opynyon as sone as he may / Unto Uenus".

This text was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1516 (the date is conjectured by EEBO). The text is also available in manuscript form, with Longleat MS 258 as the single witness. There are also different, shorter Heart and Eye debates in existence (DIMEV 5849, DIMEV 5863); however, those are not included in the present study, since both consist of only a handful of couplets. Julia Boffey has noted that judging by the marginal marks, the Longleat MS appears to have been used as a source by an unknown printer for a lost edition – the marks do not correspond with de Worde's edition, although the text is "almost identical" (2014: 16–17). The work is based on the Latin *Disputatio inter Cor et Oculum,* of which many manuscripts exist; there is also a French version.

3.1.19 Man and Woman

STC (2nd ed.) / 14109

The poem itself is a fairly standard discussion of the virtues of women, with the man claiming that all women are deceitful, and the woman resorting to the standard argument that Virgin Mary was surely flawless enough to exonerate all women from blame.

The title page heading introduces the text with an incipit: *He* [sic] *begynneth an interlocucyon, with an argument, betwyxt man and woman.* It was printed by Wynkyn the Worde, as can be seen from the colophon. EEBO gives the date of publication as 1525 and the place as London, and further adds that the text is translated from Guillaume Alexis's "Le debat de l'ome et de la feme".

3.1.20 A Lover and a Jay

STC (2nd ed.) / 10838.7

This dialogue by a Thomas Feylde is a dream vision describing a dispute between a lover (Amator) and a cynical jay (Graculus). Amator is lamenting the loss of his fickle lover, and Graculus advises him that women can never be trusted, suggesting that he should just accept the fact and stop worrying. The poem refers heavily to Ovidian examples of unhappy love affairs (Reid 2014: 49), as well as English poets like Chaucer (spelt 'Cancer', which in this context can probably be emended to read 'Caucer'), Gower, Lydgate, and Stephen Hawes.

The text was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1527 and again in 1532. For this study, I transcribed the text of the first edition myself, as the full-text version was not at that time available from EEBO. I later checked my transcription against the EEBO full text (and vice versa, cross-referring to the images).

3.1.21 Summer and Winter

STC (2nd ed.) / 6445

This text is named on the title page as *The debate and stryfe between Somer and wynter with the estate present of Man*. The virtues of the seasons were a very traditional debate topic; indeed, one of the very first medieval Latin debate poems we know of is *Conflictus veris et hiemis* from the late eighth century, attributed to Alcuin (Lambdin & Lambdin 2002: 119). The interaction begins with Summer's boast that everyone loves him; Winter challenges this, and both parties go on to list all the good things associated with them. In the end, they agree to finish their debate, noting that God created them both.

The author of this current 'Summer and Winter' debate is not known; according to the EEBO notes it was translated from French. It was printed by a Laurens Andrew, perhaps in 1528, "for to sell at the signe of seynt Iohn Euangelyst, in saynt Martyns parysshe besyde Charynge crosse". On the title page there is the heading and a picture of two men, one old and bearded and labelled 'Wynter', the other one younger and labelled 'Summer'.

3.1.22 The Spectacle of Lovers

STC (2nd ed.) / 25008

This is another debate concerned with good and bad women. This text is unusual in that the narrator himself is one of the parties; usually the narrator is only an eavesdropper, and in the rare cases where he takes part in the debate itself, it is in the role of an adjudicator of some kind. This poem begins in a way reminiscent of dream visions, with the narrator taking a walk in a beautiful setting with trees and flowers. However, he never falls asleep, but instead simply overhears a lover lamenting his unhappiness "that my mynde to her [I] dare not expresse". The narrator, from here on labelled 'Consultor' then attempts to comfort him, including the typical classical references to women's fickleness. The lover ('Amator') refuses to give in, telling the narrator it is a shame that he speaks so disapprovingly of women. The narrator finishes with an apology to women, saying the text was intended as a "demonstracyon" of the incorrectness of common misogynistic ideas.

The text was written by William Walter, "seruaunt vnto syr Henry Marnaye knyght Chauncelour of the Duchye of Lancastre", and printed by Wynkyn de Worde. The text is dated by the STC to 1533. The same William Walter also produced two Boccaccio translations, which were printed by de Worde: *Tytus & Gesyppus*, probably printed in 1525, and *Guystarde and Sygysmonde*, printed in 1532. The poem makes heavy use of Ovidian exempla in its argumentation (Reid 2014: 49); Walter's treatment also has echoes from Stephen Hawes (Edwards 1986).

3.1.23 A Dialogue Defensive

STC (2nd ed.) / 24601

This text is a late example of the bird debate: a dialogue between the Falcon and the Magpie, the former defending women against "malicious detractoures", the latter attacking them but losing in the end. Having admitted to malicious motives for attacking women, the Magpie has to flee from the Falcon's threatened punishment.

This 40-page work is extant in a single edition, printed by Robert Wyer in 1542. Two names are associated with the text: a Robert Vaughan claims to have published it on behalf of a friend "[l]est slaunder perchaunce, his sharpe sowne out shake /To moue me malyce". The name of Robert Burdet then appears twice in acrostics in the paratext titled "Robert Vaghane to the reader". The author has been tentatively identified by Thorpe (1982) as Robert Burdett (1510–1549), of Bramcote, Warwickshire, who served as steward in the household of Henry Grey, the third Marquess of Dorset, and was a member of parliament on three occasions in the 1540s. Little is known about his education, but Thorpe suggests that he may have gone to Oxford and then to Gray's Inn; he certainly served as justice of peace in Warwickshire from 1542 on.

3.1.24 Age and Youth

DIMEV 6298

Here, an old man and a young man, representing their respective ages, meet on a beautiful spring morning. The young man praises the joys of youth, and Age responds that all those joys will soon fade. They do not resolve their differences, but the narrator seems to suggest that both are right: one should enjoy one's youth precisely for the reason that it will not last.

The text survives in four manuscripts: Edinburgh University Library MS Laing 205 (Makculloch MS), Cambridge, Magdalene Coll. MS Pepys 2553 (Maitland Folio MS), NLS MS Advocates 1.1.6 (the Bannatyne MS and the Bannatyne Draft MS). The text used here is from the TEAMS online edition (Parkinson 2010). The poem is attributed to Robert Henryson in the Bannatyne MS (Wood 1958: xxviii): one of the Scottish *makaris* ('makers' or poets) of the late fifteenth century. Little is known of his birth and education, but he must have died before 1508, when a printed work laments his passing (Wood 1958: xi). A Robert Henryson, usually taken to be our poet, was employed at the newly-founded University of Glasgow, which implies degrees in arts and canon law, although there is no record of his having attained such degrees in England or Scotland (Macqueen 2006: 9). From around 1468, he was schoolmaster of the grammar school at the Benedictine abbey in Dunfermline.

3.1.25 Pride and Lowliness

STC (2nd ed.) / 24061

In this dream debate, the two abstractions battling are both represented by a pair of breeches: a fancy velvet pair standing for pride, and a pair of plain cloth breeches standing for humility. The debate soon expands from this initial opposition to include the selection of suitable jury members: a large part of the text is devoted to finding a

panel of judges who could decide on the issue, and the merits of each candidate are debated by the breeches. In the end, however, the jury never give a pronouncement; instead three strangers appear and tear the plain cloth breeches to tatters. The choosing of the jury from passers-by of all classes allows for a discussion of many human vices and virtues: Ransom (2014) argues that the description of the potential jury members is indebted to the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales*, and that other Chaucerian echoes can also be found. He bases his argument partly on the fact that the later prose version of the text explicitly mentions Chaucer (2014: 325). On the title page, this text is named as *The debate betweene Pride and Lowlines, pleaded to an issue in assise,* and the author is cited by his initials "F. T.". EEBO notes that the text has been "erroneously attributed to Francis Thynne". This volume was printed in London "[b]y Iohn Charlwood, for Rafe Newbery, dwelling in Fleetestrete a litle aboue the Condite". The STC conjectures a publication date of 1577. According to Ransom (2014: 323), the print run seems to have been small, so the book is unlikely to have circulated widely.

In its turn, this debate was reworked into a prose redaction by Robert Greene (*Quip for an Upstart Courtier,* 1592, STC (2nd ed.) / 12300). Greene changes the ending: in his prose version, the jury gives the victory to the cloth-breeches, on the grounds that the garment is of English making and "as honest as he is auntient". This nationalist aspect is much less pronounced in the original poem, where the Italian origin of the velvet-breeches is mentioned but not really stressed very much: it is their ostentatiousness that is the problem, not so much their Italian origins. The Puritan emphasis on plainness probably contributed to making the excesses of fashion a hot topic – at least in 1583, the Puritan pamphleteer Philip Stubbes disapprovingly noted the excessive cost of current fashions in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (Kidnie 1996: 145). However, he also argued that blaming these fashions on foreigners was "but a visour or cloak, to couer their own shame withall" (Kidnie 1996: 118). A type of breeches known as Venetians were very fashionable at this time (Nunn 1984: 35), which may explain the association between ostentatiousness and Italian origin.

3.1.26 The Soul and the Body

STC (2nd ed.) / 1909.3

One of the early modern Body and Soul debates studied here is *The Complaint or Dialogue, Betvvixt The Soule and the Bodie of a damned man*. In this dream vision, the narrator observes a soul lately departed from the body, asking it where all its palaces have gone, and accusing it of "false iudgings" and other misdeeds. The body answers, admitting that it has often led the soul astray, but also pointing out that the soul was created to govern over the body, and if it failed to do so, it only has itself to blame. At

the end of the dispute, a group of fiends come to drag the soul to hell, the soul cries to Jesus for help, and the devils mockingly answer that it is now too late.

The text is found in a book printed in London in 1622, containing the poem in both English and Latin. It is printed together with the *Manuale Catholicorum.* While there is a note on the title page attributing the text to "an ancient Manuscript Copie" supposedly written by St. Bernard, the text belongs to the *Noctis sub silentio* tradition, sometimes attributed to Robert Grosseteste (Dottin & Hazard 2010). This seems to have been a very popular work: according to Walther, the Latin text can be found in over 130 different manuscripts (1920: 211–214). See also Salmi (2014).

3.1.27 Saint Bernard's Vision

STC (2nd ed.) / 1910

As in the previous text, the soul and body debate the question of who is to blame for the sorry state they are both in after death. While the general progression of the dispute is similar in both texts, there are differences of detail: for example, at the end, the soul directs the body to "goe, and rot in bed of Clay", which is a move missing from *The Complaint or Dialogue,* and the soul's exchange with the devils is missing here. Because of such differences, it is worthwhile to examine the two texts as separate items.

The early modern Saint Bernard's Vision was "[p]rinted at London for I. Wright". The authors of the STC catalogue date it to ca. 1640. Like the previous text (see 3.1.26), this is an English translation of the *Noctis sub silentio*, although this is an abridged version, printed on a single sheet. There is a note at the top of the page to the effect that it can be sung "to the tune of Fortune my foe". See also Salmi (2014).

3.1.28 Death and Life

DIMEV 983

This is an alliterative dream vision describing a conflict between the two ladies Death and Life. Like the Body and Soul debates, this poem is preoccupied with the unavoidability of death. However, while most Body and Soul debates are rather depressing and end with the suffering of both parts equally, *Death and Life* ends with a reaffirmation of life and Christian hope. The text shows some romantic and courtly influences in the description of the "Ladye Dame Liffe" and her retinue. Comparisons have been made (e.g. Turville-Petre 1977: 5, Asher 2001: 208) to both *Winner and Waster* and *The Parlement of the Three Ages,* suggesting that the author was likely familiar with both. Other inspirations may have included *Piers Plowman* and *De Planctu Naturae* (Hanford & Steadman 1918: 248).

The debate ends with the victory of Life, as Dame Life narrates how Christ overcame death and how the gates of Hell were thrown open. Asher has noted how the poet's celebration of life is not limited to eternal life in Heaven: Dame Life's retinue includes not only theological virtues such as Hope and Mercy, but also decidedly earthly ones such as Mirth, Disport and Dallyance (2001: 217). This, again, is very different from the stereotypical discussions of virtues and vices, where mirth and suchlike would definitely tend to be seen as vices and temptations. In sum, it would be fair to say that while the topic of the poem may be conventional enough, the treatment is innovative indeed.

It survives in a single late manuscript, BL Additional MS 27879 (also known as the Percy Folio MS). The alliterative metre of the poem is of the style commonly found in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries (Hanford & Steadman 1918: 255), although this anthology of 195 verse texts seems to have been compiled by a single scribe in the 1640s, judging by internal and watermark evidence (Donatelli 1993: 116). The copyist was apparently not familiar with the earlier language form he was copying: "As a result the manuscript is a chaos of modernization and sheer blunder" (Hanford & Steadman 1918: 223). Linguistic features suggest that the manuscript originated in the north-west (Donatelli 1993: 120), and there are indications that the scribe may have used printed sources (1993: 122–124). The manuscript was rescued by Thomas Percy from the maids of an acquaintance, who were using it to light a fire (Donatelli 1993: 114).

3.1.29 A Covetous Miser

Wing / J1044

The dispute in this text is between the miser mentioned in the title, and a husbandman, who discuss the price of grain. The miser is convinced that he will be ruined, as he claims that he cannot afford to sell his product at the low prices paid. The husbandman argues that no one was ever ruined as the result of a good harvest, regardless of how low the grain prices might go. The debate ends without resolution, but the narrator goes on to recount how the miser's house was then robbed, and interprets this as a divine punishment for covetousness.

This short ballad was written by the poet and playwright Thomas Jordan (c. 1614–1685) and printed in London for W. Thackeray, T. Passinger and W. Whitwood. EEBO dates this title to between 1670–1677. The introductory paragraph ends with a note that it could be sung "to the tune of, *the Fair Angel of England;* or, *the Tyrant*". The narrator reports that the dispute is "tedious", and indeed the story seems rather pedestrian, although the author probably intended the adjective in the sense of 'lengthy'. Grabes (1982: 36) characterises the poem as an example of "empty moralizing" as opposed to "topically

satirical". While the introduction claims this to have been a real discussion overheard by the author, the two characters clearly function as stereotyped natural opposites rather than genuine characters. Grain-hoarding was apparently a sin commonly denounced in the vulgar literature of the time (Waddell 2012: 57–58).

3.2 Excluded dialogues

In this section, I shall discuss some other texts which were excluded from the corpus, and the reasons for excluding them. The first criterion for selection, to be considered before any further examination of the text, is whether or not there the text is in any way labelled as conflictive. This criterion was crucial for the early modern period, where an overwhelming number of printed dialogues are available, and it was impossible to read through all of them to determine their level of conflictiveness. For the medieval period, Utley's bibliography of dialogues and debates (1972), Conlee's anthology (1991) and Burt's list of potential 'verse arguments' (2014: 255–257) were examined for poems containing conflict talk. On the whole, I will not give specific MS references for excluded works.

The second factor is whether or not the text is genuinely dialogic. For example, *A Lover's Complaint* is not dialogic, since it only includes the voice of the lover, without reference to the loved one's discourse. A similar case is *Brandy-wine, in the Hollanders ingratitude. Being a serious expostulation of an English souldier with the Dutch* [Wing (2nd ed.) / W45]: it does not include the Dutchman's answer. Finally, there are poems about the holly and the ivy, which sometimes come in pairs, but like the texts mentioned above, each poem only presents one voice, and the texts therefore contain no interaction. So I have only included texts which are designed to represent a complete dialogue, incorporating the reactions of both participants.

Having established that the text contains dialogue, the next step is to look for a conflict sequence. There are texts which have a label suggesting conflict, but which nonetheless do not contain a conflict sequence. For example, *The new married couple, or A friendly debate between the countrey farmer and his buxome wife* [Wing / 2267:08] is no debate, despite the textual label. The happy couple is still in their honeymoon, and although the farmer mentions the possibility of 'horns', he does not accuse his new wife of any impropriety, nor is she insulted by the idea, simply reassuring him that he will never be a cuckold. Other texts have been seen by scholars as belonging to the tradition of debate poetry, although they contain no textual labels suggesting conflict. One such example is *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis*, an alliterative dialogue where three lords are hunting and happen across three dead kings, their ancestors, who warn them of the wages of sin. There is no debating or conflict talk. Similarly, *The Buke of the Howlat* was considered by Burt to be a potential verse argument (2014: 255), but again it can hardly be called a

debate. Although the text mentions a debate ("Sum said to, and sum fra, /Sum nay, and sum ȝa, /Baith pro and contra / thus argewe thaj all"), the process of verbal conflict is not reported. *An Adventure on Wednesday*, again, is a dialogue, but clearly not a debate: a young man meets a beautiful lady, asks her for a kiss, and after an initial show of reluctance she finds his kisses very sweet. So the conflict sequence never has a chance to begin. Also Dunbar's *Tretis of the Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* is sometimes treated as a debate poem (e.g. Kinghorn 1959: 79), for unclear reasons – the text does contain a discussion, but as Neufeld points out, "the debate form is entirely abandoned" (1999: 422): the women are quite unanimous in despising their husbands and there is thus no conflict. Lichfield's *Remors of Conscyence* is another poem treated by Burt (2014) as a potential verse argument. It is a dialogue between God and Man. God begins the dialogue, exhorting Man to mend his ways before he dies, and Man admits that he has sinned, proceeding to give excuses: "[T]hou knowest mannes feblenesse / How frayle it is and hath ben aye". Man never opposes God's statements as such; he merely gives accounts, so this cannot be considered a true debate, although the text is definitely filled with argumentation.

In some cases, there is a minimal conflict sequence of three turns embedded within a much longer non-conflictive text. For example, *Mum and the Sothsegger* is labelled as a disputation within the text, but a huge majority of the text consists of non-dialogic musings. The initial conflict sequence takes place between lines 232–276, but is interrupted again before it can be said to properly begin, as the narrator-truthteller and Mum go their separate ways. There is another abortive conflict sequence at lines 674–766, which means that out of the totality of 1751 lines, only 136 are taken up by conflict talk. *The Churl and the Bird* also includes a minimal conflict sequence, since the Churl initially opposes the caged Bird's request to be set free, threatening to make a dinner out of him, but when the Bird bribes him, he immediately gives in and the conflict sequence is resolved when the poem has barely started. Again, in *A disputison bytwene a cristenemon and a Jew* there are the minimum three turns, after which the disputants decide to resolve their differences by means of a wager, and the conflict sequence ends at that point.

Lydgate's *The Mumming at Hertford* has also been suggested as a possible debate by Burt (2014: 256), and indeed the text itself refers to the interaction as a debate (l. 216). However, the text does not contain a full conflict sequence, since both parties (a group of aggrieved husbands and their shrewish wives) get only one speech turn, and then the King gives his pronouncement, acting as a judge. In the present study, then, I have excluded poems containing such a partial conflict sequence, choosing to focus on the most conflict-oriented texts.

There are also some dialogic texts which contain both dialogue and conflict, but it is the wrong type of conflict. *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* is an illustrative example of how all debates are conflict talk, but conflict talk is not necessarily debate. While debates have many features of conflict talk, they should also contain argumentation, of which *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* has very little: it is merely a name-calling contest. Dunbar, for example, calls Kennedy (among other things) a *skitterand scorpioun.* Indeed (see 1.4), I have chosen to exclude all debates between non-fictional characters, arguing that such texts form a different genre. This category also includes a few Early Modern religious treatises in verse form, usually between representatives of different Christian sects.

There is a special and problematic sub-genre often referred to as "love debates" by modern scholars. While love is an important theme in many debate poems, I am here referring specifically to those texts where a young man is trying to persuade his sweetheart to grant him her favours. It seems to me that this subclass of debate-like texts is fundamentally different from other debate poems. Most debate poetry is contest-oriented in the sense that the speakers are competing for victory in the eyes of an audience, instead of trying to convince each other. In love debates, however, the whole point is persuading the other participant to do as the speaker wishes. The initial speaker (the man) is indeed not attempting to engage in conflict talk, although the woman can of course treat his approach as an arguable action. However, if the man wishes to be persuasive, he cannot really engage in conflict talk in return.

Robene and Makyne is a typical example. The conflict, if such it is, is very indirect, as Makyne (a country maiden) first shows an interest in the shepherd lad Robene, who protests that he knows nothing about love. More than a debate as such, this is a case of requesting a favour and negotiating the conditions under which it might be granted. *Meeting in the Wood* is another 'love debate' where a young woman's resolve seems to be fading, as she considers the advantages of accepting a handsome, well-dressed man. However, after refusing the man's initial proposition she does not give a clear answer to his reassurances of fidelity. Once more there is no clear conflict sequence. In *The Crow and Pie,* the man first approaches the "damesell" asking her not to scorn him, and on being refused, he attempts to bribe her by offering her a purse, which she again refuses. In the end he rapes her, thus causing the roles to change: she now begs him to marry her to save her reputation, and he refuses. *Interludium de Clerico et Puella* does technically contain a minimal conflict sequence of three turns. This begins as the clerk remarks that whoever marries such a maiden is a lucky man, and the girl objects to this, arguing that she will not "lufe na clerc fayllard" (l. 8). The clerk opposes this (very mildly) by begging for mercy, which the girl refuses again. At this point the clerk pretends to give up, but in fact goes to ask someone to act as a go-between.

I suggest that these are a very marginal form of debate. First of all, none of the abovementioned texts has a contemporary textual label marking them as debates or disputes. The "love debates" do contain some conflictive moves, such as directives to leave, and as suggested above, the typical structure begins with the man making romantic advances, which are at least initially rejected by the woman, and the rejection is followed by the man's reassurances of his undying love and fidelity. However, argumentation is found in a plethora of text types besides debates. Persuading a person to give you something that is theirs to give is a very different situational frame from the abstract disputes commonly found in debate poetry, and the scope tends to be very limited compared to other debate poetry. After all, the question is simple enough and depends largely on the individual preferences of the girl. In the case of the "love debate", it is hard to imagine a judge pronouncing a resolution or declaring a winner, which is a possibility entertained in many of the most prototypical debate poems. This is not surprising, since there is really no contest to be won. For these reasons, the abovementioned four love debates were not included in the corpus.

Finally, some texts were also excluded because they were not suitable for the purposes of the present study: if the assignment of speakers for the different verses was sufficiently unclear to make an interactional analysis very difficult, the text was not included in the corpus. For instance, in *Mede and moche thank* the assignment of verses to the two speakers is debated. As it is impossible to analyse the moves of the speakers without knowing who the moves belong to, this text is excluded from the corpus.

3.3 Summary

The selection procedure outlined above yields a corpus of 30 texts and a little over 100,000 words. The corpus can possibly be extended in the future, but for present purposes it contains the most central and prototypical texts of the genre, excluding non-dialogic and non-conflictive texts.

In Chapter 4, I shall review previous research on debate poetry, historical dialogue analysis in general, and previous work on literary and/or staged conflict talk. I shall then continue to the central analytical concepts of the present study.

4 Previous studies, theoretical framework and methodology

In this chapter, I shall discuss previous research on historical dialogues, the theoretical concepts related to conflict and the features of conflict talk in more detail. I shall begin with a brief review of earlier studies of debate poetry and historical dialogic materials, then focus in more detail on concepts related to conflict talk. As seen in Chapter 2, there is a great range of different genres of conflict talk, but also the terminology used to describe them is far from unified. I shall also examine the concept of conflictive moves and introduce the analytical categories utilised in this study. I shall finish with a discussion of some methodological issues.

4.1 Previous research

Earlier work on debate poetry has largely approached the topic from a literary angle, and because of this, most scholars have focused on the few canonically important works, first and foremost *The Owl and the Nightingale*. On the whole, the minor works of the genre have not attracted much scholarly attention, although any works with a known author (such as Lydgate's *Horse, Goose and Sheep*) have received more attention (e.g. Withers 2011). *Winner and Waster,* as a member of the fairly small group of Middle English alliterative works, has interested some scholars (Roney 1994, Jacobs 1985). In this section, I shall summarise the results of these earlier efforts.

Hume (1975) is an attempt at a conclusive interpretation of the meaning behind *The Owl and the Nightingale.* Previously, scholarship had failed to establish a convincing explanation of the allegorical elements: it had been argued that the Nightingale stands for a more light-hearted, secular approach to life, while the Owl had been taken for a clerical figure. However, there was no agreement on what the real topic of the poem is: it touches on many issues, including the general status of women in society, marital violence, soothsaying, whether it is preferable to be an expert in one skill or a jack-of-all-trades, the unfairness of church authorities in bestowing benefices and so on. Hume suggested that precisely this effect was the intention of the poet, and the purpose of writing a pretense debate with such a multiplicity of themes is to satirise the human tendency of contentiousness. This is an important point, although the scope of the study is limited to a single, albeit central, text.

The issue of resolution, or rather the unexpectedly common occurrence of non-resolution in an authoritarian and orthodox age, was the question that inspired Reed to write his monograph on Middle English debate poetry (1990). He explains this as a carnevalistic tendency, functioning to release the tensions created by the society's overwhelming pressure towards orthodoxy. Of course, it may be noted that even in genuine conversational conflicts, it is quite common for a conflict to end without a clear winner.

However, Reed's basic argument is convincing and thoroughly researched, and can also be used in extending Hume's argument to debate poetry more generally: if resolution is not the most important issue, then the focus must lie on the process of conflict and argumentation itself.

Burt (2014) explores many interesting relationships between debate poetry and other genres such as preaching manuals, commentaries and mystery plays. Unfortunately, she also insists on a very simple sort of didacticism: that the characters within a poem should represent the roles of a teacher and students, and if such roles cannot easily be assigned, Burt labels it 'confusion'. But debates could and did indeed take place not only between teachers and students, but also between equals, and there is no need to force such a simplistic template on poems where such hierarchical situations simply do not exist. It is true that there are some texts where, for reasons of orthodoxy, the game is rigged and the winner is obvious from the beginning: for example, the debate between Jesus and the Masters of Law, written by a medieval Christian, could hardly end with the rabbis winning, and it is similarly clear that when a debate begins with Mary accusing the Cross of having stood still while her son was put to death, the only possible result is for the Cross to be exonerated, since he was an instrument of the greater divine plan.

Previous scholarship, then, has convincingly argued that one key function of (at least some) debate poems is satire of the human tendency for squabbling, and that open-endedness and irresolution are important features of the genre. Perhaps the two are related: without a genuine openness for alternative viewpoints, debate poems might tend more towards the didactic, vertical type, which offers less scope for the expression of contentiousness. However, the distinguishing features of the whole genre are still left rather vague, and there has been next to no linguistically oriented work on debate poetry specifically. In fact, the only such work I am aware of is Leal Abad's recent article on impoliteness and communicative immediacy in medieval Spanish debate poetry (2011). She examines elements such as questions, insults and address forms, arguing that rather than representations of orality, they function as reinforcers of the didactical purpose of the work. She also finds a diachronic development from initial bluntness to a style relying more on inference. However, these findings cannot be generalised to works in other vernacular languages without further research.

I shall next review previous research on historical dialogues more generally. Such studies are often categorised as belonging to the field of historical pragmatics, which can be further divided into diachronic pragmatics and pragmaphilology (see Jacobs & Jucker 1995: 10–25). My own approach leans more towards the pragmaphilological in the sense that I am studying a small group of texts, but I am not focusing on the diachronical development of the genre at this stage. Patterns of interaction are a central interest of

historical pragmatics, so it is hardly surprising that speech-related data is a long-standing preoccupation of historical pragmaticians. For example, address terms and their use in creating social distinctions (e.g. Taavitsainen & Jucker 2003) have been a topic of interest. The interactive uses of code-switching have also been studied (e.g. Harjunpää & Mäkilähde 2016).

Within historical linguistics, using written data is a necessity, at least when studying periods prior to the invention of technologies of recording speech. Historical dialogue analysis has made use of many types of material (see, for example, the selection in Jucker et al. 1999), but so far, studies of specifically speech-like features have mainly focused on genres that are either speech-derived, like trial proceedings, or very clearly speech-related, such as drama. For instance, trial interaction has been much studied (e.g. Archer 2006, 2008; Doty & Hiltunen 2009, Hiltunen 2010, Kryk-Kastovsky 2009, Leitner 2013, Moore 2002, Włodarczyk 2007), since it is perceived as a type of data that contains traces of actual spoken interactions. But when referring specifically to analysing conflict interactions, surely these cases are unrepresentative of everyday conflicts. No matter how litigious a particular society might be at a given time, the vast majority of conflicts would still be solved without legal procedures by the participants themselves or with the assistance of other members of the community. So there are advantages to the use of literary material when studying conflict talk. Even in the present day, conflict data can be hard to come by, since people are reluctant to have researchers examining such emotionally invested and private material as genuine conflict interactions. Literary materials, although they only pretend to spokenness, get us past this hurdle. Of literary genres, drama has received the most attention (e.g. Mazzon 2009, Forest-Hill 2000, Kopytko 1993, Mullini 2005, Sörlin 2008), as it is seen as mimetic of spoken discourse. Włodarczyk (2005) has examined speech representation in Middle English romances.

Culpeper and Kytö (2010) is a corpus-based study focusing on early modern dialogues from a variety of genres. Their stated aim is to "bring spoken face-to-face interaction into focus in the historical context" (2010: 2); while the ultimate goal would be to understand what face-to-face spoken discourse was like in the past, their preliminary research problem involves discovering what speech-related written texts were like. This study is built around the CED (*A Corpus of English Dialogues 1560–1760*), which contains speech-related materials from fields like plays and trial proceedings, didactic manuals in dialogue form, and prose fiction. By examining such a varied selection of genres, they hope to be able to generalise by means of a "triangulation" procedure (2010: 3). Culpeper and Kytö note the preferability of considering the evidence from historical commentaries (e.g. conversation manuals), if available (2010: 14). This gives the modern scholar some access to native-speaker intuitions, although they admit that such commentators often have prescriptive goals and as such may not give an unbiased view.

They examine features such as for example lexical bundles, repetition, and pragmatic noise, finding that while none of their text-types show all features of speech-likeness, they all have some such features. In their study, drama texts ranked highest overall in speech-like features.

Mazzon (2009) examines interactive dialogue sequences in Middle English drama, more specifically the N-town plays, a collection of 42 late medieval mystery plays. She focuses on dialogic features such as address forms, but also modality and other types of stance markers like interjections, along with verbs of saying and performatives. Her final chapter examines the interaction "outside" the text, i.e. between the audience and the performers. While many historical pragmaticians have been interested in features of speech-like genres, Mazzon is one of the few who have actually examined them from a sequential viewpoint, including pair structures (e.g. question-answer or directive-compliance pairs). She also touches upon conversational moves and conflict talk. The reasoning behind her selection of features is their affectivity (2009: 16): she is interested in the way stance and attitude are communicated in these fictional interactions. She finds, among other things, that modality "permeates, in one form or another, a large part of the 'utterances' assigned to characters in these plays" (2009: 89), and that drama interaction reproduces many (although not all) types of sequences and pair-structures explored by conversation analysts.

As for studies of historical conflict talk, one genre that has been studied increasingly in recent years is the genre of controversies – disagreements on questions of science, politics, religion and philosophy. Fritz (2010: 452) points out that unlike in historical dialogue analysis, there is a wealth of surviving material from the early modern period that is relevant for studying controversies. I would argue that since controversies are in many ways a similar genre to debate poetry (a controversy, like a debate poem, is built around a disagreement on a central question, which the participants attempt to resolve), the findings of these studies provide a point of comparison for mine. Ratia (2006, 2011) has studied argumentative strategies in early modern controversies on tobacco; also Dascal (1997, 1998), Gloning (2005) and Fritz (2005, 2008, 2010) have studied different types of controversies. Fritz, in particular, has investigated the communication principles governing early modern controversies, using metadiscursive comments from participants to ascertain the rules of managing a controversy. One central difference between controversies and debates is that in the former, the interaction takes place between the different texts, and they are thus not dialogic in the same way as debates, which contain dialogue sequences between the fictional characters. Of course, the opponent's points may be quoted and then refuted even in written controversies, but this intertextuality is still different from a face-to-face exchange, even a fictional one.

Another strand of historical pragmatics that is related to conflict is that of the study of historical impoliteness (see Culpeper & Kádár 2011). Speech acts such as insults have also been examined in some detail, e.g. Jucker (2000) discusses insults in historical sources. The article identifies a number of stylistic means of depicting verbal aggression (name-calling, sexual innuendo, scatology, animal imagery) and possible reactions to it (counter-abuse, stunned silence, physical violence, intervention by another character). Verbal insults have also been studied in other languages using a speech act framework, for example Falk examines insults recorded in seventeenth-century Swedish judicial protocols (2011).

4.2 Conversation analysis and its literary applications

Another field which has examined conflict talk in some detail is conversation analysis (CA). Indeed, most studies focusing on conflict in face-to-face interaction are at least in some ways influenced by CA methods, even when their main field can be identified as sociolinguistics, pragmatics or discourse analysis. This is due to the necessities of data collection, which is usually in audio or video format and needs to be transcribed and ethnographically grounded (Grimshaw 1990b: 12). While CA methods originated in the context of ordinary conversation, they have also long been applied to studying interaction in institutional settings (Richards 2005: 2).

One of the basic concepts of conversation analysis is the *joint action*: participants in an interaction collaborating to reach a particular goal (see e.g. Clift 2016: 2). Whether that goal is to have a harmonious conversation that upholds the social web between the participants, or to carry out a conflict interaction, collaboration cannot be avoided. This collaboration is manifested in the sequence of interaction, for example in adjacency pairs, where an utterance in first position (the first pair part) prompts a particular type of response in second position (the second pair part). A failure of the recipient to provide the expected second pair part is sanctionable, i.e. may provoke censure or at any rate be commented on. Greeting-greeting and question-answer are typical adjacency pairs (Clift 2016: 70), but many conflictive moves also invite a particular response or a choice from a limited set of available options. As McDowell puts it, "[e]very conversational edifice is the product of both competitive and collaborative effort, and verbal duelling is no exception" (1985: 209).

McDowell goes on to discuss equal-opportunity game structures in verbal duels: the rules provide all competitors with the same opportunities of succeeding (ibid.). However, this only applies to certain game-like formats of verbal duelling: in the more serious types of conflicts, there is very commonly a power imbalance of some kind, either due to the different roles of the participants or constructed within the interaction itself, by a participant who succeeds in dominating the other(s). Hutchby (1996: 42) finds that in

calls to talk radio shows "going second", i.e. the first attack position, is advantageous, due to the different resources available to the participants. The caller, who initiates the interaction, has to offer an opinion, which the host is free to attack without the need to provide a clear alternative of their own.

A few concepts of talk-in-interaction are used in this study. One is the *conversational floor*, which can be controlled by a single individual or collaboratively developed (Edelsky 1981). A speaker holding the floor may perform moves to keep the floor, and a speaker wanting to take over may perform *floor bids*. Another useful concept is that of *extreme case formulations*, a type of expression frequently used both for the purposes of accusing/complaining and for defending against such accusations (Pomerantz 1986: 219–220). An extreme case formulation presents something as extremely common (e.g. "everybody does this" or "you always"), usually in an attempt to justify a claim or a behaviour (ibid.). This is distinct from simple *formulations*, which Heritage and Watson define as "saying-in-so-many-words-what-we-are-doing" (1980: 246–247). A formulation, then, is used to summarise the previous discourse by the interlocutor, who may or may not confirm it as a correct intepretation of their meaning.

Methods developed for studying talk-in-interaction have also been applied to literary data. I have already mentioned Spitz (2006), who examines mother-daughter conflicts in present-day English drama in her doctoral dissertation, and has since then also studied representations of conflict in a novel (2010). In other languages, conflict in drama has also been the focus of recent doctoral research: e.g. Winkler (2012) studied dialogic structures of conflict exchanges between married couples in Swedish and German plays. Sörlin (2008) studied verbal conflicts in Swedish dramatic texts from 1725 to 2000, focusing on sequences containing disagreements, complaints and refusals. She found that the same types of moves are dominant throughout the period. The moves tended to be more complex than those found in real-life disputes, and they also tended towards directness. She explains this latter feature with recipient design: the authors' need to construct a maximally clear text (2008: 242).

4.3 Conceptualising conflict talk

In this study, I shall focus mainly on oppositional types of argument and the way the oppositional effect is produced by the characters (or rather, the author) during the represented interaction. Schiffrin (1985) notes that some scholars distinguish between monologic and dialogic arguments, but she feels that a more relevant distinction is between *rhetorical* and *oppositional* arguments. The first one involves a monologue in support of a position that is conceivably disputable, but not disputed in actuality. The latter requires actual overt dispute produced by one or more speakers. The disputes in debate poetry, then, are literary representations of oppositional arguments, although the

poems in their entirety also contain non-oppositional parts. Rhetorical arguments do not conform to the structural definition of conflict talk, since they lack the oppositional moves which transform a stretch of discourse into a conflict sequence. Such rhetorical arguments have been long studied by logicians, who generally focus on the criteria of good argumentation (for a linguistic approach, see van Eemeren et al. 2007). Linguistic studies often focus on registers such as academic communication, where good argumentation is particularly relevant (see e.g. Vassileva 2009).

Studies on early literary debates have similarly attempted to distinguish between different 'flavours' of debate. Gilman (1956) introduced the concept of *horizontal* and *vertical* debates, where a horizontal debate is between equals and a vertical one between an authority figure of some kind and a character submissive to that authority. For example, the medieval debates *adversus Iudaeos* would be vertical by definition, since the Christian authors would consider their own faith intrinsically more authoritative than any alternative. Finally, Scott (1998, 2002) introduced the concept of *foregrounded* and *backgrounded* disagreements. The former type of disagreement is characterised by short turns and explicit disagreement, among a number of other features, while backgrounded disagreements are relatively calm affairs, characterised by long and few turns and less explicit disagreement. The unifying factor in all of the terms and distinctions listed above is that they are in some way related to the intensity of the opposition in the disagreement. I would argue that the oppositional, horizontal types of conflict are more relevant for understanding conflict procedures, since they show conflict interaction in a more condensed form. This is the reason for focusing this study on debates containing recognisable conflict sequences.

In the introduction to this volume, I gave the standard structural definition of conflict talk: a sequence of talk where the participants oppose each other in some way for a minimum of three consecutive turns. Similar structures can be found in conflict genres across times and cultures. Note, for instance, Bax and Padmos' (1983) work on the old Icelandic *mannjafnaðr* (see 2.3.1 above), which Schwebel describes as follows: "The basic sequential structure of mannjafnaðr duels, they explain, begins with an initiating claim by speaker A and is followed by a rejection of that claim and initiation of a new claim by speaker B. The second claim is then rejected by A; after the rejection, B defends the claim and the duel concludes." (Schwebel 1997: 327). The exact form of opposition may again be different, but the basic structure remains: speech turns follow each other with both participants opposing each other in some way.

However, I would argue that rather than the structural organisation in itself, what makes conflict talk interesting is the way in which the participants collaborate to construct the conflict (see Section 4.2 above), and the methods they use during it to present a positive

self-image, and conversely to portray the opponent in a negative light. In short, if verbal interaction is the most important method of building social organisation, then conflict talk is a condensed and aggravated way of doing this. It makes explicit certain aspects of power and status which tend to remain hidden beneath the surface. Naturally, sequential and structural aspects of the exchange are also manipulated for this purpose and are not without interest in themselves, but the focus of this study is broader.

As Locher points out, disagreement is obviously related to questions of power on the one hand, and politeness on the other (2004: 1). Power, defined as the ability to control the behaviour of others, is always exercised through negotiation in the context of a relationship (2004: 2–3). The use of power involves an underlying conflict of interests, although this is not always made explicit in the interaction (2004: 40). It is also related to considerations of status: a person of higher status may be more likely to exercise power (2004: 34), but it is also possible to increase one's status temporarily by "scoring points" during the interaction (2004: 30–31). This is particularly relevant to verbal duel contexts. The connection between power and gender is also an important aspect to keep in mind when examining interactions (see e.g. Lakoff 2003), especially as the status of women is a central theme in many debate poems.

A related concept is that of conversational dominance, which refers specifically to the use of power for the purpose of controlling the development of a conversation: Itakura describes dominance as a multi-dimensional construct involving one participant's "*control* over the interactional contribution of the other" (2001: 1862, emphasis original) and emerging over the interaction sequence through local asymmetries. She recognises three different aspects of dominance: *sequential* dominance involves attempts at topic initiation (or offers to complete the other speaker's turn). *Participatory* dominance potentially includes interruptions and overlaps, while *quantitative* dominance is measured by a simple word count (ibid.). Control attempts can be seen as successful if the recipient responds with a complying action, but a non-complying response from the recipient can lead to a failure of the control attempt. In this way, the distribution of successful control attempts becomes a measure of dominance (2001: 1863).

One of the findings made in studies of spoken interaction is that for any action, there is often a preference for a particular type of response (see e.g. Pomerantz 1984). This does not necessarily imply a personal preference by the speaker of the first pair part; rather, it is an expectation based on the speaker's knowledge of various types of interaction. This knowledge is shared by all competent speakers to some extent, and it gives them reason to expect a certain type of response to many of the utterances they produce, while other responses are just odd and unexpected. In this case, there is a *structural* preference for a certain type of response, and other types are dispreferred. For instance, the preferred

response to a question is normally an answer, and in most situations, the preferred response to a statement is agreement. There are certain exceptions, however: for example, the preferred response to a compliment is not agreement, since that would imply self-praise.[17] The key point is that these preferences are observable in the discourse itself, since dispreferred second pair parts tend to be delayed and/or marked with various kinds of mitigation devices: prefaces, accounts etc. This can be observed in Early Modern English as well, as can be seen in example (12) below, an excerpt from a prose disputation between "civil and uncivil life", printed in 1586:

(12) *The English Courtier, and the Cuntrey-gentleman*

Vallentine. **I pray you** (Maister Vincent) lay by these curtesies, and fal to the matter of your demaundes. For **mee thinkes**, (though you would be called a playne man) yet you vse more ceremony, then I, that haue spente some parte of my life in Countries, where those customes are most plentifull.
Vincent. Well, then I will holde you no longer in these complaintes, (which wordes I learne of you trauellers.) But fall into the matter it selfe.
Vallentine. Indeed Sir, that is my desire, & sith it seemeth, that the subiect of your speech shalbe in comparing of our countrey customs, with those of forrain nations, **I hope you will hold mee blameles,** (though occasion beeinge offered) **I happen to finde faulte** with somewhat of our owne, and **commend the customes of others**: **which I will doo the more boldly,** because you tolde mee, you loued plainenes, and therfore bee content, our talke may bee free speech, and without respect.
Vincent. On Gods name, so let vs proceede, and (as I promised) least our talke should extend too farre, I will neither aske your opinion of all customes, nor of all sortes of men: but onely desire to be resolued of one doubt, in one thing, which toucheth mee only, and others of my degree and condition.
[STC (2nd ed.) / 15590, sig. B2r-v]

The title-page labels this a disputation, and indeed there is a difference of opinion between the two gentlemen mentioned in the title, which lasts for longer than three turns. However, the conflict element is much less pronounced than in most debate poems, and the mitigation element is stronger. We can observe politeness phrases (*I pray you*) and hedging (*mee thinkes*), but especially noticeable is the marked reluctance of Valentine, the character speaking in favour of the courtly life, to engage in conflictual talk: he asks forgiveness in advance, in case he finds fault with some of the country gentleman's customs, and offers an account for why he would be so bold. So it seems that at least in the early modern period, preference rules in English were similar to the present day, as far as disagreement goes.

However, one would not normally expect the participants in a conflict sequence to agree with one another. Indeed, Kotthoff (1993) found evidence that in German and Anglo-American conflict sequences within discussions between students and lecturers, the normal preference for agreement was reversed. Where participants would normally

[17] The preferences described here apply for present-day English and Finnish; other linguistic systems may have different preferences.

precede disagreements with hedges and hesitation markers, after the conflict sequence was established, they would instead hesitate to agree with one another. There was also a noticeable tendency for attempts at agreement to be interpreted as disagreement, and concessions of any sort were accompanied with strong signs of reluctance and hesitation. All of this would suggest that in a conflict situation, the expectations of the participants and hence the preference structure of the interaction change. This is relevant because some understanding of preference structure is useful for understanding conflict interactions. For instance, the speakers in (13) are using the normally affirmative answer *yes* quite often:

(13) *Carpenter's Tools,* ll. 9–24

"Wherfore," seyd the Belte,	"That's why," said the Belt,
"With grete strokys I schall hym pelte.	"I shall pelt him with great strokes.
My mayster schall full well thene,	My master will prosper very well,
Both to clothe and fede his men."	and clothe and feed his men."
"Ye, ye," seyd the Twybyll,	"Yeah, yeah," said the Two-edged Axe.
"Thou spekys ever ageyn skyll.	"You speak against reason as always.
Iwys, iwys, it wyll not bene,	Indeed, indeed that will not happen,
Ne never I thinke that he wyll then."	And I don't think he will ever flourish."
"Yis, yis," seyd the Wymbyll.	"Yes, yes," said the Wimble,
"I ame als rounde as a thymbyll.	"I am as round as a thimble.
My maysters werke I wyll remembyr;	I will remember my master's work;
I schall crepe fast into the tymbyr,	I shall bore into the timber,
And help my mayster within a stounde	And help my master within a short time
To store his cofer with twenti pounde."	To fill his money-box with 20 pounds."
"Ye, ye" seyd the Compas,	"Yeah, yeah," said the Compass,
"Thou arte a fole in that case.	"In that case you are a fool!"

However, in the conflict context, these yes-replies cannot be understood as signaling agreement. Nor is there need to establish a number of different senses for the word, as the MED does (s.v. *yis* (interj.)), listing completely contradictory senses like 1(a) "[a]s an affirmative reply and 1(c) "as a contradiction". Similarly, Waster responds to Winner's initial words with a seemingly affirmative *yee.* However, in typical conflict fashion, this is only a prelude to conflictive actions. He begins with an unfavourable comment about the Winner's discourse (*thi wordes are hye*):

(14) *Winner and Waster,* ll. 246–255

"Yee, Wynnere," quod Wastoure, "thi wordes are hye:	"Yes, Winner," said Waster, "your words
Bot I schall tell the a tale that tene schall the better.	are proud, but I shall tell you a tale which
When thou haste waltered and went and wakede alle the nyghte,	will annoy you more. When you have tossed and turned, disturbing your sleep, and that of
And iche a wy in this werlde that wonnes the abowte,	the neighbours who live thereabouts, and

And hase werpede thy wyde howses full of wolle sakkes The bemys benden at the rofe, siche bakone there hynges, Stuffed are sterlynges undere stelen bowndes – What scholde worthe of that wele if no waste come? Some rote, some ruste, some ratons fede. Let be thy cramynge of thi kystes for Cristis lufe of heven!	have stuffed your wide houses with sackfuls of wool, the roof-beams bending with bacon flitches, silver pennies stuffed into steel-bound chests, what would happen to that wealth if there were no waste? Some would rot, some would rust, some would feed the rats. Give up cramming your chests, for the love of Christ in heaven!

The Waster makes a prediction, foreseeing a sad end to Winner's hoarding, painting a kind of exemplary picture to illustrate his point that wealth is useless if not used, and should be spent on useful things instead, like charity. He finishes with a directive to cease this greedy behaviour, strengthening it with an oath. In sum, it is clear that in no way does he 'affirm' Winner's arguments here.

The conflict context explains how these surprising 'affirmations' come to be understood as something else: Kotthoff has demonstrated how, during a conflict sequence, signals of agreement are often interpreted as implying disagreement (1993: 204). The reasons for both the normal preference structure and the reversed one found in some conflict sequences are related to politeness: normally, people tend to prefer friendly interactions with other people, and this can be achieved by mutual polite behaviour. In conflict situations, however, there is a perceived threat to their own self-image, which can become so acute that normal concerns for the interlocutor's face become secondary, as participants engage in actions to protect their own face. For this reason, impoliteness and face theory should be briefly discussed.

4.4 (Im)politeness

The basic concept of politeness theory is that of face, introduced within social studies by Goffman (1967). Brown and Levinson (1987) added the concept of positive and negative face: the former they defined as a positive self-image and a desire that this self-image be approved of by others, while the latter is "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" (1987: 62). Both of these face-wants can be threatened by an interlocutor performing a face-threatening act of some kind. The threat can be performed either *on-record* or *off-record*: in the former case, the face-threat is direct and undeniable, while in the latter case it is performed in such an indirect way that, should someone call attention to it, the speaker can deny having intended to perform a face-threat at all. This downgrading is known as mitigation (see Fraser 1980, Caffi 1999), while aggravating a face-threat would mean strengthening it. Note that a *face-threat* does not always lead to *face-damage:* various factors may affect the success of the face-threatening act, and both the speaker and the hearer have a range of face-saving devices which can be used to reduce the threat. Face-damage is also context-dependent: Culpeper

(1996: 359) notes that impoliteness is extremely common in the context of military training, describing a sequence where non-commissioned officers systematically attack the positive face of a recruit in training. It has been debated whether or not such cases really count as face-threats, when the perpetrators perform them as part of what they perceive to be their job in training the recruits. For example, Mills has argued that in the military community of practice, impoliteness becomes a norm and will not be classified as such by the participants (2002: 79). This is relevant for the present study, since a debate could be seen as a prototypical example of a contest where face-threats are expected and therefore shrugged off. However, as Culpeper points out, the responses of the recipients prove that even in military contexts some acts are still experienced as face-damaging, so that impoliteness is not necessarily neutralised just because it is sanctioned in a particular context (2005: 65).

Angry, emotional outbursts are one sign that the recipient has experienced the act as face-threatening; metatalk is another way of locating such exchanges. Such metatalk can be produced by either the characters or the narrator; in (15) below, the Nightingale is responding to the Owl's sarcastic question of whether she has been ordained as a priest (provoked by the curse against harbingers of evil with which the Nightingale has finished her previous turn):

(15) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1298–1316

"Wat!" heo seide, "hule, artu wod?	"What!" she said, "Owl, are you mad?
þu ȝeolpest of seolliche wisdome,	You've been boasting of marvellous wisdom
þu nustest wanene he þe come,	And yet you can't explain where you got it from –
bute hit of wicchecrefte were.	Unless it's through witchcraft.
Þarof þu, wrecche, most þe skere	You'll have to clear yourself of that charge, you
ȝif þu wult among manne beo:	wretch, If you want to remain among mankind,
oþer þu most of londe fleo.	Or else you must flee the country.
For alle þeo þat þerof cuþe,	For all those who profess that art
heo uere ifurn of prestes muþe	Were long ago excommunicated by ecclesiastical
amanset: swuch þu art ȝette,	degree – as you are still,
þu wiecche-crafte neauer ne lete.	for you've never given your witchcraft up.
Ich þe seide nu lutel ere,	I told you about this a short while ago
an þu askedest ȝef ich were	And you insultingly asked me
a-bisemere to preost ihoded.	If I'd been ordained as a priest:
Ah þe mansing is so ibroded,	But, even if there were no priests in this country,
þah no preost a-londe nere,	The anathema would still be widely known
a wrecche neoþeles þu were:	And you would still be an outlaw.
for eauereuch child þe cleopeþ fule,	Every child says you're 'nasty'
an euereuch man a wrecche hule."	And every man calls you 'a wretched owl'.

The Nightingale responds with the interjection *wat*, which is presumably meant to project incredulity at such questions. She then moves on to a competence challenge, arguing that the Owl may have some knowledge, but she cannot prove that it comes from a respectable source: it could be witchcraft. She predicts that the Owl may end up excommunicated and exiled – a repetition of the comment which led to the Owl's question. This leads her to repeat the Owl's question with a commentary of her own: you asked me if I was an ordained priest – that is an insult. The word *bisemere* (l. 1311; 'ridicule, mockery; taunt, insult' according to the MED) is generally used in situations where someone is made a laughing stock (cf. instances of the word in *The Good Man and the Devil*). Thus, the Nightingale clearly recognises the sarcasm of the Owl's question.

Having established that at least some moves are perceived as inappropriate or impolite even in a conflict context, a discussion of impoliteness is in order. Defining impoliteness is far from straightforward – indeed, as Culpeper points out, it is "a real challenge" (2011: 22). Two central questions that need to be addressed are related to intentionality on the one hand and the reactions of the target on the other, a matter that was already touched upon. It has often been argued that intentionality is an essential requirement for an utterance to be considered impolite (e.g. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000 argue this for insults). However, as Culpeper has remarked, people frequently describe something as impolite even when they know no such effect was intended (2010: 3233). On the other hand, the intentions of speakers are rarely completely accessible to the researcher – even speakers themselves may not be consciously aware of all their motivations. On the other hand, people can and frequently do make assumptions of others' intentions based on their behaviour, and no doubt such assumptions are often accurate enough.

As for target reactions, those too have sometimes been considered definitive of impoliteness (e.g. Holmes et al. 2008: 196). In this interpretation, then, impoliteness is essentially a perlocutionary effect: if the target is not offended by the attempted face-attack, then the exchange does not count as one, regardless of the speaker's intention. Provided that there is a record of the recipient's reaction and that the reaction is transparent, this approach allows for easy verification that somebody has behaved impolitely. Bousfield (2008: 72–73) considers both intention and reaction as necessary criteria: if impoliteness was intended but not perceived, he considers the example to be a *failed attempt at impoliteness*. If impoliteness was not intended but the recipient perceives the utterance as face-damaging, Bousfield terms this either *accidental* or *incidental face-damage* (the former if the recipient considers the face-attack intentional, the latter if the recipient is offended in spite of realising that it is unintentional).

It should be noted at this point that not all face-threatening actions are necessarily *impolite*. For instance, making a request can be face-threatening to both participants (the recipient's negative face is threatened, since it limits their freedom of action, while the sender's positive face may also be threatened – if the recipient is unwilling to comply, is it because they do not view the sender in a positive light?). It does not follow that making a request is impolite; it only becomes so if the face-needs of the recipient are intentionally ignored. Another term sometimes used is *verbal aggression*. This is defined as "message behavior which attacks a person's self-concept in order to deliver psychological pain" (Infante 1995: 51). In terms of classical rhetoric, this would equal engaging in *ad hominem* attacks. Infante's phrasing is reminiscent of Brown and Levinson's definition of positive face-threat as a threat to the individual's positive self-image (see page 81). Infante's list of the types of verbally aggressive messages includes attacks on the hearer's character, personality, competence, physical appearance, even their significant others; he also lists improper language such as maledictions and swearing, and acts such as teasing, ridicule, threats, global rejection and negative comparison. These would generally seem to be cases of aggravated on-record face-threatening acts. The key part of the definition, then, is the phrase concerning the purpose of the attack: the intention of the attack is to deliver pain. Based on this definition, it would seem that impoliteness need not necessarily take the form of verbal aggression, but all verbal aggression is by definition impolite.

However, Archer, evaluating and developing work by Culpeper (1996, 2005) and others, proposes a different way of defining the terms, suggesting that impoliteness should be seen as a subcategory of verbal aggression (2008: 188). She prefers to use the term 'impoliteness' for strategies of face-aggravation motivated by "some personal sense of *spite*" (emphasis original, 2008: 191), while verbal aggression is seen as a broader activity, which is not intended to cause face-threat, but may sometimes result in face-damage nonetheless. This is the sense in which I shall use the terms in the present study, as it forms a useful continuum: one may distinguish between 'impoliteness' (intentional aggravation of face), 'verbal aggression' (which may or may not result in face-damage, but that is not its main purpose), and 'conflict talk' (which includes the two previous categories, but also the various cooperative strategies of negotiating a resolution). Archer further suggests that it might be fruitful to focus on instances of verbal aggression rather than impoliteness, since identifying malicious intent is by no means straightforward (2008: 196).

While (im)politeness may often be designed to be implicit and interpretable only in full context, in some cases impoliteness can become quite conventionalised and formulaic (for a discussion of inherent, 'semantic' and implicational, 'pragmatic' impoliteness, see Culpeper 2011: 117–126). In his study of naturally occurring present-day English data,

Culpeper identified the following types of impoliteness formulae: insults, pointed criticisms, challenging or unpalatable questions or presuppositions, condescensions, message enforcers, dismissals, silencers, threats and negative expressives (2011: 136–137). These were arrived at by collecting data where the target or someone else had explicitly labelled the utterance as impolite, and categorising them on the basis of structural commonalities. With the exception of condescensions, all of these can be found in debate poetry as well. Since my focus is on conflict talk in general and not just impoliteness, I have preferred Spitz's categorisation of moves (see page 90) to Culpeper's, but clearly the two systems share a number of items.

Brown and Levinson gave examples from a number of different languages, attempting to create a universally applicable face-theory. However, the theory has been much criticised in the last fifteen years, particularly the claim of universality (see e.g. Eelen 2001). It has been pointed out that different cultures value different aspects of face differently, and the same argument can be made for historical forms of English – for instance, Kohnen has argued that Old English directives operated in "a world beyond politeness" (2008: 41), and Jucker has characterised the Middle English period as transitional between an older system of discernment politeness and a modern face-based politeness system (2010). In historical pragmatics, the problem of interpreting potential instances of impoliteness is even more acute than in intercultural studies of politeness, since there are no surviving native speakers whose intuitions the researcher could consult. Kádár and Culpeper point out that there are two approaches to this problem: relying on the researcher's own intuitions, which could be completely incorrect, or examining the evaluations of recipients or other contemporary witnesses (2010: 17–18). I have tried to follow the second course of action to the best of my ability, grounding my interpretations on the full interactional context of the conflict sequence. Such an approach is characterised by Jucker as a "discursive or post-modern approach" which focuses on interaction and the ongoing negotiation of politeness (2012: 41).

4.5 The concept of move

In this study, I have preferred the concept of *move* over the (perhaps more commonly used) term *speech act.* Spitz (2006) uses the term *speech act(ion)* in her table of contents, but in the text she seems to use both *speech act* and *speech action* synonymously. However, she also uses the terms *move* and *countermove* on occasion (e.g. 2006: 43, 68, 74, 245). Speech acts are typically studied as independent actions, separate from the full discourse context. Since I am interested specifically in the organisation of discourse and the systematic sequences within it, a concept designed for that purpose seemed more relevant for my purposes. Furthermore, the common classifications used in speech act theory may not be the most relevant for the purposes of analysing conflict talk. As Labov and Fanshel have argued, the important actions in conversation are "challenges, defenses,

and retreats, which have to do with the status of the participants, their rights and obligations, and their changing relationships in terms of social organization" (1977: 58–59).

For this reason, the concept of *move* was preferred to that of speech act, although it, too, has its own complications. In historical pragmatics, the term *move* has been previously used by Fritz (2005, n.d.) and Gloning (2005). However, while examining a range of possible moves in controversies, they do not discuss the concept from a theoretical or methodological viewpoint. In linguistics more generally, the term is used in at least two rather different senses: by those pursuing genre analysis according to the model of John Swales (2004), and in conversation analytical research, following Goffman (1981). It is also used in systemic-functional linguistics (e.g. Eggins & Slade 1997). While Goffman's preferred object of analysis is naturally occurring conversation, Swales developed his model for the purposes of analysing academic texts. In both cases, a move is seen as a functional unit, but the scope of the unit varies: in Goffman's terms, a move is defined as "everything conveyed by an actor during a turn at taking action" (1967: 20). Thus, a very short utterance like *mm-hmm* or *uh huh* can form a move on its own, but on the other hand, even a relatively short turn at talk can actually contain multiple moves. This is the sense in which I understand Spitz to use the term.

Swales, on the other hand, seems to interpret moves as longer sections of text. His understanding of moves is strongly influenced by rhetorics, where moves are strategically used for the purpose of strengthening one's argument. This type of move analysis has also been developed by Bhatia (1993, 2004). Both these authors examine moves as building blocks of different genres (e.g. academic introductions or advertisements), where the structure of a text can be defined to a great degree by the expected moves for that particular genre. This means that what Swales or Bhatia would term a move may contain several different steps, each of which contribute in their own way to the general purpose of the move. For instance, Chandrasegaran notes that a typical paper in applied linguistics might contain a Reader Orientation move, which typically begins with a Framing step followed by an Identification of Specific Area step (2012: 14).

Eggins and Slade suggest that moves are discourse units of speech function, related but not identical to the grammatical category of clauses (1997: 185–187). Finally, Franck (1979) sees conversational moves as speech actions providing the recipient with a standard set of continuation options, which can be ranked according to a hierarchy of social acceptability (preference). The response moves, in turn, can comply with these expectations to a varying degree; the key point is that *any* move whatsoever, even seeming nonresponsiveness, will be interpreted as a response to the initiating move

(1979: 466). This is approximately the way I understand the concept, although responses in debate poetry can be separated from the initial move by a considerable distance, much more so than in ordinary conversation. A move, then, in the current study, is a phrase or clause(s) serving an argumentative function and inviting a response of some kind.

What all these uses of the term *move* share is that it is a metaphor from the world of games (cf. Wittgenstein's notion of language games). While linguistics has not widely been combined with game theory[18] it is worth examining how the term is understood in game theory. A move, then, is seen by game theorists as a single action taken by a player, either sequentially (taking turns with the opponent, as in conversation) or simultaneously. Crucially, what distinguishes a move from a simple decision is the players' awareness that each action will have an effect on the opponent, and that the opponent in turn is aware of this and will design their own actions accordingly (Dixit and Skeath 2004: 18).[19] A further assumption made in such strategic games is that all participants have equal access to the rules, which are known by all participants: they all know who is participating in the game, what the available strategies are, and what the payoffs for each strategy are (Dixit and Skeath 2004: 32). Dixit and Skeath are not referring specifically to language games here, but conversational rules are also equally available to all members of society, although this knowledge is often subconscious and rarely explicitly formulated. Yet the participants will be able to formulate moves which 'invite' a particular response, as suggested by Franck (1979). Finally, game theory assumes that players will act in a rational manner to maximise their gains. While it is not a necessary part of the definition of the word, the connotations of this use of 'move' suggest the idea of stratagems, feints, manoeuvres and gambits, all of which are indirect means to gain an end. The participants in a game may and do collaborate, but at the same time they may attempt to divert the opponent's attention away from their real intent.

Under this broad definition of strategic games, a conversation would be a good example of a strategic game. The players may not be able to give a list of the rules and payoffs used in the game, but when a rule is broken, they know it and will frequently comment on it. Sometimes they may not agree on the rules – but Dixit and Skeath remark that "this merely admits that there is another game being played at a deeper level – namely, where the players choose the rules of the superficial game" (2004: 31). Most importantly, in

[18] There are some exceptions: for instance, Allott (2006), De Jaegher & van Rooij (2010) and Franke (2013) have discussed linguistic strategies from the viewpoint of game theory. Carlson (1983) is an earlier and much more thorough attempt to develop a game-based theory of discourse. On the whole, though, game-theoretical approaches have yet to become widespread in linguistics, possibly because the gains and losses in human interaction cannot easily be assigned a numeric value.

[19] This definition covers *strategic* games only; games of simple chance would require a different definition.

conversational interaction, as in other strategic games, the participants design their own actions in the awareness that these actions will affect the interlocutor, and that the interlocutor is aware of this and will in turn design their actions accordingly. For example, in a conversation where one participant asks the other for help, the person making the request will begin by making a guess about how reluctant the hearer might be to perform the desired action, and will use linguistic resources such as various face-saving devices in an attempt to reach their goal.

Conversation is normally a game with sequential moves. Carlson, describing dialogue from the viewpoint of game theory, argues that the only context-independent rule of dialogue is simply that "any player may put forward any sentence", keeping in mind that it is a game with linearly ordered moves (1983: 44). This requirement of linear ordering, together with strategical considerations, he considers sufficient to explain turn-taking rules. This scenario of alternating, discrete moves is complicated to some extent in the context of written debate poetry, since in some cases the speech turns are rather long, and will necessarily contain several separate moves. A similar situation exists in academic writing. So in a way, the speakers perform move clusters (see Fritz n.d.: 15–23) or 'complex moves' (see Sörlin 2008). The key point for locating moves is that they serve some strategic function in the conflict sequence, ultimately contributing towards the general purpose of winning the debate. There may occasionally be moves within a conflict sequence which serve no purpose for the strategic aims of the conflict, for example if a third party happens to come along and exchanges greetings with the participants.

The rules of debating were no doubt familiar to the contemporary audiences of these poems, but they are less obvious to the modern reader. Fritz (2010: 470) has given a list of communication principles in early modern controversies, many of them focusing on the quality of argumentation (veracity, relevance, brevity, adequate backing of claims) and politeness (avoiding personal attacks, sarcasm or making fun of the opponent). Clearly these are not very well suited to debate poetry, where the basic purpose of entertainment means that both *ad hominem* arguments and (at least on occasion) bad argumentation are more allowable. Indeed, Fritz has also pointed out that the principles he has identified are negotiable to an extent, and not equally valid in all parts of a controversy (2008: 115), and he mentions the *delectare* principle, whereby the more entertaining speaker scores points (n.d.: 27). But what kind of rules do we have evidence of for debate poetry? Perhaps the most important rule is that each party gets a say in the proceedings. For example, the Owl explicitly remarks that it would not be right if the debate was wrapped up without her having a chance to respond in kind to the Nightingale's accusations (l. 549). As for personal attacks, they are common enough to form a de facto norm at least in the opening stages of a debate (see Chapter 7).

Basing a theory of human behaviour upon the assumption of complete rationality may sound rather naive. However, there is no reason why emotional and interpersonal payoffs cannot be taken into consideration in addition to more narrowly defined rewards. So for instance in the example of making a request, the relationship between the speakers will determine whether the maker of the request is just aiming to manipulate the interlocutor into doing something against their will, or whether the request is to be seen more as a genuine attempt to gain information on what the interlocutor would want to do. Both options are strategic; the difference depends on the value which the speaker assigns to the furthering of the relationship between the participants, as opposed to the value assigned to simply getting their own way. So, while the conceptualisation of conversation as a game may suggest connotations of selfishness and trying to use every possible stratagem to achieve victory, the game-theoretical definition of games does not really imply such an interpretation. Selfish behaviour may be advantageous in a one-off game, but in the longer run, other players will probably find a way to pay back for it, and in real life there is rarely any certainty that the game will truly be one-off. There is also the fact that not all games are zero-sum games, where the victory of one participant means the loss of the other: many types of games, including most conversations, allow for a win-win scenario.

While linguistic pragmatics has traditionally largely focused on cooperative situations and harmony (see page 12 above), the focus in game theory tends to be on games with a conflict of interest between the participants (De Jaegher and van Rooij 2013: 770), although collaborative games also exist. A game-theoretical analysis is beyond the scope of the present study, but the concept of strategic actions or manoeuvring is useful for understanding debates. For instance, it has been suggested that debates are a game of "instrumental rationality" (Rogers 2002: 20), where the point of the exercise is not to solve a problem rationally in the most efficient way: the point is to maintain an appearance of rationality while simultaneously sniping at the opponent in an attempt to cast them in a negative light. The success (or not) of their attempt to influence the audience and/or adjudicators will determine the winner.

This is in strict contrast to e.g. van Eemeren et al's pragma-dialectical approach: they define argumentation as "an attempt to resolve or prevent a difference of opinion by critically testing the acceptability of a standpoint that is in doubt" (2007: 2). This definition is extremely idealised (a fact which the authors themselves admit by calling their description an 'ideal model of a critical discussion') – one may suspect that face-concerns and other emotional issues prevent such unbiased and objective truth-testing in an overwhelming majority of cases. Of course, van Eemeren et al are discussing *argumentation* while Rogers is referring to *debates*, and these are two different things. My point is that models of good argumentation, although an ideal worth aspiring to, are

far from sufficient in helping us understand what actually happens in most conflict interactions where truth-testing is only one of multiple goals. So, especially for a genre like debate poetry, where entertainment is the primary function and didacticism a secondary one, a game-oriented reading would seem to be a promising approach.

4.6 The analytical framework

Research on conflict talk has established a set of moves which are typically found in conflict talk. Leaving out for the moment the logical quality of the arguments presented, there are two main strategies for winning a debate: the first is to make one's opponent look bad, and the second is to make oneself look good. We might call the first strategy other-oriented, and the second one self-oriented. Such a division does not appear to be at all common in previous research. In most cases, this may be because scholars prefer to focus on explicitly conflictive moves, as for example Spitz (2006). In other cases, they may select different aspects of the moves as a criterion for classification: for example, Fritz (n.d.) classifies individual moves (as opposed to move clusters) into critical moves, personal attacks, the use of rhetorical devices, and the use of comparisons. Fritz (2005), on the other hand, focuses on first-person singular utterances as moves. With my distinction between other-oriented and self-oriented moves I am attempting to achieve a similar end, without basing the distinction on strictly formal criteria. After all, in many cases different forms can be used for the same function: "I mean" and "that is to say" would be categorised differently on formal criteria, although in practice they are likely to be functionally equivalent. In any case, the division is intended merely for the purposes of organising the analysis, as a move will usually at least imply something about both participants. In this section, I shall outline the specific sources used for my analytical framework, proceeding in the same order as the following chapters: I shall begin with other-oriented moves, then the self-oriented ones, moving on to the opening and closing of conflict sequences, and finally the quantitative analysis of frequent lexical patterns in conflict.

My point of departure for the other-oriented moves was the list provided by Spitz (2006). In her work, she examines the sequential organisation of conflict sequences, the ways in which adversative elements are highlighted rather than downplayed in her data, and the ways in which power relationships emerge from interaction, where they are maintained cooperatively through joint action. Spitz's work offers a good starting point for examining the conflict features of early debate poetry, since her material was also literary: she studied mother-daughter disputes in contemporary drama texts. The differences between a modern-day genuine conversation and a much earlier literary pretence of dialogue could be either due to diachronic changes or differences in medium (or both), but comparing an early literary pretence-debate to a modern one removes one variable from the procedure of comparison. Spitz's list of argumentative speech actions

includes accusations, directives, threats, relevance challenges, competence challenges, disqualifications, demands for explanation, unfavourable comments, contradictions, confrontational corrections and counterclaims. These will be described in more detail in Chapter 5, with examples from my data.

As for self-oriented moves (see Chapter 6), Fritz (2005: 236) lists a selection of moves found in early modern controversies which can be performed with first-person expressions, although he notes that many other types of moves exist as well. His list includes

1) justifying one's entrance into a controversy
2) clarifying text organisation
3) hedging
4) "marking a disagreement in quasi-dialogue" (*he says p, but I say q*)
5) marking a disagreement with an authority
6) self-praise
7) presenting one's experience as evidence
8) interpreting one's own words
9) claiming incomprehension
10) giving a "narrative of one's progress from error to truth"

However, not all of these are common in debate poetry: self-praise, clarifying text organisation and interpreting one's own words (as in *that is to say*) are the main recurring features. In studies of present-day conflict talk, self-praise has not been treated as a typical feature, but it is noticeably common in my material, and it has also been observed in studies of historical verbal duels, e.g. heroic flyting (Parks 1990). In the present study, clarifying text organisation and explaining one's own words will be treated together under the heading of clarification moves (see Section 6.5).

Fritz's moves 5, 7 and 10 (disagreeing with an authority, giving experiential evidence or a narrative of progress) are probably motivated by the emerging paradigm of experimental science in the seventeenth century, and I have not identified any instances of them in debate poetry. Hedging and claiming incomprehension would be perfectly possible in debate poetry, but do not seem to occur very often, nor do the participants in debate poetry seem to justify their entrance into the conflict. Move 4, marking a disagreement, is similar to the use of formulations, but this function is expressed somewhat differently in debate poetry, due to the immediate presence of the opponent: there is typically no explicit contrast between *you say* and *I say*, although a contrast may be created between the participants themselves.

Some additional self-oriented moves have been identified in previous research. Backing a claim, while not a first-person move in the sense that it would be performed with a first-person expression, is recognised as a move both by Fritz in the context of early modern controversies (n.d.: 17), and in studies of present-day arguments (e.g. Stein & Albro 2001). For the various types of excuses, justifications and explanations produced by characters in response to an accusation, I have preferred the term *account* as a commonly used umbrella term (see e.g. Scott & Lyman 1968, Heritage 1988, Bolden & Robinson 2011). Shifting responsibility is a move identified by me; I have treated it as a type of account.[20] Finally, certainty expressions are another move identified in the present study, used by speakers in epistemic comments to emphasise their honesty and their own certainty in the accuracy of their arguments. To summarise, the self-oriented moves examined in the present study include self-praise, clarification moves, backing a claim, accounts and certainty expressions.

In Chapter 7, I shall examine the opening passages of a debate. The concept of the *arguable action*, as identified by Maynard (1985), was already discussed above on page 8 in the context of the beginning phase of a debate. However, it should be stressed that, as Maynard phrases it, "any utterance or action may contain objectionable features and may become part of a dispute only if it is contradicted" (1985: 3). Once the speakers have entered into the conflict phase of their interaction, any further acts, whether spoken or not, can then be interpreted as new arguable actions, which will in turn become issues to be debated. The arguable action need not necessarily be something immoral or incorrect in any objective way: what matters is that one of the speakers construes an action or failure to act as objectionable, and voices this objection more or less explicitly. Indeed, an action may be more likely to lead to a conflict sequence if it is disliked by a single individual rather than universally disapproved of in society, since the latter type of action is less likely to be undertaken. The arguable action can be either verbal or non-verbal, and the process is naturally recursive: one way of defending against an complaint or attempt to argue about one's actions is to make the complaint itself arguable. In this way, a dispute can go on, while the topic shifts each time a new point is made arguable. In my analysis, I shall examine the first three turns (counting from the first attack, rather than the arguable action).

My analysis of closings (Chapter 8) is inspired by Vuchinich (1990), who studied the sequential organisation of closings in present-day family conflicts, finding five possible termination formats: submission, third-party intervention, compromise, stand-off and withdrawal. These are negotiated through two alternative types of pair structures, the

[20] Locher identifies shifting responsibility as a strategy which "allows interactants to portray themselves as not responsible for what they are reporting" (2004: 130). I use the term in a broader sense to cover responsibility for any action, not just utterances.

submission terminal exchange and the compromise terminal exchange. The submission exchange takes place when an oppositional move is met with an assent, while the compromise exchange requires one participant to offer a concession, which is then accepted (1990: 121–122). Only the first format, that of submission, inevitably leads to a determination with an unequivocal winner, although third-party intervention may of course also involve the third party (usually powerful or authoritative) siding with one of the debaters, and indeed Vuchinich suggests that third-party intervention is a subtype of the submission terminal exchange (1990: 125). For example, in a family conflict sequence between siblings, a parent may intervene with a directive to stop fighting, and the intervention is likely to eventually terminate the conflict.

A concession exchange requires finding a position between those advocated by the participants, acceptable to both (1990: 126). This new compromise solution is then offered as a concession to the opponent, and if it is accepted by the recipient in the next turn, the participants have successfully negotiated a termination by compromise. A stand-off, on the other hand, is achieved by "avoiding the second slot in a terminal exchange" (1990: 130). The first slot may consist of an offer of concession or an oppositional move, but in either case a stand-off can be reached by withholding the response. Withdrawal, then, is really a subtype of stand-off, where the avoidance takes the form of completely leaving the interaction. In Vuchinich's data of conflicts recorded at the family dinner table, withdrawal was quite rare, while stand-off was the most frequent termination format (1990: 135).

For much of the preceding discussion I have been focusing on elements of language which are, in a way, not strictly linguistic: attacks and defences can easily be performed nonverbally as well as verbally. This is to some extent typical of research focusing on conflict talk, as scholars tend to focus on the functions performed by the participants, rather than on the concrete linguistic realisations of those functions. However, there has been some work on the lexical level as well. Scott (1998, 2002) studied linguistic features of conflict in spoken data: a set of four televised episodes of an American television news show debating topical issues of various kinds. She convincingly argues that such interaction, while not "naturally occurring" conversation, is in many ways similar to the talk produced by professionals at, for example, meetings. My penultimate chapter (Chapter 9) departs from Scott's model of analysis.

Scott's purpose was to examine quantitatively the types of features that seem to occur more frequently in disagreement phases of talk, compared to a general purpose corpus (Biber 1988). Based on her analysis, she distinguished certain subtypes of backgrounded and foregrounded disagreement talk (on a scale from 'collegial' disagreements through 'personal challenge' disagreements to a 'personal attack' disagreement). Each of these

subtypes was found to have a slightly different linguistic constitution. Scott's focus was on the language use of professionals in a somewhat formal, public setting, which means that the subtypes may not be generalisable to other types of material.

Her list of features to be studied, however, is quite a useful starting point for comparisons, since she had a very rigorous methodology for verifying that a potentially conflict-related feature really was more frequent in conflict sequences than in a general corpus. Features had to be strongly present both within a sequence (any sequence should show a minimum number of co-occurring features) and across sequences (a feature had to occur within a high percentage of the conflict sequences analysed). In such a way, only the most salient indicators of disagreement were included. The linguistic features found by Scott to index disagreements include the following (2002: 6): absolute expressions (*all* and *every*), negation, the discourse markers *but*, *now*, and *well*; emphatics (*a lot*), floor bids (expressions intended to gain or keep the floor), overlapping speech turns, indexical second person pronouns, modals, repetitions, questions, short turn length; and uptake avoidance (a conspicuous failure to answer a question).

In this study, I shall focus only on the features most relevant for early debate poetry: the written data does not represent overlapping speech turns (even assuming that these would be found in a debate context, which can be more formal in its turn-taking rules than ordinary conversation). Many of the other elements, too, are likely to have lower frequencies in written material. Repetition is an example of this. While it is clearly possible to repeat elements in a written text, it is perhaps less likely that this strategy will be used in a written text compared to a heated face-to-face argument where speakers may feel forced to repeat things just to have them heard. Repetitions in a verse text are obviously much more carefully considered and used for a specific stylistic effect. Similarly, turn length is probably much less variable in debate poetry than genuine disagreements or debates, depending more on verse form than the heatedness of the discussion. However, despite these differences, many of Scott's features can be found in earlier stages of English as well, making them relevant for studies of conflictive language use. As the reasons for the high frequency of these features have to do with the semantics and pragmatics of the conflict interaction, it does not seem too far-fetched to assume that they were already conflict-related in the medieval period and indeed even earlier.

I have, however, shortened Scott's list of features, as my approach in Chapter 9 is quantitative, making use of the AntConc software. Lacking non-verbal cues, uptake avoidance is hard to search for. The same problem applies to floor bids, and in any case the likelihood of having to fight for the floor is smaller in debates, where the rules guarantee both parties a chance to speak. Both uptake avoidance and floor bids are touched upon in the preceding qualitative chapters, however. Out of Scott's diagnostic

features, turn length is unsuitable for analysis in poetic texts, since it is partly dependent on metre.[21] Given the corpus methodology used in this chapter, I also chose to exclude questions, which are less straightforward to search for in a corpus without tagging or normalised punctuation. Wh-questions would be easy to search for, but questions formed by inversion would be missed. Repetitions were discarded for the same reason. Finally, discourse markers were also considered more suited to a qualitative analysis. Scott started from a very short list of three well-known discourse markers, which she had observed to be common in her data. Of course, the historical development of various discourse markers has been studied extensively, but none of them seem to be particularly frequent in my data, so there was no obvious way to select a subset of discourse markers for analysis.

This process of elimination resulted in a much shorter list of features:

1. absolute expressions (e.g. *all* and *every*)
2. negation
3. emphatics such as *a lot*
4. indexical 2nd-person pronouns
5. modals

These features were the most suitable for analysis in a number of ways: first of all, they are all features that can easily be located with a corpus search. They are also all very frequent, which is important in a relatively small corpus such as mine (Scott's corpus was even smaller, but her data only consisted of the conflict sequences, while I have chosen to include the whole texts). Low-frequency items will simply not occur often enough in such a small dataset to yield reliable numeric data. They are also features which, while obviously not completely diachronically stable, have nonetheless not changed quite so drastically as, for example, discourse markers.

4.7 The concept of layering: Literary representation of dialogue

Dialogue in literary works is not genuine dialogue even when the reported dialogue is based on real events. The Greek historian Thucydides famously remarked in the first chapter of his *History of the Peloponnesian War* that

> [w]ith reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory,

[21] In *The Carpenter's Tools,* the average turn length is 55 words, which is similar to Scott's average of 53.5 words per turn in backgrounded disagreements (2002: 311). However, in many cases turns may be longer in my corpus than in Scott's data (television shows discussing a controversial topic), since there is a tendency for long monologues.

> so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. (Book 1, 1.22)

Indeed, Tannen has argued that all cases of "reported speech" should be seen as constructed dialogue (1989: 110). Even if representations of dialogues that actually took place in the real world are to been seen as creative and fictional in some sense, obviously this is all the more true when the dialogue takes place between wholly imaginary or even fantastic characters, like for instance two speaking birds.

Regardless of the fictive status of the dialogue, literary works frequently exhibit what has been termed *layering* (Clark 1996). As Tannen's argument should make one suspect, this is not only a feature of fictional language, as storytelling is a very common occurrence in everyday conversations as well, many of which are concerned with representing actions and discourses which took place somewhere else, or which may be completely imaginary. For instance, in a debate poem, there is commonly a frame story presented by the voice of a character (real or imaginary) functioning as narrator, who reports the speech of other characters (a different layer), who in turn may use chunks of reported speech within their discourse.

Beyond these fictional layers, there is the zero layer (so to say) of the author, who creates all of the discourse attributed to the characters. In many cases, it would be valid to speak of a "collective sender" rather than any single individual sender, as Dynel (2011) proposed for film dialogue. Film and other forms of drama differ from non-dramatic literature in one very important way in terms of the participants: although there may be a single author behind the dialogue, the interpretations becoming available to the recipient are strongly influenced by the manner of delivery, which in turn is formed by the joint efforts of the author, actor, director, costume designer, stage designer, musicians and so on. Indeed, a medieval manuscript or early modern printed book is likely to have been a joint effort as well – in addition to the author, there may have been copyists, illuminators, printers, and so on, and in some cases, the texts were performed publicly or privately much as plays were (see e.g. Jucker & Pahta 2011: 3; Culpeper & Demmen 2011). However, this zero layer is mostly beyond the scope of the current study, which focuses on the fictional layers of the text.

As for the fictional layers, there are commonly at least three. First of all, the narrator's discourse (in the texts with a narratorial voice) forms Layer 1. The discourse between the characters, then, forms Layer 2, and when the characters report what someone else (either their current interlocutor or a third party) has said, that forms a third layer. Sometimes, however, the narrator is presented as participating in interaction with the

characters in the poem, and in those cases his report of his own speeches belongs to Layer 2 rather than Layer 1. There is evidence that these layers are linguistically different in some respects: Salmi (in press) found that in early modern debate poetry, the frequence of verbs of existence (*be, have*) was significantly higher on Layer 2 than on Layer 1.

Instead of using the term 'layering', some scholars refer to multiple discourse levels (e.g. Culpeper & Kytö 2010); and in many ways, the concept is not very different from intertextuality, although that concept is generally used only for written texts.

4.8 Further methodological tools

The process of material selection has been explained in Section 1.4 above. In practice, the analysis was carried out with the help of MAXQDA11, a qualitative data analysis software package, into which the text files were imported.[22] Once the texts are in the MAXQDA 'project', various features of interest can then be coded simply by highlighting the relevant excerpts of text and drag-and-dropping them into the relevant category. The highlighted examples can then be examined in table format, which can be exported into MS Excel if desired. An advantage of examining the table in MAXQDA, however, is that a click on the table cell will bring up the example in its full context. The use of a purpose-built software for qualitative analysis makes the process considerably easier, aiding visualisation, enhancing the consistency of coding and making it easy to perform additional quantitative look-ups when necessary.

Unfortunately, I have yet to devise a way in which to localise conflictive moves automatically through a corpus search. Indeed, that may be nearly impossible, as these moves can take a variety of forms. Thus, the instances of moves were localised by close reading. The system of coding was initially based on Spitz's list of conflictive moves (2006). However, during the process of coding, recurrent patterns emerged from the data, creating a need for new codes (for example the move I have termed a *prediction*). Self-praise was another example of a move which I did not initially expect to find, but which nonetheless surfaced very soon during the analysis, especially as it was used without much in the way of hedging or softening. As for consistency of coding, ideally there would be at least two independent coders, but such resources were not available for the current project. However, I have attempted to approximate a similar effect by recursion: the coding was checked repeatedly, with sufficient time in between to assure that I would see the exchange with fresh eyes.

[22] MAXQDA, software for qualitative data analysis, 1989–2016, VERBI Software – Consult – Sozialforschung GmbH, Berlin, Germany. The manual for Version 11 can be found at http://www.maxqda.com/download/manuals/MAX11_manual_eng.pdf.

I have generally preferred to analyse stretches of talk as containing a great number of relatively short moves, which are connected together to build a strategy of attack or defence. This is an issue that does not arise to quite the same extent in genuine face-to-face talk, since speech turns tend to be shorter there. However, it is usually relatively simple to assign a function to a phrase. Since the moves are of various lengths and take different forms, I have preferred not to perform any statistical analyses on them, beyond a simple frequency count. Where possible, I have used formal criteria to assist in assigning examples to categories. For instance, the distinction between accusation and demand for explanation is that the former is a statement, while the latter is in question form. This might seem overly mechanical, but as a matter of fact the two moves tend to co-occur. Take example (16) below:

(16) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 217–226

"Hule," ho sede, "seie me soþ,	"Owl," she said, "Tell me the truth:
wi dostu þat unwiȝtis doþ?	why do you do what perverse creatures do,
þu singist aniȝt & noȝt adai,	singing by night rather than by day?
& al þi song is wailawai.	And all your singing's just 'moan, moan, moan'.
Þu miȝt mid þine songe afere	With your song you could strike fear
alle þat ihereþ þine ibere:	Into anybody who heard your carrying-on.
þu schrichest & ȝollest to þine fere,	The way you shriek and yell at your mate
þat hit is grislich to ihere:	is horrible to hear; and it seems to everybody
hit þincheþ boþe wise & snepe	that you're weeping rather than singing.
noȝt þat þu singe, ac þat þu wepe.	

Instead of labelling the whole stretch of talk as either an accusation or a demand for explanation (when after all it is both) I would argue that it is a combination of at least four moves. First of all, there is the directive *seie me soþ,* face-threatening both because it is giving orders, and because of the assumption that the Owl might not be telling the truth without being asked to. Secondly, there is a demand for explanation: *wi dostu þat unwiȝtis doþ?* Thirdly, there is an accusation: the Owl only sings by night, and so mournfully that all hearers are frightened of her. It is here that the counting becomes complicated: is the shrieking and yelling to be understood as a separate accusation (which would mean that there are two accusations following close on each other's heels), or should it be seen as an elaboration of the first accusation, perhaps to lend credibility to it? On the whole, I have treated such repetitions of more or less the same accusation (or any other move) as constituting a single move, except in cases where a different move is introduced before the speaker returns to the topic. Finally, there is a different type of move, oriented towards the speaker rather than the addressee: the Nightingale attempts to add credibility to her accusations by implying that this is just not her opinion, but that of all wise men.

In the penultimate chapter of this study, I have adopted a quantitative approach, intended to complement the qualitative work done in the other chapters. For the quantitative searches, the freeware corpus analysis toolkit AntConc 3.4.4[23] was used. It has the advantage of being freely available, intuitive to use, and it was more than sufficient for my relatively small corpus and simple searches: it provides wordlists, concordances, N-gram searches and keyword analyses.

In the following two chapters I shall focus on the most common moves found in my corpus of debate poetry. First, I shall examine other-oriented moves: moves that focus on the opponent's shortcomings. I shall then proceed to self-oriented moves, which attempt to present the speaker in a positive light.

[23] The software is developed by Laurence Anthony at Waseda University, Tokyo. The manual is available at http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/releases/AntConc344/help.pdf. The first searches were performed with version 3.3.5 of the software, but all results were later checked with version 3.4.4.

5 Other-oriented conflictive moves

Participants in debates have two general goals, both designed to lead to victory in the altercation: first, they try to present the antagonist in a negative light, and secondly, they try to present themselves in a positive light. This chapter focuses on moves which aim towards the first goal, while the following chapter examines moves aiming towards the latter one. Of course, in practice attack is often the best defence: a well-designed attack will force the opponent to defend themselves, deflecting time and energy which he might otherwise have directed into an attack of their own. Different types of moves can be used for this purpose. In the following, I shall examine some of the most frequently occuring other-oriented move-types. Figure 1. below shows the relative frequencies of each move, allowing the reader to get a general idea of which moves are most common in the present corpus of early debate poetry.

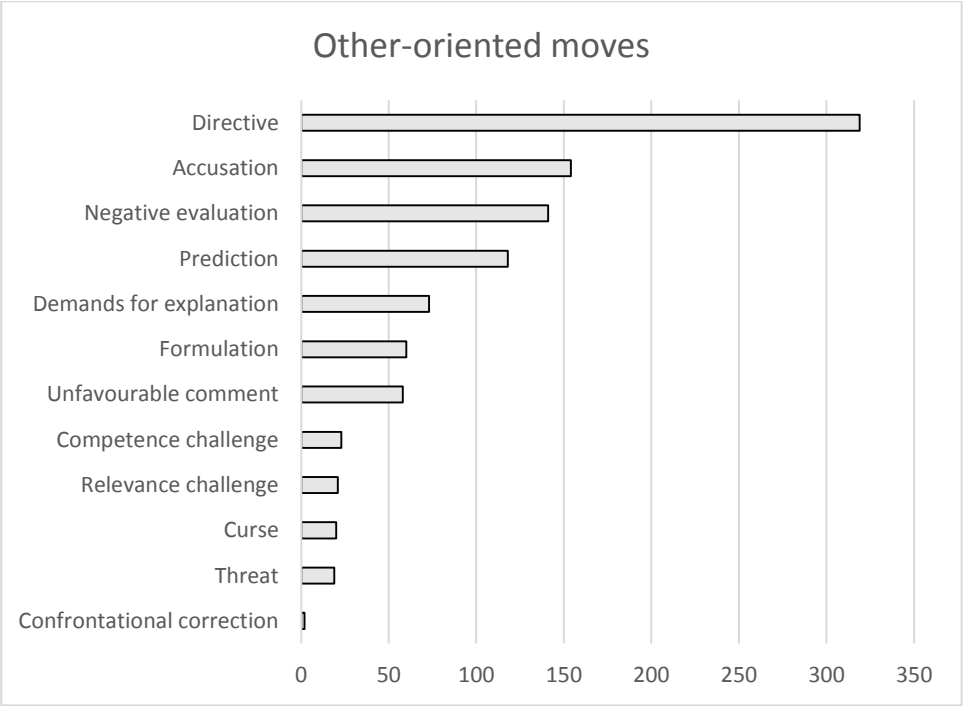

Figure 1. The raw frequencies of the other-oriented moves in my data set.

Most of these moves are adopted from Spitz (2006), but I have added the two categories of predictions and formulations, both of which are very salient in the dataset. On the other hand, I have chosen not to focus on contradictions and counterclaims in any depth in my analysis, although these moves are also common in debate poetry. A contradiction is a negation of an opponent's proposition (Spitz 2006: 437), while a counterclaim

opposes the proposition implicitly, for example by offering an alternative proposition which is mutually exclusive with the opponent's (Spitz 2006: 493). The reason for this exclusion is twofold: firstly, they are unique among Spitz's moves in being focused on the propositional content. All the other moves tend to be aimed at the opponent's person in a more direct way. Secondly, no study of reasonable length could possibly analyse *all* the moves found in conflict, and an examination of these fairly straightforward forms of opposition would have yielded little new information. I shall now illustrate each of the moves, proceeding from the most frequent types to the relatively rare ones.

5.1 Directives

Spitz notes that directives are a common form of expressing opposition in mother-daughter disputes in drama (2006: 292). The basic aim of a *directive* is for the speaker to get the addressee to perform some action which the speaker (although not necessarily the addressee) wishes to take place. This amounts to an encroachment on the hearer's right of self-determination, as the successful performance of a directive means that the speaker has control over the addressee's actions.[24] This is the reason why directives are a threat to the recipient's negative face. On the other hand, sometimes a directive may have a very different implicit function: it could be an intentional provocation, serving to goad a reluctant opponent into participating in the conflict talk (cf. Bax 1981 on the ritual challenges preceding combat in knightly romances).

The most typical way to perform a directive is by using an imperative verb. Of course, the same result can be achieved by using more indirect means, such as formulating the directive as a question. On the other hand, sometimes no verb is needed: when a character responds to another's speech with "Softe, syr!", the interactive achievement aimed at is to affect the interlocutor in such a way that they will cease talking. In the present study, such implicit directives have also been included in the counts.

In early English debate poetry, there are two major recurring types of directives. First there are demands for attention, and secondly there are commands to leave. I shall now examine each of these types in turn. Here are some examples where a debater directs the opponent to listen carefully and pay attention:

[24] There are exceptions: "Have some cake!" is a bald on-record directive, but it is nonetheless not normally perceived as a severe face-threat, since it is an offer and therefore "oriented to face" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 99): a bald on-record directive is generally used only when the speaker expects that the offer is agreeable to the recipient, and a more indirect form of directive is selected if there is a chance that the offer may be unwelcome and, therefore, a bigger face-threat.

(17) *The Heart and the Eye*, l. 300

Take now ryght good hede what I say to the.	Now pay close attention to what I tell you.

(18) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1421–1422

Lust nu, ich segge þe hwareuore	Just listen and I'll tell you my reasoning
Vp to þe toppe from þe more:	From top to bottom.

Such calls for attention can serve at least two purposes: first of all, they can be used to mark particularly central points in the argument, so that both the interlocutor and the audience are sure to catch these.[25] Simultaneously, they can be used to threaten the interlocutor's face by implying that they do not normally listen or pay close enough attention, perhaps being too engrossed in their own line of thinking. Both interpretations seem plausible in the debate context. Another way of demanding attention is to tell the interlocutor to be silent:

(19) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 655–656

Site nu stille, chaterestre!	Now sit quietly, you chatterbox!
Nere þu neuer ibunde uastre.	You've never been more completely tied in knots.

(20) *The Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 187–191

"Softe, syr," seyd the Gabull Rope,	"Softly, sir," said the Cable Rope,
"Me thinke gode ale is in your tope.	"I think there is good ale in your head!
For thou spekys as thou wold fyght,	For you speak as if you wanted to fight
Therto and thou hade any myght.	If you only had the might for it.
I schall tell thee another tale:	(But) I will tell you another story:

Such moves can be *floor-bids:* the speaker wishes for the opponent to yield the floor to them, and produces a move which is intended to silence the opponent. In other cases, the speaker may not wish to take the floor themselves, and the main goal is to make the opponent stop talking (cf. Culpeper's category of *silencers* (2011: 136)). Typical forms of floor bids in Scott's study of linguistic realisation of conflict included *let me* + verb, and various expressions including the words *minute* or *second*, like 'just a second' or 'wait a minute' (2002: 306). Time expressions are not used for this purpose in early

[25] Some of the shorter types could also be considered to function as discourse markers. However, as can be seen from example (17), many examples consist of longer phrases and are integrated into the sentence structure.

debate poetry, but both the *let me* + verb construction and instructions to wait can be found. For example, in *The Owl and the Nightingale* the Wren demands to be heard at the end, when the Nightingale has declared herself the victor and the Owl threatens her with an army of birds of prey. He directs them to listen and let him speak:

(21) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1729–1734

"Lusteþ," heo cwaþ, "lateþ me speke.	"Now listen!" she said. "Let me speak!
Hwat! wulle ȝe þis pes tobreke,	What! – do you want to break this peace
An do þanne kinge swuch schame?	And so then disgrace the king?
Ȝet nis he nouþer ded ne lame.	Indeed, you won't find him dead or crippled!
Hunke schal itide harm & schonde,	If you commit a breach of the peace in his land,
Ȝef ȝe doþ griþbruche on his londe.	You'll both suffer injury and dishonour.

Various forms of the verb *lust* (listen) and synonyms like *hearken* are used as floor bids. For example, in *The Thrush and the Nightingale,* the Nightingale declares that it is now her turn to speak:

(22) *The Thrush and the Nightingale,* ll. 146–148

Tho seide the Nighttingale,	Then the Nightingale said,
"Fowel, wel redi is thi tale;	"Bird, you're very ready to talk;
Herkne to mi lore.	Listen to what I have to teach.

These floor bids are typically followed by a less than flattering description of the preceding argumentation (an unfavourable comment, see 5.8 below). For example, in example (23) below, the Nightingale has been arguing that all love is a waste of time, excepting the love of God. The Merle responds by referring to the Nightingale's talk as *preaching*, and attempts to put an end to it by telling him to cease:

(23) *The Merle and the Nightingale*, ll. 33–40

"Seis," quod the merle, "thy preching, nychtingale!	"Cease," said the blackbird, "your preaching,
Sall folk thair yewth spend into holines?	nightingale! Must people spend their youth in
Of yung sanctis growis auld feyndis, but faill.	holiness? Of young saints come old fiends, no
Fy, ypocreit in yeiris tendirnes,	doubt. Fie, hypocrite in tender years,
Agane the law of kynd thow gois expres	you go right against the law of nature,
That crukit aige makis on with yewth serene,	treating crooked age as one with serene youth,
Quhome Nature of conditionis maid dyvers:	the two of whom Nature made diverse of
A lusty lyfe in luves service bene."	condition: Joyful is life in Love's service!"

While 'preaching' is not necessarily a negative characterisation, there is a time and place for it. Especially combined with the implication of hypocrisy a few lines later, and the directive to stop preaching, there is justification for understanding it as unfriendly in this

context, even though it is a relatively accurate description of the Nightingale's actions in this poem. Much more aggressive formulations can also be found. Another Nightingale responds to a clerk's argument as follows:

(24) *The Clerk and the Nightingale II*, ll. 19–22

"Be styl, clerk, and hold thi mowth, And let gabbyng a throwe; This lesyng ys wel syde cowde, That may al folk know.	Be still, clerk, and hold your mouth, And leave gabbing for a while! These lies are very widely recognised [as such], and known to everyone.

In addition to telling him to be still and hold his mouth, the Nightingale uses words like *gabbing* and *lesyng,* both of which can refer to lies and trickery, but also to idle talk and illusions. *Be still* occurs several times in this function. Again, there are negative implications to formulating the demand for attention in such a way, suggesting that the interlocutor is excessively loud and/or talkative.

Another commonly occurring type of directive is an order to leave. For example, the Soul, having first evaluated the Body's question on the chance of redemption as wanting reason, directs it to "goe, and rot":

(25) *Saint Bernard's Vision*, ll. 99–102

Thy question (senselesse Body) wanteth reason, Redemption now is hopelesse, out of season. Uile Body goe, and rot in bed of Clay, Untill the great and generall Iudgement day:	Your question, senseless Body, is irrational. There is no hope of redemption now, it's out of season. Vile Body, go and rot in your clay bed until the great and general Judgement Day!

Such orders are seldom complied with, at least immediately, and it appears that directives to leave are bleached of semantic content. The fact that they still occur relatively often suggests that compliance is not the result aimed for: it is more likely that they serve another function. Telling someone to leave has the obvious implication that their company is not desired, and this can further be attributed to a negative perception of the addressee by the speaker. Thus, a directive to leave is an attack on the addressee's positive face as well as attacking the negative face as all directives. It can also rather strongly imply that the recipient's contribution to the discourse is not considered to be of any value. As can be seen from the example above, this type of directive can be further aggravated by combining it with insulting epithets ("uile"), or with curses ("rot in bed of clay"). Another possible function of this type of directive is the silencing of the opponent: if they leave the setting of the conflict, they can hardly go on disputing.

There are basically two possible responses to a directive: compliance and noncompliance. However, these can be combined with verbal commentary in various ways, and sometimes the verbal and nonverbal responses are not in agreement. The verbal marking of compliance seems to be quite rare in my corpus, as opposed to the findings of Mazzon (2009: 131) on the N-town plays. Indeed, compliance itself is rare in debates: while compliance is the preferred response to directives in general, this is unlikely to hold in the debate context. As for marking refusals, there are a few instances where the characters explicitly comment on their refusal to follow the directive produced by their opponent, but mostly the refusal is not verbally marked. Nor is there much evidence that directives were actually perceived as face-threatening or inappropriate. Of course, we cannot assume that early modern, let alone medieval, speakers of English had identical face-threatening (or face-saving) devices to ours, but there is a noticeable tendency for directives to cluster with other aggressive moves, and in some cases the reaction is equally aggressive. Here is an example of a verbal response to a directive, from a love-debate, where Consultor is advising the lover (Amator) that he should make an end of his unrequited love (*from her loue / do your selfe refrayne*):

(26) *The Spectacle of Lovers,* ll. 771–777

Experyence by fyre / whiche is nygh quenched with brymstone it wyll be kyndled soone agayne In lykewyse loue / yf it be frequented wherfore from her loue / do your selfe refrayne Fynde some occasyon / at her to dysdayne To desyre her loue / be not ye to madde Except of yours / that she wolde be as gladde	Experiment with fire: when it is nearly quenched, it can soon be rekindled with brimstone. Love does the same thing, if often attended to. So hold back from her love! Find an excuse to disdain her! Don't be too keen to desire her love, unless she would be equally glad of yours!
Amator. To gyue me suche counsell / me thynke ye be not wyse Your sugred lyppes can not me begyle For yf I sholde folowe your aduyse My lyfe wolde contynue / but a small whyle From her company / I can not me exyle To leue that thynge / whiche that I loue best No reasonable man / wyll make no suche request	Amator I don't think you're very wise to give me such counsel. Your sugared lips cannot beguile me! For if I should follow your advice, my life would continue only a short while. I can't banish myself from her company. To leave the thing I love best! No reasonable man would make such a request!

Amator clearly refuses to comply with the directive. He responds with a negative evaluation, implying that Consultor is either unwise and therefore incompetent, or purposefully deceiving him. He then goes on to give an account of his reasons for refusing, explaining that it is impossible and quite unreasonable for him to follow this advice, as it would lead to death from a broken heart. He then reiterates the negative evaluation, repeating that no reasonable man would require such a thing of him.

5.2 Accusations

Spitz (2006: 248) defines an accusation as an expression of dissatisfaction or criticism regarding an action or attitude, which is seen as either violating a social norm or the speaker's personal expectations or preferences: an accusation construes the recipient as a wrongdoer. It can also be referred to as blaming, complaining, criticising, disapproving, and a number of other terms (Spitz 2006: 248). Spitz points out that distinguishing between these types of communicative acts is by no means easy and possibly not very useful either (ibid.). Niemi and Bateman (2015: 84) remark that the goal of complaints tends to be gaining the recipient's 'affiliation', i.e. expressions of sympathy and support. Accusations, on the other hand, normally provoke a denial or some other type of countermove. It could also be argued that complaints are usually aimed at a third party, while accusations are directed at the interlocutor. In debate poetry, however, this distinction can be problematic, as the speakers commonly represent a larger group they are associated with. A typical group would be women, as the virtues (or lack thereof) of women were a common topic for dispute. I have followed Spitz in using the term *accusation*, although I would consider it roughly synonymous with blaming, complaints and criticising. Accusations are a threat to the receiver's positive face, as they imply that the receiver has failed to fulfil a social expectation which at least the speaker constructs as normative by the very act of complaining.

It seems fairly self-evident that such an aggressive move is unlikely to be received well: the addressee is likely to counter the attack in some way. Considering these disadvantages of performing an accusation, there must be advantages as well, for the move to be worth performing. In some cases, the desired outcome on the macro-level may indeed be an escalation of the conflict to such a point that the addressee chooses to leave. However, this is not the goal of any single move so much as of the verbal conflict itself. On the micro-level, the purpose of an accusation is probably more to provide evidence in the form of concrete examples of undesirable previous actions, or to direct the receiver to cease the objectionable action. See example (27) below, a speech of a rabbi in the disputation between Jesus and the Masters of Law. The text expands on the story found in Luke 2:41–50, where the twelve-year-old Jesus stays at the temple after Passover and astonishes the teachers with his questions and answers (see 3.1.6 above). The medieval version frames this as a debate:

(27) *Jesus and the Masters of Law,* ll. 18–27

A mayster seide to Jhesu:	A master said to Jesus:
"Þhou scholdest lerne and nouȝt teche,	"You should be learning, not teaching.
Þou spillest speche – what seystou!	It's just a waste of words – what are you saying!
Þi wrangful wordes worcheþ wreche;	Your injurious words do damage.

Þou repungnest in pres aʒeyn vr prou,	You publicly argue against our advantage,
As preised prophete þe peple preche.	And preach to the people as an esteemed prophet.
Stunt a stounde þi sawe of Gru,	Stop for a moment your Greek sayings:
Þi wit to teche may not reche.	Your discretion is not sufficient for teaching.
Þow schuldest lerne A. B. C.	You should be learning your ABC,
ffor þe fayleþ a foundement; [...]"	for you are missing the basic skills…"

The master is accusing Jesus of 'wrongful words' which will confuse people, and are nothing but a waste of speech (*þou spillest speche*). Note that there is another category that can sometimes be quite similar to accusations: that of unfavourable comments (see 5.8 below). An unfavourable comment is "a negative evaluation of what the prior speaker has just said" (Spitz 2006: 420). For instance, the reference to wrongful words is an unfavourable comment. However, in addition to evaluating the contents of his words, the master is clearly also accusing Jesus of wrongdoing in that he is publicly rebelling against accepted teachings, and presenting himself as a prophet. This is combined with a directive to cease talking (*stunt a stounde þi sawe* 'cease for a moment your words'). The master then moves on to a competence challenge (see 5.8 below): the boy does not (yet) have enough knowledge to teach, although the master does admit his obvious talent. Nonetheless, he patronisingly suggests that the young Jesus should first learn his ABC. Often the accusation is not founded so much on an arguable action as an arguable attitude: for instance, the masters seem to object as much to the presumption of the young man speaking in the temple as to his unorthodox teachings.

Accusations can be either first or second position moves. Of course, a prerequisite for an accusation is that there is an antecedent event of some kind, which can be evaluated by means of the accusation, but an accusation can be (and often is) used to initiate the verbal dispute. It is a tool for arguing the arguable action. For instance, *The Thrush and the Nightingale* begins with accusations: first, the narrator reports that the Thrush is continuously speaking ill of women. He then seems to slide into direct speech reporting the Thrush's accusation against women:

(28) *The Thrush and the Nightingale,* ll. 19–27

"For hy biswiketh euchan ma	Because they deceive every man
That mest bileueth hem ouppon;	Who puts most faith in them;
They hy ben milde of chere,	Although they are gentle in manner,
Hoe beth fikele and fals to fonde,	They are fickle and false when tried,
Hoe wercheth wo in euchan londe –	They cause misery in every country –
Hit were betere that hy nere!"	It would be better if they didn't exist!
"Lo, it is shome to blame leuedy,	"It's shameful to criticise ladies,
For hy beth hende of corteisy;	Since they are well-bred and courteous;
Ich rede that thou lete. [...]"	I advise you to leave off. [...]"

Although the Thrush's initial complaint expresses criticism of something he finds socially unacceptable, it is probably better analysed as a complaint than as an accusation, since the women in question are not present to respond to an accusation. However, the Nightingale chooses to take this complaint as arguable and initiates the dispute sequence with an accusation that the Thrush's behaviour is shameful, gives her reasons for thinking so, and directs him to stop. This is quite typical: accusations are often followed with arguments explaining why the arguable action is to be considered wrong. Take example (29) below, Amator's response to Consultor's claim that women cannot be trusted.

(29) *The Spectacle of Lovers*, ll. 582–588

Fye fye for shame / ye do rayle in your sentence Theym so to dysprayse / it is not commendable Syth they be bounde / by vertue of obedyence To obey theyr husbandes / & to theym to be seruysable Not as a seruaunt / but by loue charytable And as a frende / to be to theym stedfast In worde and dede / whyle that theyr lyues last	Fie, fie for shame! Your arguments are abusive. It is not right to criticise them so, since they are bound by virtue of obedience to obey their husbands and to be useful to them, not as servants, but through tender-hearted love, and to be unshakable in friendship, in word and deed, while their lives last.

Amator disapproves of Consultor's argument, explicitly stating that it is "not commendable". As this clearly construes the dispraise as socially unacceptable, it seems to be a clear case of accusation. However, it is less clear how *ye do rayle in your sentence* ('you make abusive assertions', cf. MED *railen* (v.(3) and *sentence* (n. 5a)) should be analysed. I have treated it as an unfavourable comment, but it might also be seen as an accusation. In any case, Amator then goes on to provide a reason why Consultor's attitude is wrong: women are bound to obey their husbands and be "serviceable" to them as faithful friends. In this way, he implicitly frames Consultor as both uncharitable and unreasonable. Similarly, in *A Dialogue Defensive*, the Magpie argues that women bring their husbands "to debt and danger", being lazy spendthrifts. The Falcon accuses him of lying, and proceeds to give evidence for this:

(30) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 503–522

Nothynge is trewe, thou speakest here this day Thy fables be fayned, and false this is clere A womans offyce, as Arystotle tought In his Econymyckes, is redy for to make Suche thynges for sustynaunce, as to her be brought Her famylye to fede, that paynes and labours take All rychesse procured, by nyght or els by day	Nothing is true that you say here today! Your fables are fiction and false, this is clear. A woman's job, as Aristotle taught in his *Economics*, is to make ready for sustenance such things as are brought to her to feed her hard-working family. All riches, which are produced by the man's labours, by night or

Throughe the mannes trauayle, in felde or in towne
The wyfe with her wysdom, must kepe from decay
And suffer no proffyte, in losse to fall downe
By practes I proue, in places as I passe
The prudent polycye, in suche gubernacyon
Of women that wysely, the worlde do compasse
In moste honest maner, to theyr commendacyon
what labour of bodye, do they oft sustayne
what breke of slepe, whan they shulde rest take
with honestye theyr husbandes, and house to mayntayne
These thynges to fulfyll, no paynes they forsake
Men dyuers I haue knowe, to wast, spyll, and spende
At drynkynges and games, suche rychesse as they had

by day, in the fields or in town, the wife must preserve with wisdom, suffering no profit to be lost or squandered. Daily experience in many places is my proof of the prudent policies women have in such management, wisely going around the world in the most commendable way to their credit.
What labours of body they often sustain!
What lack of sleep, when they should instead rest in order to maintain their husbands and house honourably! They spare no trouble to achieve these things. As for men, I have known many to waste, squander and spend what riches they had at drinking and games.

After stating that the Magpie's words are not true (an unfavourable comment), the Falcon backs his argument by citing Aristotle on the duties of women. While this is of course an ideal description and not sufficient on its own to counter the Magpie's argument, the Falcon argues that experience (*practes*, l. 513) has proven that many women are indeed very honest and hardworking in maintaining their house and family, while it is not unknown for men to spend their earnings on drink and gambling. In this way, he attempts to deflect the Magpie's complaint against women by an accusation of his own. The Magpie does not attempt to contradict this argument; instead he offers another accusation to the effect that women like to tempt men "with Cupydes darte". Although accusations are common as first-part moves, in practice they also often occur as responses to another move by the opponent, as can be seen from (29) and (30) above. This is also true of present-day conflict talk (Pomerantz 1978).

5.3 Negative evaluations

Spitz uses the term *disqualification* for this move, remarking that "[s]peakers can disqualify opponents by attributing a negative value to them, their actions, values or beliefs or to things or people attached to them" (2006: 403). For reasons of clarity, I have preferred the term *negative evaluation* for this category, as the term *disqualification* is not widely used for this function in English. Such evaluations are obviously a threat to the interlocutor's positive face, since expressing a negative belief about the interlocutor will conflict with their need to uphold a positive self-image. Explicit negative evaluations are quite common in my data, as can be expected from the *ad hominem* nature of some debate poems. This category includes name-calling and pejorative expressions, but also other types of explicit negative evaluations about the recipient. In many cases, insults would go under this category.

Note that evaluations of the opponent's argument are treated as a separate move type (see 5.8). This move is related to competence challenges, which could be seen as a type of negative evaluation regarding the competence of the interlocutor. Indeed, it can sometimes be rather difficult to keep the two moves separate, but there are grounds for doing so. Since a competence challenge is intended to question the epistemic status of the opponent's statements, they are thus relevant for the argument, while a negative evaluation is essentially an *ad hominem* move. This distinction seems useful enough to justify keeping the two moves separate.

Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000) define insults mainly in terms of their illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect: an insult will have taken place when the speaker has made a statement about the addressee (or someone closely related to them), if the addressee feels offended, and attributes this effect to an intention on the part of the speaker. Indeed, many of the move types already discussed above would count as insulting under this definition, depending on how strictly we interpret the notion that the insult is a 'statement': a directive is not a statement, but it can be experienced as insulting, because it implies that the speaker sees the addressee as the kind of person to whom orders may be given. In any case, we have no direct access to the feelings of the recipient, unless they are expressed verbally, or, in the case of debate poetry, reported by the narrator, as in example (31) below, showing the Owl's reaction to the Nightingale's negative evaluation of her:

(31) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 33–44

"Vnwiȝt," ho sede, "awei þu flo!	"You mutant!" she cried, "Why don't you fly
me is þe wurs þat ich þe so.	away? Just looking at you is bad for me.
Iwis for þine vule lete,	In fact I'm frequently put off my singing
wel oft ich mine song forlete;	Because of your ugly countenance.
min horte atfliþ & falt mi tonge,	Whenever you're shoved into my presence,
wonne þu art to me iþrunge.	My heart deserts me and my tongue falters.
Me luste bet speten þane singe	Because of your awful howling
of þine fule ȝoȝelinge."	I'd rather spit than sing!"
Þos hule abod fort hit was eve,	The Owl waited until it was evening
ho ne miȝte no leng bileue,	(but she could hardly put up with it any longer,
vor hire horte was so gret	for her heart was so swollen
þat wel neȝ hire fnast atschet,	that her breath almost burst out of her)

The Nightingale begins by calling the Owl a monster (*vnwiȝt***)** and telling her to fly away, and she goes on to claim that the mere sight of the Owl almost makes her sick: she can definitely not go on singing when such dreadful creatures are near her. The Owl remains silent until night, but the narrator remarks that her heart was almost bursting. This suggests that while an exchange of insults may have been entertaining to the audience,

the participants are represented as taking them seriously nonetheless. The example also suggests one possible function for insults: they can be used to provoke an argument. A forcefully worded negative evaluation also immediately puts the opponent on the defensive: they will have to either deny the negative qualities attributed to them, or give an acceptable account for them, before they can proceed to a counterattack.

In addition to the reactions of the recipients, the quality of the negative evaluations themselves suggests that they are not to be taken in a ludic spirit, unlike for instance the creative insults found in the early Scottish flytings. For example, in the flyting between the poets Dunbar and Kennedy, the former refers to his opponent as "ignorant elf, aip, owll irregular", and the latter retorts with "crawdown" (coward) and "skitterand scorpioun". Neither of the contestants stops to defend against such imputations, which Parks has reported as typical of the ludic debate (1990: 169). In contrast, participants in debate poems frequently do defend themselves against each other's attacks, although it is not always clear whether there was any particular move that they are reacting to, or whether they are responding to the sum effect of a whole cluster of moves. However, some examples can be found, as in the Owl's discussion of the Nightingale's looks:

(32) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 577–582 and 751–758

(Owl:)	(Owl:)
Þu art dim an of fule howe,	You're a dim and dirty colour;
an þinchest a lutel soti clowe.	and you look just like a little, sooty ball.
Þu nart fair, no þu nart strong,	You aren't pretty and you aren't strong;
ne þu nart þicke, ne þu nart long:	nor are you tall or broad.
þu hauest imist al of fairhede,	You've missed out completely on beauty
an lutel is al þi godede.	and you haven't got much virtue either.
[…]	[...]
(Nightingale:)	(Nightingale:)
Wi atuitestu me mine unstrengþe,	Why do you twit me for my lack of strength,
an mine ungrete & mine unlengþe,	my small size and my shortness?
an seist þat ich nam noȝt strong,	And why do you say that I'm not strong,
vor ich nam noþer gret ne long?	because I'm neither big nor tall?
Ac þu nost neuer wat þu menst,	Well, you don't know what you're talking about.
bute lese wordes þu me lenst:	You were just trying to fob me off with lying words.
for ich kan craft & ich kan liste,	For I'm versed in craftiness and cunning,
and þareuore ich am þus þriste.	and that's why I'm as bold as I am.

The Owl, whom the Nightingale has earlier described as "lodlich to biholde", is now paying back and describing the nightingale as small, weak and insignificant, like a sooty little ball that is neither fair nor strong. The Nightingale reacts to this with a demand for explanation, referring to the Owl's contribution with the verb *atwiten* ('accuse, reproach, taunt') and implying that size matters not. She then proceeds to a competence challenge,

arguing that the Owl does not know what she is talking about and accusing her of lying (*lese wordes*). Finally, she attempts to regain her self-image with some self-praise: she claims to know many skills. After the extract cited here, she gives a little exemplum on how one worthy skill well mastered can be more useful as a defence against attacks than a whole bunch of useless tricks.

In example (33) below, the heart is reasserting his accusation that the eye has caused him great pain, accompanying it with negative evaluations, calling the eye *worse than an erytyke.* The eye denies both, and announces that he will immediately seek out a marshall to judge their dispute.

(33) *Heart and Eye,* ll. 290–301

Herte	Heart
Thou scornest fast mortherer as I trowe	You speak derisively, you murderer, as I believe.
Thou hast me smyte with a stroke mortall	You have struck me a mortal blow;
By thy fals loke thou hast me ouerthrowe	Through your false looking you have overthrown
I wende full lytell thou had be such at all	me. I did not expect you to behave in such a way
Thou hast me cast with out the castell wall	at all. You have cast me outside the castle wall of
Of good comforte and out of all gladnesse	good comfort and all gladness.
Therfore in fayth I may the ryght well call	So indeed I have every right to call you
Worse than an erytyke the trouth to expresse.	worse than a heretic, to tell you the truth.
Eye	Eye
I am no mortherer nor out of byleue	I am no murderer nor an unbeliever
Thou shalte me fynde alway both playne & trewe	You will always find me both plain and true,
Nor by no wytnesse shalte thou neuer preue	Nor will you ever be able to prove by any witness
That euer I was to man vntrewe	that I was ever untrue to [any?] man.

Although negative evaluations, as an *ad hominem* move, should be strictly irrelevant for most types of debates, they are heavily used in debate poetry. There are two possible explanations for this. First of all, while the topics discussed in most debate poems may be abstract, the participants, as personifications, are typically personally involved in the matter. In this way, the *ad hominem* move becomes more relevant in much the same way it does in political debates preceding an election. This is an explanation which functions on Layer 2, the fictional layer of the characters. Secondly and more importantly, negative evaluations can be quite entertaining to the audience, who do not have a personal stake in the exchange.

5.4 Competence challenges

Spitz defines *competence challenges* as a "class of oppositional moves that call into question not simply (an aspect of) the prior talk but the competence or status of the party who produced that talk" (2006: 387). Another term for this move is 'incompetence claim'.

The goal of a competence challenge is obviously to make the opponent appear incompetent, threatening their positive face. They are thus a classical example of an *ad hominem* attack, which means that they could also be seen as a way to avoid answering a point: if the opponent's argument is easily refutable, an attack against the argument would appear to be a more direct route to victory. Again, the threat to the opponent's face is aggravated, since everyone would like to be seen as competent. On the other hand, this approach was already recognised by the rhetoricians of the ancient world: Aristotle famously distinguished between three modes of persuasion: *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos (Rhetorica* 1.2.3). Ethos ('character') refers to the speaker's presentation of the self as competent, virtuous, and well-intentioned. A competence challenge, then, is an attack on the opponent's ethos. Mud-slinging campaigns in modern politics are another example of this time-honoured strategy. Due to the grave face-threat, this move is likely to aggravate the conflict, but it could perhaps be said that it is directed more at the audience than the opponent, who is unlikely to give in and admit that the accusation of incompetence is justified.

Spitz reports this move as typically occurring in the form of declarative statements such as "you don't know" (2006: 388). This should probably be seen as a subtype of negative evaluation, since lack of competence is a negative quality attributed to the interlocutor. Competence challenges in pure form are not very common in debate poetry, but some examples can be found:

(34) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 1321–1330

Hwat canstu, wrecche þing, of storre,	But what do you know about stars, you wretched thing
bute þat þu bihauest hi feorre?	– except that you can stare at them in the distance?
Alswo deþ mani dor & man,	Well, that's no more than many animals and men do,
þeo of swucche nawiht ne con.	who know nothing at all about them!
On ape mai a boc biholde,	An ape can look at a book,
an leues wenden & eft folde:	Turn the leaves and shut it again,
ac he ne con þe bet þaruore	but it by no means makes him
of clerkes lore top ne more.	any more advanced in scholarly knowledge.
Þah þu iseo þe steorre alswo,	In the same way, even though you might look at the
nartu þe wisure neauer þe mo.	stars, you aren't any the wiser because of it.

Here the Owl, associated with evil omens, has been explaining this unlucky association with a claim for knowledge of astronomy, which she argues does not imply evil intentions on her part. The fact that her calls precede unfortunate incidents means she has been trying to warn people, not that she causes these incidents. The Nightingale's approach to this argument is to undermine it using a competence challenge: The Owl has no more knowledge of astronomy than a monkey holding a book has of the meaning within it.

In many cases, negative evaluations carry an implicit competence challenge within them. Such evaluations attribute to the opponent not only ignorance but downright stupidity or other qualities tending to undermine their credibility, such as drunkenness. However, the competence challenge remains implicit, as in the examples below.

(35) *The Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 187–190

'Softe, syr,' seyd the Gabull Rope,	"Softly, sir," said the Cable Rope,
Me thinke good ale is in your tope.	"I think there is good ale in your head!
For thou spekys as thou wold fyght,	For you speak as if you wanted to fight
Therto and thou hade any myght.	If you only had the might for it.

(36) *Horse, Goose and Sheep*, ll. 435–437

Here is a gentyl rayson of an horse	Here is a noble argument of a horse!
I trowe he be falle in to som dotage	I believe he must have fallen into some madness,
Whiche of madnes by wulle sette no forse	foolishly heedless about wool.

If an opponent is drunk, stupid or "fallen into dotage", they can hardly be believed competent, and there is little need to pay too much attention to any of their arguments, relevant or not. However, in such cases the competence challenge remains implicit, and they are better analysed as negative evaluations. As can be seen from the examples above, this move often combines with unfavourable comments (*a gentyl rayson of an horse,* which is clearly intended as sarcastic in this context, and *thou spekys as thou wold fyght* must also be seen as unfavourable given the reference to ale and excessive aggressivity).

In rhetorical terms, this move is an attack on the ethos or credibility of the interlocutor. Competent, moral and likable persons are more likely to be believed, so reducing the appearance of these positive qualities will affect the way audiences (if any) are likely to receive their arguments. In sum, competence challenges are a convenient way to avoid responding to an argument, but will also attack the opponent's positive face by questioning their credibility.

5.5 Threats

Both threats and predictions are moves which state something about the future. Threats basically function much like promises in the sense that the speaker uttering the threat presents herself as having the power to bring about whatever dire consequences mentioned in the threat. Indeed, Spitz defines a threat as a promise of "future action to the detriment of the addressee if the addressee fails to heed the threat", and reports them as frequently taking the form of an "if-then" or "either-or" statement (2006: 339).

Similarly, Culpeper (2011: 136) describes several conventionalised impoliteness formulae which can be used to form threats. The abovementioned *if - then* structure is one of them; other formulae were based on the phrases *you'd better - or else* and *(verb) before I...* Threats are one of the speech acts listed by Brown and Levinson as intrinsically face-threatening (1987: 65–66). Since they have the aim of limiting the addressee's future actions, they are a threat to the recipient's negative face, and are closely connected with directives, with which they tend to co-occur (as in the *if-else* structure). At 18 identified instances threats are far from the top of the list of adversative moves in my data: explicit threats are unusual in this material, but they do sometimes occur.

While the grammatical forms are different, a conditional structure similar to the one identified by Spitz can also be found in threats in early debate verse. In many cases, the threats are rather implicit. In *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the Owl remarks that if she had the chance to hold the Nightingale "in her foot" (l. 51), she would sing a different tune. Since the Nightingale is hiding in her hedge, the implicit threat is much less impressive than it might otherwise have been. Similarly, near the end of the poem the songbirds are so vocal in claiming victory that the Owl threatens to call in her own troops, the other birds of prey. A similar conditional threat can be found in example (37) below:

(37) *The Clerk and the Nightingale II*, ll. 61–66

The to smyte I ame prest,	I am inclined to smite you,
Hens but þat thow be goyng.	Unless you leave soon.
Ne blame þou women ne more,	Do not blame women any longer,
For-soth I rede the;	I advise you truthfully;
Thow schalt aby yt fful dere,	You shall pay quite dearly for it,
Hennys but þat thow ffle!"	Unless you fly off from here!

The Clerk is threatening to 'smite' the Nightingale, unless she leaves the arena of combat. A physical threat is probably one of the most forcible moves found in conflict talk, since it opens the possibility of escalating the conflict from the verbal level to the physical. In this way, it threatens not only the opponent's face, but (at least in extreme cases) their very right to exist. In both the Owl's and the Clerk's case, the participant uttering the threat is depicted as experiencing an extreme emotional reaction, so that their heart is almost bursting. The intense feeling is an explaining factor for performing such an aggressive action as threatening the opponent's physical health.

The extreme aggression of threats may be a reason for their relative scarcity in the data. In the debate context, violence is always present as a possibility: for example, *Winner and Waster* begins with two armies lined up for battle, and *The Heart and the Eye*

includes an actual duel, with both opposing parties decked out in full armor and an actual exchange of blows before the fight is interrupted by a messenger from Venus, who insists on resolving the conflict by legal means. So it seems that the verbal duel is seen as an alternative to physical aggression, and the fact that physical threats are usually not carried out serves to heighten the importance of the verbal duel.

Against this backdrop, it is quite noticeable that many of the threats found in the data involve a situation where one of the participants takes on an authority role, upholding societal rules and expectations. For example, in *Winner and Waster,* the king intercedes to stop the looming battle between the two protagonists. The herald, sent to speak for him, utters the following royal threat:

(38) *Winner and Waster,* ll. 132–134

If any beryn be so bolde with banere for to ryde Withinn the kyngdome riche bot the kynge one, That he schall losse the londe and his lyfe aftir.	If any knight is so bold as to ride with a banner Within this noble kingdom, except the king alone, That he shall lose his land, and his life after that.

In this case, the threat is not so much due to an emotional reaction as it is a duty: the speaker is actually trying to inhibit physical aggression from occurring, which is a way of sustaining peace and order in the kingdom. Similarly, in the debate between the Heart and the Eye, the Eye threatens legal action if the Heart insists on sticking to his accusations:

(39) *The Heart and the Eye*, ll. 303–305

And yf thou wolde say ought to the contrary To desyre the marshall I wyll pursewe And make hym Iuge I wyll not lenger tary.	And if you would say anything to the contrary, I will seek out Desire, the marshal, And I will hesitate no longer to make him our judge.

A final example of threats is from *Jesus and the Masters of Law,* where one of the masters threatens Jesus with a beating unless he holds his tongue for a while. Again, the master is trying support his existing religious institutions, which are threatened by the young boy's appropriation of authority.

(40) *Jesus and the Masters of Law*, ll. 43–46

Jhesu, þou art a grameful gille; I rede raþe þou lerne a-riht; And bote þou stonde a stounde stille, To betyng bare þou schalt be diht.	Jesus, you are a vexing rascal! I advise you to learn properly, And unless you are quiet for a moment, You shall be stripped and beaten.

It seems, then, that threats are very often reserved for people in positions of authority. The exceptions, where threats are uttered without any institutional backing, are found in situations of extreme emotional discomfort. Indeed, considering that Spitz's study focused on disputes between mothers and daughters, this might also explain why threats were a salient action in her data: a mother might feel justified in taking up a position of authority even with an adult daughter, especially if provoked.

5.6 Predictions

Predictions concern future events over which the speaker has no power at least directly. This is a move which Spitz does not discuss, but in my data, they are much more common than threats, at 97 instances. Of course, it is perfectly possible for a prediction to be positive, in which case it is a supportive move, serving to boost the confidence of the recipient. However, in the debate context predictions are overwhelmingly negative. They are typically concerned either with the outcome of the debate itself or with the general fate of the participants. Here is an example of the first case from *The Owl and the Nightingale*:

(41) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1571–1574

Anoþer þing ich mai þe telle,	There's another matter I want to raise with you
Þat þu ne schald for þine felle,	And you won't be able to find an answer to it
Ondswere none þarto finde:	Even if your life depended on it –
Al þi sputing schal aswinde.	Your wrangling will come to an end.

Here the Owl claims to have such a brilliant argument that it will be impossible for the Nightingale to find a satisfactory answer. The argument immediately following this claim narrates how the Owl comforts the faithful wife, who longs for her husband who is away on business. This does not strike me as particularly dazzling; it is followed by the reasoning that the Owl is useful to humans even when dead (her carcass can be used for a scarecrow), while the Nightingale is of no use even while alive. As it happens, the Nightingale completely ignores the Owl's supposedly fantastic argument, leaping instead to claim victory over a point of procedure. Sidestepping a point or "uptake avoidance" is a typical feature of disputing (Scott 2002); this strategy is presumably often chosen in situations where no easy answer is available.

In the Body and Soul debates, negative predictions typically refer to both speakers at once, since the guilt for the misdeeds performed during their lifetime also comes to be shared between the two.

(42) *The Soul and the Body,* ll. 168–171

For all Gods Scriptures which are true and sure, Witnesse, at last, thou shalt be plagu'd with me.	For all God's Scriptures which are true and sure, witness that, in the end, you shall be tormented along with me.

More typically, the general predictions are concerned with the future fortunes of the adversary only, whose supposed negative qualities are presented as leading to no good end, as in examples (43) and (44) below:

(43) *The Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 198–202

Nother of you schall never thryfe, Nother the mayster ne the man, For nothinge that ye do canne. For ye wyll spend in a moneth More gode than thre men hath.	Neither of you will ever thrive, neither the master nor the man, For anything you are able to do. For in a single month, you will spend more than three men's worth of money.

(44) *Winner and Waster*, ll. 441–444

The devyll at thi dede-day schal delyn thi gudis; Tho thou woldest that it were, wyn thay it never; Thi skathill sectours schal sever tham aboute, And thou hafe helle full hotte for that thou here saved.	The devil when you die will distribute your goods, Those that you want to have them will never have the chance, your crooked executors will scatter them about, and you will burn in hell for what you saved here.

On the other hand, some characters make negative predictions about their own fate. This tends to happen in vertical debates where the outcome is easily predictable and one of the characters is presented as either unsympathetic (as in the debate of the covetours miser and the husbandman, see example (45) below) or otherwise clearly wrong (as in the debate between mercy and righteousness).

(45) *Covetous miser*, ll. 31–32

If Grain hold so cheap as it plainly appears, I shall be undone within two or three years.	If the prices of grain stay as cheap as they appear to be doing, I shall be undone within two or three years.

As can be seen from the examples above, predictions tend to be presented with a suggestion of inevitability: no matter how much you may wish to avoid your fate, there is nothing you can do. They are therefore a threat to the opponent's positive face, since the opponent is presented as doomed and unable to improve their situation. Thus, predictions are similar to threats in the sense that the likely function is to cause doubt

and fear in the opponent. Possibly they might also serve as well-intended warnings, although this interpretation seems less likely in the conflict context.

5.7 Demands for explanation

Spitz (2006: 316–317) defines the *demand for explanation* as a move requesting evidence for an earlier statement, arguing that such requests serve a two-fold function: first of all they challenge the validity of the viewpoint given by the opponent, and secondly they limit the opponent's freedom of choice as to how they can proceed. Instead of moving to a new point, the opponent is constrained to defend the argument they made earlier. In this way, a demand for explanation threatens both the opponent's positive and negative face: the challenge implies an uncharitable belief about their ability, while the limitation of freedom obviously acts against their negative face-wants. Spitz notes that this move often takes the form of *wh*-questions (2006: 316), which is true also in my data.

Under Spitz's definition of this move, demands for explanation appear to occur only in response to statements, not non-verbal types of actions. This means that a speaker demanding an explanation for some physical deed would be engaging in a different type of move. Take the following example from *A Disputacione betwyx the Body and Wormes:*

(46) *The Body and the Worms*, ll. 42–48

"Wormes, wormes," þis body sayd,	"Worms, O worms," this body mourned.
"Why do ȝe þus, what causes ȝow me þus to ete?	"Why do you thus? What makes you eat?
By ȝow my flesche is horribilly arayed,	By you my flesh is foully adorned,
Whilk was a fygure whylom fresche & feete,	Which once was a figure fresh and sweet,
Right amyabyll & odorus & swete,	Right amiable, fragrant, and always neat.
Beste belofed of any creature,	Of all creatures I was loved the best,
Lady & soferayne cald I ȝow ensure.	Called lady and sovereign, I do attest.

Here, the body is objecting to the fact that the worms are eating her, which is not a verbal act and as such this would not be a demand for explanation. Indeed, the utterance functions very much like an accusation, as the body clearly finds the worms' action objectionable. However, I have preferred to classify such cases as demands for explanation, so that the group of accusations contains mostly statements, and the group of demands for explanation consists of utterances in question form. The important issue is the function of the utterance (making the opponent provide an explanation or justification), not the exact nature of the act to be explained, whether verbal or non-verbal.

Demands for explanation referring to a verbal act are also quite common, as in the following examples.

(47) *Heart and Eye*, ll. 218–219

The eye than sayd thou herte to what entente	The Eye then said: "You, Heart, why are you
Sayst thou that I haue done the ony wronge	saying that I have done you any harm?

(48) *A Lover and a Jay*, ll. 189–192

Thou carefull man	You sorrowful man
That dothe complayne	who complains
In herte vnfayne	so unhappy at heart
Why doest thou so.	Why do you do so?

Demands for explanation are typically realised with a *wh*-question, most commonly with a *why,* as in examples (46) and (48) above. There is also a related use of *yes-no*-questions, which look similar to demands for explanation, but function rhetorically, so that indeed the questioner provides an answer for themselves:

(49) *The Body and the Worms*, ll. 71–73

If we, as bestes, had smellyng & tastynge,	If we, as beasts, could smell or taste,
Trows þu þat we wald towche þi caryone playne?	Do you think that we your corpse would touch?
Nay, parde, we wald it voyde for certayne!	Nope, we'd surely avoid it, thank you very much!

I have not considered such *yes-no*-questions as demands for explanation.

Demands for explanation are connected with the self-oriented move of accounts (see 6.4), since an explanation is one type of account.

5.8 Unfavourable comments

The category of *unfavourable comments* is defined by Spitz as "meta-communicative evaluations of the other's preceding talk" (2006: 420). As with predictions, it is perfectly possible to evaluate the previous talk positively, thus performing a supportive move, but in the conflict context such evaluations tend to be negative, for instance characterising the previous speaker's contribution as silly. Unfavourable comments resemble negative evaluations in many ways, the difference being that the former category consists of metalinguistic comments, while negative evaluations focus on the speaker's personal characteristics. They are also closely related to competence and relevance challenges, which are examined in the next two sections. The implication of calling someone's

utterance silly is very likely to be that the speaker does not know what they are talking about – an implicit competence challenge. Similarly, relevance challenges imply an incompetence in making a relevant conversational contribution.

Examples of this can easily be found in debate poetry. For example, in *The Soul and the Body,* the Body responds to the Soul's accusations by characterising them as *witlesse reasons,* and *neyther true nor stable*:

(50) *The Soul and the Body,* ll. 177–192

THus said the Soule: at last	Thus said the Soul. At last,
the gastly Coarse	the ghastly corpse
Straines vp it selfe	stretched itself up,
as being new reuiued:	as newly revived,
And with deepe grones	and with deep groans,
as if it had beene hoarse,	as if it was hoarse,
Askt, who such witlesse	asked who had invented
reasons had contriued?	such foolish arguments?
Art thou, quoth it, my Soule	"Are you," it said, "my soul,
which thus dost faine?	dissembling in such a way?
All that thou saist	All that you say
is neyther true nor stable:	is neither true nor certain:
For I will proue	For I will prove
with arguments most plaine,	with the simplest of arguments
If some be true	that even if some are true,
in many thou dost fable.	in many cases you are just telling tales.

Spitz herself notes (2006: 421) that these unfavourable comments have an affinity with negative evaluations (or disqualifications, as she terms them). I would argue that they are also related to both relevance challenges (see next section): "witlesse reasons" is undoubtedly an unfavourable comment, but it seems equally clear that a person contriving witless reasons cannot be very competent in making their argument. When the sinner expresses a belief that his interlocutor is raving, he is definitely making an unfavourable comment about the previous discourse, but it seems to me that this is simultaneously a competence challenge, and indeed a negative evaluation about the speaker. In other cases, a similar comment might function as a relevance challenge too, if the previous discourse is characterised as worthless. Unfavourable comments implying irrelevance are rather more common than relevance challenges in the strict sense.

As in example (50) above, unfavourable comments most often refer to the previous contribution as somehow unreasonable, foolish or even childish. The opponent's

arguments can also be labelled untrue, or even malicious and slanderous, as in the examples below:

(51) *A Dialogue Defensive,* ll. 313–316

Nothynge sayde the Fawcon, is more repugnant Vnto the trouth, than thy sayinges all And that may be proued, by reasones abundant Deduced of pryncyples Theologycall	"Nothing," said the Falcon, "is more inconsistent with the truth than all your assertions, and that can be proved by abundant arguments deduced from theological principles."

(52) *Cuckoo and the Nightingale,* ll. 236–238

And oo þing I wil rede þe also: Ne leue þou not þe cukko, loves foo, ffor al þat he haþe seyde is strong lesing.	And I will also give you one piece of advice: Do not believe the cuckoo, that enemy of love, for everything he has said is blatant lies.

Lesing is defined in the MED as 'the telling of a lie or lies, the practice or sin of lying (s.v. *lēsing(e* (ger.(2))). When the preceding contribution is represented in such negative terms, the credibility of the opponent's argument is obviously severely undermined.

5.9 Relevance challenges

Relevance challenges are also known as *irrelevancy claims.* This is the term preferred by Muntigl and Turnbull, who argue that it is the most aggravating type of disagreement found in second turn position, since giving relevant conversational input is a part of the skill set that should be mastered by every competent member in a society (1998: 243). Implying that the opponent's contribution is useless is therefore indeed a face-threatening act. On the other hand, a relevance challenge can be aimed at arguments which are well-formed and logically sound, and which are therefore beyond the reach of many other argumentative moves. In this sense, this move offers a way to avoid answering an argument by the opponent, taking the debate to a different level: negotiating the limits of the acceptable topic is a meta-argumentative act (Spitz 2006: 373). It is generally understood that a dispute has a certain topic and comments are to be limited to ones relevant to that topic, so trying to limit the topic in a manner advantageous to one's argument will also restrict the opponent's freedom in choosing the direction of the discourse to follow. Hutchby (1996: 50) terms this type of move a *validity challenge*.

Clear cases of relevance challenge are not easy to come by, but some examples can be found. For example, the cloth breeches in *Pride and Lowliness* evaluate their opponent's speech to be irrelevant, a "dygression" which does not serve their purpose:

(53) *Pride and Lowliness,* ll. 1467–1470

The breche of cloth sayd, whereto is this glose, Of welth, of friendship and possession: Which serueth not to this present purpose. But from our matters are dygression.	The breeches of cloth said: "What's the point of this commentary on wealth, friendship and possessions, which is irrelevant to our present purpose and a digression from our topic?"

There is very little evidence in my data that this move was actually perceived as such a dire face-threatening act as Muntigl and Turnbull argue. Opponents do not tend to contradict (or yield to) the relevance challenge directly by explicitly stating the importance or relevance of their argument. In (53) above, the chosen referee resolves the question in favour of the cloth breeches.

The effect of such a statement is to deny the value of previous contributions for the purposes of the present discussion, making it unnecessary to counter any claims made by the interlocutor. If the claims are argued to be irrelevant, their truth-value does not matter one way or the other: even if perfectly true, they will make no difference to the outcome of the argument. An irrelevance claim, if at all plausible, is thus a very convenient way to avoid having to answer a point.

5.10 Formulations of the opponent's speech

Formulations are a move which adopts elements from the previous turn and adapts them for strategic purposes. The term *formulation* has been used in conversation analysis for three separate, albeit related, meanings (Deppermann 2011: 117–118). The sense adopted here is closest to that of Heritage and Watson, who define a formulation as a kind of summary of a previous speaker's argument – "saying-in-so-many-words-what-we-are-doing" – an activity which, they note, is typically combined with other types of interactional work, such as persuading (1980: 246–247). It can be used to summarise either the interlocutor's speech or one's own earlier contributions. A formulation of another speaker's position is, naturally, a second-part move: in order to summarise such a position, it needs to have been disclosed in the prior discourse. In everyday conversation, formulations are often used for the constructive purpose of making sure that the speaker has understood the gist of the previous speaker's argument correctly: it is an alignment-creating or at least a neutral move, possibly inviting confirmation from the interlocutor. Such relatively neutral formulations are also found in debate poetry, as example (54) below demonstrates:

(54) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 707–715

"Hule, þu axest me," ho seide, "ȝif ich kon eni oþer dede	"Owl," she said, "You ask me if I know how to do anything else

bute singen in sume tide,	apart from singing in the summer-time
an bringe blisse for & wide.	and spreading happiness far and wide.
Wi axestu of craftes mine?	What's the point of asking about my abilities?
Betere is min on þan alle þine,	My one ability is better than all of yours.
betere is o song of mine muþe	A single song out of my mouth
þan al þat eure þi kun kuþe:	is better than any ever produced by your kindred.
an lust, ich telle þe wareuore.	Now listen and I'll tell you why.

Here the Nightingale repeats the main point of the Owl's earlier question of whether the Nightingale can do anything except sing. Her formulation is quite neutral, mainly used for the purpose of cohesion. It is only after the formulation that she moves to the attack with a demand for explanation: why should the Owl ask about other skills, when singing is quite sufficient? However, in conflict sequences formulations can be used in a much more aggressive way, to the point that they approach unfavourable comments. Take example (55) below, where the Nightingale is again summarising an argument by the Owl:

(55) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 1331–1342

Ah ȝet þu, fule þing, me chist,	And yet, you nasty creature, you criticize me
an wel grimliche me atwist	and fiercely reproach me
þat ich singe bi manne huse,	for singing near people's houses
an teache wif breke spuse.	and instructing women to break their marriage-vows.
Þu liest iwis, þu fule þing!	In fact, you're lying, you nasty creature!
þurh me nas neauer ischend spusing.	No marriage was ever dishonoured because of me,
Ah soþ hit is ich singe & grede	although it's true that I choose to sing and call out
þar lauedies beoþ & faire maide;	where there are ladies and pretty girls;
& soþ hit is of luue ich singe:	and it's true that I sing about love,
for god wif mai in spusing	For a good woman does better
bet luuien hire oȝene were,	to love her own husband,
þane awer hire copenere;	leaving her lover to rave;

This time, the Nightingale seems quite upset, which is perhaps understandable as the Owl has accused her of tempting ladies to commit adultery. She refers to the Owl's accusation using the verbs *chide* and *atwite* ('charge', 'taunt', 'speak ill of'), both of which have strong negative connotations. She boosts this with name-calling (*þu fule þing*) and the use of intensifiers (*wel grimliche* and, later on, *iwis*). She then moves on to a fierce denial: the Owl is lying, disgusting creature that she is, for no marriage was ever destroyed through her actions. Example (55) showed how formulations can become a weapon in the conflict by representing the previous utterance (and by extension, its utterer) in a negative light. Example (56) shows a less emotional formulation. The Falcon has been defending against the Magpie's accusation against all women, arguing that

women are as perfect in body, as reasonable, and more virtuous in living than men. The Magpie responds as follows:

(56) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 913–920

By thy processe sayde the Pye, as I can perceyue Thou concludest all women, vertuous to be Because that a fewe, vertues dyd receyue wherof examples, thou dydes recyte to me At the length thou dost take for fynall conclusyon That women in theyr lyuynge, far men do excell As thoughe they alonely, of grace had infusyon This vtterly from men, grace thou wylt repell.	"By your procedure," said the Magpie, "as I perceive, you conclude that all women are virtuous, just because a few of them did possess virtues. You recited some examples of this to me, and in the end you take it as final conclusion that women excel over men in their way of living, as if they alone had been infused with grace. In this way, you want to ban men from all grace.

The Magpie does not resort to name-calling and uses fewer intensifiers. However, he does make use of "extreme case formulations" like *all* and *fewe.* He is, of course, exaggerating the Falcon's argument in an attempt to make it appear unreasonable: the Falcon did say that women were more virtuous than men in general, but he never claimed that all women were so. The Magpie is building a straw man and supporting it with references back to the Falcon's previous discourse ("examples thou dydes recyte to me"). His reasoning is also slightly questionable, as there is no logical necessity requiring that only one gender can be virtuous. However, most of the points he attributes to his opponent were indeed mentioned by the Falcon – the exaggeration is there for the purpose of making the Falcon's arguments appear too extreme to be found credible.

In debate poetry, formulations are frequently found near topic shifts. The importance of formulations for topical organisation was also noted in conversational data by Heritage and Watson (1980: 255), but this function is even more highlighted in debate poetry. Since turns often contain more than one topic, each in answer to a question or accusation by the previous speaker, it is useful to begin each new topic with a brief summary of the argument which is about to be answered.

(57) *Pride and Lowliness,* ll. 733–740

And where thou sayest thou art a punisher, Of sinne, it is full true I doo confesse: As thou hast sayd, and in such foorme order, Which is to robbe, to rauishe, and oppresse. And so farre from all collour to doo good, And further I dare safely vndertake: Then deuils to cast out through Beelzebub, No truer glose of that text can I make.	And when you say you are a punisher of sin, I do confess that it is quite true, As you have said, and in such first-class order, Which is to rob, to ravish, and oppress. And so far from any pretence of doing good, And further, I dare safely to claim, Than casting out devils through Beelzebub! I can make no better interpretation of this text.

Formulations are also found in present-day conflicts and representations of it. Spitz (2006: 318–321) describes an aggressive use of formulations in dispute, and Torres Vieira and Cortes Gago have recently analysed the use of formulations in a conflict situation, observing that speakers can use them to transform their own previous contributions, e.g. representing an imposition as an offer (2016: 322), and these formulations can then be accepted or challenged by the recipient. However, in debate poetry the sequential organisation is different: the formulation is normally not placed at the end of a turn, so the opponent does not have the immediate opportunity to confirm or refute it (for instance, by means of an unfavourable comment or a contradiction). There is thus no "formulation-decision" adjacency pair of the kind examined by Heritage and Watson (1980: 252–254). Instead, the speaker goes on with giving her own viewpoint, contrary to the negatively-framed (re)formulation she provided earlier. In this way, the formulation acts as a springboard for the further development of the speaker's argument. Perhaps it could be seen as a pre-attack move much in the same way that there are pre-requests.

Having examined formulations of others' speech, which repeat the opponent's words as a reminder, more immediate forms of *format tying* should be briefly considered. Format tying, as described by e.g. Goodwin and Goodwin (1987: 215–227), is the strategic repetition of syntactic, lexical or semantic elements from the previous speaker's turn. In conflict contexts repetitions can be used to portray the opponent's argument in a negative light. Spitz terms this *contrastive mirroring* (2006: 201): the speaker adapts elements from the previous utterance, manipulating them in various ways to their own advantage to construct their response. Spitz further argues that many of these interactive elements will typically be missed by an analysis focusing solely on speech acts and presuppositions examined in isolation from the context (2006: 203).

Format tying cannot be considered a move as such, as it is very common in all types of verbal interaction. However, certain moves make especially frequent use of this conversational resource. For instance, the move type which Spitz labels confrontational corrections requires some kind of format tying. This move involves objecting to a specific element in the opponent's previous discourse; this element is frequently corrected by offering an alternative word or expression (Spitz 2006: 466). This move is quite rare in my materials – I have identified only three instances. Example (58) below shows an instance of this move in the early modern *Dyalogue defensyue for women:*

(58) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 89–96

Falcon	The Falcon
All thynges sayde the fawcon, of Goddes creacyon	"All things," said the Falcon, "in God's creation,
As scrypture recordeth, be perfyt in theyr kynde	are perfect by nature, as scripture records.
woman was create, by dyuyne operacyon	Woman was created by divine operation, perfect
Perfyt in body, in reason, wyll, and mynde.	in body, reason, will, and mind."
Pye	The Magpie
Perfyt? who there sayde the Pye I the pray	"Perfect? Whoa there!" said the Magpie. "I ask
Perfection in woman, shall neuer take place	you! Perfection shall never be found in a woman.
Vnperfyt she is, and rude alway	She is imperfect and always lacking refinement
In body, and in soule, voyde of all grace.	in body, and her soul is devoid of all grace."

In this example the Magpie objects to the Falcon's description of women as *perfect*. The term is marked as offensive by the turn-initial repetition, and then followed by a correction suggesting that the exact opposite would be more accurate. Note also how the fourth line of Magpie's response echoes the list structure from the Falcon's last line: the parallelism is not close enough for these verses to be read as a diagraph or echoing structure[26] (Du Bois 2014: 362), but the repetition is present both on lexical and structural level.

The probable reason for the rarity of this move is the comparably low interactivity of debate poems even compared to the drama texts which provided Spitz with material. For instance, speech turns in many of the debates (which may otherwise show a wealth of interactive features) are quite long, which reduces opportunities for confrontational corrections. After all, a confrontational correction requires a single objectionable word or phrase in the previous turn, and if that previous turn is very long, the audience may not even remember that the term picked up was in fact used in the previous turn. In a constructed, literary dialogue, the characters themselves obviously have no memory limitations of this type, but the audience of the poem very likely does.

Below is another example that looks very much like a confrontational correction in form, and functions in a similar way to question a particular formulation used by the previous speaker:

[26] Du Bois (2014: 362) defines a diagraph as "a structure that emerges from the mapping of resonance relations between counterpart structures across parallel utterances produced in dialogic juxtaposition." Each part of the first structure is echoed with a comparable element in the second one.

(59) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 281–288

Falcon The Fawcon than answered, mylde in his mode Sayinge Pye from thy raylynge, thy selfe remoue Chryste that suffered death, racked on a rode Forbyd that euer, thou shulde this proue.	The Falcon The Falcon then answered, mild by disposition, saying: "Magpie, eliminate this ranting! Christ, who suffered death, tormented on the cross, forbid that you should ever prove this."
Pye Proue sayde the Pye, what maystry is this? who put man I pray the, in his fyrste creacyon From Paradyse, that place of pleasure and blys But woman, throughe the Deuylles temptacyon?	The Magpie "Prove?" said the Magpie, "What sort of accomplishment would that be? Who else, I ask you, drove man from paradise, that place of pleasure and bliss, on his first creation, but woman, through the Devil's temptation?"

In example (59) above, the Magpie repeats the word *proue,* but the element questioned or corrected is not so much the word itself as the easiness or difficulty of proving the argument. While this is not the most typical example, this can still be seen as a confrontational correction.

Confrontational corrections are not the only type of format tying found in my data. Here is an example where a phrase is picked up from the first speaker and echoed by the second, not to correct it but to accentuate the contrast between the two contestants:

(60) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 445–452

Falcon […] Suche myschyfes many men, oft haue precured And yet they cesse nat, the same to support As towchynge this matter, I am full assured All theyr madnes fully, I can nat report.	Falcon Such misdeeds have many men often committed, and yet they do not cease to tolerate these crimes. So I am quite sure that I cannot even report all their foolishness in this matter.
Pye I can report than, sayde the Pye That women be crewell, and loue to be in stryfe Cursed as Cayn, thou canst nat denye Angry as the waspe, wedowe, mayde, and wyfe.	Magpie "I can report though," said the Magpie, "That women are cruel and love discord, Cursed as Cayn, you cannot deny, Angry as the wasp, widow, maiden, and wife."

This is very effective in heightening the sense of antagonism between the characters, adding to the life-like effect of the conflict and the enjoyment of the audience. Nonetheless, format tying, like confrontational corrections, is not a common element in

debate poetry. Characters do frequently refer back to the previous speaker, but they tend to focus on points in the argument rather than individual words.

5.11 Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the most frequent types of aggressive moves to occur in debate poetry. Indeed, it seems that examples of most of the central moves found in present-day conflict talk can also be found in debate poetry. However, due to the long speech turns of debate poetry, the sequential organisation of these moves differs from genuine face-to-face conflict talk or even dramatic representations of it: in medieval and early modern verse debates, a number of moves are normally chained together, and the opponent may not respond to all of them equally. Indeed, the number of such complex move combinations can be a challenge to the analyst and appears to be a feature specific to literary conflicts. Sörlin (2008) also found a high frequence of complex speech acts in her data of Swedish dramatic conflicts.

The most noticeably missing, or at least extremely rare, move is the confrontational correction. This is understandable, as it is a move which picks up an element of the previous speaker's turn and repeats it, and such echoing tactics can only be useful if the interaction is formed of short exchanges. Utilising such a move after a longer speech turn carries the risk that the audience listening to an exchange may miss the point of the correction. Explicit relevance challenges and competence challenges are also rather rare, although unfavourable comments and negative evaluations respectively may imply claims which, phrased more explicitly, would amount to the aforementioned moves. On the other hand, formulations and predictions are common moves in debate poetry, although their conflict-specific uses have not, to my knowledge, been examined specifically in present-day data.

In the next chapter, I shall examine moves in which the characters try to present themselves in a positive light, attempting to align themselves with authorities and popular opinion, giving accounts of actions which could be seen as negative, and clarifying what they mean. I have termed such moves *self-oriented* as opposed to the more aggressive, other-oriented moves.

6 Self-oriented moves

In the present chapter, I shall examine self-oriented or 'defensive' moves. It should be remembered, however, that the distinction between defensive and offensive is not clear-cut: defensive moves are often offensive by implication, and vice versa. At the end of the chapter, there will be an example of the analysis of a full text, combining the moves from this and the preceding chapter. Figure 2 below shows the numbers of each self-oriented move identified in the present corpus of early debate poetry.

Figure 2. The raw frequencies of the self-oriented moves in my data set.

I will begin my discussion with moves that are typically volunteered by the speaker in support of their argument and are not necessarily dependent on an earlier assertion by the previous speaker, although they can be designed to anticipate potential accusations before the opponent has a chance to utter them. Self-praise and backing a claim (with references to authorities) are examples of such proactive moves. Both are intended to project an impression of competence. I have included citations of *auctoritates* under the heading of backing a claim, but also other types of 'authorities' like common opinion, when the characters explicitly refer to it. Backing a claim is then a way of expressing evidentiality. A related but distinct type of move is certainty expressions – assertions of truthfulness or certainty formed not by providing the evidence for a claim, but rather by highlighting the speaker's own conviction and emotional commitment to it. I will then move on to discuss the other main group of moves, consisting of different types of accounts. This includes several types of related moves responding to an accusation by the first speaker and basically functioning as second-pair parts in an adjacency pair.

Examples of accounts are shifting responsibility and positive reinterpretation. These defensive actions involve admitting to an offensive act: the face-threat produced by the admission can then be blunted either by shifting the responsibility to someone else, giving excuses or justifications for it, or reinterpreting it in a positive light. Of course the offensive act can also be denied, but that is less common. The final group of defensive moves is metadiscoursal in the sense that the speaker comments on their own previous or upcoming moves. This group includes clarification moves, which can either explain something potentially difficult that the speaker has said, or explicate the organisation of the discourse that follows.

6.1 Self-praise

In ordinary conversation, self-praise is generally seen as something to be avoided. Face-theory offers a simple explanation for this: self-praise, while boosting the speaker's own positive face, may tend to imply a face-threat to the audience's positive face by making them look less praiseworthy in comparison. This led Leech to formulate a modesty maxim, requiring speakers to minimise praise of self (1983: 132): self-praise is a dispreferred response in most situations. It is not clear to what extent this expectation would hold in the debate context, especially with the contestant-oriented type of debate. Boasting is extremely common in flyting, including the heroic type studied by Parks, where the participants may either boast retrospectively of their past deeds of glory or prospectively of the feats of battle they will perform against the current adversary (1990: 48–49). So, one might expect self-praise to be unproblematic or at least less problematic in competitive situations.

However, there is evidence that self-praise was not universally acceptable even in the debate context: opponents sometimes react to what they perceive as excessive self-praise. In one case, a perceived boast even acts as the initial arguable action beginning the debate:

(61) *Summer and Winter*, ll. 1–8

Somer spekyth first	Summer speaks first
Euery thynge of my comynge is desirous	Everyone longs for my coming, for I arouse
For I cause the trew louers hartis to be amorous	affection in true lovers' hearts. Through me, all
All birdes by me renew their songes glorious	the birds renew their glorious song in the
In the shadow vnder my bowes grene & copious	shadow under my green and abundant branches!
Wynter	Winter
Frende what be ye that maketh so great boste	Friend, who are you to boast so much, saying
Saynge that you haue all at wyll on your coste	that you have all at will in your territory? If you
Be you so valiaunt as ye say & of so greate bownte	are so splendid as you say and of such great
That so great ioye demeaneth of what contre be ye	virtue, you who provoke such great joy, what

country are you from?

Here Summer engages in self-praise by listing various positive things associated with the season of summer, such as birdsong, love and green leaves. He presents these positive attributes as something for which others too would vouch: the suggestion that "every thynge" longs for the coming of summer lends a certain authority to his boast. It might also be seen as a mitigating device, placing the origination point of the praising act outside the speaker himself, although in this context that does not seem too likely. Winter's use of the word *boste* implies that he finds Summer's speech offensive. He demands an explanation for it, also appearing to question the validity of Summer's claims: the phrasing "be you so valiaunt as ye say" casts some doubt on whether this self-praise might not be a little exaggerated.

A similar example can be found in *The Owl and the Nightingale,* where the Owl claims she has access to great knowledge and wisdom. The Nightingale treats this as a boast, as proven by her use of the word *ȝeolpe* 'to boast, brag' in her formulation of the Owl's argument:

(62) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1297–1307

"Wat!" heo seide, "hule, artu wod?	"What!" she said, "Owl, are you mad?
þu ȝeolpest of seolliche wisdome,	You've been boasting of marvellous wisdom
þu nustest wanene he þe come,	And yet you can't explain where you got it from –
bute hit of wicchecrefte were.	unless it's through witchcraft.
Þarof þu, wrecche, most þe skere	You'll have to clear yourself of that charge, you
ȝif þu wult among manne beo:	wretch, if you want to remain among mankind,
oþer þu most of londe fleo.	Or else you must flee the country.
For alle þeo þat þerof cuþe,	For all those who profess that art
heo uere ifurn of prestes muþe	Were long ago excommunicated by ecclesiastical
amanset: swuch þu art ȝette,	degree – as you are still,
þu wiecche-crafte neauer ne lete.	for you've never given your witchcraft up.

The Nightingale's response to the perceived bragging is rather more aggressive than Winter's in the previous example. Instead of a relatively gentle request for additional evidence, she reacts with name-calling (*wrecche*) and a kind of indirect curse, noting that all those who had such forbidden knowledge have been cursed 'of prestes muþe', that is, by an important authority. She does not deny the Owl's knowledge, but she argues that the wisdom has been gained by the questionable means of witchcraft. If true, such an interpretation would turn the Owl's own argument against her. Beyond the condemnatory tone of the word *ȝeolpe* itself, the Nightingale does not, however, explicitly object to the boasting – it is the "wisdom" and its evil origin she focuses on, not the fact that the Owl had mentioned her knowledge in a positive light.

This brings us to the next point. As we have seen before (see 4.3), there is reason to believe that the preference rules in disputes can be very different from those in ordinary conversation (Kotthoff 1993). Indeed, it might well be the case that this holds for self-praise as well. This may be more likely in those forms of debate where the personality of the debaters is a central theme. This is the case in most debate poems, but it might to some extent be true also of non-literary genres like political debates, where the personality and ethos of the candidate are crucial. A different issue is that in certain contexts self-praise can be community-building as well as destructive: it can be used to create a shared positive self-image, as Dayter (2014) found in her study of the ways in which ballet aficionados used and reacted to self-praise on Twitter. There the key factor making self-praise acceptable was that it foregrounded the speaker's enthusiasm for all things ballet. Since this enthusiasm was shared by the audience, presenting it in a positive light is at least to some extent face-enhancing to them as well. Thus the audience and the tweeter become aligned in this shared attitude of love for their chosen art.

The question of the preference (or not) for self-praise can also be approached from the viewpoint of mitigation: dispreferred structures tend to be prefaced with various forms of hedging devices. This general principle can also be observed in instances of self-praise, where various mitigation mechanisms tend to be used to make it more acceptable to hearers. Dayter (2014: 91) cites four strategies found in ballet blogs: self-praise plus disclaimer, self-praise plus shift of focus, self-praise plus self-denigration, and self-praise plus reference to hard work. Such devices were not unknown to medieval and early modern writers either: authors frequently invoked the rhetorical topos of humility at the beginning of their narration, and sometimes also at the end. For example, see (63) below, from the dedication of the text:

(63) *A Dialogue Defensive*, prologue ll. 1–8

TO you maystres Arthur, my seruyce premysed As reason of ryght, requyreth to recompence Your gentle herte, whiche hath nat despysed Afore this tyme, to take with beneuolence My wrytynges vnworthye, full of vayne sentence whiche kyndnes consydered, good cause doth constrayne And dewty me dryueth to do my dylygence with some small gyfte, for to requyte agayne.	To you, mistress Arthur, my service, presupposed as right and proper, requires me to repay your gentle heart, which has earlier not scorned to accept with benevolence my unworthy writings, full of vain morality. Considering this kindness, good reason and duty compel me to strive diligently with some small talent, to repay you.

Here the author is going out of his way to stress the benevolence and patience of his patron, while simultaneously downplaying the value of his "unworthy writings". The latter strategy is an example of the modesty topos identified already by Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* 4.1.8). Curtius recognises this as a very generally applied topos in

the Middle Ages (2013: 83), and Dunn identifies it as probably the most important classical commonplace used in renaissance prefaces (1994: 5–6). Sometimes authors also felt the need to justify having written anything at all:

(64) *The Spectacle of Lovers,* prologue ll. 1–21

FOr as moche as ydelnesse is rote of all vyces whom to eschue ye wyseman dothe vs counsayle I therfore entende with some maner of besynesse Agaynst the same that I myght preuayle Recorde of Phylosepher whiche maketh rehersayle Better it is to wryte and some thynge for to saye Than in slouthe & ydelnesse to spende the tyme awaye	Since idleness is the root of all vices, and wise men counsel us to eschew it, I therefore intend to prevail against this same vice with some kind of occupation. Recall the philosopher(s) who make the argument that it is better to write and say something than to while the time away in sloth and idleness.
And thus thynkynge my mynde for to apply To make some thynge for my recreacyon It came to my remembraunce to shewe and notyfy Bytwene a louer and me the greate alteracyon Of his peteous complaynt makynge demonstracyon The answeres agayne there vnto replyenge In maner of argument togyder dysputynge	So, thinking to apply my mind in such a way, in order to make something for my own amusement, it occurred to me to show and publish a great altercation between a lover and myself, demonstrating his moving complaint and the answers to them, in the manner of an argument, disputing together.
wherfore I requyre you with humble petycyon This my poore werke to take agreable And there as is amysse to make reformacyon From mesure & good makynge whiche is so varyable Lette ygnoraunce excuse my faute reprouable whiche made it not for ony presumpcyon But onely for pastyme and recreacyon	So I humbly beseech you to take kindly to this my poor work, and correct what is amiss in it, in terms of metre and workmanship which is so fluctuating. Let ignorance excuse my reprehensible faults; it was not written in presumption, but only for a pastime and recreation.

The author begins by citing proverbial authority in the form of the well-known saying that idleness is the root of all vices, which not only he but wise men have advised others to avoid. He then gives an account of why he chose to write his "poore werke" (l. 16), explaining that it was only undertaken to avoid idleness, and he expects there to be many faults, which he asks his wiser readers to correct. Examples such as the above should make it clear that at least a pretence of humility was the general norm in the early modern period. In the earlier medieval debate poems of my corpus such obvious humility devices are not found, perhaps because the texts are generally anonymous and usually contain little prefatory matter. However, the authors tended to downplay their individual creative process. For example, many medieval debate poems have a dream vision framework, which not only presents the story as something given from above – rather than a product of the author's conscious mind – but also gives it a kind of authority. Since biblical times,

dreams had been linked to prophecy and visions, transcendent knowledge from heaven (see Bickley 2013).

Such modesty strategies are not to be found in the conflict sequences of debate poetry, which again suggests that the expectations and conventions are very different in debate contexts than in day-to-day interaction. Instead, what seems to be taking place in debates is aggravation of the self-praise. The reason usually given for the perceived impoliteness or social unacceptability of self-praise is that it implies dispraise of the interlocutor. In debates, this implied negativity toward the interlocutor is quite often made explicit by comparing the (professed) positive attributes of the speaker with those of the interlocutor, stating that the two are different in every way:

(65) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 804–807

Þu seist þat þu canst fele wike,	You say that you know how to do many services,
ac euer ich am þin unilike.	But I'm your opposite in everything:
Do þine craftes alle togadere,	Heap all your skills together,
ȝet is min on horte betere.	And yet is my one skill still radically better!

Here the Nightingale uses a formulation (a fairly neutral one, as it happens) to summarise the Owl's argument that she has got many useful skills. She then declares that she is completely different from the Owl: she has only one skill, but it is worth more than all the Owl's 'craftes'. Sometimes self-praise is the most important move of one participant in the conflict, as in *Age and Youth,* where Age responds to Youth's cheerfulness with negative predictions, and Youth keeps responding with self-praise, as in the example below.

(66) *Age and Youth,* ll. 50–55

This mirry man of mirth yit movit moir.	This merry man spoke yet more about mirth.
"My corps is clene withowt corruptioun,	"My body is clean without corruption,
My self is sound but seiknes or but soir,	My person is sound without sickness or sores,
My wittis fyve in dew proportioun,	My five wits in due proportion,
My curage is of clene complexioun,	My fortitude is of healthy constitution,
My hairt is haill, my levar and my splene [...]	My heart is healthy, my liver and my spleen [...]

The only strategy even resembling mitigation (of self-praise) that can be found in the material is that of citing an external authority as the source of self-praise, in effect transforming the self-praise into praise-by-other (see e.g. example (61) above, where Summer boasts that everybody longs for him). However, while this might indeed function as mitigation in some situations, taken in full context the debate examples actually seem to function more as aggravation than mitigation (see page 81), stressing

the notion that also external authorities can be presented as favouring the speaker rather than the opponent.

As far as I am aware, self-praise has not been identified as a feature in present day disputes. E.g. Spitz (2006) does not include it as one of her move types, although she analyses a long list of moves found in mother-daughter disputes as presented in modern drama. It is a very common self-oriented move in my material, however. In a way this is perhaps not surprising, since the goal of a dispute is victory, and this can be achieved either by attacking the interlocutor or by promoting one's own achievements. A domestic argument of the type studied by Spitz (mother-daughter arguments in drama) is not competitive in the same way: while there may be an underlying element of one-upmanship, the participants are likely to frame the disagreement as focusing on issues rather than persons.

6.2 Backing a claim

In a debate setting, a hearer is not likely to believe the speaker simply because she says something is so;[27] better evidence is needed. More often than not that evidence is about aligning oneself with other people or texts, implying that one is not alone in believing in a particular opinion. One way of providing such evidence is by citing an authority. This move is naturally not limited to debate texts alone–references to authority are found in many other argumentative texts as well. Much has been written about the concept of *auctoritas* and its effects on medieval literature (see e.g. Minnis 1984, Ziolkowski 2009). Classical and biblical authorities are commonly referred to even in debate poetry. In example (67) below, the reference points to the biblical authorities David and Solomon:

(67) *The Clerk and the Nightingale I*, ll. 57–60

I take wyttenesse of Dauyd Kyng,	I take King David as my witness,
And at Salomon þe wyse,	And Solomon the Wise,
Þat a woman for a litull thyng	That a woman will often change
Ofte change hir seruyse.	her allegiance for a minor reason.

Not all of the allusions to authority cite the texts in any detail: the reader/hearer is expected to be familiar enough with these texts that they will know the reference. Sometimes speakers refer to authorities who are unnamed. These can be experts of one kind or another, as the 'phisiciens' mentioned in example (68) below. Even if we do not know the physician by name, we can probably accept that a physician is an authoritative

[27] Of course "just saying so", known as *nudae assertiones* or 'naked assertions' (Fritz 2010: 470) is also a common move, although I have not included it in my analysis here, having chosen to focus on the more strongly person-oriented moves.

source on dietary matters. Here we are already moving slightly further from the idea of an identifiable classical or biblical authority, although the writer may of course have had specific physicians in mind.

(68) *Horse, Goose and Sheep,* ll. 333–337

His flessh his natural restauracion	His meat is naturally restorative,
As som men seyn after grete sekenesse	as some men say, after a severe illness. Roasted or
Rosted or sodyn holsome is moton	boiled, mutton is wholesome,
Boyled with grewell / phisiciens expresse	and boiled with gruel, physicians mention,
Ful nutrityf after grete accesse	it is very nutritious after a high fever.

Famous stories by classical authors are also often alluded to by the speakers. In (69) below, the Horse is trying to prove that his kind is most useful to men, and to support his case he is making reference to all the famous horses of various heroes of antiquity: Alexander, Hector, and Perseus, and their horses Bucephalus, Galathe, and Pegasus.

(69) *Horse, Goose and Sheep*, ll. 43–56

Marcyall prowesse in especyall	God has given martial prowess in especial to
God hath be horse yeue to werrours	warriors by means of the horse. Remember
Recorde of alisaundre whos hors bucyfall	Alexander, whose horse Bucephalus helped him
Made hym escape fro many sharp shours	escape from many a sharp shower [of arrows].
The golden chare of olde conquerours	The golden chariot of old conquerors was
Towarde the tryumphe for knyghtly dedes	taken toward the triumph for knightly deeds
Conceyued hit was with foure white stedes	with four white steeds. Remember Hector, the
Remembre hector the troian champion	Trojan champion, whose horse was at one time
Whos hors was callyd whilom galathe	called Galathe. Upon his back he acted like a lion,
Vpon whos back he pleyde the lyon	and made the Greeks flee quite often. The steed of
Full ofte fithes he made the grekes flee	Perseus was called Pegasus, with swift wings, and
The stede of perseus was cleped pigase	poets say that for his swiftness he was named the
With swifte wynges / poetes seyn the same	horse of Fame.
Was for his swiftenes named ye horse of fame	

Reference could also be made to somewhat more contemporary characters, nonetheless ones that had already earned widespread literary fame, like King Arthur and his knights. This is a different type of backing: these heroes are not necessarily seen as an authority, but rather their story is widely known and in some way exemplary. In example (70) below, Sir Gawain is cited as a witness that true women are hard to find:

(70) *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, ll. 85–93

“Nightingale, thou hauest wrong,	“Nightingale, you are wrong
Wolt thou me senden of this lond,	If you want to send me out of the country,

For Ich holde with the rightte.	Because I am on the right side.
I take witnesse of Sire Wawain,	I take witness from Sir Gawain,
That Iesu Crist yaf might and main	To whom Jesus Christ gave power
And strengthe for to fightte.	And strength to fight.
So wide so he heuede igon	Far as he had travelled,
Trewe ne founde he neuere non,	He never found one faithful woman,
Bi daye ne bi nightte."	By day or night."

Exemplary stories are also a common way of adding credibility to a claim. In other cases, backing is sought by presenting something as common knowledge, a fact that "all men" or just "men" in general can attest to. This was also found in example (68) above (l. 334, *som men seyn*). "Hearsay" is also a common source mentioned by the debaters. Proverbial wisdom is another type of evidence used. *The Owl and the Nightingale* is particularly heavy with proverbial references:

(71) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 127–142

Herbi men segget a bispel,	This illustrates a fable that people tell
þeȝ hit ne bo fuliche spel;	(though it isn't entirely a fiction):
al so hit is bi þan ungode	"This is how it is with a bad man
þat is icumen of fule brode,	who comes from a nasty brood.
& is meind wit fro monne,	He might be mixed up with worthy peple,
euer he cuþ þat he com þonne,	But he still betrays his origins –
þat he com of þan adel-eye,	That he came from an addled egg,
þeȝ he a fro neste leie.	Even if he happens to lie in a respectable nest.
þeȝ appel trendli from þon trowe,	An apple might roll away from the tree
þar he & oþer mid growe,	Where it grew among others,
þeȝ he bo þar-from bicume,	But even if it finds itself somewhere else,
he cuþ wel whonene he is icume."	It still reveals exactly where it's from."
Þos word aȝaf þe niȝtingale,	The Nightingale imparted these words,
& after þare longe tale	And after that long speech,
he song so lude & so scharpe,	She sang so loudly and so penetratingly
riȝt so me grulde schille harpe.	That it was as if ringing harps were being played.

A *bī-spel* is a parable or fable – a story intended to convey a moral. In this case, the point is that nature is stronger than nurture. Just before this excerpt, the Nightingale has been telling the story of an owlet that was brought up in a falcon's nest. When the owlet dirties the nest, the falcon throws it out of the nest, believing that his noble offspring would not be guilty of such an action. Apparently this story of a changeling in the wrong nest was not traditional enough to function as common knowledge, because the Nightingale goes on to cite the more familiar saying that an apple does not fall far from the tree.

Other people's opinions can sometimes be referred to even when they are completely conjectural. In example (72), the Devil is trying to convince the good man that pride is a good thing rather than a mortal sin. His argument is that by being humble and keeping company with 'poor wretches', the man will become the laughing-stock of everyone he meets on the way. This is obviously not something easily provable, without putting it to the test, but if the argument is psychologically convincing enough, even an imagined common opinion may naturally be quite persuasive. Here the good man is not convinced, however:

(72) *The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 178–192

Proud & stout euer þat þou be!	Always be proud and fierce!
ffor ȝif þou drawe þe to cumpaigny	For if you let yourself be seen in the company
Of pore wrecches þat wone þe by,	of unfortunate paupers in your neighbourhood,
Vche a Mon þat beo þe wey goþ	everyone passing on the way
Of hem schalt þou be swiþe loþ,	will find you very unattractive,
And alle wolle þei ful ȝare	and they will all be quite ready
Lauhwhe þe to bisemare	to laugh at you in mockery
And sigge: "lo, Men mowe wel se	and say: "Look, it is easy to see
What Mon þat he þenkeþ to be!	what kind of man this appears to be!
A wrecche sone wol he ben,	He will soon be a pauper, since he keeps company
To wrecches he draweþ, as alle men sen;	with paupers, as all men can see.
Wel Men may seo alle bi þan	Everyone can easily tell from that
Þat neuer-more wol he beo man."	that he will never be a [decent] man again."
ÞE gode Mon vnderstod	The good man understood
Þat þat þe toþur seide was not good.	that what the other had said was not good.

In certain cases, speakers go so far as to suggest that not only other people, but even the opponents themselves know perfectly well that something is the case, although the interlocutor may have implied otherwise in the previous discourse. Example (73) gives a basic example (*thou knowest ryght well*), while example (74) combines the idea that the opponent himself knows he is wrong with the claim that he has often heard other people say this:

(73) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 374–377

where vyce is raygnynge, than sayde the Pye	"Where vice in in ascendancy," the Magpie
Punysshement must folowe, thou knowest ryght well	then said, "punishment must follow, as you
All vyce raygneth in women, this is no lye	know perfectly well. All vice prevails in
Therfore in paynes, they must nedes dwell.	women, this is no lie, and therefore they must
	remain in distress.

(74) *Mercy and Righteousness*, ll. 153–160

Mercy seide, "Ful weel þou woost, AS þou hast often herd sayen, What man is founde þat was lost, Wiþ him is Crist plesid & fayn. What nede had Crist to suffre payne But for to bie oure soulis to blis? Telle me þi lijf heere al playn, Þat mercy may passe riȝtwisnes."	Mercy said, "You know quite well, and have often heard people say that when a man is found that was lost, Christ is pleased and happy with him. What need was there for Christ to suffer pain, except to redeem our souls and bring them to bliss? Tell me your life here quite simply and candidly, so that mercy may overrule righteousness.

In these examples, the speaker-centred, defensive strategy of citing external authority shades into an offensive move. The implication is that the opponents are sticking to their argument out of plain stubbornness, or perhaps lying on purpose. Such an accusation is a threat to the opponent's positive face.

Classical and literary heroes could sometimes, albeit rarely, be challenged as well. In *The Body and the Worms,* a long list of ancient heroes is given as examples of worm-food, incapable of stopping the inexorable vermin:

(75) *The Body and the Worms*, ll. 108–128

Þe neyne worthy, Judas Machabeus sure, Julyus Cesar, Godfray de Bolayne, Alexander, Dauyd, Ector, & Athure, Kyng Charls, Duk Josue þe captayne; With al þe troiane knyghtes most souerayne; With fayr Elyn bewtyuows of vysage, Pollysene, Lucres, Dydo of Cartage; Þies & oþer war also fayr as ȝe, Ȝit durst þai not styr ne mofe in no wyse When possession on þaim taken had we; ffor al venomos wormes to devyse Acowmpenyd ar to þat seruyse, With vs for to halde ar þai set fully, Ȝow vnto devowre & waste vttyrly: Þe cokkatrys, þe basilysk, & þe dragon, Þe lyȝerd, þe tortoys, þe coluber, Þe tode, þe mowdewarp, & þe scorpyon, Þe vypera, þe snake, & þe eddyr, Þe crawpaude; þe pyssemoure, & þe canker, Þe spytterd, þe mawkes, þe evet of kynde, Þe watyr leyche, & oþer ar not behynde."	All the nine worthy: Alexander the Great, Judas Maccabeus, and David of old, Caesar and Hector and Guinevere's mate, Godfrey and Joshua and Charlemagne bold, With all Trojan knights, each with honor untold, And beautiful Helen, so fair of visage, Polyxena, Lucrece, and Dido of Carthage. These – and more – were your equals in looks Yet dared they not to stir or move Once we possession of them took. For all venomous worms it does behoove To do this labor, as soon they'll prove. With us to stay they're fully set: They'll waste and devour you utterly yet. The cockatrice, the basilisk, and the dragon, The toad and the tortoise with his shell on his back, The newt, the mole, and the scorpion, The crab and the ants, both red and black, The viper, the adder, all prepped to attack, The maggots, the leeches, the spiders (all kinds), And the lizard – and others are not far behind."

Similarly, in *Death and Life,* Death claims that not one of Arthur's knights was "so hardye nor so hye, soe holy nor soe wicked, but I burst them with my brand & brought them assunder." This undermining of authority reinforces the point of these texts: in the end, it is the worms that will not only win this particular debate, but they are also bound to overcome all the heroes in the world. The worms then go on to list another set of famous literary creatures, including the basilisk and the dragon. Obviously these cannot be seen as authorities in the proper sense of the word, but they might well be familiar to the contemporary reader from bestiaries. In this way, they do add to the authoritativeness of the argument, making it part of a rich network of allusions and significance, and adjusting their argument to what the audience already knows. Thus, the variety of authorities referred to becomes quite wide compared to e.g. early modern controversies (see Fritz n.d.: 16–17).

Minnis (1984) traces a development where the concept of *auctoritas* is extended from the divine to encompass also human authors. In debate poetry, we can see how such notions could be exploited in a ludic literary format to back the claims (whether seriously intended or not) of characters engaged in dispute.

6.3 Certainty expressions

While evidentiality can be defined narrowly as referring to linguistic methods of indicating the source of information given, a broader interpretation of evidentiality also includes expressions marking the speaker's certainty (Yang 2014: 582). However, scholarly consensus seems to favour the more narrow interpretation (see e.g. Aikhenvald 2004: 4, Carretero & Zamorano-Mansilla 2013: 318–319, Whitt 2010). Certainty expressions can be seen as expressions of subjectivity and stance, marking the speaker's commitment to the message. A certainty expression, then, is any expression through which speakers can convey their own confidence in the truth of their statement (Rubin, Liddy & Kando 2006: 63). They are a type of epistemic comment.

In debate poems, the epistemic justification of arguments is important, but the conflict context highlights a particular type of device. The speakers frequently accuse one another of lying or improper speech, and one way of defending against this are phrases explicitly asserting the speaker's truthfulness, propriety and certainty in the claims they are making. A word found in both the aggressive and defensive moves (see 5.8 above) is *lesyng*, defined by the MED as 'the telling of a lie or lies, the practice or sin of lying [s.v. *lēsing(e* (ger.(2))). So, an unfavourable comment might describe a claim as a lie, but speakers may in turn strengthen their claims by asserting that they are telling the truth without any lies:

(76) *The Clerk and the Nightingale II*, ll. 39–42

Clerk, ylk trew woman hath vpon,	Clerk, the only true woman,
With-owt any lesyng,	without any lie,
A robbe of grey marbyl ston,	is one wearing a robe of grey marble stone,
And of gret cumpasyng.	and of great extent.

One might think that such an extremely misogynistic argument would need no more boosting! On the other hand, the debates about women have a tendency for exaggerated generalisations, as if *all* women were necessarily either good or bad. One may also suspect that sometimes these are empty formulae used mainly for the sake of the rhyme, bringing nothing new to the argument. For instance, the story of Judas Iscariot must have been well known to most audiences, and it does not seem likely that mentioning his death would have provoked suspicions of lying in the audience's mind, yet the speaker chooses to boost this with the phrase *this is no lye*:

(77) *Man and Woman*, ll. 169–172

The men of Iury/made god to dye	The Jewish men caused God to die;
Iudas scaryot hym solde/by false treason	Judas Iscariot sold him through false treachery
And after hum selfe hanged/this is no lye	And hanged himself afterwards, this is no lie
Wherfore styll in payne/his soule it doth won.	And his soul still suffers the punishment for it.

There are some recurring patterns in how certainty expressions are formed. First of all, there are explicit references to truthfulness or lying: *Al is soþ þat I seye, þeiȝ I speke in Rym*,[28] or *I wyll not lye, be the rode*. This is a very common type, and sometimes both truth and lying are mentioned: *"ffor sothe," said kynd, "I wil not lye"*,[29] where *ffor sothe* seems to serve just as an emphasiser. Other types of certainty expressions are *in faith*, *for certayne* and *iwis*. However, none of these is very common, and they rarely appear alone, instead combining with other strengthening expressions such as *I may well*, as found in *Therfore in fayth I may the ryght well call worse than an erytyke*.[30] A similar sentence structure is found in *I dare safely vndertake*[31] and *i sigge þe sikerli*:[32] a verb of saying combines with an adverb expressing certainty or acceptability. Sometimes the speakers go so far as to swear to their truthfulness or certainty: *I suere thee, Compas, by the rode*.[33] Indeed, many other speech act verbs can be used to explicitly announce what

[28] The Good Man and the Devil, l. 203.
[29] Nurture and Nature, l. 21.
[30] The Heart and the Eye, l. 297.
[31] Pride and Lowliness, l. 738.
[32] The Good Man and the Devil, l. 609.
[33] The Carpenter's Tools, l. 36.

the speaker is doing, and such phrases can then serve to add conviction to the message, as the phrase *I the tell* in example (78) below:

(78) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 701–704

Nothynge I thynke lesse, sayde the Fawcon I the tell Than agaynst the sayinges, of Paule for to speake All vanytie in rayment, the Apostle doth repell All vanytie in the same, my mynde is to breake.	"I wish nothing less," the Falcon said, "I tell you, than to speak against the testimony of St Paul. The Apostle rejects all vanity in clothing, and my intention also is to crush all vanity in this matter.

Sometimes the narrator, as well, feels the need to assure the audience of his veracity. Indeed, one function of the common dream vision frame story is to make an incredible story more believable, and also to give it authority. Example (79) below shows how a narrator might proceed with such a task, making repeated use of this move:

(79) *The Heart and the Eye*, ll. 49–64

And I serched ladyes many one I founde syttynge about a fayre fountayne Under a pyne whiche shadowed them echone It was thynge to me yet vncertayne To knowe of theym whiche was the souerayne Theyr behauynge so Inly notable And to theyr beaute **yf I sholde not fayne** Of all other they were Incomperable. And in thyr presence **yf I sholde not lye** Were gentyll women of ryght goodly statute I had not seen afore in company More fressher folke of shap **I you ensure** And in theyr doynge sad and eke demure To fest the people they had grete delyght All that I sawe was done by good measure And well demend euery maner wyght.	And I examined many ladies. I found them sitting around a fair fountain, under a pine which cast its shadow on all of them. It was not yet clear to me which of them was preeminent. Their behaviour was altogether so praiseworthy, and as for their beauty, to be frank, they were incomparable to any others. And in their presence, to tell the truth, were noble women of very pleasant appearance, I had not seen before then in a gathering more youthful folk in style, I ensure you. And in their actions they were both dignified and grave. They took great delight in feasting the people – all that I saw was done moderately and they were well-mannered each and everyone.

Certainty expressions are interactional on Layer 1, in the sense that they are a way of recognising points in the discourse where the audience may be expected to react with disbelief. For example, in (79) above the narrator seems to realise that his praise of the beautiful ladies is so idealised that it may invite some scepticism in the audience. In many cases, these expressions seem to mark the speaker's emotional commitment rather than any real evidential value.

6.4 Giving accounts

One way of responding to an accusation is to admit the action itself, while suggesting that there was a good intention behind it, or at any rate an acceptable excuse. The general term preferred for the various types of justifications here is *account* (see Sacks 1989, Heritage 1988). An account is basically an explanation of the reasons behind one's actions. Often these explanations are highly detailed, packing in a lot of arguments in favour of the speaker's actions. Such 'defensive detailing' presents the arguable action as problematic, but frames the speaker as innocent (Drew 1998: 297). Accounts can also be elicited with a demand for explanation. Excuses are also a kind of account, but giving an excuse is a risky strategy, since an excuse is a "remedial interchange" (Goffman 1971) presupposing that there is something to apologise about (Traum 2000: 15). In case the recipient of an accusation cannot provide another type of justification, silence and a quick change of topic (*uptake avoidance*, to use a term from Scott 2002) may well be a safer option than drawing additional attention to the offensive act by giving excuses. This may well explain why such defensive moves are less frequent than the offensive strategies studied.

An example of an account can be found in (80) below. The Owl admits that the Nightingale is right to say that she hides herself during daytime (*þarto ne segge ich nich ne nai*). However, she gives this fact a positive reinterpretation. She claims that her reason for hiding is the envy of the lesser birds: she is fierce and strong, as is fitting for a bird of prey. In this way, she assigns positive qualities to herself, and having listed them in some detail, she goes on to use them to justify her actions. As she feels there is nothing to be gained by arguing with ignorant fools, she chooses to keep her distance:

(80) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 265–288

Þu seist þat ich me hude adai,	You say that I hide away in the day-time.
þarto ne segge ich nich ne nai:	I'm not going to deny that in any way.
& lust ich telle þe wareuore,	Listen while I tell you the reason,
al wi hit is & wareuore.	And all the whys and the wherefores of it.
Ich habbe bile stif & stronge,	I've got a hard, strong beak
& gode cliuers scharp & longe,	And long, sharp claws,
so hit bicumeþ to hauekes cunne;	As is fitting for a member of the hawkish clan.
hit is min hiȝte, hit is mi wunne,	It is my joy and my delight
þat ich me draȝe to mine cunde,	To associate myself with those who are of my
ne mai [me] no man þareuore schende:	kind. Nobody can reproach me for that.
on me hit is wel isene,	Looking at me, it's easy to see
vor riȝte cunde ich am so kene.	That I'm so fierce because I'm true to my nature:
Vorþi ich am loþ smale foȝle	And that's why I'm hated by all the little birds
þat floþ bi grunde an bi þuuele:	who fly along the ground and in thickets. They
hi me bichermet & bigredeþ,	shout and rail against me

& hore flockes to me ledeþ.	And gather in flocks around me.
Me is lof to habbe reste	I just want to have peace,
& sitte stille in mine neste:	And to sit quietly in my nest:
vor nere ich neuer no þe betere,	For I wouldn't come off any btter
ȝif ich mid chauling & mid chatere	If I abused them by jabbering and chattering,
hom schende & mid fule worde,	Using foul language –
so herdes doþ oþer mid schit-worde.	As shepherds do – and filthy words.
Ne lust me wit þe screwen chide;	I don't want to argue with the rascals, and for that
forþi ich wende from hom wide.	reason I turn as far away from them as I can.

As can be seen from the above, and as the concept of defensive detailing suggests, accounts can be rather long. It would no doubt be possible to divide them further into submoves. For instance, the Owl presents a possible-world scenario where she would respond to the small birds with chattering and foul words (the if-clause in ll. 284–286), but she has overturned this scenario from the beginning by preceding it with the comment that she would be no better for it. However, for a first overall study of the conflict strategies found in debate poetry, a macro-level analysis is sufficient.

This strategy of giving one's actions a positive spin is quite common. For instance, when Winner has accused Waster of excessive feasting, the latter retorts that this is a good thing:

(81) *Winner and Waster*, ll. 295–296

With oure festes and oure fare we feden the pore;	With our feasts and our fine fare we feed the
It es plesynge to the Prynce that Paradyse wroghte.	poor. It gives pleasure to the prince who created Paradise.

Similarly, when the Nightingale accuses the Owl of being a bird of evil omen, the Owl first shifts the responsibility for the negative event itself by saying that it all happens through God's will, and goes on to argue that she is actually performing a good deed when singing her song of ill omen:

(82) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1251–1264

Hwanne ich iseo þat sum wrechede	When I realize that people are threatened
is manne neh, inoh ich grede,	With some disaster I cry out frequently,
an bidde inoh þat hi heom schilde,	Urging them to look after themselves
for toward heom is [harm unmilde].	As some terrible injury looms upon them.
Ah þah ich grede lude an stille,	But no matter how loudly I cry out,
al hit itid þurh Godes wille.	It all comes to pass through the will of God.
Hwi wulleþ men of me hi mene,	But why do people complain about me
þah ich mid soþe heo awene?	Just because I trouble them by telling the truth?
Þah ich hi warni al þat ȝer,	Even if I spent the whole year warning them about it,

nis heom þerfore harem no þe ner:	their harm is none the nearer because of it. No, I sing
ah ich heom singe for ich wolde	to them because I want them to understand clearly
þat hi wel understonde schulde	that some catastrophe is close at hand.
þat sum unselþe heom is ihende,	When I direct my hooting towards them, [...]
hwan ich min huing to heom sende.	

If the Owl's song were seen as causing the accidents that befall men, the Nightingale would clearly be correct in blaming her. The Owl is attempting to reframe this as a warning, enabling men to be on their guard in advance of the actual event. She goes on to back this claim by citing a proverb she attributes to King Alfred, to the effect that a person should keep a lookout for trouble even when everything seems to be going well, since nothing on this earth lasts forever. In this way, she has combined three different defensive strategies into one speech turn: she has shifted responsibility to God, reinterpreted her admitted actions in a positive light, and cited an authority supporting her interpretation of things.

Another common type of account refers to inability or the lack of options. For example, in the debate between the Lover and the Jay, the Jay instructs the suffering lover to cheer up, for sorrow and care will not help him. The Lover responds, admitting that he knows love may not last, but arguing that it is impossible for him to stop loving and suffering for love:

(83) *A Lover and a Jay,* ll. 369–376

Yet my poore herte	Yet my poor heart
Can not awaye sterte	Cannot rush away
From the penetable darte	From the penetrating dart
Of blynde Cupydo	Of blind Cupid
His doughter wyll	His daughter's will
Woundeth me styll	Wounds me still
With paynes vnmedsynable	With incurable pains
Where euer I go.	Wherever I go.

A successful account will deal with an accusation, forcing the opponent to make new accusations or refute the validity of the account itself.

As we saw in example (82) above, one way of accounting for an action is by shifting the responsibility to someone else. The Body and Soul debates tend to be largely concerned with this type of attribution of guilt: the Soul claims that the many sins committed during his life were all due to the temptations of the Body, while the Body argues that the Soul was created for the purpose of being in charge and has only himself to blame if he did

not manage to control his bodily urges. Both, however, agree that a multitude of sins was committed.

(84) *The Soul and the Body*, ll. 241–248

The body of it selfe	The body on its own
none ill hath knowne,	has known no evil;
All that it knowes	All that it knows
proceedeth from thy head:	originates in your head:
If I doe what thou bidst	If I do what you ask me to,
the fault's thine owne,	the fault is all yours!
For without thee	For without you,
the body resteth dead.	the body lies dead.

This strategy is not limited to the Body and Soul debates. For instance, in the *Debate between the Carpenter's Tools*, the tools disagree on whether their master the Carpenter will ever thrive: some are determined to work very hard to make him wealthy, while others claim he will waste all the money earned on drink. During the tools' discussion of the Carpenter's habits of drinking and spending, the Pricking Knife puts the blame on the alewife:

(85) *The Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 87–92

Than bespake the Prykyng Knyfe,	The Pricking-Knife then spoke up:
"He duellys to nyghe the alewyfe.	"He lives too near the alewife,
Sche makys oft tyme his purse full thyn;	and often she makes his purse quite thin;
No peny some tyme sche levys therin.	Some times she leaves not a single penny in there.
Tho thou gete more than other thre,	Even if you earn more than three others,
Thryfty man he cane not be."	He will never be a prosperous man."

The two pairs of breeches debating in *Pride and Lowliness* also make use of this technique. In their case, they are engaged in choosing a jury for their debate, and the cloth breeches object to a bricklayer, whom they claim to be "vnfaithful in his hart, that taketh wage and woorketh all in vaine" because he builds fireplaces that do not draw smoke.

(86) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 1265–1268

The veluet breches hereunto replyed,	The velvet breeches replied to this, saying the
The chalenge was both false and slaunderous:	challenge was both false and slanderous, and
And want of smoke to be his fault denyed.	denied the lack of smoke to be his fault, rather
But rather of the dweller in the house.	blaming it on the inhabitants.

In lines 1267–1268, the velvet breeches shift responsibility for the issue to the inhabitants of the house. In this case, then, the responsibility is shifted not from the speaker himself, but from an associate expected to side with the velvet breeches and thereby affect the outcome of the final resolution. This "team-formation effect" can also be observed in other debates, for instance in those concerned with the question of women, where attacks can be aimed at their male defender by association only.

6.5 Clarification moves: Interpreting one's own words or discourse organisation

Another type of metacommunicative comment often found in this material is clarification of the speaker's meaning – what Fritz calls "giving an interpretation of one's own words" (2005: 236), which he does not describe in any detail but says is a very common move (2005: 245). This move occurs in debate poetry as well, although it is not a particularly common action, especially not on the character's layer (Layer 2). These are basically first-person formulations, except that again, there is no need for a confirmation from the interlocutor. Clarification moves can be volunteered by the speaker, but they can also be second pair parts, i.e. given in response to a demand for explanation, as in (87) below. The Cuckoo says the Nightingale sings in such a fancy, "quaint" manner that people cannot understand her:

(87) *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,* ll. 121–135

"And euere wiȝt mai vnderstonde me; But nyȝtyngale, so mai þai not do þe, ffor þou hast many a nyce queynt crye. I haue þe herd seyn 'Ocy! Ocy!' Hou myȝt I cnow what þat shuld be?"	"And every creature can understand me; but, Nightingale, they may not understand you as well, for you make many silly, contrived sounds. I have heard you say 'Ocy! Ocy!' How am I to know what that's supposed to mean?"
"A, foole," quod she, "wost þou not what it is Whan þat I sai 'Oci! Oci!' i-wis? **Then mene I þat** I would, wondir feyne That al þai were shamefulli slayn That menen ouȝt again loue amys.	"Oh, fool!", said she, "do you really not know what it means when I say 'Oci! Oci!'? I then mean that I wish very much that all those who have any ill will towards love would be shamefully put to death.
And also, I would þat al þoo hade þe dede, That þink not in loue her life to lede; ffor who þat wil not þe god of Loue serue, I dar wel sai, he is worþi to sterue; And for þat skil 'Ocy! Oci!' I grede."	And also, I wish that all those would die that do not intend to lead their lives in love. For whoever is unwilling to serve the god of Love, I dare well say he deserves death. And for that reason I call out 'Oci! Oci!'"

The Nightingale responds by offering an explanation of what her cries of "Oci! Oci!" are meant to communicate. This is probably the most genuinely interactive and conflict-related instance of this move in my data.

I mean is a typical phrase used for this purpose. For example, in (88) below, the Nightingale is making the negative evaluation that the Owl is dirty. Perhaps judging that the claim of uncleanliness might be a little vague without further clarification, she explains that she is specifically referring to the Owl's nest, where her disgusting offspring sit and dirty the nest up to their chin[34] (as the Owl well knows, according to the Nightingale – see 6.2 above).

(88) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 91–97

Þu art lodlich & unclene,	You're hateful and dirty:
bi þine neste **ich hit mene,**	I'm referring to your nest –
& ek bi þine fule brode,	And also to your filthy brood.
þu fedest on hom a wel ful fode.	It's a pretty nasty family that you're bringing up!
Vel wostu þat hi doþ þarinne,	You know what they do in their nest –
hi fuleþ hit up to þe chinne:	They're up to their chins in their droppings.
ho sitteþ þar so hi bo bisne.	They sit there as if they couldn't see, [...]

Similarly, in (89) below the Falcon begins with a vague, general statement, which he then clarifies by saying he means prophecy.

(89) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 330–337

I shall proue sayde the Fawcon, that supernaturall	"I intend to prove," said the Falcon, that
Knowledge in woman, may well take place	supernatural knowledge can well occur in women.
Prophecye **I meane**, the gyfte celestyall	I am referring to prophecy, the celestial gift
In to the soule infused, by especyall grace	infused into the soul by especial grace. Cassandra,
Cassandra doughter, to Pryamus the kynge	the daughter of Priam the king, a most fair lady,
A lady moste fayre, dyd shewe the destruction	predicted the destruction of noble Troy when it
Of noble Troye, whan it was moste florysshynge	was flourishing most, and that it would come to
That by Parys actes, it shulde come to confusyon	ruin through the acts of Paris.

While some instances, like example (87) above, are interactive and genuinely aimed to elucidate something that the interlocutor has failed to understand, mostly these phrases seem to have a text-organisational function. Typically, an argument is first given very briefly in a rather vague and tantalising form, as in Falcon's comment about supernatural knowledge in women, and then elaborated further. For example, the Falcon continues with an explanation that simultaneously clarifies his meaning and provides evidence for believing his argument, since he gives a list of famous classical sibyls and seeresses. On the author's layer (Layer 0), the clarification phrases serve other functions, for example

[34] Cartlidge notes (2001: 50) that owls are described as unclean both in the Bible and by Ovid. He also cites evidence from modern bird-watchers, to the effect that even when the nest itself is kept clean, its immediate surroundings are commonly dirty.

allowing them to show off their skills at *copia*, finding different ways of saying things, while simultaneous making opaque and creative poetic phrases more understandable to the audience. See (90) below:

(90) *Pride and Lowliness,* ll. 249–256

I se betwene vs litle difference. Or none at all, saue only woorkmanship: Whereto yf there belong preeminence, Make thou no claime to thy mistres woorship.	I see little difference between us, or none at all, except in workmanship: and if any prestige is to be derived from that, you cannot claim the merit which belongs to your master.
I meane the woorkman which the garnished, With silke and golde, and with imbroderie: By meane whereof Pride hath thee rauished, To bost in things belonging not to thee.	I mean the workman who adorned you with silk and gold, and with embroidery, through which pride has assaulted you, causing you to boast of things that are not yours by right.

Here the phrase *make thou no claime to thy mistres woorship* is perhaps less than clear, in spite of the reference to 'workmanship', but it can then be expanded in more detail in the following stanza. Such expansion was also considered to be rhetorically attractive: a skilful writer was trained to express the same idea in a multitude of different ways (see the discussion of *copia* on page 28 above).

Clarification moves are naturally not limited to conflict talk, but can also be found in non-conflict contexts. For example, in example (91) below, the narrator clarifies his use of the term *triour* to his audience, with whom he is obviously not in any conflict:

(91) *Pride and Lowliness,* ll. 1229–1230

We asked then the triours what they thought, I meane the wydowe and the fatherlesse:	We asked then the judges what they thought, I mean the widow and the fatherless:

In conflict situations these moves are particularly useful, because they allow the speaker to modify potentially vague aspects of their preceding discourse in such a way as to present their ideas in the clearest and most positive light possible. As Fritz points out, misunderstandings are typical in such situations (2005: 245). All in all, however, it seems that in debate poetry, these moves are more a poetic technique than a reflection of genuine conflict interactions. Indeed, the majority of instances in my corpus occur on the narrator's layer (Layer 1) – the narrator in *Pride and Lowliness* makes particularly frequent use of it.

In addition to clarifying the meaning of their statements, the participants can also make moves of interpreting discourse organisation by metadiscursive comments. Fritz

describes this move as "fairly inconspicuous" and again quite frequent (2005: 239). This is another move that is not necessarily conflict-related, and which is commonly used both by the characters and by the narrators in debate poetry. Sometimes also the *I mean* phrases seem to organise the text, which is the reason for discussing them both in the same section. With the characters, these metadiscursive comments typically point to the following discourse, and are formed with either *will* or *schall* and a verb of speaking. See example (92) below:

(92) *The Heart and the Eye,* ll. 321–329

The herte than toke no maner of counseyll	The heart then took no kind of counsel
But his owne tale he tolde full trewely	But told his own tale quite truthfully:
And desyre lo here my cause saunsfefayll	"Desire, lo, hear my statement without fail!
The eye hath done to me vncurteysly	The eye has treated me rudely.
Not longe a go he put his syght trewly	Not long ago, truly, he put his sight
On the fayrest and best where euer she go	on the fairest and best lady, wherever she went,
For his pleasure and not for myn trewly	for his own pleasure and not for mine, surely,
Ryght in this wyse as I shall telle you lo.	exactly in the way I shall now tell you. Listen!
Whan the eye had on her set his syght...	When the eye had set his sight on her...

Here the Heart is making a complaint to Desire, "of loue the marshall", after their initial argument has ended with an agreement to seek arbitration. After a brief explanation that the Eye has acted uncourteously, the Heart precedes his more detailed narrative of the Eye's actions with a comment on what will follow (*ryght in this wyse as I shall telle you lo*). These comments structure the upcoming discourse, giving the audience an idea of what will come next. Sometimes parts of it are labeled, for example when one of the carpenter's tools promises to tell the others a *saw* (a proverb):

(93) *The Carpenter's Tools,* ll. 163–170

"What, Syr?" seyd the Wyndas-Rewle,	"What, sir?" said the Windlass,
"Me thynke thou arte bot a fole.	"I think you are nothing but a fool.
For thou spekys oute of seson;	For you speak untimely,
He may not thé therfor by reson.	He cannot prosper therefore by reason.
A carpenter to be a knyght?	A carpenter to become a knight?
That were ever ageyn ryght.	That would be against all justice.
Therfor I schall telle thee a saw:	Therefore I will tell you a proverb:
Who so wold be hyghe he schall be law."	Whoever exalts himself will be humbled."

When the narrator uses such phrases, he can use phrases similar to the examples given above, but he can also phrase it as a reference to the future discourse in the form *as you shall hear*, suggesting that he expects the story to be read aloud. Anaphoric references

to the preceding discourse are less common, but they do sometimes occur, usually to mark something as a repetition from earlier: *Therefore I thinke as I haue sayd before.*

All in all, these explications of text organisation are much more vague than those Fritz finds in early modern controversies, which can for example explicitly announce that the following stretch of discourse is a slight digression from the main flow of the text, but nonetheless important enough to be worth discussing in full (2005: 239). This may reflect the centrality of the entertainment function in debates, where (in spite of the secondary instructive function of the text) the logical structure of the argument is less important than in arguments actually intended to convince the audience.

6.6 Move by move: An analysis of a full text

Context is of course important for the analysis: ideally, the full context would be given for all the examples, in order to display the interaction between the characters to the reader. However, in practice this would result in a very unwieldy volume. While space does not permit including a full analysis for all the texts, it is possible to give one example of a full sequence here, combining the moves from Chapters 5 and 6.

This is the beginning of the dialogue sequence in *The Clerk and the Nightingale I*, written in the late fifteenth century. This text was chosen because it is one of the shortest in my corpus, as the end is missing, and therefore it is possible to cite it in full. The missing end is not a problem for analysing the moves at the beginning, however. The moves have been numbered, each type separately, and in case they can be identified as a response to a move performed earlier in the sequence, that earlier move is given in parentheses after the current move.

(94) *The Clerk and the Nightingale I*

1	In a mornyng of May,	
2	As I lay on slepyng,	
3	To here a song of a fowle	
4	I had gret likyng.	
5	I herd a nyȝtyngale syng,	
6	I likyd hir full welle;	
7	She seid to me a wonder thyng,	
8	I shall tell þe euery delle.	
9	“Thynk, man, for þi curtesy	directive 1
10	& for þine owne gode;	
11	Stonde a while and sey me	directive 2
12	Why þou mornyst in þi mode?”	demand for explanation 1

13	“Niȝtyngale, wel I may	account 1 (demand 1)
14	& wele I wot and wene;	
15	I morne nyȝt and day	
16	For on þat is so schene.”	
17	“Now, clerk, for-soth þou art a fole	negative evaluation 1
18	Þat þou mournys so depe:	
19	Þat now is hot shalbe colde,	
20	Þat now lawȝgh oft may wepe.”	prediction 1
21	“Nyghtyngale, she is so gode	
22	Þat no thyng may telle,	
23	Fayre and trwe, mylde of mode -	claim 1
24	She may me gif and sell!”	
25	“Be-warre, clerk, I warne þe:	
26	Luf þou not so depe;	directive 3
27	When þou levyst in luf to be,	
28	Nede þou hase to wepe.	
29	A woman is a wonder thyng,	
30	Þow sho be fayre and stille;	
31	She nys trwe to knyȝt nor kyng;	contradiction 1 (claim 1)
32	Clerke, to þe she nylle.”	
33	“Nyȝtyngale, why seyst þou so?	demand for explanation 2
34	Þou gabbust in þi tale.	unfavourable comment 1
35	Wymmen bryng men owt of woo,	claim 2
36	She is bote of alle bale.”	
37	“Ne art þou not to lore sete,	
38	And wist of olde and newe.	
39	Treue þi luf and lockyt boþe?	
40	Þat werk is not trwe!	contradiction 2 (claim 2)
41	Alle woo a woman began,	counterclaim 1 (claim 2)
42	She was begynyng;	
43	Wyttenesse Adam, þe formast man -	backing a claim 1 (counterclaim 1)
44	Þat is no lesyng.”	certainty marker 1
45	“Nyȝtyngale, þat wot I wele:	
46	A woman wroȝt a shame.	
47	A-noþer, I telle þe euery dell,	certainty marker 2
48	Broȝt vs alle to game.”	counterclaim 2 (counterclaim 1)
49	“Be stille, clerk, þou art vn-wyse;	directive 4, negative evaluation 2
50	Þou spekist of a mayde	formulation 2 (counterclaim 2)
51	Þat bare þe Lord of Paradyse,	

52	Þat oure foo-men frayed.	
53	Name hir to no woman,	directive 5
54	To mayden nor to wyfe,	
55	For þou knowist, nor I ne kan,	implicit relevance claim, Mary is *sui generis*
56	Non so trwe of life.	
57	I take wyttenesse of Dauyd Kyng,	backing a claim 2
58	And at Salomon þe wyse,	
59	Þat a woman for a litull thyng	claim 3
60	Ofte change hir seruyse.	
61	Luf a woman as þi lyfe,	directive 6
62	And kepe hir all with wynne,	
63	For a purse or for a knyfe,	
64	When on is owt anoþer is in.”	
65	“Niȝtyngale, þou gabbist me!	unfavourable comment 2
66	Wymmen be fayre and hende,	
67	Ful of game and of glee	
68	Wher-so þei wende.	
69	Were a mon in sorow broȝt,	
70	Wymmen myȝt out hym bryng;	claim 4 (reiteration of claim 2?)
71	With a lokyng turne his thoȝt,	
72	And with a kysse turne his mournyng.”	
73	“Clerke, if þou wil riȝt begynne,	
74	Rede and vndurstonde,	
75	Mannes thoȝt chaungis with synne,	
76	Wel oft þou turnyd fonde;	negative evaluation 3
77	Kysse of women wyrkyth wo	contradiction 3 (claim 4)
78	With synne mony folde;	
79	Iudas kissed God also,	backing a claim 3 (contradiction 3)
80	And to þe Iewes he hym solde.	
81	Clerk, as þou art wyse,	
82	Þou louyst wel hir lokyng;	
83	When þi purse shakyn is,	prediction 2
84	Fare-wel, clerk, þi cossyng!”	
85	“Nyȝtyngale, þou spekist noȝt,	unfavourable comment 3
86	Late be alle þi fare.	directive 7
87	How sholde men be forth broȝt	demand for explanation 3
88	Ne wymmen ware?”	
89	“Ther-to onswer I can	
90	With-out any stodying:	

91 Wymmen was for man-
92 Kynd forth to bryng.

93 She was made to helpe man,
94 And no-thyng for to leve.
95 Þou myȝtes þat wete at Adam,
96 But þou ne wilt me leve.

97 I sey alle wymmen ar mysse-went,
98 On gode is not in londe.
99 Men thruȝ wymmen be shent
100 And ofte broȝt in bonde;

101 For I fynde non so gode,
102 Be way nor be strete,
103 But a man may change hir mote
104 If his purse wey grete."

105 Nyȝtyngale, þou gabbist me, Unfavourable comment 4
106 And þat is shame thym..."

While the identification of moves is usually fairly straightforward, this passage illustrates some of the difficulties of examining the sequences formed with the moves. For example, should directives 1 and 2 be understood as a single command, or as two parts? I have generally opted for the latter interpretation, which may partly account for the high number of directives in my material. Similarly, distinguishing new claims from elaborations of old ones is by no means always simple. For this reason, the move counts should be approached with care: they are intended only as a rough measure of the prevalence of particular moves in this data, as the nature of the moves themselves makes them difficult to quantify exactly.

The sequence beginning at line 89 illustrates the limitations of the move classification used, as I have interpreted accounts as referring to explanations of the behaviour of the speaker only. This means that although line 89 is clearly an answer to the demand for explanation that ends the previous turn, it is not identified as any of the move types. Judging a question as easy (*onswer I can without any stodying*) is probably a recurring move in debates as well, although it occurs in low enough numbers that it has not been coded for the present study. On the other hand, a complete analysis of *all* the moves in a text would be very challenging to compile especially in longer texts, considering the multifunctionality of many utterances and the complex move sequences of debate poetry. I would argue that this is necessarily the case with all research focusing on texts of any length and complexity, and researchers always need to focus on some aspects of the text, leaving others for later. In my case, the focus on conflictive moves, together with the relatively small size of my corpus, means that the abovementioned moves are not

analysed in any depth. However, future research may well allow more such moves to be identified, if the data is extended to include exchanges from less prototypical texts as well.

The passage also illustrates how the moves tend to cluster in some parts of the text (cf. Salmi 2008): there are short stretches where several moves occur within the space of just a few lines, while on other occasions, a whole stanza or more may pass without a single new move, as the speaker develops a specific part of their argument with a narrative example, or expands a claim in some other way.

It may be noted that the sequence contains no self-praise. This is probably because the Nightingale attacks women rather than the Clerk personally, so he feels little need to praise himself, focusing his laudatory remarks on women instead. On the other hand, the Nightingale does make negative evaluations about the Clerk, while the Clerk makes unfavourable comments about the Nightingale's arguments. All the Nightingale's negative evaluations concern the Clerk's intellectual powers, and can therefore be interpreted as implicit competence challenges. Accounts are also not very common, probably for the same reason as self-praise: with the exception of the first demand for explanation and the account given in response, the Clerk does not need to account for his own deeds. Instead he focuses on refuting the Nightingale's claims about women.

6.7 Summary

The frequencies of defensive moves are on the whole lower than those of offensive moves. Since moves are not normally studied quantitatively, it is hard to say how this result compares with previous research. It might reflect a sense that attack is the best defence, as more defensive strategies tend to have the downside that they invite attention to the vulnerable points of the speaker. Therefore, defensive arguments had better be very good ones to avoid losing the debate. For example, *The Owl and the Nightingale* ends when the Owl makes the argument that she is useful to humans even when dead, as her carcass can be used as a scarecrow. The Owl's attempt at positive reframing is not accepted by the Nightingale, who claims victory at this point, saying that being used as a scarecrow is surely a great shame and nothing to boast about. The Owl does not admit defeat, insisting that they get the opinion of an arbitrator, but the exchange nonetheless shows the risk of admitting the opponent's points even with accounts offered.

Self-praise is a frequent self-oriented move in my data. It has not been viewed as a conflict-related feature in present-day conflicts, although it recurs in many forms of verbal duel both in the past and the present. It is often used for the purpose of making explicit comparisons between the participants and to construct opposition (cf. Jeffries 2010), as the speaker is presented in a positive light, while the opponent is described in

negative terms. Another frequently occurring move is that of backing a claim. This is done by referring to authorities or otherwise aligning oneself with the opinions of other people. The types of backing found in debate poetry include classical and biblical authorities and expert knowledge, also found in early modern controversies (Fritz n.d.: 17). However, debate poems also make use of famous non-classical literary figures like Arthur and his knights, fables and proverbial wisdom. Real or conjectural common opinion can also be utilised to back one's claims.

The category of accounts includes moves like positive reinterpretation, arguing that there were no options to performing an arguable action, and shifting responsibility. One obvious strategy that is clearly missing from debate poetry when compared to studies of present-day English remedial interchanges is that of expressing regret for an offensive act. Such a speech act implies admission of guilt without giving mitigating factors, a move which may boost the face of the speaker as it presents them as a person of integrity, taking responsibility for their actions. However, in a debate context an admission of guilt may amount to admission of defeat, as the expectation was that each point made by the interlocutor had to be countered in a satisfactory manner (Fritz n.d.: 20–21). This probably explains the absence of such moves in debate poetry.

Certainty expressions are devices for strengthening the epistemic status of a claim, conveying the speaker's commitment to what they are saying. Assertions of truthfulness are one common type found in debate poetry. The last class of self-oriented moves discussed in the present study are clarifications, either of the speaker's meaning or of discourse organisation. A typical phrase used for the former purpose is *I mean*; however, most instances in my data seem to have more of a discourse-organisational function, while the explaining function is secondary. As for making discourse organisation clearer, this too happens in debate poetry, although the occurrences seem vague in comparison with those in controversies: the following discourse is described in less detail.

The move by move analysis which concluded this chapter illustrates some of the problems of the framework when applied to literary texts such as debates. The length and multifunctionality of turns can make it challenging, for instance, to decide whether an instance should be seen as a move extended over a stretch of discourse or two instances of the same move. However, the analysis also usefully illustrates the ways in which the different moves can be combined.

Beginnings and endings of sequences have always been of particular interest to scholars of interaction. Having examined some of the most common and salient other-oriented and self-oriented moves in debate poetry, I shall next examine how the debate sequence is initiated and terminated.

7 Beginning the conflict: The opening sequence

In Chapters 7 and 8 I shall examine two key parts of the debate exchanges: the beginning and the end. A study of the full conflict sequence in each poem would take too much space, and since the texts are different in length and complexity, comparison of the full texts is no easy matter. For this reason, I shall focus mainly on the first and last three speech turns. In this chapter, I shall investigate how the participants begin the sequence: what kinds of actions provoke a debate? This will be followed by an examination of how the participants respond to such invitations to fight. The analysis is organised according to the first three speech turns and what typically happens in each of them.

Move	1st turn	2nd turn	3rd turn	Total
directive	17	8	14	39
accusation	16	10	14	40
negative evaluation	16	3	19	38
demand explanation	15	7	6	28
prediction	7	5	9	21
self-praise	4	5	2	11
account	0	7	0	7

Table 1. The most common moves within the first three turns. Many other moves also occur, but the numbers are very low and such marginal cases were not judged to yield much of value to the analysis in this chapter. Acephalous texts have not been analysed for this section.

Table 1 shows how different moves are typically used at different points in the discourse. *First turn* here refers to the first attack turn, and it is characterised by directives, accusations, negative evaluations and demands for explanation. The third turn (by the same speaker as the first turn) is similar, except that demands for explanation are somewhat less common. However, the defensive second turns are much less likely to use these moves. This reflects the initial power imbalance between the participants. I shall now examine the beginning of the debate in more detail.

7.1 The arguable action and the first turn

In conflicts, there is usually an "arguable action" (Maynard 1985) that sparks off the argument as participants turn it into the topic of discussion. In debate poems, we rarely see these arguable actions directly. This is partly a question of framing; however, a similar lack of data can occur in nonfictional sources such as letters, as Jucker and Taavitsainen have noted: "Letters may contain accounts of impolite behavior and people's reactions, but they do not usually contain the events that caused them" (2000: 71). On the other hand, while the poems often do not contain a description of the arguable

action itself, it may be referred to within the conflict sequence. In a few acephalous poems even the reference to the arguable action has been lost, if indeed ever there was one. The arguable actions mentioned in my material can be divided roughly into two types: first, there are situations where the accused character has caused pain to the opponent or their friends in some non-verbal way. The second class of arguable action is objectionable speech, which includes inaccurate statements and boasting, excessive complaints, or in the case of bird debates, an unpleasant voice. Especially in debates concerned with love and women, the outward expression of lovesickness can initiate a debate: the unhappy lover laments the sorry state he is in, and his adversary overhears his moans and attempts to console him by remarking on the unreliability of women in general. While the lover may show physical symptoms like paleness, I have still classified these instances under the heading of objectionable speech, as the focus is never on the physical symptoms alone – rather, it is the excessive lamentations that are objected to.

In this section, I shall begin with the first class of arguable actions (the non-verbal type), proceeding on an approximate scale of descending arguability. I shall therefore begin with the most obviously arguable acts, and move towards types which are less universally disapproved of. The most dramatic arguable action is found in *Death and Life*, a dream vision where the narrator falls asleep under a green hawthorn tree[35] and dreams of a fair lady on an outing with her retinue of nobility. He learns that this is Dame Life; their enjoyment of nature and music is brought to a sudden end, as they are approached by "the ffoulest ffreake that formed was euer": Dame Death, who puts an end to the festivities by killing 1500 innocent people. In most cases, arguable actions are much less significant, and often the perpetrator may be unaware that they are doing anything objectionable (another reason for starting the move count from the next move only). In any case, when 1500 of her servants have been killed with one stroke, including children in their cradle, it is hardly surprising that Life soon objects to this behaviour. She addresses Death, making the first verbal attack move. Since the arguable action is not always intended as a conflict move, I have counted the moves of the conflict from the turn reacting to the arguable action, rather than the arguable action itself.[36]

[35] The species of the tree may be significant, as hawthorn has strong if complicated mythological associations in folklore: it was sometimes considered unlucky, while in other situations it could protect against evil, and fairies or witches could meet by the lone hawthorn tree (Watts 2007: 180–183). Falling asleep under such a tree, one could expect strange dreams. However, it was also symbolic of the Crucifixion, through an association with the crown of thorns (Eberly 1989: 50).

[36] This is in no way intended to imply that the arguable action is unimportant; it is merely a more consistent way of counting, especially in the poetic context, where there is no full situational context and gradual build-up such as one might expect in a genuine face-to-face conflict, and the arguable action is often not given in direct speech.

(95) *Death and Life*, ll. 233–240

[...] vnto dolefull Death she dresseth her to speake; sayth; "Thou woefull wretch, weaknesse of care, bold birth full of bale, bringer of sorrowe, dame daughter of the devill, Death is thy name: but if thy fare be thy fairer the feend haue thy soule. Couldest thou any cause ffind, thou kaitiffe wretch, that neither reason nor right may raigne with thy name? Why kills thou the body that neuer care rought? The grasse nor the greene trees greeued the neuer,	She prepares to speak to gloomy Death, saying: "You awful creature, audacious thing full of bale, bringer of sorrow, Dame daughter of the Devil! Your name is Death, but if your actions do not become fairer, the fiend have your soul! You miserable wretch, could you find any justification for why neither reason nor right may coexist with your name? Why do you kill the body that was never struck by care? The grass or the green trees never hurt you.

The language Life uses is strongly emotional: there are negative evaluations (even name-calling) and cursing (a move which I have not treated separately, due to its relative rarity). Of course, an emotional reaction is understandable considering the high death toll, but in this context it can also be seen as an intentional provocation, a challenge to verbal combat. Dame Life then demands explanation for Death's behaviour, which she presents as unreasonable and unjustifiable, going against God's will. Interestingly, most of the debates with an actual nonverbal arguable action seem to lean towards the 'vertical' end of the scale (see page 77). For example, Mary objects to the fact that the Cross took part in killing her son, and in *The Body and the Worms*, the body is shocked at the way the worms have been eating away at her. In both these cases, there can really be no doubt of who will win. This is also in a way the case with *Death and Life*, if one considers the character of Life to refer specifically to the Christian hope of eternal life. She undoubtedly does represent eternal life, but she does not reject the pleasures of earthly life, either.

In most cases, the arguable action is much less serious. In the debate between the Heart and Eye, the eye has looked too long at a lovely lady, causing the heart to fall in love. In *Winner and Waster*, Winner has a specific objection to Waster's spending, as he feels that whatever he earns by hard work, Waster will soon spend. The arguable action of spending itself is not shown in the introduction of the poem, but Winner's accusation makes it clear that this is what has provoked their conflict:

(96) *Winner and Waster,* ll. 228–232

"Bot this felle false thefe that byfore yowe standes Thynkes to strike or he styntt and stroye me for ever. Alle that I wynn thurgh witt he wastes thurgh pryde; I gedir, I glene, and he lattys goo sone; I pryke and I pryne, and he the purse opynes."	But this false wicked thief who stands before you is planning to strike me down and destroy me for ever. All that I win by my wits, he wastes through pride, I gather, I glean, and he lets it all go, I pinch and I save, and he opens the purse.

Again we have name-calling, and we can also find Winner expressing unflattering beliefs about Waster's motivation – pride was considered one of the cardinal sins, and indeed the first and most important of them all.[37] Winner also suggests that Waster's liberality and extravagant spending is intended to be damaging to himself ("thynkes… to stroye me for ever"). Note that in this poem, the two contestants are presenting their arguments directly to an external arbitrator (the King), as opposed to the common pattern of secretly overheard argument later reported by an eavesdropping narrator. Guessing at the motives of others is, of course, something we all frequently do in interaction, but explicitly stating what we believe others' intentions to be is perhaps more useful in convincing the judge than it would be in talking to the opponent alone.

In bird debates, the arguable action commonly has to do with singing – either the contents or the quality of the song give reason for complaints. In *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, the Nightingale objects that the Cuckoo sings badly. As the debate progresses, the birds move on to discussing the merits of love and women, but the initial exchange concerns the relative merits of their song. In *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, it is again the Nightingale who objects, but in this case to the contents of the song: it is shameful to speak ill of women. Similarly, in *The Merle and the Nightingale*, the initial objection comes from the Nightingale, who tells the Merle to stop singing, "for in thy song gud sentens is thair none". The Merle has been praising spring and a life in love's service, but the Nightingale, unusually pious in this poem, argues that all love is wasted except for the love of God. In *A Dialogue Defensive for Women*, a later text, the Falcon begins with an unfavourable comment to the Magpie, saying that jangling words are no proof of veracity. Only in Magpie's next turn do we learn that he, too, has been speaking ill of women. Here is the Nightingale's first attack against the Owl in *The Owl and the Nightingale*:

(97) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 33–40

"Vnwiȝt," ho sede, "awei þu flo!	"You mutant!" she cried, "Why don't you fly
me is þe wurs þat ich þe so.	away? Just looking at you is bad for me.
Iwis for þine vule lete,	In fact I'm frequently put off my singing

[37] In *The Debate between the Good man and the Devil*, the good man, repeating the sermon he has just heard, lists the deadly sins as follows:
He spac of dedli synnes: And seide þer weore seuene,
And whose dyede þer-Inne: Scholde neuere comen in heuene:
Pruide is þe furste: Envye is þat oþer,
Wraþþe is þe þridde: Þat mon haþ to his broþer,
Þe feorþe is Couetyse: Þe fyfþe is Lecherie,
Þe sixte is Sleuþe: Þe seueþe is Glotonye. (ll. 62–67)

wel oft ich mine song forlete;	Because of your ugly countenance.
min horte atfliþ & falt mi tonge,	Whenever you're shoved into my presence,
wonne þu art to me iþrunge.	My heart deserts me and my tongue falters.
Me luste bet speten þane singe	Because of your awful howling
of þine fule ȝoȝelinge."	I'd rather spit than sing!"

Instead of beginning with her grievance, the Nightingale initiates her attack with the impolite strategy of name-calling, as she terms the Owl an *vnwiht* or monster: a negative evaluation. This is followed by a directive to fly away, for the Nightingale suffers from seeing her. The reason for this seemingly unprovoked attack is given in the following lines: the Nightingale says she is unable to sing in the Owl's presence. Her courage deserts her and her "tongue fails", which may be interpreted as physical symptoms of a very strong emotion. In the final line of example (97), the Owl's "shrieking" is alluded to. As far as we are told, however, the Owl has not been provoking the Nightingale by actually singing, since the debate begins in daylight and indeed the Owl has to wait until sunset before she can make her answer: apparently the mere possibility of owlish hooting is seen as offensive by the Nightingale. In sum, the Owl's mere presence constitutes an arguable action in the Nightingale's mind, and the aesthetically unappealing nature of her song is singled out as a particularly dire offence. This is another example of the way in which relatively innocent actions (or non-actions) can be construed as arguable by the participants of a discussion, if they wish to initiate a conflict sequence for whatever reason. The Nightingale's initial attack mostly consists of negative evaluation and the insulting directive to leave (*awei þu flo!*). Indeed, negative evaluations (especially in the form of name-calling) are highly typical of the first turn, as can be seen from examples (95), (96) and (97) above.

Also in the debate between Pride and Lowliness, the velvet breeches treat the mere presence of the plainer pair of breeches as a provocation. As he explains it, reverence for his betters should have kept the simpler garment away (it may be worth clarifying at this point that although the debate is a dream vision and could therefore have taken place anywhere, it is set in no royal hall: it takes place near a pleasant stream in a valley between two hills). The presence of the plain cloth pair of breeches is thus interpreted as a sign of disregard, and the velvet breeches begins by an accusation of insolence, and a demand for explanation for this behaviour:

(98) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 237–244

Vp stoode this veluet breche of which I sayde,	Up stood these velvet breeches I told you about,
And spake to them of cloth in great disdayne:	and spoke to those of plain cloth with great
"Thou breeche of cloth, how art thou not afrayde,	disdain: "You cloth breeches, how come you are
Of our displeasure to incurre the payne.	not afraid to provoke our displeasure like this!

That hast presumed here to take thy place, Without regard of vs or reuerence: But as it were to berd vs and to face, I hold it best for thee to get thee hence.”	You have presumed to take your place here, without consideration or respect of us, as if it were to defy and confront us. I think it is best for you to be gone!”

The example does not contain direct name-calling like many other first turns, but the tone is extremely condescending from the beginning. The beginning address “thou breeche of cloth” also sounds offensive, especially considering the narrator’s comment that it was spoken very disdainfully. While the use of personal pronouns to convey immediacy and distance was not yet available in the earliest Middle English debate poems, this text is from 1577, and we can safely assume that the use of *thou* is deliberate and intended to communicate disrespect. There is also an implied threat in the first two lines of the velvet breeches’ turn, where he suggests that his opponent should be afraid of incurring his wrath. He is also attempting to order the plain breeches away, although he formulates it as advice rather than a command.

A similar example with a strong reaction to the mere presence of an adversary can be found in many of the Body and Soul debates. Of course, the debate itself is not about the presence of the opposing character: they are debating the question of who is to blame for the sins which they have committed while still alive. Here is the beginning of the first speech turn in *As I lay in a Winter’s Night*, the debate found in the Laud manuscript:

(99) *As I Lay in a Winter’s Night*, ll. 13–16

It seide, “Weile, and walawo! Wo worþe þi fleys, þi foule blod. Wreche bodi, wȝy listouȝ so, Þat ȝwilene were so wilde and wod?”	It said, “Alas, and woe is me! May evil befall your flesh, your filthy blood! Vile body, why do you lie so, You that used to be so wild and wicked?

Again, negative emotions are expressed: first, there are expressions of sorrow (*weile and walawo*), and then the soul makes negative evaluations about the body (it is described as *foule* and *wreche*). The soul seemingly objects to the body’s lying still, demanding to know why it does so, when it had used to ride around fierce and proud like a lion. As the dead body clearly has little choice in the matter of lying still, this can be seen as rather sarcastic (perhaps definable as an *unpalatable question,* to use Culpeper’s term (2011: 135)). In the Auchinleck version, the soul also refers to the body as *stinking,* since the body has already started to rot – a highly negative evaluation, although also likely to be realistic in the situational context. In this case, the strong negative tone at the beginning can be explained by the moralistic function of the work: the reader is expected to meditate on the shortness of life and the horrors of death, and the tone, ranging between sorrow and disgust, is no doubt intended to induce such contemplations. On the other hand, on the fictional layer, such face-threats would tend to provoke retaliatory measures,

thereby ensuring that a conflict interaction does indeed commence. The real objection of the soul is to the wild ways of the body during its life, and after the initial question, the body's pride and luxurious ways are listed in detail, finishing with an accusation that all of this has doomed the soul to hell.

In some cases, the debate just begins *in media res*, with very little context given: one of the participants makes a statement out of the blue. For example, *The Argument between Man and Woman* begins with a general introduction describing how the narrator was lying in the shadow of a tree on a hot summer day when he overheard an argument between a man and woman over the question of "whiche of them coulde proue to be moost excellent". At this point, there is a heading naming the first speaker ("the man") and the debate begins:

(100) *Man and Woman*, ll. 9–12

The fyrst whiche I herde was the man that sayde	The first thing I heard was the man, saying:
Adam our forfather by womans shrewde councell	"Adam, our forefather, was grievously betrayed
To ete of an apple was pyteously betrayde	by the wicked advice of woman, to taste the apple.
Well happy is he that with you dothe not mell.	Well happy is he that has no dealings with you!"

There is, then, no description of how the participants were led to begin their dispute, or whether there was some kind of personal animosity between them – the man simply begins with his accusation towards all womankind. In this case, the arguable action is not so much an action as a general tendency, as he is accusing all of womankind of being malicious and treacherous. However, even in (100) above, there is emotional language (Adam was betrayed *pyteously*), and negative characteristics are attributed to the interlocutor. Similarly, *Horse, Goose and Sheep* does not mention an arguable action: the narrator merely notes that the animals were carrying out a debate over which of them was "to man most prouffitable". In these cases, then, the first speech turn we have access to is the move which is normally in second position, right after the arguable action: the first aggressive move. This has been found to be an advantageous position: Hutchby (1996) found that the participant attacking first[38] can focus on criticising the opponent, with no need to defend their own views or indeed even offer an alternative of their own, while the opponent has to begin by deflecting these criticisms, and will probably have no chance to go on attack until they have made a strong case for their own viewpoint.

[38] In his case this was the second position in a two-part sequence, as he was studying the exchanges between people calling into an argumentative radio show, and the host. In this context, the caller is the one volunteering an opinion, which the host then makes arguable. The host can freely attack the caller's opinion, while the callers have to defend their stance before they can go on the offensive.

Finally, there is one debate in my corpus which begins in a very different way, owing to the nature of the second disputant. *The Good Man and the Devil* begins with a description of the good man returning from church on a holy day, earnestly meditating on the sermon he has just heard. The narrator then informs us that "þe wikked fend of helle" was annoyed by such godliness, and sent a messenger to tempt him. If we are to search for an arguable action here, then, it is probably the act of going to church and listening to the sermon. Of course, the devil is in disguise, appearing "as a mon feir and riche", and begins the interaction as follows.

(101) *The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 34–56

"ffelawe, wel I-met her!
Sei me, as nou mote þou þe,
Wher hast þow now I-be?"
"I com from þe chirche, what woldestou þer-bi?
What þou art & whi þou askest, tel me nou, belamy!"
"I am a ferren mon and a wey-feryng,
Hastou atte churche I-herd eny sarmoun,
Vndoynge of þe gospel or of lessoun?
I preyȝe þe, gode felawe, ȝif þi wille be,
Al þat þou herdest, tel hit nou to me!
ffor I con my-self, beo my lewete,
Of alle-maner lore gret plente.
I con wel I-knowe, I sei þe, for-þi,
Wher hit were wisdam þat he spac, or elles foli.
Wys þow schalt fynde me and hende;
ffor, ȝif he out fals haþ seid, I schal hit amende.
Þauh þow to me haue no trist,
I con more þen þe prest,
And better I wot, forsoþe I-wys,
How men schulen come to blis,
And also more I con telle
Wherfore Men schule go to helle."

"Fellow, well-met indeed!
Tell me, as you wish to do well,
where have you been just now?"
"I come from the church – why do you wish
to know? Who are you and why do you ask
me, tell me now, good friend?" "I am a
traveller from afar. Have you heard a sermon
at church, explaining the gospel or lesson?
I ask you, good fellow, if you would,
to report to me now all that you heard there!
For I myself know, in spite of my lay position,
a great many kinds of lore.
That is why I know very well, I tell you,
whether it was wisdom that the priest spoke,
or folly. You shall find me both wise and
helpful: for if he said anything false, I shall
amend it. Though you may not trust me,
I am more learned than the priest,
and indeed, truth be told, I know better
how men can attain bliss,
and also I can tell you more
about how men go to hell."

Here, the fiend is attempting to hide his aggressive purposes – ostensibly he only wishes to hear what the priest said in his sermon, so he can correct any errors. The frame he is trying to set up is that of requesting information and offering friendly advice. The need to play this game of charades means that the more direct conflictive resources are not available to him, and indeed his greeting is remarkably polite: compare his "gode felawe" with the *wretches, thieves, monsters* and *fools* normally found in the opening turns of debate poems. He also uses the negative politeness device *ȝif þi wille be* to soften his request to repeat the gist of the sermon. However, it may be significant that the word *felawe* was used in at least two relevant senses: firstly, to a close companion, especially when combined with an attributive adjective like *good* or a similar term; but also

condescendingly to an inferior person "or one so treated" (MED, s.v. *fĕlau(e*, senses 2 and 5). The conflict sequence properly begins only when the good man has explained the first part of the sermon. The devil repeats the gist of the argument, and then goes on to undermine it:

(102) *The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 79–90

"Þow spekest," he seide, "of louyng,	"You speak," he said, "of loving,
Þat mon schulde furst of alle þing;	That is our duty above all things;
Þat loue god schal eueri mon,	That everyone shall love God,
And siþen his neihȝebor, as he con.	and then his neighbour, as well as he can.
Bote hou miȝtest þou trewe loue	But how can you have true love
Haue to him þat is aboue,	for him that is above,
Whon he so ofte wraþþeþ þe	When he so often causes you grief
And let þe in muche myschef be?	And allows you to suffer much adversity?
He let þi catel from þe falle,	He permits your cattle to be lost,
Hors in stable and Oxe in stalle,	the horse in its stable and the ox in its stall,
And oþer þing awey let go,	And other things he lets go away,
And suffreþ þe be brouȝt in muche wo.	and allows you to be brought into great distress.

The formulation of the sermon's argument is followed by a counterargument suggesting that it is an impossible task. This counterclaim is formatted as a question, and followed by an accusation, aimed not at the interlocutor but at God, intended as evidence that divine love cannot exist because negative events often take place. The first attack move thus conforms to the general pattern, except that the target is not the opponent but a third party associated with the opponent, not unlike in *Man and Woman.*

To summarise, an arguable action of some kind is usually mentioned in debate poetry, although in many cases it is rather vague, and sometimes it is missing entirely. However, the objections forming the first attack turn of the debate show clear similarities: accusations are typical first attack moves, along with directives to leave, negative evaluations and demands for explanation. Especially negative evaluations are a recurring feature, often in the aggravated form of name-calling, and strengthened by the expression of strong negative feelings. An examination of first attack turns shows that the initial attack tends to be strongly aggressive and provocative, in fact sometimes disproportionately so when compared to the arguable action. This strongly hostile tone of the first attack is notable, especially given the relatively minor provocations functioning as arguable actions in most cases. The attacker often seems to harbour some kind of personal antipathy or rancour towards the opponent. It is not always clear whether the reader is meant to empathise with the angry emotion of the attacker, taking the accusations at face value, or to receive it critically, perhaps chuckling to themselves about the characters who are making such a fuss over essentially trivial things. In some

cases, the reference to an arguable action might be seen as forming part of a ritual challenge to a verbal duel, in which case the actual action is unimportant and the reference to it is just an instrument for initiating the duel (for a comparable exchange structure, see Bax 1981 and 1999 on knights challenging each other).

7.2 Answering the objection

In the second turn, the speaker must react appropriately to the first speaker's attack. The first turn is fairly unified in the sense that it is always an objection to some previous action, typically formulated as an accusation and/or a directive to leave. On the other hand, there are also certain moves, for example contradictions, counter-claims (see page 100) and confrontational corrections (see page 126), that are specifically second-position moves, in the sense that they are by definition used in response to an earlier move by the opponent: it is impossible to have a counter-claim if there has not been a claim first. However, the options are not limited to the abovementioned moves. I shall begin with accounts and the ways in which they are combined with other moves, and then move on to the types of moves that are also used in the first turn.

As can be seen from Table 1, the speaker often chooses to give an account explaining their actions. For example, in *The Clerk and the Nightingale I*, the nightingale begins by demanding an explanation from the narrator ("Why þou mornyst in þi mode?"), and the narrator responds by giving this account of his unexpected behaviour:

(103) *The Clerk and the Nightingale I*, ll. 13–16

"Niȝtyngale, wel I may	Nightingale, well I may,
& wele I wot and wene;	and well do I know
I morne nyȝt and day	that I mourn night and day
For on þat is so schene.	for one that is so fair.

Implicit in this explanation is the idea that it is natural to be mournful when in love with a fair lady. This explanation is not accepted, however – indeed, the nightingale considers it grounds for a competence challenge. In the case of the clerk-narrator, this is not made explicit, but in many cases the accounts given in second-position turns are concerned with the (im)possibility of any alternative actions, arguing that what the speaker did was the only option available to her. So, for example, in *As I Lay in a Winter's Night,* the Body responds to the Soul's accusations and demands for explanation by remarking that he was not much more than a dumb animal, and had no way of knowing what was good or evil – indeed he did nothing without the Soul's urging:

(104) *As I Lay in a Winter's Night*, ll. 49–56

"For god schop þe aftir his schap	For God made you after his image
And gaf þe boþe wyt and skil,	and gave you both intelligence and discretion. I
In þi loking war I laft	was left in your keeping,
To wisse aftir þin oune wil;	to do whatever you wished with me.
Ne toc I neuere wychecraft,	I never took up witchcraft,
Ne wist I ȝwat was guod nor il,	nor did I know what was good or evil,
Bote as a wretche dumb and mad,	but as a mute and ignorant wretch,
Bote as touȝ tauȝtest þer til.	I did whatever you taught me to.

By stressing his own limited abilities, the Body attempts to shift the responsibility for their shared sins onto the Soul.

Accounts can also be given as a justification for noncompliance with the opponent's directions, in which case an account serves as a second-pair part to a directive. In these cases, the account is often combined with a verbal declaration of non-compliance, and inability can be cited as a reason here as well. For example, in *The Clerk and the Husbandman*, the husbandman has instructed the clerk to give up his sweetheart, as women are not to be trusted. The clerk is not convinced, and refuses as follows:

(105) *The Clerk and the Husbandman*, ll. 17–24

How schulde I do so thene sayd þe clerke	"How could I do so?" then said the clerk,
Thay wolde me lofe wt alle þar mayne	"when she loves me with all her might.
Syth I fvnde no faute yne worde nor worke	Since I can find no fault in word or work,
Wtowte a cause I may not complayne	I cannot complain without a reason.
I moste nede loue þt louythe agayne	I must needs love her that loves in return,
I wer not kynde bot I dyde soo	it would not be natural to do otherwise.
To turn my herte þu labste in vane	In vain you try to turn my heart,
Quia amore languio.	*quia amore languio* [for I languish in love]."

The argument of naturalness is often used in debate poetry. If something is natural, then it must be good. It would be unnatural for the clerk to abandon his lover, when she has not given him any cause to do so, so he argues that he has no option: he must necessarily love in return when the girl loves him with all her might. The lack of viable alternatives is then understood as an acceptable reason for the objectionable behaviour. Similarly, in *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, the arguable action is the Thrush's continuous singing against women, which the Nightingale disapproves of. The Thrush responds to the Nightingale's directive to cease:

(106) *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, ll. 37–39

I ne may wimen herien nohut,	I cannot praise women at all,
For hy beth swikele and false of thohut,	Since they are treacherous and false-minded,
Also Ich am ounderstonde.	As I understand.

The Thrush is arguing that it is impossible for him to speak against his own experience and better knowledge (and that of classical authorities like Alexander): there are so many cases of unreliable women that praising them is just not realistic. He is then ostensibly refusing a directive; actually, he was never asked to praise women, but just to cease slandering them. The strategy of exaggerating the opponent's argument, sometimes to absurd levels (a type of formulation, see 5.10 above), is quite common in conflicts, as it is easier to refute an exaggerated claim. Currently known as the "straw man" argument, this was apparently not recognised as a distinct type of fallacy until the twentieth century (Walton 1996).

A similar case of noncompliance can be found in the debate between the Body and the Worms, where the body begins by objecting to the fact that the worms have consumed most of her body, and are growing fat "& vgly rownde & gret also". She therefore directs them to go and find some other body who would reward them better. The worms refuse:

(107) *The Body and the Worms*, ll. 60–73

"Nay, nay, we will not ȝit departe þe fro	"No, no, we won't depart from you
While þat one of þi bones with oþer wil hange,	While one of your bones with another's connected,
To we hafe scowred & pollysched to	Till we have scoured and polished 'em, too,
And made als clene as we can þaim emange;	Made 'em clean as can be, not a joint neglected.
For our labour we aske no maner of þing to fange	And for our work, there's no pay expected.
–Gold, syluer, ryches, ne no oþer mede –	For gold, silver, or riches we have no need.
Bot onely vs wormes on þe to fede,	We only ask your flesh on which to feed.
Whilk may not sauour ne smell in no wyse	For we have no way of tasting or smelling
Þine orrybyll flesche, rotyng & stynkynge,	Your horrible, rotting, stinking waste.
Of al creatures hated to devyse,	All creatures find you extremely repelling
Safe onely of vs wretchid wormes beyng;	Except for us worms; we're already disgraced.
If we, as bestes, had smellyng & tastynge,	If we, as beasts, could smell or taste,
Trows þu þat we wald towche þi caryone playne?	Do you think that we your corpse would touch?
Nay, parde, we wald it voyde for certayne!"	Nope, we'd surely avoid it, thank you very much!"

Here, then, we have another directive-noncompliance sequence. Often the initial directive to leave is not explicitly responded to; e.g. the *awei þu fle!* of the Nightingale in *The Owl and the Nightingale* is not commented on by the Owl, although her behaviour makes it obvious that she is refusing to follow the directive. Here, on the other hand, the worms not only refuse verbally (in terms of moves, this would be a contradiction), but

they also give an account of their reasons for doing so. Their answer adds insult to injury, as the body, previously so proud of her beauty, is now the target of negative evaluations centring on her lacking beauty: she is depicted as horrible and stinking. Of course such a description is likely to be rather accurate when applied to a recently deceased corpse. However, the body takes offence, remarking that the worms are "vncortes", and calls out to the various knights and squires who used to eagerly offer her their service.

In *The Owl and the Nightingale,* the Nightingale begins with a surprise attack on the Owl's singing, as mentioned in the previous section (see page 161). Since the exchange begins in daylight, it is hardly the likeliest time for the Owl to be singing, and indeed the narrator reports that the Owl waits until nightfall to respond, although she is so upset that her heart is nearly breaking. When she does respond, it is with a demand for explanation and an accusation that the Nightingale's speech is shameful, but also with a physical threat:

(108) *The Owl and the Nightingale,* ll. 46–54

"Hu þincþe nu bi mine songe?	"How does my song seem to you now?
Wenst þu þat ich ne cunne singe,	Do you think I can't sing
þeȝ ich ne cunne of writelinge?	Just because I don't know anything about twittering?
Ilome þu dest me grame,	You often insult me,
& seist me [boþe tone] & schame.	Saying things that are both irritating and offensive.
Ȝif ich þe holde on mine uote,	If you were ever out of those branches
(so hit bitide þat ich mote!)	And I got a hold of you in my foot –
& þu were vt of þine rise,	Oh, if only I might! –
þu sholdest singe an oþer wise."	Then you'd sing a different tune!"

The Nightingale, safely hidden within her bush, is not particularly impressed with this threat, and begins her next turn by telling the Owl so and implying that the Owl's threat only goes to show what a disgusting creature she really is. Apparently the threat, then, is not a successful move to start with. The Owl next tries to cheat the Nightingale by flattery, suggesting that she come out of the bush so they can see which of the two has brighter plumage. The Nightingale does not fall for this ploy, but perhaps the continued physical threat makes her reconsider the wisdom of such an aggressive approach. In any case she suggests that a formal debate "mid fayre worde" would be a more seemly way to solve the question, and they go on to a procedural discussion of who shall decide the winner.

A directive can also be used in second position turns. For example, in the debate between Jesus and the masters of law, Jesus explicitly challenges the rabbis (after some unfavourable comments) to demonstrate their learning by asking them a difficult question:

(109) *Jesus and the Masters of Law*, ll. 33–40

Jhesu seide: "I may wel se	Jesus said: "I can easily see
Þi bok is blynt and þou art blent;	your book is misguided and you are blinded.
Þou farest foule, so þynkeþ me,	You are doing badly, so it seems to me,
ffor lewed lore on þe is lent.	for foolish learning is given you.
Whi is A. bi-fore B.?	Why does A come before B?
Tel me þat, spekest in present,	Tell me that, speak now,
Or I schal tymeli teche þe	or I shall soon teach you;
Þi reson raþe þe schal repent."	before long you will regret your arguments."

This is not a demand for explanation in the sense that I understand the term, since the masters have only suggested that Jesus should be learning his letters instead of preaching in public, and the child Jesus is not directly asking for an account to explain this sentiment. The directive functions as a kind of challenge to a duel to show who has the deeper understanding of scripture. In *The Debate between the Carpenter's Tools*, the progression of the interaction is potentially complicated by the great number of tools taking part in the altercation, but in effect the tools form two teams. First, the Shype-Ax (a small axe for shaping timbers, MED s.v. ax(e (n.(1))) says he will help his master, but simultaneously predicts that the master will never be a wealthy man regardless of what he does. The Belt takes this prediction as arguable, following it with an implied disagreement:

(110) *The Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 9–16

"Wherfore," seyd the Belte,	"That's why," said the Belt,
"With grete strokys I schall hym pelte.	"I shall pelt [for] him with great strokes.
My mayster schall full well thene,	My master will prosper very well,
Both to clothe and fede his men."	and clothe and feed his men."
"Ye, ye," seyd the Twybyll,	"Yeah, yeah," said the Two-edged Axe.
"Thou spekys ever ageyn skyll.	"You speak against reason as always.
Iwys, iwys, it wyll not bene,	Indeed, indeed that will not happen,
Ne never I thinke that he wyll then."	And I don't think he will ever flourish."

The Twybyll (a two-edged axe or adze) in turn responds to this with a defence of the arguable action. He claims that the Belt's contribution goes against common sense, implicitly questioning his competence with this unfavourable comment. He also gives an alternative prediction – the master will never do well. Interestingly, he precedes his disagreement not with *nai*, but with the affirmative *ye* (see the discussion under example (111) below, and at example (13) above).

In *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,* the Nightingale directs the Cuckoo to leave the floor to those birds who can actually sing, claiming that nobody wants to hear him anyway

(an unfavourable comment). The Cuckoo confronts this statement with a demand for explanation and a counterclaim that he also can sing well enough, questioning the Nightingale's skill as a singer in turn:

(111) *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, ll. 116–125

"What!" quod he, "what mai þe aylen nov?	"What!" he said, "What is the matter with you now?
It þinkiþ me I sing as wel as þou;	It seems to me I sing as well as you do,
ffor my song is boþ trwe & plein,	for my song is both true and plain,
And þouȝ I cannot crakil so in vayne,	and although I cannot crackle so in vain
As þou dost in þi þrote, I wot not howe;	as you do in your throat, I don't know how,
And euere wiȝt mai vnderstonde me;	yet everyone can understand me,
But nyȝtyngale, so mai þai not do þe,	but Nightingale, so may they not understand you, for
ffor þou hast many a nyce queynt crye.	you have many silly, outlandish cries.
I haue þe herd seyn 'Ocy! Ocy!'	I have heard you say 'Oci! Oci!'
Hou myȝt I cnow what þat shuld be?"	How should I know what that is supposed to mean?"

The Cuckoo expresses surprise at the Nightingale's attack, implying that there must be something wrong with her judgment – he claims that he sings as well as she does, although his style is plainer and more accessible. So he denies the accusation of bad singing, but admits that indeed his competence is lacking in the sense that he is unable to "crackle so in vain" as the Nightingale does. Such partial agreements or admissions are quite typical of conflict talk; in fact, Kotthoff has remarked that a 'yes' in conflict context will typically be interpreted as introducing a disagreement, a 'but', and the more foregrounded the agreement, the stronger this expectation is (1993: 204). The Cuckoo next attempts to give this inability a positive spin: his song is first of all honest, and everyone can understand what he is saying, while the Nightingale's song is so fancy it is quite impossible to understand. He finishes with a demand for explanation: how can he be expected to know what the Nightingale means with her cries?

The reader may recall from the previous section that the *Argument between Man and Woman* begins with a non-contextualised statement from the man (see example (100)), who refers to the way in which Adam was fooled to taste the apple, and argues that happy is the man who has nothing to do with women. The woman's response echoes the man's first turn perfectly: there is another, equally pithy biblical reference that contradicts the implication suggested by the man's reference to the apple story. The woman then explicitly mentions that the two stories should be compared, and she predicts that women are the clear winners of such a comparison.

(112) *Man and Woman,* ll. 13–16

Ihesu of a mayden and vyrgyn his mother	Jesus was incarnated through his mother, a
Was incarnated to redeme that man had loste	maiden and virgin, to redeem what man had lost.
Set thou this one now agaynst the other	Now set this score against the other, and woman
And woman is more excellent in euery coste.	is superior in every way.

This leads to a kind of impasse, since both have cited evidence from an authority which cannot be refuted for theological reasons. So the only alternatives would seem to be either to give up and admit defeat, or to shift one's focus slightly to give new evidence to support one's view. Indeed, the man opts for the latter: he is markedly silent on the question of Mary and the Incarnation, but declares instead that no woman has ever been transformed into an angel, but many women have gone to hell as a punishment for their pride. Apparently, this too is a point which cannot be directly refuted, as the woman reacts by saying that angels are more likely to *visit* women than men. The argument goes on, with very few points actually denied by either participant – in this debate, the interactional element is rather limited.

In sum, the second-position move in debate poetry shows some distinct patterns of its own. Name-calling is much less frequent in second-position turns, although some few negative evaluations can be found. Accounts are also common, as the speakers defend themselves. On the other hand, some of the same moves are found in both turns: for example accusations are sometimes responded to with counter-accusations, and directives and demands for explanation are also quite common in the second turn. At this stage, a key issue in the debate is initiating a negotiation of the arguability of the act which the attacker has claimed as provocation for initiating the verbal duel. In later stages the debaters often leave this initial topic, as the issue expands to comprise almost the whole personality of both participants.

7.3 Continuing the conflict: From the third turn onwards

The third turn typically serves to reassert or clarify the original accusation, and sometimes to reinforce a directive given in the first attack turn. In *The Heart and the Eye*, the Eye responds to the initial accusation with a claim of innocence. The Heart responds to this with a demand for explanation and a repeated accusation:

(113) *The Heart and the Eye*, ll. 217–232

Eye	The Eye
The eye than sayd thou herte to what entente	The Eye then said: "You, Heart, why are you
Sayst thou that I haue done the ony wronge	saying that I have done you any harm? I am
I am thy frende yf thou lyst be contente	your friend, if you like, be content! I may well

I may well swere myn othe yf thou wyll it fonge
And leue me well bothe at shorte and longe
That I dyde neuer euyll vnto the
I doubte me not though thou with wordes stronge
Lyst thus to chyde take this for certaynte.

swear an oath if you wish to receive it. And believe me well, at the long and short of it, that I never did any harm to you. I am not uncertain about this, even if you want to rebuke me thus with strong words, you can be sure about that."

Herte
Hast thou not made by ryght swete auenture
Me for to chese the floure of womanhede
The moost pleasant of lyuynge creature
Surmountynge in verrey goodly hede
And for the swetnesse that in her doth sprede
Thou hast on her planted thy stedefast syght
Whiche is to me grete preuydyce in dede
Syth I may not se her as it were ryght.

The Heart
"Have you not made me, by sweet coincidence, to choose the flower of womanhood, the most pleasant of living creatures, preeminent in true excellence, and for the sweetness that she spreads, you have planted your steadfast sight on her, which is a great injury to me indeed, since I cannot see her as would be right."

Basically the two are negotiating the arguability of the antecedent action of looking at the beautiful woman. The Eye protests his innocence quite stoutly with oaths and assurances of friendship, and demands an explanation for the Heart's possible motives for making such an accusation. The Heart demands an explanation in turn, explaining that the Eye has caused him pain by looking at a fair lady and then turning away too soon.

Such negotiation of the exact nature of the debated question is quite typical in the third move. In the debate between the Merle and the Nightingale, the Nightingale begins by asking the Merle to stop singing, "for in thy song gud sentens is thair none". The Merle refuses, accusing the Nightingale of hypocrisy and predicting that "of yung sanctis growis auld feyndis": his argument is that it is natural for a young person to fall in love, and only with age do people grow more serene. The Nightingale insists on the validity of her point:

(114) *Merle and Nightingale*, ll. 41–48

The nychtingaill said, "Fule, remembir thee
That both in yewth and eild and every hour
The luve of God most deir to man suld be,
That Him of nocht wrocht lyk His awin figour
And deit Himself, fro deid him to succour.
O, quhithir wes kythit thair, trew lufe or none?
He is most trew and steidfast paramour:
All luve is lost bot upone him allone."

The Nightingale said, "Bird, remember that both in youth and old age and every hour the love of God should be dearest to each man, God who created him from nothingness in his own image, and died to relieve him from death. Oh, was this a manifestation of true love or none? He is the truest and most steadfast lover: All love is lost, except the one given to him alone."

The Nightingale is speaking like a logician here: God's love is relevant for everyone, and relegating it to old people only is a false dichotomy. In this way, she succeeds in

asserting the relevance of her initial directive, forcing the Merle to find a different line of argument if he wishes to make a credible case for noncompliance.

In the examples given up to this point, the conflict is not aggravated further during the third move, but sometimes that can happen too. The reader may remember from the discussion above (see example (109)) that in the debate between Jesus and the masters of law, the twelve-year old Jesus responded to the initial attempt to silence him by challenging the masters to tell him why A comes before B. Unsurprisingly, the masters are none too happy about this presumption:

(115) *Jesus and the Masters of Law*, ll. 41–50

Þe maister wiþ wel wikked wille	The master with a wicked intention
Spake in pres of people, apliht:	Spoke in public, indeed:
"Jhesu, þou art a grameful gille;	"Jesus, you are an annoying rascal;
I rede raþe þou lerne a-riht;	I advise you to quickly learn aright;
And bote þou stonde a stounde stille,	And unless you're quiet for a moment,
To betyng bare þou schalt be diht."	You shall receive a thorough beating."
Qwaþ Jhesu, "Þat is no skille,	Jesus said: "That is not fitting,
I com not hider for to fiht.	I did not come here to fight.
Ȝit," quaþ Jhesu, "of myn askyng	Yet," said Jesus, "to my question
Þou ne ȝiuest non onswere.	You did not give an answer."

Initially, the masters were not particularly aggressive – they merely disagreed with the theology preached by the young Jesus, but recognised his obvious talent and advised him to be silent and learn the fundamentals correctly. The competence challenge seems to have angered them, since their continued attempts to silence the opposition are now combined with name-calling and threats of beating. Similarly, in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* the level of aggression is on the rise by the third turn, as the Nightingale, who initially referred to her opponent as "goode cukko", is now resorting to name-calling, terming the Cuckoo a fool, and implying that the Cuckoo, like everyone unwilling to serve the god of love, deserves to die. This is quite an escalation, even if the initial "goode cukko" is taken as sarcastic, as it probably should be.

(116) *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, ll. 126–135

"A, foole," quod she, "wost þou not what it is	"Oh, fool!", said she, "do you really not know
Whan þat I sai 'Oci! Oci!' i-wis?	what it means when I say 'Oci! Oci!'? I then
Then mene I þat I would, wondir feyne	mean that I wish very much that all those who
That al þai were shamefulli slayn	have any ill will towards love would be
That menen ouȝt again loue amys.	shamefully put to death.
And also, I would þat al þoo hade þe dede,	And also, I wish that all those would die
That þink not in loue her life to lede;	that do not intend to lead their lives in love.

ffor who þat wil not þe god of Loue serue,	For whoever is unwilling to serve the god of
I dar wel sai, he is worþi to sterue;	Love, I dare well say he deserves death.
And for þat skil 'Ocy! Oci!' I grede."	And for that reason I call out 'Oci! Oci!'"

Her reply demonstrates the riskiness of asking for information: it has revealed a gap in the Cuckoo's knowledge of the world, and the Nightingale does not hesitate to highlight his ignorance. She is also proving to be surprisingly ferocious, repeatedly stating that all those who refuse the service of the god of love deserve to die a shameful death. This is probably due to the cry of 'Oci! Oci!' being interpreted as the imperative form of the verb *ocire* 'kill' (AND, s.v. *occire*); both the verbalisation of the call and its interpretation appear to have been standard folklore in Middle French (Leach 2007: 132). In any case, at this point the tone is getting quite fierce.

In debates about love, there is a common pattern where the first move is a demand for explanation of the excessive woefulness and care exhibited by the lover, and this is answered in the second move. The third move, then, is framed as advice to the lover. Here is an example from *The Lover and a Jay*, where the Jay begins with a negative evaluation of the lover's intelligence, and follows this up with a number of directives, intended to suggest a more profitable attitude:

(117) *A Lover and a Jay*, ll. 201–216

To set thy mynde	To set your mind
On one vnkynde.	on one so unnatural
Thy wyttes were blynde	your wits were blind.
Yet neuerthelesse	Yet nevertheless
Thyselfe to spyll	leave thoughts of suicide
Do way be styll	and be still,
For after trouble	for after trouble
Cometh Ioyfulnesse.	comes joyfulness.
Exyle dyspayre	Cast off despair!
To myrth repayre	Take refuge in pleasant things!
For sorowe and care	For sorrow and care
Auayleth nought	accomplish nothing.
To good request	Always be responsive
Be alwaye prest	to good invitations [?].
For wytte is beest	For intelligence is best
Whan it is bought	when you earn it through experience.

The Jay begins by bluntly giving his unflattering opinion on the intelligence of the lover (annoyed, one might suspect, at having had to listen through a hundred lines of rather pedestrian verse complaints to the effect of "She is vntrewe / Alacke Alacke"). As the lover seems to be contemplating suicide, the bird is nonetheless moved to give seemingly

well-meaning advice, formulated as a series of directives, each of which is followed by the reasoning behind it. A very similar exchange is found in *The Spectacle of Lovers*; in both these texts the lover then goes on arguing that he has no choice except to love, as he would die otherwise, and the more cynical advisor attempts to ease the lover's pain by denying the value of love.

The debate between Mary and the Cross is an interesting case, since both the parties are so authoritative in their different ways (see also Section 6.2 above). The initial exchange consists of Mary's accusations ("Tre, thou dost no trouthe!") and the answer of the Cross, which stresses the significance and necessity of this action for the whole of humanity, and how it fulfills a number of prophecies. Mary appears to pick up on the theme of prophets and authorities, since she refers to St. Paul in her answer:

(118) *Mary and the Cross*, ll. 222–238 and 252–261

Oure Ladi seide, "Cros, of thi werk,
Wonder the not theih I be wrothe;
Thus seide Poule, Cristes clerk,
'The feolle Jewes, with false othe,
Jewes ston-hard in sinnes merk,
Beoten a Lomb withouten lothe,
Softur then watur undur serk,
Meode, or milk medled bothe.'
The Jewes weoren harde stones;
Softur then watur, or eny licour,
Or dewz that lith on the lilie flour,
Was Cristes bodi, in blod colour;
The Jewes brisseden His bones.
"And mony a prophete gan make mon,
And seide, 'Lord, send us Thi Lomb
Out of the wildernesses ston
To fende us from the lyon cromb.'
[…]

"Cros, whi weore thou so redi
To rende my Fruit feor in fylde?"
"Ladi, to make the devel dredi,
God schop me a scheld, schame to schilde,
Til Lomb of Love dyede,
And on me yeld the gost with vois.
I was chose a relik chois,
The signe of Jhesu Cristes Crois;
Ther dar no devel abyde.

Our Lady said: "Cross, do not wonder
if I am angry with your doings.
Thus said Paul, the officer of Christ:
'The treacherous Jews, with their false oaths,
Jews stone-hard in the darkness of sin, beat a
Lamb who had given no offense, [who was] softer
than water under [his] garments, or mead, or milk,
or a blend of both.'
The Jews were hard stones;
Softer than water, or any liquid,
or the dew that lies on the lily-flower,
was the body of Christ, the colour of blood;
the Jews broke his bones.
"And many a prophet began to lament,
and said: 'Lord, send us Thy Lamb
out of the stone of wilderness,
to defend us from the lion's claw.'
[...]

"Cross, why were you so ready
to tear my Fruit far into filth?"
"Lady, to make the devil dread.
God made me a shield, to shield from shame.
Since the Lamb of Love died,
and yielded His spirit on me, with his words, I
was made a choice relic: The sign of the Cross of
Jesus Christ! No devil dares remain in my
presence.

This is one debate where the conflict is channelled in respectful ways; Mary begins with a half-apologetic note, asking the Cross not to wonder at her anger. The following reference to the 'hardness' of the Jews is an attempt to find a suitable target for her (and possibly the audience's) anger, and is contrasted with the softness of the body of Christ (see Rubin 1999 on narrative representations of Jewish otherness). She goes on to demand an explanation for the Cross's readiness to act the role it has acted.

The third move, then, serves mainly to reiterate and explicate the initial attack. The moves utilised are largely similar to those found in the first turn. In some cases, the conflict is further escalated from a relatively sedate beginning; in others, additional evidence is brought to bear on the question under debate.

7.4 Establishing differences

Many of the moves identified above are used for the purpose of establishing differences between the participants, whether at the beginning or later in the debate. Salmi (2017) found that at least in early modern debates, speakers on Layer 2, that is within the fictional interaction, were more likely to use verbs of existence (*be, have*) than the narrator. One possible explanation for this is the use of existence verbs in explicit comparisons between the contestants (their use in negative evaluations might be another). See example (119) below, from the Owl and the Nightingale. The Owl has been boasting of her skills (getting rid of mice and other vermin in churches, hardiness in winter, nest-building), some of which are even useful to men and none of which the Nightingale can deny – so she is attempting to deny their value, and furiously defends the value of her own singing:

(119) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 803–808

wat þarf he recche of a mo swenge,	Why should he care about any more tricks
þone þe on him is swo genge?	When the one he has is so effective?
Þu seist þat þu canst fele wike,	You say that you know how to do many services,
ac euer ich am þin unilike.	but I'm your opposite in everything:
Do þine craftes alle togadere,	Heap all your skills together,
ȝet is min on horte betere.	And yet is my one skill radically better!

Having just attempted to undermine the value of all the Owl's capabilities, the Nightingale stresses how different the two birds are: her one skill is worth more than all the Owl's crafts put together. Such comparisons are quite common in debate poetry, and often common opinion is cited in support of one's own position. The positive connotations of the speaker are exploited to the full, and everything negative is attributed to the opponent:

(120) *Summer and Winter*, ll. 25–32

Somer Wynter loued as I am / canst thou in no wyse be Thorow me cometh good wyne / & corne & good fruites gret plente But thorow the all theis goodis be wasted & destroied Thou causest the people / suffer moche wo / it can not be denyed	Summer Winter, there is no way you can be loved as I am. Through me comes good wine and corn and plenty of good fruits, but through you all these goods are wasted and destroyed. You cause the people to suffer much woe, it cannot be denied!
Wynter Somer yf that I were not / thou sholdest be made full lene By many a beste venymus /of the which I make the clene Of snakes / adders / & stynkynge wormes & of many a flie From the I make clere delyueraunce by my great curtesye	Winter Summer, if I did not exist, you would be made quite weak by many venomous creatures of which I clean you. I deliver you from snakes, adders, stinking worms and many a fly, all through my great courtesy.

Here both speakers claim they are better than their opponent. Summer makes an explicit comparison, arguing that Winter simply cannot be as well liked as he is. He then goes on to give evidence for this, listing all the foodstuff produced in summertime as reasons for liking summer, and pointing out that little food is produced in winter, a time of suffering and dearth for the (poor) people. Winter does not deny Summer's claim at that point, although later returns to the question of food, boasting of his sweetmeats and good bacon. He chooses instead to go on the attack, accusing Summer of being the season of venomous beasts, which he drives away. In this way, not only the speakers but all the phenomena associated with each of them are compared at least implicitly, but often quite openly.

In *Pride and Lowliness,* the velvet breeches take it very badly that the breeches of cloth have denied the status difference between them, and confidently claimed that if there is any difference, it is in the quality of workmanship and is probably not to the velvet breeches' advantage. The velvet garment replies:

(121) *Pride and Lowliness,* ll. 261–272

[...] How dare thou speake such language vnto me, Thy better, and thy selfe with me compare: So farre inferiour in eche degree, As they that nere vs both, witnesses are.	How dare you speak such language to me, your superior, and compare yourself to me: so far inferior in every way, as those that are near to both, can witness.
Besides that**,** I was borne in Italy, Sometime the mistres of the world so wide: Famous in learning and chiualry, As in this world there hath been none beside.	Besides that, I was born in Italy, long the mistress of all the wide world: Famous in learning and chivalry, so that in this world none has ever been its equal.

Besides all that, my foote is woorth thy yard, So am I iolif fayre and precious: Where I am present, who dooth the regard, Or the vouchsafe to dwellen in his house.	Besides all that, a foot of my fabric is worth a yard of yours. I am so handsome, fair and precious! Where I am present, who cares about you, or even lets you in his house!

Naturally, both of the breeches are items of clothing, and, as is implied in the narrator's closing address at the end, the part of body they cover is not known as the worthiest. These shared attributes are never mentioned by either pair of breeches: it is the differences which the breeches are interested in highlighting. Indeed, there is a considerable number of very explicit comparisons here, for a character who is objecting to his opponent's audacity in making such comparisons between them! So, the velvet breech claims to be of Italian origin, and says it is the most highly regarded region in the world. He also points out the higher price of the velvet he is made of, and refers to the authority of general opinion. Again, each of the speakers' qualities are methodically compared.

Comparisons can well be made with other types of verbs, too. In such cases, it is the actions of the speakers rather than their characters which are being compared. Of course, action can reveal character. In example (122) below, the Magpie is essentially comparing his self-image with his public image (the Falcon has just alluded to a proverb about the malicious 'prating' of magpies):

(122) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 309–312

A prater I am called, because I hyt the nayle Euen vpon the heade, than sayde the Pye whan I say the trouth, thou sayst I rayle Yet my trewe sayinges, thou cannest nat denye.	"I am called a chatterbox, because I always hit the nail upon the head," the Magpie then said. "When I tell the truth, you say I'm ranting, yet you cannot deny my true sayings."

He acknowledges his bad reputation, admitting that he is known as a 'prater' (chatterer). The use of the passive form suggests that he is aware that this is not just the Falcon's opinion. He implies that this is just malice: people resent his accurate descriptions of their behaviour. He then contrasts his actions and the Falcon's specific interpretation of them: he claims to be telling the truth, but the Falcon does not accept it as such. He finishes with a prediction that the Falcon will not be able to deny his arguments.

7.5 Summary

The examination of the first three moves shows the initial imbalance between the participants. The participant attacking first tends to use directives, accusations, negative evaluations and demands for explanation, all of which are less commonly used in the

second turn, where the recipient of the attack defends themselves. It is probably not surprising that accounts (explanations for one's actions) are more common in the second turn and nonexistent in the first and third turns, since it is a move which can be invited by accusations or directives. However, the uneven distribution of negative evaluations is most noticeable: 35 of the 38 negative evaluations identified are spoken by the attacker (the speaker performing the first attack turn). Directives also show a similar imbalance, although weaker (31 out of 39), while demands for explanation seem to be particularly common in the first turn only.

Rarer moves, such as curses, have not been discussed in depth in this chapter. It is very hard to make generalisations based on just three occurrences, and Arnovick noted nearly twenty years ago that thanks to synchronic studies, we already have a relatively "clear picture of cursing in each period" (1999: 74). However, it can be noted that the curses in my data overwhelmingly represent the more modern 'expressive' style of cursing, rather than the ritualised religious type. As such, they can be seen as expressions of subjectivity and stance, highlighting the speaker's angry emotion (see Arnovick 1999: 92–94). The distribution of curses also accords well with the general tendency observed in this chapter, in that they are used in the first and third turns, but never in the defensive second turn. Indeed, the high frequency of negative evaluations can also be seen as reflecting a subjective, person-oriented style of argumentation.

The exclusion of the arguable action from the sequence may also deserve some further discussion here. What I have done, in effect, is to examine arguable actions when available, without including them in the move count. Ideally, if the full context was in existence, this too would be included in the analysis. However, in the debate frame story, the arguable action is not always available, and sometimes it is non-verbal. Beginning the numbering of moves from the first attack move allows for a system of categorisation which assigns the same number to the first attack move in each debate, regardless of whether or not the arguable action is in the frame story or not: the moves line up neatly and consistently.

The alternative option, of counting the arguable action as the first move, would mean that a high number of first moves would not be available for analysis. In this context, it is also problematic in terms of theory, since almost any action (or lack of action) can be *made* arguable by the simple process of initiating a disagreement about them, and as I have argued above, many of these actions hardly seem intentional at all. The contextual situation is thus different from that found in e.g. Hutchby's data, where the first move consisted of listeners calling a talk radio show to offer an opinion, which they can reasonably expect to be attacked (1996: 42). Opening the conversation in these cases, then, is an intentional move, while most arguable actions in debate poetry seem unlikely

to be intentional at all. This distinction seems important enough to me to justify beginning the sequence from the first attack move rather than the arguable action.

In the next chapter, I will examine the ways in which the conflict sequences are terminated, and the relationship between the termination procedure and the resolution (if any) of the question debated.

8 Closing the conflict: To resolve or not to resolve?

We may intuitively expect that conflicts should be resolved, and all the more so in the case of medieval poetry, where we expect a certain orthodoxy of opinion. For example, Reed's monograph on the literary significance of irresolution in Middle English debates seems to have been inspired by the surprise provoked by the observation that expectations of closure were not fulfilled. His explanation is that there is a certain carnivalistic instinct at work, a tendency to parody the official culture without overturning it, thus partially counteracting a general moralistic tendency in Middle English debate writing (1990: 27–37). However, it should be noted that in real conflicts the absence of a clear winner is not at all unusual either. Vuchinich (1990) studied the sequential organisation of closings in present-day family conflicts, finding five possible termination formats: submission, third-party intervention, compromise, stand-off and withdrawal. Only the first format, that of submission, inevitably leads to a determination with an unequivocal winner, although third-party intervention may of course also involve the third party (usually powerful or authoritative) siding with one of the debaters. Vuchinich finds stand-off to be the most frequent of all termination formats in his material – 66% of all the conflicts in his data closed with this format (1990: 135). The probable reason for this is that submission of course involves the very face-damaging fact of admitting that one has been wrong, and on the whole speakers are very reluctant to make such admissions. It should also be recalled that victory is not even necessarily the goal in all conflict interactions (cf. page 20).

In this chapter, I shall examine the different types of ending found in debate poetry, and how these resolutions (or non-resolutions, as it may be) are negotiated. There are two practical problems with applying Vuchinich's classification in the context of debate poetry. Firstly, debate poems may contain more than one conflict sequence, which means that negotiations about the resolution can occur mid-poem or even at the beginning, after which the conflict continues in the format agreed upon. So debate poems are complex, sometimes showing features of more than one format simultaneously. Secondly, the end of the text may not coincide with the end of the debate: the irresolution effect is often achieved not with a judgment reflecting a compromise solution, but by framing out the arbitrator's decision entirely. However, as long as the resolution (choosing the winner) is distinguished from the negotiation formats that the characters engage in, this is not a problem.

8.1 Submission

Vuchinich defines submission as an assenting reply to an oppositional move (1990: 121). In debate poetry, submission is perhaps more common than in everyday disputes; in any case several examples can be found. It seems that this termination format is particularly

common in those debates which have an explicitly religious theme: poems with submission sequences include *Mary and the Cross, Mercy and Righteousness, The Merle and the Nightingale* and *The Body and the Worms*, all of which have a religious theme. It further appears that the submitting participant was expected to perform some conciliating actions. In *Mary and the Cross*, we are not given Mary's exact words, but the narrator makes it quite clear that there was a complete reconciliation. The Cross explains how it will be present on the day of judgement, acting as a witness of the suffering of Christ, and crying out to heaven against those who have contributed to it. Example (123) below gives the end of the Cross's speech and the description of Mary's response:

(123) *Mary and the Cross,* ll. 477–487

[...] Mayden, meoke and mylde,	Maiden, meek and mild,
God hath taken in the His fleschly trene;	God has taken in you His earthly ancestry
I bar thi Fruit, leothi and lene;	I carried your Fruit, slender and lean,
Hit is riht the Roode helpe to arene	It is right that the Cross should help to accuse
Wrecches that wraththe thi Chylde."	The wretches that harmed your Child."
The Queen acordet with the Cros,	The Queen was reconciled with the Cross,
And ayeyn him spak no more speche;	And spoke no more against him:
The Queen yaf the Cros a cos,	The Queen gave the Cross a kiss,
The Ladi of Love love gan seche,	The Lady of Love sought love,
Theih hire Fruit on him were diht to dros,	Although her child was condemned to perish
Whon rendyng ropus gan Him reche.	On the cross, when rending ropes tore him.

At least two parts in the narrator's description are recurring features in submission sequences. First of all, there is the observation that Mary "acordet" with the Cross ('agreed' or 'was reconciled', MED s.v. *accŏrden*), and secondly, there is the assertion that she spoke "no more speche" against it. Both of these elements tend to be present also in many other submissions. The kiss mentioned at the end is not typical, but the atmosphere in this phase of the debate certainly tends to be much more cordial than in other segments, with explicit "supportive interchanges" (Goffman 1971: 62–94) or rapport-seeking. Example (124) below gives an example of how these features could be formulated by the participants themselves:

(124) *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, ll. 182–193

"Nightingale, I wes woed,	"Nightingale, I was mad,
Other I couthe to luitel goed	Or too ignorant,
With the for to striue.	To argue with you.
I suge that Icham ouercome	I say that I am overcome

Thoru hire that bar that holi sone That soffrede woundes fiue.	Through the woman who bore that holy son Who suffered five wounds.
Hi swerie bi his holi name, Ne shal I neuere suggen shame Bi maidnes ne bi wiue. Hout of this londe willi te, Ne rechi neuere weder I fle, Awai Ich wille driue!"	I swear by his holy name That I will never slander Unmarried women or wives. I will leave this country, And I don't care where I fly to, I'm getting out of here!"

First of all, the Thrush confesses that he was too ignorant to argue with the Nightingale, and admits that he is beaten by the Nightingale's mention of Mary as an example of virtuous womanhood. He then promises to never repeat his offence of disparaging women, and declares that he will comply with the Nightingale's directive to leave. It is typical of this submission format that the submitting participant makes a very open admission that they were mistaken. For example, in *The Merle and the Nightingale,* the Merle also admits that he has been wrong:

(125) *The Merle and the Nightingale*, ll. 96–103

Than said the merle, "Myn errour I confes. This frustir luve all is bot vanité Blind ignorance me gaif sic hardine To argone so agane the varité. Quhairfoir I counsall every man that he With lufe nocht in the Feindis net be tone, Bot luve the Luve that did for his lufe de. All lufe is lost bot upone God allone."	The Merle then said: "I confess my error. This useless love is nothing but vanity. Blind ignorance it was that gave me such resolve to argue so against the truth. Therefore I counsel every man that he not be taken in the Fiend's net through love, but love the Love that died for loving him. All love is lost, except upon God alone."

This admission comes rather abruptly: in his previous turn, the Merle argues that love is the motivation behind all courage and energy. The Nightingale contradicts him, and the Merle suddenly gives up, admitting that earthly love is nothing but vanity, and they go on to sing a duet to the glory of God. The Merle attributes his earlier stubbornness to "blind ignorance", much like the thrush in the earlier example. *Mercy and Righteousness* also ends with a sudden recapitulation by the sinner, who represents righteousness in the poem. This is provoked by Mercy's offer to hear his confession. As for the rapport-seeking actions, one good example is from *The Body and the Worms*, where the body actually apologises for having made complaints about the worms, and proposes friendship to them:

(126) *The Body and the Worms*, ll. 213–215

Þis þat I hafe complened & sayd,	For all that I've said, and you worms reviled,

In no displesyng take it ȝow vnto.	Be not displeased, I humbly implore.
Lat vs be frendes at þis sodayn brayde	Let us be friends for a little while

However, insincere submissions can also be found: For example, *The Clerk and the Nightingale II* ends with the Nightingale's seeming submission. In the antepenultimate turn, the Nightingale has argued that the only virtuous woman is a woman dead and buried. The Clerk responds with a threat to smite the bird, and a directive to leave:

(127) *The Clerk and the Nightingale II,* ll. 61–70 and 75–86

"The to smyte I ame prest,	I am inclined to smite you,
Hens but þat thow be goyng.	Unless you leave soon.
Ne blame þou women ne more,	Do not blame women any longer,
For-soth I rede the;	I advise you truthfully;
Thow schalt aby yt fful dere,	You shall pay quite dearly for it,
Hennys but þat thow ffle!"	Unless you fly off from here!
"Nay, clerk, for thi curtesy,	"No, Clerk, for the sake of courtesy,
Mys-doe thow me ryght noght.	do not behave badly towards me at all.
I wole theym preyse by and by,	I will praise them by and by,
Y wyle chaunge my thoght.	I will change my thought!
[...]	
Haue good day, clerk ffre,	Have a nice day, noble clerk,
Fro the wyll Y wende;	I will go from you.
Take hede what þat I haue seyde þe,	Consider what I have said to you,
Fro the bygynnyng to the ende.	From the beginning to the end.
Loue wher thy ert may be-happe,	Love where your heart may happen to fall,
What-so-euer sche be;	regardless of who she is,
And sche schal make a glasyn cappe,	and she will delude you,
And to skorn lawth the.	and laugh you to scorn.
Fare-wel, clerk, and haue goodday,	Farewell, clerk, and have a good day,
No more wyl I spute.	I will dispute no more.
Now wyl I fare in my way:	I will go my way now:
I rede þou to my wordys tak hede."	I advise you to take note of my words."

The Clerk's strategy of threats is seemingly successful: the Nightingale promises he will "change his thought" and begin praising women from now on. He takes his leave quite politely, saying he does not wish to dispute any further. However, he also advises the clerk to take heed of everything he has said, predicting that women shall laugh at the clerk in scorn if he continues on his path of following where his heart leads him. It seems, then, that the promise to change his opinion is false, only intended to placate the clerk so that he will not realise his threats.

Similarly, in *A Dialogue Defensive*, the Magpie gives up after he has accused the Falcon of being a *agent* (an 'agent' or 'guardian', MED s.v. *prōcūtŏur* (n.)) of women, and Falcon has replied that he sees no reason not to be one, if that means he is defending the truth. This provokes the following admission of defeat from the Magpie:

(128) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 945–960

I se sayde the Pye, with the to contende
Agaynst the femyne gendre, I am moche vnable
As one ouercome, therfore I make an ende
For lytell it auayleth, before the to fable.

Falcon
Yet one thynge of the, or thou from hens flye
I demaunde sayde the Fawcon, what moued thy mynde
In all thy sore sayinges, so shamefully to lye with
raylynge outragyous, agaynst woman kynde
whyther theyr nature, theyr wordes, or theyr lyuynge
Thy tongue haue prouoked, to deadly detraction
Or rather by rashnes, of enuye procedynge
Theyr fame to defaulke, thou hast delectacyon.

Pye
Theyr nature is good, than sayde the Pye
And so be theyr dedes, the trouth for to tell
Malyce me moued, of women to lye
Syster to Megera, the ragynge fende of hell.

"I see!" said the Magpie. "I cannot contend
with you against the feminine gender.
Therefore, as one overcome, I make an end
here, for it's no use to go on talking to you.

The Falcon
"One more thing I ask of you, before you fly
away from here!" said the Falcon. "What
inspired you to lie so shamefully, ranting
outrageously in all your evil sayings against
womankind? Has their nature, words or living
provoked your tongue to deadly defamation,
or rather, do you take delight in blackening
their name because of rashness, arising from
envy?"

The Magpie
"Their nature is good," the Magpie then said,
"And so are their deeds, to tell you the truth.
It was Malice that moved me to tell lies about
women, that sister to Megera, the raging fiend
from hell."

This submission resembles the earlier examples in its forthrightness, as the Magpie readily admits that he cannot win this battle. Furthermore, when questioned by the Falcon, he admits that his motivation for speaking ill of women was pure malice. However, while the submissive party in both (124) and (125) has strongly implied that they will not persist in their error, and the penance required of Righteousness requires a similar commitment, the Magpie makes no such promises. Indeed, in neither of the insincere submissions does the speaker actually admit that they were wrong: they merely agree that the dispute seems to have come to an impasse.

From the examples analysed here, it appears that a party wishing to admit defeat was expected to confess their error, possibly giving some account for their reasons (like ignorance) but without seeming to justify it, and mend their ways. Indeed, stubbornly sticking to one's opinion might lead to violence, as happens in *A Dialogue Defensive*. The Magpie has admitted that he is overcome, and the Falcon questions him further:

(129) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 981–992

Fawcon. Than yf thou shuldes playnly, and as the trouth is Thy mynde agaynst men, sayde the Fawcon expresse Rebuke they shulde haue, of prayse they shulde mys And thy style agaynst women, than woldes thou redresse.	The Falcon "Then, if you should speak your mind plainly and truthfully against men," said the Falcon, "they should have rebuke and miss out on praise, and you would then correct your style against women?"
Pye. I graunt sayde the Pye, but yet adulacyon Nedes must I vse, great men to content And agaynst women, my common detraction These two to contynewe, is my full intent Auaryce of mynde, that is insacyable Adulacyon to vse, hath gyuen me occasyon And so hath enuye, the vyce detestable Prouoked detraction, with false accusacyon.	The Magpie "I admit this," said the Magpie, "yet I must needs use adulation to satisfy great men, and my common defamation against women. It is my full intent to continue these two. Avarice of mind, which is insatiable, has given me occasion to use adulation, and so has envy, that detestable vice, provoked defamation and false accusations."

This stubborn insistence on continuing is apparently very provoking to the Falcon. The narrator remarks that he is "moche moued in his mynde / Agaynst the Pyes wordes, and open confessyon". After a lament on the wretched state of the world where "reason is blynded" and "iudgement corrupte", the Falcon takes flight to punish the Magpie, who flies away in order to escape. The birds, then, behave according to the folklore associated with them: the Falcon is noble and courageous in his defence of women, while the greedy and slanderous Magpie refuses to mend his ways.

This ending suggests that a failure to follow the expected submission protocol could have dire consequences. Indeed, similar findings have been seen in studies of early trial proceedings. This is the case in the Salem witchcraft trials, where those accused parties who insisted on their innocence were generally executed, while those who confessed were more likely to survive (Archer 2002), and this was also the case in medieval heresy trials (Sullivan 2011: 2). Archer argues that this is because a failure to confess was seen as non-cooperative behaviour, and my data suggests that cooperativeness was similarly expected when losing a debate. Of course, in the more religiously oriented debates, such as *Mary and the Cross* or *Mercy and Righteousness*, the submission is partly out of theological necessity: it is hard to imagine how the debate between either of these pairs of combatants could have finished otherwise. However, they do seem to reinforce a model for correct Christian behaviour which is found in non-literary contexts as well, so it seems to have been a widely accepted ideal model, although this does not necessarily mean that it was a realistic pattern of behaviour.

8.2 Third-party intervention

Third-party intervention is the second ending format recognised by Vuchinich (1990: 125–126). He notes that this can be seen as a subtype of submission, since the termination sequence is similar and the third party is usually in a position of power (ibid.). The main difference between intervention and submission, then, is whether the assent is to one's original opponent or someone who joins the interaction at the end. An intervening third party is also a relatively common occurrence in debate poetry, although the classification is not without its problems. For example, sometimes the participants agree to invite someone to serve as arbitrator, while in other cases the judge is self-selected. The latter case, of course, is closer to the type of intervention examined by Vuchinich: a resolution by a judge who has been invited by the participants is hardly an "intervention", and the participants actually have to negotiate an agreement of some kind before they can choose a judge. The debate may then end simply with one of the participants requesting a judgement from the arbitrator. I have chosen to treat these cases as compromises (see Section 8.3). The third-party interventions found in debate poetry can be divided into two classes: violent and non-violent. A violent intervention interrupts the proceedings, either by driving away one of the participants or by incapacitating them from continuing in some violent way. The non-violent type of intervention, on the other hand, leads to a submission through argumentation. Typically, the motivation for a third-party intervention is to stop the conflict from becoming violent, but on other occasions, it may be the third party who engages in violence.

The Owl and the Nightingale is an example of a genuine and non-violent third-party intervention. At the beginning, the birds spend a considerable time choosing a suitable judge, which would imply that they are heading for a compromise resolution by arbitration. However, at the end there is an unexpected third-party intervention, when it looks like the birds are going to fight in spite of their agreement to resolve the conflict with a civilised debate. The Nightingale claims victory on a technical point, but the Owl does not acknowledge this point, and the two birds are starting to summon their respective war-bands in support. At this point, the Wren interrupts the battle preparations:

(130) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1729–1749

"Lusteþ," heo cwaþ, "lateþ me speke.	"Now listen!" she said. "Let me speak! What! –
Hwat! wulle ȝe þis pes tobreke,	do you want to break this peace and so then
an do þanne [kinge] swuch schame?	disgrace the king? Indeed, you won't find him
Ȝet nis he nouþer ded ne lame.	dead or crippled! If you commit a breach of the
Hunke schal itide harm & schonde,	peace in his land, you'll both suffer injury and
ȝef ȝe doþ griþbruche on his londe.	dishonour. Now stop all this, call a truce and go
Lateþ beo, & beoþ isome,	straight off to hear the verdict upon you: And let

an fareþ riht to ower dome,
an lateþ dom þis plaid tobreke,
al swo hit was erur bispeke."
"Ich an wel," cwað þe niȝtegale,
"ah, wranne, nawt for þire tale,
ah do for mire lahfulnesse.
Ich nolde þat unrihtfulnesse
me at þen ende ouerkome:
ich nam ofdrad of none dome.
Bihote ich habbe, soþ hit is,
þat Maister Nichole, þat is wis,
bituxen vs deme schulle,
an ȝet ich wene þat he wule.
Ah, war mihte we hine finde?"

arbitration bring this dispute to an end, just as it was previously agreed!"

"That's fine by me," said the Nightingale, "But not because of anything you've said, Wren, but only on account of my own law-abiding nature. In the end I don't want unrighteousness to triumph over me. I'm not scared of any judgment. It's true I promised that the wise Master Nicholas should arbitrate between us and I still hope that he will: But where can we find him?"

The Wren claims the floor by directing the others to listen (l. 1729). The Wren expresses shock at the idea of breaking the king's peace so shamefully, predicting that the king would punish any such action forcefully. He directs the combatants to act lawfully instead and ask for an unbiased judgement, reminding them that indeed this was what they had earlier decided to do (thereby framing this not as only his own order, but in their interest). The Nightingale's answer suggests that this slight face-saving is warranted: she agrees to the suggestion willingly, but is careful to point out that she does not do so merely because the Wren is telling her to. She claims it is her own lawful nature that prompts her to act in this manner, and admits that she had earlier committed to seeking rightful judgement. She also makes a point of stating that she is not afraid of the decision, in response to the Owl's earlier accusation that the Nightingale has declared herself the winner only because she is afraid of the official judgement. The Owl also agrees with the Wren's proposal, so this would seem to be a successful third-party intervention, where both participans have submitted to the Wren.

The narrator precedes the intervention of the Wren by describing him as a bird of certain status, who is bred among mankind and has the right to speak before the king himself if he so chooses. This is important, since some such statement is usually given about the judges.[39] In *Winner and Waster*, the king insists on judging the case, since the agonists

[39] In *Pride and Lowliness*, the narrator acts as the judge and modestly describes himself as "for my learning farre vnwoorthy"; however, he also mentions that he has been "towards the lawe these long xv. yeres space, / And thereof sworne to be an atturney." In *Heart and Eye*, Cupid sends the debaters to be judged by her lady mother, Venus, because "he knoweth verely that ye / Can best Iuge them as to theyr behoue". In those cases where the judge is royal, reminders of their regal status are given: for example, in *Horse, Goose, and Sheep* the judges, the eagle and the lion, are described as "sittyng in estate royall", and in *Winner and Waster*, the herald remarks that it "es the usage here and ever schall worthe" that failure to submit to the king's judgment will lead to the loss of land and life.

are threatening to break his peace by solving their differences by battle: again the intervention is motivated by a desire to keep the peace. As he does this before the debate has even begun, and the combatants agree to his arbitration, the actual ending of the debate qualifies as a compromise. In *Pride and Lowliness*, the narrator similarly intercedes to stop a battle at the early stages of the interaction. The adversaries are about to fight to the death, when the narrator steps in:

(131) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 321–344

With that the veluet breches as me thought,
Began toward the other fast to roll:
And surely but for mee they would haue fought,
So I was faine the matter to controll.
And spake vnto them both as ye shall heere,
At least as I my selfe imagined:
Nay freend (quoth I) ye shall doo him no dere,
But eche of them sware other should be dead.

At that, it seemed to me that the velvet breeches began to roll fast toward the other, and surely, if it weren't for me, they would have fought. So I was eager to control the situation, and spoke to them both as you shall here (at least as I myself imagined): "No, friend," said I, "you shall not harm him!" But each of them swore the other should die.

Not so (quoth I) I know a better way,
And more indifferent vnto you bothe:
For when ye haue done eyther what ye may,
Ye must be ruled be ye lefe or lothe.

"Not so," said I, "I know a better way, and more impartial towards you both: For when you have done to each other whatever you can, you must be ruled whether you want it or no.

For here ye dwellen in a lande of peace,
And vnder lawes, and vnder Magistrate:
God graunt them in his graces to encrease,
That enden wyll full iustly your debate.

For here you are in a land of peace, governed by laws and under magistrates: may God grant them [the ability] to increase in his graces, and they will end your debate in a perfectly fair way.

And I my selfe for better was in place,
Though for my learnyng farre vnwoorthy:
Towards the lawe these long xv. yeres space,
And thereof sworne to be an atturney.

And I myself, though quite unworthy in my learning, was in a legal position these past long 15 years, and sworn to be an attorney.

If I may pleaser you with my seruice,
I am yours to commaund right as ye list:
For doubt in lawe ye shall haue myne aduise,
Till better come that wyl herein assist.

If I may satisfy you with my service,
I am yours to command exactly as you wish: in any legal doubts you will have my counsel, until better assistance arrives."

Like the Wren, the narrator stresses the importance of legal procedure, since the land is at peace and has laws to deal with such situations. However, this intervention is not enough to close the debate: the participants agree to let the narrator serve as arbitrator, but since the procedure agreed upon involves the selection of a jury, the disagreement goes on as the participants dispute over the suitability of each candidate, continuing the attacks aimed at each other while they are doing this.

A case where a third-party intervention leads to a resolution is *The Debate between the Carpenter's Tools*, where the carpenter's wife joins the fray at the end, siding with the tools that think the master will never thrive:

(132) *Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 197–220

Than spake the Wryghtys Wyfe,	Then spoke the Carpenter's Wife:
"Nother of you schall never thryfe,	"Neither of you will ever thrive,
Nother the mayster ne the man,	neither the master nor the man,
For nothinge that ye do canne.	For anything you are able to do.
For ye wyll spend in a moneth	For in a single month, you will spend
More gode than thre men hath."	more than three men's worth of money.
The Squyre seyd, "What sey ye dame?	The Servant said: "What are you saying, madam?
Ye schuld not speke my mayster schame."	You should not speak ill of my master!"
"Squyre, I have non other cause,	"Servant, I have no other motive,
I suere thee by Seynt Eustase;	I swear to you by St Eustace;
For all the yerne that I may spynne,	Than that he thinks it no sin to spend on ale
To spend at ale he thinkys no synne.	[the earnings from] all the yarn that I can spin.
He wyll spend more in an owre	He will spend more in an hour
Than thou and I cane gete in fowre."	than you and I can earn in four!"
"Yit me thinke ye be to blame	"Yet it seems to me that you are at fault
To gyffe my mayster syche a name.	for giving my master such a [bad] name.
For thoff he spend more than ye have,	For even though he spends more than you can
Yit his worschype ye schuld save."	afford, you should still protect his reputation."
"Mary, I schrew hym and thee to,	"Mary! I curse him and you too,
And all them that so canne do.	and all those that can do such a thing.
For hys servant I trow thou be,	For I believe you are his servant,
Ther thou schall never thé.	and there you shall never prosper.
For and thou lerne that craft at hym,	For if you learn that craft from him,
Thy thryft I trow schall be full thine."	I believe your savings shall be quite meagre."

After the Squire has twice opposed the Wife's intervention, the Draught Nail gives a speech in support of the Wife, declaring that leaving the carpenter's workshop in search of a better one is the sensible course of action. The Wife agrees, lamenting the marriage bonds which keep her from doing so, and cursing the priest that made her an everlasting "apprentice" bound to serve the master until she dies. Perhaps because of her natural authority as the mistress of the house, she manages to silence both the tools and the apprentice, and gets the final word in the debate. *The Owl and the Nightingale* and *The Carpenter's Tools* are the only texts where a non-violent third-party intervention actually concludes the debate. It is important to note, though, that concluding the debate does not necessarily mean the determination of a winner: for example, the narrator of *The Owl and the Nightingale* explicitly remarks that they flew off to seek judgement, but that he does not know how they fared.

As for violent third-party interventions, they always conclude a debate in my data. Most of the body and soul debates end with a violent third-party intervention, as devils come to drag the soul to hell. In *Pride and Lowliness*, the discussion is brought to a close just before the jury's determination by a third-party intervention (the narrator notes that the jury would definitely have found in favour of the cloth breeches, as their case was "so good that nedelie must he winne"). Indeed, the poem thus contains two separate third-party interventions: the first one is when the narrator volunteers his services as an arbitrator, and the second is the final violent attack. In this final intervention, a group of young men, presumably supporters of the velvet breeches, arrive on the scene to grab the unlucky winner-to-be and tear him into pieces.

(133) *Pride and Lowliness,* ll. 1905–1920

But for to see how they him puld and halde, My selfe and others of the company: That it beheld for pitie were appald, To se them shew that extreme crueltie. For thre and thre laid hold vppon a syde, Vpon the panes before and eke behynde: That one pane from another gan to ride, Both out syde and that where with it was lyude.	But to see how they pulled and held him! Myself and others in the company that beheld it were appalled to see them show such extreme cruelty. For three and three took hold of each side, upon the front pieces and ones in the back, so that one piece tore apart from the other, both the outside and the lining.
So that they were defaced in a throw, And pece by peece so very smal itorn: That there nys man so connyng that couth know, Or gesse what garment they had ben beforn.	So that they were defaced in an instant, and torn so very small bit by bit that there is no man so skillful that he could have known or guessed what garment they once formed.
Not so much as the codpece was exempt, Or for his seruice so much fauor found: As not to be in peces al to rent, And here and there in peces throwen a ground.	Not even the codpiece was exempt, or found so much favour for his service as not to be all torn to pieces, and thrown upon the ground in pieces here and there.

The jury thereafter scatters in fear, and no formal resolution is pronounced. As a result, the debate ends with a sole survivor, who may be a winner *de facto*, but not *de jure*, since the appointed authorities never had a chance to pronounce a winner. This is ironic, considering that a very long portion of the poem is spent in choosing a suitable jury from passers-by to decide the affair. This whole procedure is then completely undermined by the final plot twist of the attack, so that the violent ending in *Pride and Lowliness* seems to be designed to counterbalance the resolution towards which the poem is heading.

In *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, it is the narrator himself that resorts to violence. He bears a grudge towards the Cuckoo from the very beginning, as he goes to the woods in the hope of hearing the nightingale sing, but instead he hears "the lewd cuckoo" – an

evil omen signifying bad luck in love. So when the Nightingale bursts into tears at the Cuckoo's complete and stubborn refusal to become a servant of the god of love, and prays for someone to revenge her, the narrator intervenes:

(134) *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale,* ll. 211–225

"Allas," quod she, "myn hert wil tobreke,
To herin þus þis fals brid speke
Of loue and of his wirshipful seruice.
Nou god of loue, þou helpe me in som wise
That I may on þis cukko bene awreke."
Me þouȝt þen I stert vp anone,
And to the broke I ran, and gat a stoon,
And at the Cukko hertely I cast;
And he, for dred, fley away ful faste;
And glad was I þat he was agone.

And euermore þe cukko as he flai
Said, "Farewel, farewel, popingay,"
As þouȝ he hade scorned, thoughte me;
But ay I hunted him fro tree to tree,
Til he was fer al out of sighte awey.

"Alas," she said, "my heart will break
to hear this false bird speak thus
of love and his esteemed service.
Now, God of Love, help me in some way
so that I can have my revenge on this cuckoo!"
It then seemed to me I started up at once,
and ran to the brook, and got a stone,
and threw it vigorously at the cuckoo;
and he, out of fear, flew away fast;
and glad was I that he was gone.

And constantly the cuckoo, as he flew,
said: "Farewell, farewell, [you silly] parrot,"
as if he was contemptuous, it seemed to me;
But I kept hunting him from tree to tree
until he was completely out of sight.

This third-party intervention is requested by one of the parties, but not procedurally arranged as in *Pride and Lowliness*, and it does not lead to a submission, but the withdrawal of one of the participants. The Nightingale then requests a further resolution by the parliament of birds, which is agreed upon but not given in the text; on the audience's layer (Layer 1; see 4.6), this allows for the members of the audience to argue the matter and pronounce a resolution among themselves.

All in all, the violent interventions contain little negotiation, although the character driven off may have the time to close the debate, saying that he does not have the time to continue and making his farewells (and possibly a parting shot, as the Cuckoo's *popingay* in example (134) above). On leaving, the characters typically excuse their departure with a statement that time is passing and they can no longer continue (e.g. *I may no more duelle*). They can also make use of conventional politeness formulae on leaving (*fare-wel*, *haue goodday*).

8.3 Compromise

Vuchinich defines this sequence as consisting of a concession followed by acceptance (1990: 122). I have chosen to include in this section two different types of sequences: those where the debate ends with a participant requesting a judgement from a previously chosen arbitrator (the acceptance being then implicit), and those examples where the

combatants themselves negotiate a resolution of some type. The option where the combatants reach a compromise on their own is much rarer than one declared by the judges: in cases where a participant makes a concession, a full submission is more common than a compromise.

Winner and Waster is one of the poems where the conflict is to be judged by a third party, yet we do not really have a clear winner. Waster requests a judgement from the king as follows:

(135) *Winner and Waster*, ll. 452–455

Now kan I carpe no more; bot, Sir Kyng, by thi trouthe, Deme us where we duell schall: me thynke the day hyes. Yit harde sore es myn hert and harmes me more Ever to see in my syghte that I in soule hate.	Now I can say no more, but kindly, sir king, Tell us where we should be, as time is moving on. My heart is still sore, and it does me harm having always in my sight the person I hate.

He says that he can no longer go on speaking and "the day hyes", commenting on the soreness of heart he suffers when forced to see his opponent. The text we have is incomplete, so the king's decision is not given in full, but what we have left does not suggest that the emergence of a clear winner is very likely. Indeed, Roney (1994) has argued that this was precisely the point of the text, and that the economical interrelatedness of spending money and acquiring it, while common knowledge now, is likely to have been a new insight at the time the poem was written. A compromise resolution (and the possibility of a later delayed decision) would agree very well with this reading. A similar ending is found in *Horse, Goose and Sheep*, where the sheep requests judgement as follows:

(136) *Horse, Goose and Sheep,* ll. 440–463

Diuerse comoditees that comyn of a shepe Cause no warres what men Iangle or muse As in her gylte / ye Iugges take ye kepe What that I saye their Innocence texcuse Of couetyse men falsely may muse Her benefetes and wrongly her atwyte Of suche occasions / wher she is not to wyte	The diverse commodities that come from sheep cause no wars regardless of the complaints and ill thoughts of men. As for her guilt, you judges, consider what I say to protest their innocence! People can grumble falsely out of covetousness, and accuse her wrongly on occasions where she is not at fault.
What is the sheep to blame in your sight Whan she is shorn and of her flees mad bare Though folk of malice for her wulles fight Causeles to stryue fooles wyl not spare Where pees resteth ther is all welfare	In your opinion, is it the sheep who is to blame, when she is shorn and deprived of her fleece, if people fight for her wool out of malice? Fools will not abstain from unjustified fighting. Where there is peace, all is welfare, and since the sheep in her

And sithe the shepe louih pees of Innocence Yeue ye for his parte diffinytyf sentence	innocence loves peace, give a definitive sentence in her favour!

Before this, the horse and the goose have argued in an ingenious twist that the peaceful sheep is the cause of all wars and dissent, since her wool brings wealth to the country, and money is the root of all evils. The sheep answers this argument, instructing the judges to pay close attention, and the resolution stresses the different roles of each animal. The royal judges pronounce all the participants to be equally valuable and necessary to the country, reminding them that God made them all for a good purpose. Indeed, it is explicitly stated that their aim is a compromise or 'mean'. This is a common argument at the point of a resolution: it is most typically concluded that both participants of the debate are equally valuable and necessary for society, and if no other commonalities can be found between them, that of a shared creator will do. In some cases, as in the Body and Soul debates, both parties are declared equally guilty.

Sometimes a debate ends when the participants themselves find a way to resolve the conflict. For example, in *The Debate between Nurture and Kynd*, the issue is actually put to the test. Nurture boasts of his cat Nyce ('Silly'), whom he has cleverly trained to serve at table, and proposes that they have dinner together, so he can show off the cat's abilities and prove that he is right about the efficiency of early training:

(137) *Nurture and Nature*, ll. 29–40

"Now I pray þe," said nurture, "Come soupe with me; Thus to stryve alle day I hold vs not wise. Thow shalt see alle with thyne iye, Bothe of nurture & of exercise. I haue a catte, I calle her Nyce, An vnresonabulle best, haue þis yn mynd; I haue taught her by nurture to do me gode seruyce: Come see how nurture passis kynd."	"Now please," said Nurture, "Come and have dinner with me! I don't think it is wise to argue like this all day. You will see with your own eyes all about nurture and [the effect of] practice. I have a cat, I call her Silly, an animal not capable of reason, keep that in mind, but I have taught her by nurture to serve me well. Come see how nurture surpasses nature!"
"Now, yn faith," said kynd, "if it be so, That shal I wete or I blynne. I wille yn to my chaumbur goo, Mi dores to lokke my tresure withynne."	"Now, indeed," said Nature, "I intend to see right away if that is so. But I will go to my chamber first, to lock the doors and keep my goods safe."

Kynd ('Nature') is equally determined to prove that nature is stronger than nurture, so he catches a live mouse and smuggles it to the dinner inside his glove. On witnessing the trained cat sitting up holding a candle at the table, he opens his glove – "it was no nede to bydde the mous renne out" – and of course the cat ignores Nurture's calls for him to perform his duties, as he chases the mouse around the chamber. The cat gets the last word (so to say) by giving the mouse "a cloute" (a stroke or blow). In spite of this

spectacular win, there is no submission, and neither of the combatants claims victory, as the text ends quite soon after this. The debate can thus be considered to end with the agreement to dine together, which would be a compromise under Vuchinich's classification. The narrator's final comments suggest that he considers both nature and nurture equally important.

The debate between Summer and Winter is a borderline case between submission and compromise. It ends shortly after Winter has argued that Christmas is the high point of the year, celebrated with wine and food. Instead of continuing his boasts about the pleasures of summer, Summer points out that midwinter is a harsh time for those who cannot afford to clothe themselves properly:

(138) *Summer and Winter,* ll. 89–100

Somer Wynter in this tyme he that hath nought hym self for to clouth When it rayneth & bloweth colde freseth & sore snouth All the pore comyns they lyue in great displeser The pore membres of god that haue so great payne to suffer	Summer Winter, at this time, when it rains, and the wind blows, and it is freezing cold with heavy snows, those that have nothing to clothe themselves with, and all the poor commoners live very unpleasantly – those poor members of the church who suffer such great hardships.
Wynter Somer thou sayest trouth a byde we the aduenture Praynge that kynge / sone of the virgyn pure That he wyll geue vs suche hete after this great colde That the pore comonalte may lyue in ease euer hym to beholde	Winter Summer, you speak the truth. Let us await the outcome [?], praying to that king, son of the pure virgin, that he will give us such heat after this great cold that the poor commoners may live in ease and behold him for ever.
Somer Wynter by one assent / our great stryfe let vs ceas And togeder agre we / and make a fynall peas God that create this worlde & made bothe the & me Let vs pray to hym to send vs a good ende / Amen for charite	Summer Winter, let us be unanimous and cease this great battle of ours. Let us both agree and make a final peace! Let us pray to God, who created this world and made both you and me, and ask him to send us a good end to this. Amen for the sake of charity.

Until this point, their debate has been for the most part a competition in self-praise, which is ironical considering that the conflict begins with Winter's disapproval of Summer's boasting. However, the reference to the poor commoners who suffer from the cold seems to create a point on which they can agree.[40] Summer also refrains from making personal

[40] Actually, poor people have been mentioned once before this, when Winter responds to Summer's boast that everyone loves him with a dismissive statement that it is only the poor and

accusations at this point. Winter responds to this suggesting that they pray for heat after the cold season. Winter's admission of the point and pious prayer could be seen as either a submission or a concession. Technically he is not offering a position in between their original positions, which is how Vuchinich defines a concession (1990: 126). However, neither does he explicitly admit to being wrong or make promises to behave better in the future – he merely acknowledges that Summer has spoken the truth on this issue. This provokes an equally conciliating reply from Summer, who proposes an end to the hostilities and suggests that they should pray together. Several features in Summer's final turn are clearly oriented towards reconciliation (*by one assent, our stryfe let vs cease, togeder agre we, God... made bothe the & me*), which supports analysing this turn as an acceptance of a concession, and thus the sequence as a compromise rather than submission.

To sum up, compromise is usually achieved by selecting an arbitrator from the outside rather than through negotiations by the participants, although there are exceptions. When the characters have submitted to such formal arbitration, I have chosen to treat this as a compromise rather than a third-party intervention, since they must collaborate in arriving at such a resolution. In these cases, the third party elected as judge always prefers a compromise solution, which typically highlights the common ground between the characters, stressing the importance of both participants for society. On the other hand, in *Nurture and Nature*, where the characters themselves agree on a procedure which is to end the debate, it ends with a clear victory for Nature. This shows how the termination of the conflict sequence by the characters is quite distinct from the resolution of the question debated.

8.4 Stand-off

Vuchinich explains stand-off as a termination format which lacks the second-pair part of the sequence (1990: 130). In the submission format, the expected sequence is oppositional move – assent, while in the compromise format it is concession – acceptance. If an oppositional move or concession receives no reaction, the participants have reached a stand-off. There are some debate poems which end in stand-off.

In *The Spectacle of Lovers*, the participants reach a stand-off without any external influence. The narrator, titled *consultor* or 'advisor', declares that they should debate no longer, reiterating his advice to avoid the company of the woman for whom the lover suffers unrequited love:

needy who love summer because they want to avoid work and lose their clothes in the summer sun (ll. 37–40). At that point, Summer simply dismisses the point as "not worth a here of wull", choosing not to explore the implied contrast with Winter.

(139) *The Spectacle of Lovers*, ll. 757–784

Consultor. We wyll no lenger / in these maters debate Folowe my counsell / his company eschewe Yf ye entende your sorowe to mytygate In secrete places / do not ye contynue Imagynacyons & thoughtes / your mynde wyl subdue wherfore suche hauntes / yf ye do not cease Loue wyll in you / more and more encrease	Consultor We will no longer debate these matters. Follow my counsel and avoid his company. If you intend to mitigate your sorrow, do not stay in secluded places. Imaginations and thoughts will overcome your mind, and love will grow more and more within you, if you do not abandon such haunts.
Experyence by fyre / whiche is nygh quenched with brymstone it wyll be kyndled soone agayne In lykewyse loue / yf it be frequented wherfore from her loue / do your selfe refrayne Fynde some occasyon / at her to dysdayne To desyre her loue / be not ye to madde Except of yours / that she wolde be as gladde	Experiment with fire: when it is nearly quenched, it can be soon rekindled with brimstone. Love does the same thing, if often attended to. So hold back from her love! Find an excuse to disdain her! Don't be too keen to desire her love, unless she would be equally glad of yours!
Amator. To gyue me suche counsell / me thynke ye be not wyse Your sugred lyppes can not me begyle For yf I sholde folowe your aduyse My lyfe wolde contynue / but a small whyle From her company / I can not me exyle To leue that thynge / whiche that I loue best No reasonable man / wyll make no suche request	Amator I don't think you're very wise to give me such counsel. Your sugared lips cannot beguile me! For if I should follow your advice, my life would continue only a short while. I can't banish myself from her company. To leave the thing I love best! No reasonable man would make such a request!
Wherfore of this talkynge / now lette vs cease Eusamples I haue / ryght many and excellent Theyr wysedome and noblenesse / for to encrease But at this tyme / these shall be competent Wherfore from hensforthe / leue your false argument And of women speke not so reprouable For shame it is to you / and nothynge commendable	So let us stop talking now. I have many excellent examples to prove their wisdom and nobility. But these must suffice for now. So leave your false argument from now on, and do not speak so unfavourably about women! For it is shameful of you and not commendable at all.

Amator refuses to listen to Consultor's advice, arguing it is unwise and unreasonable, but he agrees that they have talked long enough and it is time to stop. Statements such as the ones used here ("now let us cease" and "we will no longer in these matters debate") are found in other debates as well, in an attempt to negotiate an end to the dispute, although they do not always lead to a successful closing of the argument. Indeed, time constraints seem to be the most often-cited reason for closing a debate – when reasons are given at all, this is the one normally referred to. This is, then, a fine example of a stand-off in Vuchinich's sense (1990: 130), with the second-pair part of submitting missing. *The Clerk and the Husbandman* ends in much the same way, with both participants sticking to their opinion, except that there is no closing declaration.

On the other hand, there are some examples which technically end in stand-off even though it is clear whom the reader is expected to regard as the winner. For example, in *Jesus and the Masters of Law,* the masters are silenced by Jesus, and Mary then arrives looking for her son. This is not a third-party intervention, since the debate had already ended when Mary arrives, but the masters make no explicit submission. Similarly, in *Death and Life* the sequence ends with Life's unilateral declaration that Death has lost, but again there is no explicit submission. This probably reflects the traditional idea that a debate comes to an end when one of the participants can find no further arguments and is thereby silenced (see page 33).

Man and Woman is a borderline case. It ends with a 'conclusyon' by the woman, who essentially claims victory. The antepenultimate turn by the woman is essentially similar to all of her preceding turns, giving the argument that all the saints and nobles of all ages were born of women, and dispraising the whole female sex is therefore unwise. The man, in his last speech turn, objects that all the praiseworthy qualities mentioned by the woman are outweighed by a heavier load of evil. This turn functions as a kind of summary refutation, intended to cover any points that might have been left unanswered so far. The woman responds by directly contradicting the man's claim, and then she moves into a lengthier concluding turn (marked in the print with the heading "La femme replique", and this response is not contested. The eavesdropping narrator then says that he scared them off at this point. However, as the intervention only takes place after the debate has practically concluded, this poem seems to belong more naturally in the stand-off category.

All in all, while six of the texts can be technically classified as terminating in stand-off, it is doubtful whether contemporary audiences would have agreed with this classification. In many cases it is quite clear that the narrator favours one of the participants from the start, so these are 'vertical' debates (see page 77). In this way, stand-off may be the most problematic of Vuchinich's categories when applied to debate poetry. On the other hand, it may be the author's intentional strategy to leave the resolution implicit, letting the characters finish with stand-off. Such an undecided ending would obviously allow for a lively discussion in the event that the text was read aloud to an audience, and even solitary readers could entertain themselves by formulating their own resolution.

8.5 Withdrawal

Withdrawal can be seen as a subtype of stand-off, where in response to the sequence offered by the first speaker, the participant not only skips the expected second-pair part, but also withdraws from further interaction. In Vuchinich's data of family conflicts, this was the rarest termination format, being "socially disruptive" (1990: 135). It is not very common in debate poetry either. In the Body and Soul debates, since they are supposedly

taking place between a recently deceased body and the departing soul, it is natural that the soul would finish with a declaration that it is no longer able to continue the debate. However, since the soul is seized by devils immediately thereafter, I have chosen to treat these cases as violent third-party interventions. In fact, different versions of the Body and Soul debate treat this scene differently: in some cases the soul declares that he has to leave, wrapping up the debate before the hellhounds arrive. In other versions, he is captured before he can make any such statement. An exception is *In a Thester Study I Stood*, where the body declares that he will not continue the debate further:

(140) *In a Thester Study I Stood*, ll. 49–52 (half-lines printed as separate lines)

Wrecche gost þou vent auei	Wretched Soul, you go away!
fare þer þou shalt fare	Go where you have to go.
Me is wo inou	I'm suffering enough already,
mine sides beþ colde and bare	my sides are cold and bare,
Min hous is maked of cleie	My dwelling's made of clay,
þe woues beþ colde and bare	the walls are cold and bare,
þer þou chide niȝt and dai	I'm not saying anything more to you,
ne sege ich þe namore	even if you keep chiding me night and day

The soul repeats that the body should have thought about salvation while he still could, and then the debate portion of the text ends, as the soul moves on to a narration of the miracles that have been prophesied to take place before doomsday. This text is therefore classifiable as a withdrawal, as the body yields the floor definitively to the soul, giving his suffering as a reason for this. Sometimes one of the participants withdraws because they have decided that the dispute is pointless, as the opponent is too stubborn to give up and persists in their own opinion. For example, *A Lover and a Jay* ends with the withdrawal of the Jay:

(141) *Lover and a Jay*, ll. 601–612

Take comforte good	Take good comfort,
And chaunge thy mode	and change your mind,
For by the swete rode	for by the sweet cross,
They tourne as the wyde	they are as changing as the wind.
On the see I haue bende	I have travelled at sea
And many Ieoperdyes sene	and seen many dangers.
What nede I more to rekyn	What more should I tell you?
Thou knowest my mynde	You know what I think.
Remembre well I saye	Remember well what I've said!
I must awaye	I must go away;
Passed is the daye	the day is past
I maye not abyde	and I cannot stay.

The Jay has not quite managed to convince the Lover of the deceitfulness of love (and women, naturally). He precedes his withdrawal with a repetition of his advice to the lover. "What nede I more to rekyn / Thou knowest my minde", he then remarks and flies off. His leave-taking, referring to the passing of time, resembles those found in violent third-party interventions where the target of the attack has an opportunity to take their leave.

For reasons of space, it has not been possible to discuss each text here in detail. Table 2 below shows how I have classified each text.

Format	**Comments**
Submission	
Mary and the Cross	
The Good Man and the Devil	
The Thrush and the Nightingale	
Mercy and Righteousness	
Clerk and the Nightingale	insincere
The Merle and the Nightingale	
The Body and the Worms	
A Dialogue Defensive	insincere
Third-party intervention	
The Owl and the Nightingale	
The Carpenter's Tools	
The Cuckoo and the Nightingale	violent
The Soul and the Body	violent
As I lay in a Winter's Night	violent
Saint Bernard's Vision	violent
Compromise	
Winner and Waster	
Horse, Goose and Sheep	
The Heart and the Eye	
Nurture and Nature	
Summer and Winter?	(submission)
Standoff	
Jesus and the Masters of Law	
The Spectacle of Lovers	
The Clerk and the Husbandman	
The Covetous Miser	
Death and Life	
Man and the woman?	(third-party intervention)

Withdrawal	
In a Thester Study I Stood A Lover and a Jay Age and Youth	

Table 2. The classification of the texts in my corpus according to termination format. *The Clerk and the Nightingale I* is not included, as the text is incomplete.

As can be observed from Table 2, submission is the most frequent termination format, closely followed by third-party intervention and stand-off. Interventions are commonly violent, although avoiding violence is often given as the reason for an intervention. Compromise and withdrawal terminations can also be found.

8.6 Summary

Vuchinich's classification scheme seems to work reasonably well for debate poems. The pattern observed in submission exchanges (complete surrender, apology, promise to not carry on performing undesirable behaviour) also agrees with Kotthoff's observation that it is difficult to exit a conflict sequence (1993: 204). It appears that only such a complete reversal of attitude is sufficient to convince the interlocutor (and the audience) that the loser is indeed sincere in his change of attitude. All other termination formats can also be found in debate poetry. However, since the termination sequence of the characters is separate from the resolution of the debated question, there are some odd effects where a compromise sequence negotiated by the characters ends in a resounding victory by one of them (*Nature and Nurture*), or where the character whom we can assume to be the intended winner receives no submission, so that the debate technically ends in a stand-off (e.g. *Jesus and the Masters of Law*). The latter case may be partially explained by the tradition that a debate ended in the silencing of one participant, so that an explicit submission was not considered necessary (see page 33). In part it may be an intentional strategy, letting the audience have fun producing a resolution of their own.

The analysis in this chapter has made little use of the moves examined in the previous chapters. This is because the sequences at the end also make relatively little use of them: when the participants are trying to terminate the conflict, different moves are needed than for carrying it out. As the models developed in previous research have focused specifically on the moves found in conflict, the move categories do not extend to the types of moves used for exiting the conflict phase. Such discrepancies between the actual data and the models employed will be discussed further in the concluding chapter. At least two moves recur in the final turns of the debate. One is the demand for a resolution from the arbitrator. This is found in all the debates where there is an actual resolution at the end, and it can be combined with a request of impartiality and fairness. The other move specific to the ending sequence is a justification of one's leaving the interaction,

usually by a statement that it is late and the speaker cannot continue debating. This can be combined with standard leave-taking formulae.

References to time are often found in closing a debate, when reasons are needed for departing the scene. They can be found in stand-offs, withdrawals and compromise endings. On the whole, the ending sequences in the debates are much more cooperative than the opening sequences, which seem designed to provoke anger and further conflict. This makes sense, as the participants are cooperating to leave the conflict mode. On the other hand, in some cases the conflict threatens to escalate into physical violence, possibly because one or both participants refuse to cooperate. Indeed, it appears that for a reconciliation attempt to be acceptable, very cooperative and self-effacing behaviour was expected.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I have examined the ways in which conflict sequences begin and end. Chapter 7 demonstrated the initial power imbalance of the speakers by observing some differences in the distribution of moves at the beginning of the debate. In Chapter 8, the moves established earlier were of limited use, as the actions used for terminating a conflict are distinct from the ones used for maintaining it. In Chapter 9, I shall take a more quantitative approach to the conflict interaction, examining some linguistic features which have been found to index conflict in Present-Day English.

9 Linguistic features indexing conflict

In this chapter, I shall approach the material with more quantitative goals in mind, making use of corpus searches of the data. As Scott has pointed out, "previous disagreement research has not systematically set out to define the linguistic constitution of disagreements" (2002: 302). The situation has changed surprisingly little in the fifteen years since that statement was written. Typically, research on conflict talk has focused on features at the macro-level, much in the way the present study has up to this point: often the focus has been on the macrostructure of disagreements (such as openings and closings), or on specific functionally defined elements such as moves or speech acts. Relatively little attention has so far been paid to the actual linguistic building blocks which are used to form such moves, such as lexical items which might be more frequent in conflicts.

Scott (1998, 2002) has identified a set of linguistic features which index disagreement in television talk shows, particularly when co-occurring. These include the following lexical and discourse features (2002: 6):

absolute expressions (*all* and *every)*
negation
the discourse markers *but*, *now*, and *well*
emphatics (*a lot*)
floor bids (expressions intended to gain or keep the floor)
overlapping speech turns
indexical second-person pronouns
modals
repetitions
questions
short turn length
uptake avoidance (avoiding a question)

Scott's approach is quantitative: her focus is on establishing rigorously quantifiable patterns in the conflict sequences. She identifies conflict sequences from her data, and examines the frequencies separately for each sequence, using Biber's general purpose corpus for comparison (a comprehensive selection from the London-Lund and LOB corpora, see Biber 1988: 208). Based on a scale between the highest and lowest frequency, Scott placed cut-off points in such a way that less than a third of the sequences would be considered strong on that feature. This is a very welcome move towards addressing some important gaps in the research. In this chapter, I shall attempt an analysis based on a corpus search of high-frequency conflict-related items, but there is

no suitable general purpose corpus with which to compare my data. Instead, I shall examine the actual use of these features in context, and the moves which are realised by them. As I explained in section 4.6, the features I shall focus on are absolute expressions (e.g. *all* and *every*), negation, emphatics, second-person pronouns and modals.

For the qualitative parts of the present study, corpus construction was fairly simple. The texts were examined in full, the beginning of the conflict exchange was identified, and moves were identified through close reading and coded into the relevant categories. While the analysis naturally focused on the conflictive parts of the texts, the other parts also remained accessible for viewing. However, for a more quantitatively oriented study, it was necessary to limit the searches to only the conflict sequences, and the process of cutting out non-conflictive portions of the texts is not as simple as it might seem. *Pride and Lowliness* was a particularly problematic text, since it flows freely between different forms of speech representation (see Moore 2011: 85 for a discussion of this tendency).

(142) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 397–404

He answerd, to be plentiffe in thassise, He thought not good, ne ment not so to be: And that it was not good I dyd aduise, A Iury may be perciall (quoth he.)	He answered that he did not think it good to be a plaintiff at court, and did not intend to be one; and that what I had advised was not good: "A Jury may be partial," said he,
For I am woorthyer by muche then he, For many causes that I can alledge: But yf they wyll seme suche to the Countrie, I doubt, or of them yf they wyl take knowledge.	"For I am worthier by much than he, for many reasons that I can give you, but I doubt whether they will seem convincing to the people, or whether they are willing to acknowledge my arguments.

With modern punctuation, the shift between direct and indirect speech is easier to pinpoint, but in the original, the shift is not so clear. For the conflict dynamics, it would be misleading to leave out the indirect speech before the direct quotation, but including the narrator's indirect reporting of the participants' behaviour is also not unproblematic. I have tried to balance these two needs as best I could, including indirect reported speech by the narrator and excluding more extended descriptive sections. This inclusion of some indirect reported speech may have led to a slight increase in past tense forms of modals (*could, might, should, would*), but should not affect the results in other respects, since first-person forms and verbs other than modals were not among the features examined.

The searches were performed by including all identified spelling variants for each lexical item searched (the variants will be listed below for each category). The list of spelling variants was generated from a word list of the entire corpus, so it should be a comprehensive list of the variants occurring in this dataset. Expressions functioning

simultaneously in two categories were counted for both, as in Scott's study. For example, *never* is both a negative and an absolute.

In general, the frequencies of the features examined are comparable to those found in the more sedate conflict sequences in Scott's data. The strength of each feature is also listed in Table 3 below, to give a general idea of how the frequencies for my dataset compare with the levels found in Scott's study. Scott explains her procedure for assigning feature strength as follows:

> The scoring of the strength of the features [...] is not uniform, e.g., a coding of strong on one feature (e.g., repetition) indicates that it occurs four times or more per hundred words, while a strong on another feature (e.g., floor bids), indicates that it occurs three times or more per hundred words, and a strong on questions is indexed by a normed score of two or more. This variation in the scoring reflects the variations in range (repetition ranges from 0 to 11.2, while floor bids range from 0 to 6.1, and questions from 0 to 3.5), as well as the relative distributions of the sequences within a feature (e.g., the 56 sequences for a feature could have bunched together at the low end of the range, dispersed evenly, or grouped at several different points), and is intended to most accurately index the strength of the feature. (2002: 312)

In terms of the scale she developed for her corpus, all the features examined here are present in at least moderate strength, with the exception of emphatics (see Table 3 below). However, the comparison is problematic in certain ways: her model of feature strength was developed for that particular data set, and different ranges of variation would likely emerge if the same procedure was followed here. On the other hand, developing a different strength scale for my corpus would have meant that the comparison between her corpus and debates would be very uninformative.

Feature	**Frequency**	**Strength**
Negatives	3.1	moderate (2.0–3.9)
2nd p. prons	3.8	moderate (2.0–3.9)
Emphatics	0.7	weak (0–0.9)
Modals	2.7	moderate (1.5–2.9)
Absolutes	2.0	strong (≥2.0)

Table 3. The overall frequencies of the lexical categories studied. Frequencies normalised per 100 words; strength according to the scale developed in Scott (2002: 312).

However, the strength listing is only there to give a rough idea of the level of conflictiveness. In the following sections, I shall examine each of the features in Table

3 in more detail, and I will finish this chapter with a contextual analysis of their co-occurrence and how it contributes to the construction of seemingly conflictual discourse.

9.1 Negation

Negation is obviously a defining component of disagreement, although as Scott indicates (2002: 305), it is not at all frequently considered in the literature on disagreement. Her own analysis involved a count of all negators in the data. Cheshire advocates examining negation from the viewpoint of interaction, arguing that this is likely to be an interesting angle explaining, for instance, the use of *never* in present-day English as a way of intensifying negation (1999: 41). The example below shows that negation can be expected to be common in disputes and debates: the speakers are trying to refute each other's arguments, and negation is a necessary tool for this. Here the Owl has just finished demolishing the Nightingale's accusation that her withdrawal from the company of other birds is evidence of a guilty conscience. Moving to the next point, the Owl first summarises the Nightingale's argument that the Owl's singing is gruesome to hear. Then she answers this with a direct contradiction:

(143) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 313–314

Þat nis noȝt soþ, ich singe efne,	That's not true. I sing smoothly,
Mid fulle dreme & lude stefne.	With a rich timbre and resonant voice.

Given diachronic change in the grammar of English negation, simple frequency counts will not be comparable across periods. In medieval and early modern texts, double or triple negation is the rule. Take the following example:

(144) *The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 109–112

Þauȝ he me be-reue anon to my Ribbe,	Even if he were to leave me nothing but my ribs
Þat I haue vnneþe wher-wiþ to libbe,	[?], so that I barely have the means to live, I will
Ne wol I **not** be wroþ þerfore, **ne no** riȝt hit **nis:**	not be angry because of that, nor would it be right.
ffor al þat I haue, al hit is of his;	For all that I have comes from him.

The first phrase of the third line has double negation, and the second phrase uses triple negation with the contracted form *nis,* standing for *ne* + *is*. A fairly close rendition into Present-Day English might phrase the same line as "I will **not** be wroth therefore, **nor** is it right", using two negators where the Middle English has five. Of course, non-standard forms of PDE might use a double negative in some cases. Take the following example: *vor **nere** ich **neuer no** þe betere* (*The Owl and the Nightingale*, l. 283). Where standard PDE has a single negative: "I'd never be any better", non-standard forms might produce something like "I would never be no better" or some similar structure. However, such

constructions are stylistically marked and therefore likely to be underrepresented in any kind of recorded speech events.

Furthermore, even different manuscripts of the same text could sometimes treat negation differently: in her study on the development of negation in English, Mazzon cites examples where the two manuscripts of *The Owl and the Nightingale* place negation markers differently, and in some cases even the number of negators is shown to vary (2004: 86–87). For example, she points out that line 1265 has *naueþ mon no sikerhede* in the Jesus manuscript, while the Cotton manuscript renders the same phrase with three negatives, *naueþ no man none sikerhede.*

For such reasons, we may expect the raw frequencies of negators in early texts to be considerably higher than the ones found in modern texts. Of course this is not only a diachronic problem, but also applies to comparisons between different languages, since many European languages (e.g. Spanish and Czech) have obligatory double negation. One way to solve the problem would be to examine each example of negation in its full context, counting instances of double and triple negation as only one instance each. However, this would mean counting function rather than forms, and for the sake of consistency one should probably also include instances where a negative meaning is expressed without the use of any negator at all. The benefits of such an approach would probably not justify the expenditure of time and effort. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to simply count every negator separately, as Scott did. Here are the raw numbers of the negative forms examined.

Negator	**Conflict only**	**/100 wds**
not, nought	585	0.82
ne	386	0.54
no	364	0.51
never	182	0.25
un-	163	0.23
contractions	125	0.17
none	117	0.16
nor	81	0.11
nothing	61	0.09
mis-	39	0.05
neither	38	0.05
nay	26	0.04
less	18	0.03

noþeles	9	0.01
Total	**2194**	**3.07**

Table 4. Negative forms. The table gives the raw frequencies for my dataset and the normalised frequency per 100 words.

The most frequent negator in my data set is *not* and its variant spellings *nat, naht, naught, nawiht, nawt, nocht, noght*, *noghte, noht, nohut, nott, nought, nouht, nout, nouȝt, nouȝth, nowiht, nowiȝt, nowt* and *noȝt* (585 occurrences in total),[41] which come after the verb and can be combined with *ne* for emphasis. I have not counted *nought* as a separate item (the meanings are distinguishable from context, but not always easily, and the distinction was not fully developed in the earliest texts). Table 4 shows contracted forms combining *ne* with a verb (e.g. *nis, nam, nolde*) as a separate item, but both the contracted and full form should be treated together. Calculated in that way, the second most frequent negator in my data is *ne*, with 511 occurrences. *Ne* was the original Old English negator, normally placed before the verb (Fischer 1992: 280). In my data, there are 386 occurrences of *ne* on its own, in addition to 125 occurrences of contracted forms combining *ne* with a verb (e.g. *nis, nam, nolde*). *Ne* is surprisingly common even in the later texts in my corpus, when *not* had already become the standard form. This, however, is unlikely to have anything to do with conflictiveness: instead, the older *ne* simply survived longer in poetic texts (Mazzon 2004: 82).

While multiple negation is partly a question of differing grammatical usage, it can also be exploited for interactional purposes: heavy use of negation sometimes seems to go with important turning points or emotionally loaded moments, serving to stress the point being made. Here, the Body is objecting to the Soul's accusations that it was stubborn and would not listen to the Soul's exhortations to pray:

(145) *As I Lay*, ll. 145–152 and 205–208

I scholde haue ben dumb as a schep,	I should have been mute as a sheep,
Or as an ouwe, or as a suyn,	or a ewe, or a swine,
Þat et and drank, and lai and slep,	that ate and drank, and lay and sleep,
Slayn and passid al his pin;	then was slain and past all his pain;
Neuere of catel he **ne** kep,	He never worried about keeping cattle,
Ne wyste wat was water, **ne** wyn,	or new what was water or wine,
Ne leyn in helle, þat is so dep,	or lying in hell, that is so deep,
Neuere ne wist I of al þat wast in.	I never knew about all your concerns.
(...)	(...)
Dud I **neuere** on liue **nouȝt**,	I never did anything, while living,
I **ne** rafte **ne** I **ne** stal,	I did not rob nor did I steal,
Þat furst of þe **ne** kam þe þouȝt,	without the thought first coming from you.

[41] The spelling variants reported here only contain the variants found in my own dataset.

Abyyt þat abyȝe schal.	Let him pay for it who deserves to pay!

In this example, the Body is describing its own cluelessness about all the earthly cares that occupied the Soul, who was the manager in their joint enterprise. The parallelism in *schep/ouwe/suyn* serves to highlight the animalistic nature of the mute body, while aligning with the tendency towards three-part lists (see Jefferson 1990). The point is not to find the "dumbest" animal available, but to reach what Jefferson terms *adequate representivity* (1990: 77) of the class referred to. Similarly, the repetitive word-pairs in *et and drank, lai and slep, slayn and passid* really hammer the idea home. Parallelism, along with deviation, is one of the main ways recognised in stylistics of foregrounding an idea (see e.g. Jeffries & McIntyre 2010: 32–33), and list construction is also a resource used in face-to-face conversation (Lerner 1994, Jefferson 1990) and in many types of early English writing (e.g. Carroll 2008). In the four following lines, the Body then goes on to describe all the things it knew nothing about, using a similar parallel structure with all the phrases heavily negated: the sheep (and the Body) knew nothing about the cares of maintaining cattle, or the difference between water and wine, or the depth of hell, or any of the things the Soul was supposed to take care of. In this way, the repeated negation serves to intensify its argument and stress his insistence that he is innocent, as each point is negated separately. Many examples can be found:

(146) *The Thrush and the Nightingale*, ll. 91–93

So wide so he heuede igon Trewe **ne** founde he **neuere non**, Bi daye **ne** bi nightte.	Regardless of how far he [Gawain] went, he did not find a single true woman, by day or by night.

(147) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 579–580

Þu **nart** fair, **no** þu **nart** strong, **ne** þu **nart** þicke, **ne** þu **nart** long	You aren't pretty and you aren't strong; nor are you tall or broad.

(148) *Pride and Lowliness*, ll. 527–528

There is **no** Auditor, **ne** Clarke of Check, Can penne it bett then he, **ne** more at large.	There is no auditor or clerk of the Exchequer who could write it better than he, or more fully.

It seems that such foregrounded negation is often used for the purpose of excluding potential alternative interpretations. However, it also seems to mark moments of high emotion.

Some further interactional patterns emerge with the negator *no* (379 occurrences, with spelling variants *na, nah, no, noe* and *noo*), which is mainly used to negate nominals.

The high frequency of this word is also likely to be a feature of poetry in general, as Mazzon finds *no* to occur much more commonly in verse than in prose (2004: 82). This negator frequently clusters with particular types of words, suggesting that it was used for particular functions. The most frequent combination is *no man* (59 occurrences, including semantically similar items like *no wight* and *no person*), which will be examined in the following section, under absolute expressions. The second frequent collocation is *no more* (26 instances) or the semantically similar *no longer* (5 instances). Also *no further* is found, but at only one instance it is much rarer. These collocations can be used for two types of moves: to suggest an unwillingness on the speaker's part to carry on the dispute (7 instances), or to silence the opponent (4 instances). Examples (149) and (150) below show both of these situations. Example (149) comes at the end of the debate, where Waster declares he is tired of the dispute and asks the King to give his judgement:

(149) *Winner and Waster*, ll. 453–456

Now kan I carpe **no more**; bot Sir Kyng, by thi trouthe, Deme us where we duell schall: me thynke the day hyes. Yit harde sore es myn hert and harmes me more Ever to see in my syghte that I in soule hate.	Now I can say no more, but kindly, sir king, Tell us where we should be, as time is moving on. My heart is still sore, and it does me harm having always in my sight the person I hate."

By stating his inability to go on (*now kan I carpe no more*), Waster is engaging in a kind of pre-leavetaking routine. He may also be implying one of two things: either he is exhausted by the long dispute, or he is running out of arguments. The first case seems more likely, since he also mentions the passing of time. As in the example above, lack of time is often given as a reason for discontinuing the debate (*me thynke the day hyes*), but the speaker also makes reference to the emotional distress caused by the continuous presence of his opponent.[42] Here is an example of *no more* used within a silencer phrase:

(150) (*The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 191–194)

Þe gode Mon vnderstod Þat þat þe toþur seide was not good. "Do wei," he seide, "þi lore: **Ne spek no more of pryde**: Hit doþ þe soule muche wo: And helpeþ þe bodi luyte.	The good man understood that what the other said was not good. "Cease," he said, "your preaching: speak no more of pride! It does the soul much damage, and is of little help to the body.

[42] It should be said that *no more* is also quite often used in narrative sections which form part of no particular move.

Here the good man disapproves of the devil's arguments, and uses *no more* in the context of a directive phrase *spek no more.* This, then, is an attempt to silence the opponent, at least on the topic of pride.

The third common collocation with *no* is *(in) no wyse* (13 instances), which is used to guard against possible misinterpretation and to strengthen the speaker's commitment to his line of argument, together with certainty expressions such as *doubtlesse* and *forsoth*:

(151) *The Heart and the Eye*, ll. 761–768

Yet wyll I **in no wyse** my selfe excuse But that nature me made for hym doubtlesse And yet forsoth he ought me not to accuse That he bereth by me the heuynesse Of sorowe nor of no manere dystresse For in good fayth there can nothyng be done Without his consente as I can expresse For all the cause by hym is wrought alone.	Yet I do not wish to excuse myself in any way, except that nature undoubtedly made me for him. And yet he should not, indeed, accuse me of being the cause of the heaviness of sorrow or any distress he suffers from. For in good faith, nothing can be done without his consent, as I can tell you, for he alone is the cause of all of it.

The word *nay* occurs 26 times in my corpus (with spelling variants *nai* and *nay*). It is mostly used by the debaters, although there are some instances where the narrator uses it – most frequently for an indirect report of what the characters say. It is used for two common functions, in addition to which there are three instances that are somewhat unclear. The most frequent use is as a response (11 occurrences, and further 5 occurrences responding to rhetorical questions posed by the speaker) to contradict what has been said earlier, and the second common use is in the phrase 'say nay'. The response use can either answer a question from the opponent or a rhetorical question in the speaker's own discourse (see also example (80) above). Refusals of a request have also been counted under the 'response' category. These responses are sometimes reduplicated (*nai! nai!*), which increases the total number of occurrences.

The phrase 'say nay' occurs six times, most frequently in a negated context to indicate that a contradictory position is untenable, or that it would be unwise to say no. For example, when the dead Body complains to the Worms about their treatment of her, the worms answer: "Of þis may þou on no wyse say nay" (l. 129). The Body admits that she now recognises that all the parasites she has suffered during her lifetime were indeed messengers and so she is unable to disagree with the worms on this point. Instead, she goes on to cite the Psalter, where it is said that "alle / Sal be obedyent vn to mans calle" (Ps 8: 6–8).

To summarise, negation is used for various interactive purposes in debate poetry, and multiple negation can serve as an intensifying device. Many of the common negative phrases are used to deny the possibility of alternative viewpoints, suggesting the impossibility of denying the speaker's argument. Some functions will be discussed further in the next section on absolutes, since *never* belongs under that category as well.

9.2 Absolutes

Scott never seems to define her term *absolute*, but most items on her list belong to the subset of indefinite pronouns with universal reference: the category includes words like *all, every* (including compounds like *everybody, everyone, everything, everywhere*) and the similar compounds beginning with *any-* and *no-*. However, she also includes the time adverbials *never* and *ever,* and I have added *always* to the list. The central items in this category are carried over from Middle English to Present-Day English. Scott included them, as they are potentially signals of strong emotion and involved discourse (1998: 69). She found these to be a strong index of disagreement sequences; this may be due to their use in extreme case formulations (see below). For the cases with a negative prefix, this category overlaps with that of negatives. All such cases were counted for both categories, as in Scott's study.

Absolutes	**Conflict only**	**/100 words**
all	612	0.90
never	182	0.25
ever	142	0.20
none	117	0.16
any	89	0.12
every	66	0.09
no man	59	0.08
nothing	46	0.06
each	42	0.06
always	34	0.05
aught	7	0.01
Total	**1396**	**1.96**

Table 5. Absolutes. The table gives the raw frequencies for my dataset and the normalised frequency per 100 words.

All is the most frequent absolute found in early English debate materials, with 612 occurrences. The variant spellings include *al, all, alle* and *alre* but not *algate, allthofe,*

als, alse, also, alsoe, alswa, or *alswo*. *At all* has been analysed under emphatics only. A typical use of *all* can be found in example (152):

(152) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 89–92

All thynges sayde the fawcon, of Goddes creacyon As scrypture recordeth, be perfyt in theyr kynde woman was create, by dyuyne operacyon Perfyt in body, in reason, wyll, and mynde.	"All things," said the Falcon, "in God's creation, are perfect by nature, as scripture records. Woman was created by divine operation, perfect in body, reason, will, and mind."

Here the Falcon is making a generalisation, an absolute case: all things are created perfect, in all ways, and with no exceptions. *All* is not a straightforward word, however, since it seems to have several related senses. Indeed, the Middle English dictionary lists two separate headwords for *all*: one a limiting adjective and noun, and the other an adverbial and conjunction. Most senses of both headwords have meanings related to totality, entireness or completeness. The adverbial use is also reported as functioning as an emphatic in certain contexts (MED s.v. *al* (adv. & conj.), sense 4). However, the absolute and emphatic senses flow into each other so seamlessly that I have chosen to analyse most instances of *all* as absolutes, with the exception of a few cases of *al* + adverb or adjective, which have been analysed as emphatics.

Other common absolute expressions found in debate poetry are *ever* (spelling variants *eauer, eauere, euer, euere, ever, evere*) with 142 occurrences, *any* (spelling variants *ani, any, eni, eny* and *ony*) with 89 occurrences, *every* (spelling variants *euere, eauereuch, euereuch, eueri, euery, everi, every*) with 66 occurrences, and *each* (spelling variants *each, eache, ech, eche, echene, echeone, echone, euch, euchan*) with 42 occurrences. These absolute expressions are used as *extreme case formulations* (Pomerantz 1986).

(153) *The Debate between the Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 13–16

"Ye, ye," seyd the Twybyll, "Thou spekys ever ageyn skyll. Iwys, iwys, it wyll not bene, Ne never I thinke that he wyll then."	"Yeah, yeah," said the Two-edged Axe. "You speak against reason as always. Indeed, indeed that will not happen, And I don't think he will ever flourish."

The basic idea of such an expression is to present something as an extreme case, as in (153) above, where the Twybyll (a two-edged axe or adze) is saying that the previous speaker *always* speaks unreasonably. This is a way of constructing the opponent's behaviour as clearly and unequivocally unacceptable: bad arguments may be suffered to some extent if they only occur occasionally, but as continuous behaviour bad reasoning becomes less acceptable. On the other hand, extreme case formulations can also become a target for protest, precisely because they are seen as too absolute:

(154) *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, ll. 136–140

"Fy!" quod þe cukko, "þis is a queint lawe, That **euere** wiȝt shal loue or be to-drawe! But I forsake **al** such companye; ffor myn entent is not forto deye, Ne neþir, while I lyve, on loues yokke to drawe."	"Ugh!" said the Cuckoo, "This is a peculiar law, that everyone is forced to either love or be dismembered! But I forsake all such company, for I do not intend to die, nor to pull on love's yoke while I am alive.

The Cuckoo is referring to the opinion, expressed by the Nightingale, that those who will not serve the God of Love deserve to die. The Nightingale actually uses the absolute *al* two times in making this wish against the enemies of love.

In a way, absolute expressions are a way of expressing epistemic stance: a speaker using words like *all* and *every* is implying a level of certainty in their argument. Of course, if the absolute is based on a false generalisation, it is an easy target for attack. In (155) below, the Magpie is accusing all women of "abusing their raiment" for the purposes of vanity and seduction. His accusation demonstrates how the disagreement features tend to cluster together: there is the absolute expression *all*, the emphatic *moste*, and modals and negatives are used in an attempt to construct an unassailable case.

(155) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 717–724

Pye. Do nat women sayde the Pye, theyr rayment abuse **All** these foure wayes, whiche thou dost expresse In moste vayne maner, thou canst nat excuse Herein the femyne sexe, nor theyr lyghtnes redresse.	Magpie "Do not women," said the Magpie, "abuse their clothing in all these four ways you mention, in the vainest manner? You can't exonerate the feminine sex in this matter, nor defend their frivolity.
Fawcon. I knowe nat sayde the Fawcon, the surety to say That any so lyue, but yf thou suche fynde what canst thou infer**,** nowe in the way Of reasonnynge, agaynst the whole kynde	Falcon "I don't know," said the Falcon, "for a certainty, that there are any that live so, but if you do find such women, what can you conclude from that against all womankind by way of [valid] reasoning?"

The Falcon's answer is also epistemically oriented, and focuses on the absolute expression. He argues that he does not know for a fact of *any* woman behaving in such a manner, and goes on to point out that even if such women could be found, it is faulty logic to generalise from such examples to the whole of womankind.

No man, the most frequent collocation with *no* at 45 occurrences (59 if semantically similar words such as *no wight, no freake, no clarke* are counted), also surfaces in epistemically oriented arguments. It is typically used in a phrase designed to reduce the

credibility of the opponent's argument by suggesting that no one would believe it. Example (156) below is in response to a speech listing the stereotypical faults of women, like vanity and quarrelling, and the speaker is referring to the same logical fallacy that was seen in the previous example. However, he takes the argument into a different direction:

(156) *The Spectacle of Lovers*, l. 720

No man wyl repute your sayenge reasonable	No man will consider your arguments reasonable

Sometimes this 'no one can' argument is also used preemptively, as the speaker considers likely answers in advance, and tries to reduce the options available to the opponent. For example, in example (157) below, the Owl is discussing adultery, arguing that it is reprehensible in any case, because there are only two believable situations. She goes on to explain both of them: either the husband is a decent fellow, or else he is not, and she does not allow any third option.

(157) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1477–1483 and 1491–1494

For oþer hit is of twam þinge, Ne mai þat þridde no man bringe; Oþar þe lauerd is wel aht, Oþer aswunde, & nis naht. Ȝef he is wurþful & aht man, Nele no man, þat wisdom can, Hure of is wiue do him schame: [...] Ȝef hire lauerd is forwurde an unorne at bedde & at borde, hu miȝte þar beo eni luue wanne a cheorles buc hire ley buue?	For there can only be two explanations for it – And nobody could ever adduce a third: Either the husband is manly, or else he's feeble and useless. If he's an honourable, manly fellow, nobody with any sense is going to want to put him to shame at all on account of his wife: [...] If her husband is debilitated, impotent both at his table and in his bed, how can there be any love when such a fat-gutted oaf has spread himself on top of her?

In the two if-clauses the Owl gives the two options which she considers possible (it could be argued that her logic is faulty, since the degree of respect owed to a man is likely to be scalar, instead of allowing only the extreme ends). She then goes on to explain why adultery is hard to understand in either situation.

In sum, Table 5 shows absolutes appearing at very high frequencies in my corpus: it is the only class of features which reaches the level of 'strong' in Scott's system, if only barely.

9.3 Emphatics

Emphatics are adverbs which modify a headword, intensifying its effect. Scott included them in her study on the basis of previous research and their high frequence in her data, in comparison to Biber's corpus of 1988 (Scott 2002: 306–307). This class in in many ways similar to the class of words known as *amplifiers* (Biber et al. 1999: 554, Biber 1988: 240) or *intensifiers* (ibid., Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 1165), which serve to increase the intensity of the modified item, determining the *degree* of certainty towards a claim. Hyland uses the term *booster* for a somewhat similar function (2005: 52). An early English example would be *utterly*, as in *Rancoure and malyce it destroyeth vtterly*. Emphatics, on the other hand, simply mark the presence or lack of certainty (Biber 1988: 241). An example from my corpus would be *so* used emphatically, as for example in *In what thynge tell me, dyd God woman make so vnperfyte.* Here I shall follow Scott in examining emphatics only.

Emphatic	**Conflict only**	**/100 words**
so	259	0.36
such	64	0.09
most	61	0.09
more	56	0.08
all + adj/adv.	29	0.04
at all	4	0.01
Total	**473**	**0.66**

Table 6. Emphatics. The table gives the raw frequencies for my dataset and the normalised frequency per 100 words.

The most common word with an emphatic function in early debate poetry is *so*, which occurs 509 times in my data (this includes the spelling variants *so, soe, soo, swa* and *swo*). However, the word can also be used as an adverbial of manner, as in the question *wi dostu so?* or the prediction *wyte thou wele it schall be so, that lyghtly cum schall lyghtly go.* Sometimes the distinction is not completely clear. For example, in *theym so to dysprayse it is not commendable*, or *the souenaunce of her beaute my herte so enbraced that my coloure chaunged*, the *so* can conceivably be read either as an adverbial of manner and as an emphatic. To exclude ambiguous cases, I left out all examples of verb + *so*, thus also excluding about a dozen borderline cases where the interpretation of *so* as intensifier seemed just as credible as interpreting it to mean *in this manner*. After the adverbials of manner were manually weeded out in this way, 259 instances remained of a total of 509. Example (158) below shows a typical example of an emphatic *so*:

(158) *The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 839–842

Þinke no mon wonder: Þauh god wiþ hem be wroþ And take vengeaunce on hem: Beo hem neuer so loþ! Schriueþ ow be-tyme: ffor loue or for feer, ffor God takeþ wreche: Heer or elleswher	Let no man wonder if God is angry with them and takes vengeance on them, regardless of how unpleasant they find it. Make confession in good time, out of love or out of fear, for God will exact retribution, either here or elsewhere!

The example also shows the co-occurrence of the various linguistic features which are used together to maintain the appearance of a dispute: the absolute (negative) expression *never* is used together with the emphatic *so.*

Another common emphatic is *such*, with 64 relevant occurrences out of a total of 165 (spelling variants are *such, suche, suich, suiche, svch, sweche, swiche, swucch, swucche, swuch, swuche, sych* and *syche*). Non-emphatic uses of *such* are quite common as well.[43] Example (159) below shows *such* used as an emphatic; it also illustrates how emphatic expressions tend to co-occur with other emotional expressions, further intensifying the sentiments expressed.

(159) *Heart and Eye,* ll. 337–341

And thus the eye hath sette me in such plyght For whan he sawe that I was thus take With loue of her he parted from him quyght Or that I coud my certaynte make Wherfore of tyme I trymble sore and quake	And so the eye has put me in such a plight! For when he saw that I was so taken with love for her, he parted from her altogether before I could make sure (of her). So that I often tremble sorely and quake

The Heart, here speaking to the marshall at the court of love, is presenting himself as a victim and building up to a challenge of judicial combat. *Such* often serves as an intensifier of emotional expressions, but the effect is heightened further when it combines with other expressions of emotion such as *I trymble sore and quake*. *Most* (61 relevant occurrences out of a total of 81, with spelling variants *most, moste* and *moost*); and *more* (56 relevant occurrences out of a total of 190, spelling variants *mo, moe, moo, mor*, and *more*) can also be found as emphatics. These words also have many nonemphatic uses, but here I shall focus on the emphatic ones. Example (160) below shows the use of *most*.

[43] For example, *such* often occurs in the phrase *such as*, as in *pure Granado silke: Such as came neuer vpon legges of myne*. Occurrences with *such* + adj and *such (a)* + noun have been included in the counts provided that the headword is in some sense gradable.

(160) *Saint Bernard's Vision*, ll. 65–68

Most wretched Flesh, which in thy time of life Wast foolish, idle, vaine, and full of strife; Though of my substance thou didst speake to me, I doe confesse I should hae bridled thee.	Most wretched Flesh, so foolish, idle, vain and full of strife while alive; though you spoke to me about my substance, I do confess I should have restrained you.

Example (161) below shows the emphatic *moste* combined with *all* and *doubtles*, all of these being used to discredit the opponent and strengthen the speaker's own case.

(161) *A Dialogue Defensive*, ll. 797–800

Peace therfore Pye, and this opynyon peuyshe That men may rayle theyr pleasure, speake thou no more For sclaunder is a matter, of all other moste theuyshe The offence therof doubtles, deserueth sorowes sore	So hush, Magpie, and do not argue for this senseless opinion any more, that men may complain as they please. For slander is a most dishonest matter, and such an offense is doubtlessly worth repenting sorely.

On the whole, emphatics often co-occur with highly emotional language, which they help to accentuate. Other features, like negation, absolutes, and modals, also appear alongside emphatics. The frequency of emphatics (0.66 per 100 words on average) is relatively low in my data, which, by Scott's estimation, only signifies weak conflictiveness. On the other hand, Scott herself found emphatics to be common in only one disagreement type, which she labelled *personal challenge disagreement* and which was characterised by the strong presence of questions and negation and moderate numbers of overlapping talk, repetition and emphatics (2002: 319). The other two types she identified were *collegial disagreements* and *personal attack disagreements*. Scott does not elaborate on the fundamental differences between these types, but the latter type had strong scores on negation, overlapping talk and repetition, moderate ones on second-person pronouns, and a tendency to use discourse particles (2002: 320–321). One interpretation, therefore, would be to read the low occurrence of emphatics as a sign that debate poems conform more to the 'personal attack' type of disagreement. Indeed, considering the findings about the typical aggressive beginnings of debate poems (see Chapter 7), this seems plausible. However, such a classification can by no means be considered proven at this point, since the analysis did not (and could not) take all of Scott's features into consideration. Furthermore, while Scott's analysis of the features themselves seems robust, the division into disagreement types rests on a very small number of cases: only 17 sequences fit into any pattern (out of a total of 56), and for example the personal attack disagreements were represented by only four sequences (2002: 314–315).

9.4 Second-person pronouns

Personal pronouns are a well-known index of involvement (Biber 1988; Chafe 1985): text types containing more first- and second-person pronouns are perceived as more immediate and interactive, while more information-focused text types tend towards using third-person pronouns. Scott included them partly for this function in indexing involvement, and partly because they are often used in accusations (2002: 308). Indeed, while not all involved talk is conflictive, conflict is almost by definition involved due to its emotional intensity. I have examined expressions realised with first-person pronouns in a recent article (Salmi 2017); in this section I shall focus on the ways in which expressions containing second-person pronouns are used to build a negative image of the interlocutor.

First of all, it is worth briefly discussing the use of *thou* as opposed to the plural or polite form *you.* In the earliest material, such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, it appears clear that the polite use of *you* as a singular address form has not yet developed: according to Mustanoja, this use is first found in the second half of the thirteenth century, but it "remains sporadic [...] until the 14th century", and even then the singular was the more natural choice (1960: 126–127). It is clear that the birds in *The Owl and the Nightingale* are impolite to each other, but the use of *þu* is probably not a contributing factor. In some of the later texts, however, polite *ye*-forms appear. For example, in *The Heart and the Eye*, characters refer to the narrator with a *ye* which must be understood as polite, because he is alone. This feature was not consistently available for use in the politeness function throughout the period covered by my study, and it is in any case fairly well researched already (see e.g Jucker 2006, Mazzon 2003, Walker 2003). I have thus chosen not to focus on this in my analysis.

2nd p pron.	**Conflict only**	**/100 wds**
thou	1205	1.69
thou-oblique	1096	1.53
ye and you	288	0.40
your	112	0.16
Total	**2701**	**3.78**

Table 7. Second-person pronouns. The table gives the raw frequencies for my dataset and the normalised frequency per 100 words.

I have located all instances of the second-person pronouns *thou* and *you* in the corpus, examining them in the context of the associated verb phrase: what it is that the interlocutor is said to be doing. Second-person pronouns are a feature of very high frequency. Altogether, the corpus contains 1205 instances of the singular second-person

pronoun in the subject form *thou*. Spelling variants include *thou, thow, thowe, thu, þhou, þou, þouȝ, þow, þu, þv*, and the combined forms *-tu* and *-touȝ*, as in *shaltu.* Oblique forms include the variants *the, thee, thi, thine, thiselven, thy, thyn, thyne, thyselfe, þe, þee, þi, þin, þine, þiselue, þy,* and *þyn*. These occur 1096 times in all. Forms of *ye* appear 288 times in the corpus (spelling variants *ye, yee, you, yow, yowe, ȝov, ȝow, ȝou, ȝe,* and *ȝee*). The count for *ye* includes both subject and object forms. Possessive forms of *ye* occur 112 times (variants *ȝowr, ȝour, ȝoure, your, youre, yours,* and *yourselve*). In the rest of this section, I shall mostly focus on *thou*, since that is the pronoun most commonly used by the characters when speaking to each other. On the other hand, in the following subsection on modals, I shall group occurrences into first, second and third person uses, including both singular and plural instances.

Clusters were examined using AntConc's N-gram tool. The most common words clustering with *thou* are the verbs *be* and *have*, occuring a total of 215 times in 2-grams with *thou* as the left element (forms of *be* 138 times, forms of *have* 77 times). There are also 2-grams with *thou* in the right position and *be* or *have* in the left, i.e. with inverted word order (*be* 20 times, *have* 12 times). A large portion of these occurrences can be explained by their function as auxiliaries. When functioning as main verbs, they are used to paint a very unflattering picture of the opponent, who is depicted as *(bot a) fole, mad, vnwise, loþ, peuysshe, not worth a tord* and *worse than is the crawling Toad.* Sometimes the possibility is raised that the opponent might be *wis*, although this occurs in a conditional clause. On the other hand, they can be questioned as to what they are: *how art thou not afrayde; what art thou to whome I shulde answere*. As for the verb *have*, physical attributes of the opponent, like *scharpe clawe* and *schille þrote* come up, but mostly the focus is on what they have done: immoral actions (*bigyled, corrupted; thou hast most wretchedly beene scraping*) but also various kinds of speech actions (*thou hast rehersed, sayd, karped* but also *herd sayen*).

Thou also frequently co-occurs with verbs of speaking: *thou sayst, spekest, tellest, singist... that.* There are 180 occurrences of 2-grams and 3-grams with *thou* as the first element and a verb of speaking as the second or third element.[44] Usually this is presented in a negative light: *Al þat þu spekest hit is nouȝt; ne recche ich neuer what þu segge; þu singest a-winter wolawo; So þou seist as false men do; þou doost raue; þu spekest gideliche*. The opponent's negative viewpoints on the speaker can also be reported, although the speaker will obviously try to undermine them: *Thou sayst, that I have led thee oft astray.* Sometimes, however, the speaker admits that the opponent may have a point: *it is full true I doo confesse: As thou hast sayd.*

[44] This count excludes the cases where a 3-gram contains a 2-gram. Hence, *þu seist þat* is not included, but *þu miȝt segge* is.

A rarer type of verb co-occurring with *thou* are verbs of mental activity. They are much less common than verbs of speaking, though (63 occurrences in total, although this excludes cases of the modal *will*), and there is a great variety of verbs, the most common being *know*. Of course, *thou* can also be used for name-calling, and in such cases it is immediately followed by a noun phrase. A number of these appear in the list of N-grams: *thou beggers weede, þu wrecche, thou carefull man, thou ianglar, thou kaitiffe wretch, thou woefull wretch, thou wrathefull queene, thow accursed, þu, fule þing*. Finally, *thou* also frequently clusters with modal auxiliaries. This will be considered in more detail in the next section, which focuses on modals.

This brief exploration of the collocations of *thou* shows the overall negative light in which the opponent is seen in debate poetry. More contextualised examples will be given in the final section of this chapter.

9.5 Modals

Scott included modals in her study of features indexing disagreement on the grounds that Biber (1988) had suggested them as potentially serving such a purpose, and because they occured frequently enough to allow for useful quantification (2002: 308). The concept of modality refers to various linguistic resources which are used to communicate attitudes. Concepts such as subjectivity, stance and voice are central for these purposes. Probably the most grammaticalised way of expressing these meanings is by the use of modal verbs. Warner distinguishes between three main types of modality: epistemic, deontic and dynamic (1993: 14, following Palmer 1979). Epistemic modality is concerned with truth values and evidentiality, as for instance in *his cause [is] so good that nedelie must he winne*; deontic modality focuses on obligation and permission according to some set of norms, as for example in *I must be contente with reason as other hathe ben*; dynamic modality, finally, is a somewhat fuzzy category concerned with ability, possibility and volition, but also necessity in cases which are not clearly epistemic or deontic, for instance *I must awaye / passed is the daye / I maye not abyde*, where the *must* denotes neither logical necessity nor some externally determined norm.

A historical study of modals is complicated by the fact that expressions of modality have developed considerably from Early Middle English to the present day. For example, *can* was used throughout the Middle English period in the meaning ‘to know, to know how’ (Mustanoja 1960: 599), although the modal use was also gaining ground against *may*. Similarly, *will* used to be a full lexical verb, and is still used for this purpose in Early Middle English, but later developed into a marker of futurity.

Modal	**Conflict only**	**/100 words**
shall	472	0.66
will	318	0.45
may	318	0.45
can	217	0.30
should	179	0.25
would	141	0.20
might	133	0.19
must	61	0.09
ought	37	0.05
could	31	0.04
mot	24	0.03
Total	**1931**	**2.70**

Table 8. Modal auxiliaries. The table gives the raw frequencies for my dataset and the normalised frequency per 100 words.

On the whole the ordering of the modals according to frequency is similar to that in Mazzon's data of dramatic dialogues (2009: 58), but *can* is much more frequent in my material: it is the fourth most frequent item, while it only comes seventh in the N-town plays. 44% of the instances of *can* were from medieval texts. *Must*, on the other hand, is slightly lower in my list. Otherwise the ordering is largely similar. This is also the most striking difference between my data and that found in the Helsinki subcorpus: *can* is almost three times as common in my material (see 9.5.2 below). *Will, would, may* and *might* are also notably more common in my data, while *should* and *must* are more common in the scientific texts of the Helsinki subcorpus, although the difference is slight. All in all, modals are clearly more frequent in debate poetry than in scientific texts.

In this section, I shall examine the most common modal auxiliaries in turn, focusing on how modality is used as a resource for conflict interaction.

9.5.1 Prediction and obligation: *shall, should*

With 472 hits, SHALL is the most frequent modal verb in my corpus (spelling variants are *sal, salbe, sale, sall, salt, schal, schalbe, schall, schalle, schalt, schalte, schaltouȝ, schaltu, schul, schule, schulen, schullen, shal, shalbe, shalben, shall, shalle, shalt, shalte, shaltu, shelen, shul, shule, shulen,* and *shulle*). It is found 93 times in the first person, 86 times in the second person, and 293 times in the third person.

It is a marker of future tense, used, as seen below, for expressing prediction. The most striking function found in debate poetry is predictive: typically, something is presented as inevitably happening in the future because of God's will. This is the mostly epistemic

"inevitable future", according to Walker (1993: 170), and is a function also common in the N-town plays, according to Mazzon (2009: 58). Such predictions often have a religious theme (*thou schall be hanged in helle*), but gloomy predictions are also made in other contexts, as in the example below.

(162) *The Clerk and the Nightingale* II, ll. 79–82

Loue wher thy ert may be-happe,	Love where your heart may happen to fall,
What-so-euer sche be;	regardless of who she is,
And sche schal make a glasyn cappe,	and she will delude you,
And to skorn lawth the.	and laugh you to scorn.

The use of negative predictions as weapons of aggression has already been discussed in the previous chapters (see section 5.6). Another frequently occurring sense of *shall* indicates intention. For example, the characters commit themselves to producing winning arguments: *ich shal mid one bare worde do þat þi speche wurþ forworþe; "In fayth," said kynd, "I shalle not lye"*. In the first person, there are 27 such commissives (29% of the first-person instances of *shall*), and they are found in metadiscursive comments both by the characters and by the narrator (although the narrator's comments are excluded from the counts). Such commissives contribute to discourse organisation, making it clear to the readers what to expect next.

Otherwise, commissive *shall* is particularly common in *The Debate between the Carpenter's Tools*, where the tools claim they will perform miracles of industriousness to help their master prosper: *I schall crepe fast into the tymbyr, / And help my mayster within a stounde / To store his cofer with twenti pounde*. Excluding the metadiscursive commissives listed above, there are 33 commissives in the first person. The remaining cases of *shall* in the first person are mostly predictive: *If Grain hold so cheap as it plainly appears, I shall be undone within two or three years*. Deontic uses of *shall* are extremely rare in the first person.

However, such metadiscursive comments can also be found in the second person: *Aske of the Brokers howe, and ye shall heare; "Nay, nay!" sede þe niȝtingale, "þu shalt ihere anoþer tale"*. Sometimes it still has overtones of necessity or prediction, which make it useful in making promises.

The past tense form is much less frequent. The spelling variants examined for SHOULD are *scholde, scholden, scholdest, scholdeste, scholdist, schuld, schulde, schuldest, schuldys, schuldyst, shold, sholde, sholdest, should, shoulde, shouldst, shuld, shulde, shuldes, shuldest, soldich* and *solde* (most occurrences of *solde* are forms of the verb *sell,* but there are two which are modals). *Should* seems to be overwhelmingly used in the

third person: there are 40 instances in the first person, 22 in the second person, and 117 in the third person. It is often used as a past tense predictive (34 instances), but even more often (82 instances) it is used to convey a deontic meaning:

(163) *The Carpenter's Tools*, ll. 203–204

The Squyre seyd, "What sey ye dame? Ye schuld not speke my mayster schame."	The Servant said: "What are you saying, madam? You should not speak ill of my master!"

Other meanings are its use as a marker of hypothetical cases especially in *if*-clauses, which is also quite common (53 instances, and in some cases these hypothetical uses can also be seen to contain a flavour of the deontic:

(164) *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 51–54

ȝif ich þe holde on mine uote, (so hit bitide þat ich mote!) & þu were vt of þine rise, þu sholdest singe an oþer wise.	If you were ever out of those branches And I got a hold of you in my foot – Oh, if only I might! – Then you'd sing a different tune!

(165) *The Spectacle of Lovers,* ll. 71–74

I wolde Iesu she had the prerogatyfe That she knewe ye thoughtes of al creatures humayne Than sholde she knowe what a bytter lyfe I lede for her	I would to Jesus that she had the power to know the thoughts of all human creatures; then she would know what a bitter life I lead because of her.

While the general context in (165) above is of hypotheticality, that is established already by the *would* and *had*. The *should*, then, also conveys the idea that this is more a moral necessity than volition on behalf of the subject, although it also confirms the idea of irreality. There is also a handful of cases with other types of modality, specifically concerned with ability (*Hou scholde I be proud, whon I þis se?*) and epistemic modality (*it should seme at the least against his wyll*).

To summarise, *shall* mostly appears in contexts of prediction or commitment. Expressions of inevitable future and metadiscursive commissives are particularly common. *Should*, on the other hand, is mostly deontic, although it can also be found in hypothetical scenarios and as a simple past tense of predictive *shall*. In the following subsection, I shall discuss some notions of possibility and ability in debate poetry.

9.5.2 Possibility and ability: *may, might, can, could*

The spelling variants found for MAY are *mai, maiest, maist, maiȝt, may, maye, mayht, mayst* and *mayȝt*. It is found 70 times in the first person (11 of these in the plural), 54 times in the second person (10 plural forms), and 194 times in the third person.

In the first person, negative expressions seem to be quite common: almost one third of the occurrences are found in the context of negative phrases (22 instances). For example, phrases such as *wtowte a cause I may not complayne* and *ne mai ich for reowe lete* illustrate this tendency. On the other hand, only 8% (6 instances) occur with verbs of mental activity.

In contrast, in the second person, *may* often occurs with verbs of perception or mental activity. Examples of such phrases include *as ye may se, as wryten ye may fynde,* and *hereby thou may lerne*. About 37% (20 instances) of the total occurrences of *may* in the second person are found in such phrases. Only 8 instances (15%) of the second-person occurrences are in negative sentences.

The spelling variants included for the word count of CAN are *can, cane, canne, cannot, canst, canstu, con, cone, conne, connen, const, counnen, cunne, kan, kane, kon* and *kunne*. Excluded variants include *kun*, which is only used in the sense 'kin', and *ken*, which is a different verb, 'to make known'. The remaining variants were examined and irrelevant uses exluded. *Can* is found 46 times in the first person, 47 times in the second person, and 124 times in the third person.

I had initially expected that there would be a tendency for the negative to co-occur with the second person more than the first person, but as a matter of fact, *can* very commonly occurs in negative phrases even in the first person: *Of her noble vertue the trewthe I can not tell; How he schall thryve I cane not thinke*. 20 instances (43%) of first-person *can* are found in negative contexts, often with verbs of saying or mental activity, as with *tell* and *think* in the examples above.

In the second person as well, lack of ability is a common theme in the argumentation found in debate poetry. Over one third (20 instances or 43%) of the 47 instances of *thou/ye can* are in negative contexts, suggesting a lack of ability. Even here this often co-occurs with verbs of saying, to communicate the idea of something unsayable or undescribable: *A bongler or a botcher, thou cannest nat God call*. Of course, there is a suggestion that this is not just a personal lack of ability, but that indeed it is impossible or unacceptable to express the idea. In addition to the occurrences in clearly negative phrases, a very high number of the remaining cases imply a more or less direct questioning or belittling of the ability referred to by the second-person modal: *ich not*

ȝef þu canst masse singe, he wyll drynke more on a dey than thou cane lyghtly arne in twey, The devyles dyrte for any thyng that thow cane wyrke! However, the likelihood of *can* occurring with verbs of perception or mental activity is much lower than it was for *may*.

As for the third person, the "no man can" argument is a common occurrence in debate poetry, suggesting impossibility: *Wherfore no man can say but wedlocke is necessary; For no man can haue greater delectacyon than with women to conuerse.* In debates concerned with love, there is the idea of love as a force that cannot be stopped or denied: *from her loue he can hym not refrayne*. Referring to unthinkability or unsayability is a fairly common argument pattern in debates, and can be found in all three persons. Indeed, Scott also notes (1998: 68) that a possibility modal "[c]onsiders alternatives". *May* seems to be used in a similar way with *men*, but as in the second person, it seems to be more commonly used in positive sentences.

Might seems to be most commonly used for referring to possibility, although there are also many examples where it is used for past ability: *that I might see on euerye side 17 miles.* Sometimes there also seems to be a suggestion of deontic meaning: *Nu þu miȝt, hule, sitte & clinge; þu miȝtest bet hoten galegale.*

The spelling variants of COULD analysed here are *cold, coud, coude, coudist, could, coulde, couldest, couldst, couth, couthe, couþ, couþe, couþest, couþist, cowde, cuþ, cuþe, cuþest, koude and kuþe.* Again, irrelevant attestations (such as *cold* in the sense of 'cold') were removed manually. It seems to be used overwhelmingly as the past tense of *can.* However, there are some examples where it is clearly used to signify potential ability: *Examples for this matter, almoste innumerable I coulde here recyte, yf tyme wolde permyt; I could reherse the stories many a one, of Greekes.*

It seems that some distinct argumentative strategies can be observed in debate poetry, concerning possibility, ability or claimed ability. Their use for considering alternatives is probably the explaining factor behind the high frequency of *can.* The most striking difference between *can* and *may* is in the second person, where *may* typically occurs in positive contexts, with verbs of mental activity, and *can* is much more commonly found in negative ones, with verbs of saying. In the first person, verbs of mental activity are rarer with *may* than in the second person. These differences can probably largely be explained by the frequent use of some fixed phrases like *thou mayst see/find* as opposed to *thou canst not call/rehearse/deny.* On the other hand, if *may* in this context were to be read as referring more to possibility than ability, the finding would align with Kytö's observation that *can* rises faster in uses referring to ability than neutral possibility (1987: 226). In any case, there is a tendency for the two modals to be used for different

argumentative strategies: *may* in cases where the speaker wants to argue that something is so obvious that even the opponent can see it, or that there is much evidence for it; and *can* for the opposite case, when evidence cannot be found.

9.5.3 Volition and futurity: *will, would*

The spelling variants for WILL and NE + WILL are *nele, nelle, neltu, nelleþ, nil, nul, nule, nulle, nulleþ, nultu, nyl, nylle, wel, wil, wile, wileþ, will, wille, willi, wilt, wiltu, wol, wole, wolen, woll, wolle, wolleþ, wolt, wule, wulle, wulleþ, wult, wultu, wyl, wyle, wyll, wylle, wylt,* and *wylte*. Irrelevant cases (e.g. *all at wyll*) were weeded out manually, which reduces the total count from 605 hits to 318 occurrences of *will* as a modal marker. *Will* is found 77 times in the first person (8 of which are in the plural), 47 times in the second person (7 in the plural), and 194 times in the third person.

In the earliest texts, *will* and *would* are still found as main verbs rather than auxiliaries. For example, when the Nightingale rejoices that "Nu ich mai singe war ich wulle" (*The Owl and the Nightingale*, l. 1108), the volitional interpretation is obviously more appropriate than the futuric, and even if there is an elided main verb (i.e. *war ich wulle* ***singe***), the meaning does not appear to be much different from non-auxiliary uses such as *ich wule þat þu hit wite.* Such *that*-clauses have nonetheless been removed from the total count; instances of *will* with elided main verb have been included.

The phrase *I will* most commonly combines with a main verb referring to a future speech event: *Ȝet I þe wulle an oþer segge*; *yet wyll I in no wyse my selfe excuse*; *another reson I wyll thee seyn*. In these cases it is hard to distinguish between the volitional and the futuric meaning. 33 cases (43%) of the first-person occurrences of *will* refer to a speech act.

Second-person verb phrases with *will* quite often seem to occur in conditional clauses: *Bute þu wille bet aginne, ne shaltu bute schame iwinne*. All in all, 10 instances (21%) of second-person sentences with *will* are following an *if*, and there are other cases with unreality markers of some kind: *wethur þu wylte or none*; *or elles ryght soone ye wyll repent*. There are also 12 instances that occur in interrogative sentences.

The spelling variants of WOULD and NE + WOULD include *nolde, noldest, noldestou, wald, walde, wold, wolde, wolden, woldes, woldest, woldeste, woldestou, woldist, would, woulden,* and *wouldst.* It is found 19 times in the first person, 29 times in the second person, and 93 times in the third person (with 7 instances of *would that* removed as main verbs). It seems to be quite commonly found marking unreal situations, as in *Trows þu þat we wald towche þi caryone playne?* The use as a genuine past tense of *will* is less common, but there is usually at least a shade of volitional meaning present.

9.5.4 Necessity: *must, mot*

Originally, *must* was the past tense form of *mote*, which could be used to express ideas of permission or possibility, obligation or necessity, or to formulate a wish (OED s.v. *mote* v.1). All of these are found in the few instances of *mote* in my corpus, but *must* is predominantly deontic. The spelling variants found for MUST are *must, muste, most, moste,* and *mostist.* As some of these are homographs for spellings of MOST, the initial number of hits (129) is much reduced, and the final number of occurrences of MUST is only 61. It can be used for both deontic and epistemic functions. Uses referring to moral duty or divine will, commonly referring to suffering or enduring certain unavoidable ills, are the most frequent type (19 instances or 31%). For example, the sense of obligation can be found in *Both thou and I, we must descend to Hell*, and *In good praiers þou muste wake*, as well as examples that have to do with the unavoidability of death. Similarly, pain (often caused by love) cannot be avoided: *wyll thou or not / this payne thou must endure*. On the other hand, staying up praying instead of indulging the body in a good sleep is not a logical necessity but a moral requirement, so that the meaning of *In good praiers þou muste wake* is more deontic.

Here is an example of epistemic *must*: *It must needes folowe that he hateth me.* This is spoken by the velvet breeches in *Pride and Lowliness*, arguing that the modest knight passing on the road is unsuitable as a jury member. This is a fairly straight-forward case of an epistemic *must*, since it is not the case that anyone would command the modest knight to hate the velvet breeches; rather the speaker is making a logical deduction that if the knight prefers to put his money into good food and charity, then it necessarily follows that he must be opposed to the finery represented by the velvet breeches. Of course the logic is somewhat questionable, as charity and velvet breeches are not mutually exclusive, but clearly the speaker wishes to make it appear like a valid chain of reasoning. The necessity conveyed by *must* is further intensified with the adverb *needs* (OED, s.v. *needs*, adv.). This epistemic use of *must* for logical necessity (10 instances, 16%) commonly combines with verbs referring to the semantic field of actions taking place in debates, such as admitting a point (*graunt*) or removing something from consideration (*exclude*): *Althoughe I must graunt, that they of nature be perfyt*; *Yet profyte from them, thou must nedes exclude.*

So *must* is commonly used for moral obligations and logical necessities. A third common use is for leaving the current situation and conversation. References to the passing of time and the ensuing necessity of leaving can be a convenient way to exit a debate which is no longer going anywhere, as in *I must awaye / Passed is the daye.* This use is less common, however – there are only three instances of *must* used in this way.

In sum, modality is obviously very central in debates, since the ostensible purpose is to decide on a controversial question and convince the audience about one's own viewpoint, and this cannot be done without appropriate proof, whether by logic or by the factual accuracy of one's premises. Questions of ability (or the lack of it), possibility and volition come up regularly. Similarly, obligation in terms of morality is a common topic. Of course, issues of certainty, probability, ability and obligation can also be expressed lexically, without using the more grammaticalised resource of modal verbs, but space does not permit a full examination of such strategies here. However, while the presence of argumentation ensures a frequent use of modals, the modal phrases do not always seem to coincide in any simple way with the moves discussed in the previous chapters: they should probably be seen as building blocks for moves rather than as constituting moves in themselves.

9.6 Contextual analysis

Looking at each feature separately makes it hard to see the way they interact. In this section, I shall examine longer extracts once again, to explore how the features work together in context. Example (166) below shows a combination of various issues discussed above: the use of *shall* both in the predictive function and to refer to moral duty or divine will, the use of negatives both for contradicting and attempting to exit the dispute, references to lack of ability or possibility, and the occasional absolute and emphatic form used to strengthen the emotional effect.

(166) *The Body and the Worms*, ll. 144–176

Now þi lyfe is gone, with vs **may þu not** stryfe;	Since your life is gone, you may no longer strive
Þou art bot as erthe & as þinge to **noght** gone;	Against us worms, for you're nothing but clay,
Lyke as I **þe** sayd was in **þine** aduencione,	As you'll recall from that holy day
Of Lentyn comynge þe ask wedynsday,	When the priest, to mark the start of Lent,
When þe preste with asses crosses alway,	Makes a cross of ash on each penitent.
And with asses blisses, to hafe rememoraunce	And with ash blesses you to have in mind
What **þu art** & wher to **þou sal** turne agayne;	What you are, and to what you'll turn again,
ffor asses **þu** was afore þis instaunce,	For ashes you were before this time,
And asses **sal þu** be after for certayne.	And ashes you'll be hereafter for certain.
Be **þu** lord, lady, or hye sufferayne,	Be you lord, lady, or high sovereign,
To powder & dust in tyme to cum **þu sall**;	To powder and dust in time you will come,
Of warldly goynforth swylk is þi entyrvall."	Of your worldly sojourn such is the sum."
Þe Body spekes to þe Wormes:	The Body speaks to the Worms:
"Allas, allas, now knaw I ful well	"Alas, alas, now I know full well,
Þat in my lyfe was I made lewyd & **vn**wyse,	That all my life I was a fool.
With a reynawnde pryde **so** mykil for to mell,	With a reigning pride too much to tell,
ffor myne abowndant bewte to so devyse;	I thought of myself as a beautiful jewel

To prowde hafe I bene, to wanton, & to nyse, In warldly pleasaunce gret delyte hafyng, To be my comper **none** worthy þinkynge.	And was wanton and frivolous, as a rule, Having great delight in worldly pleasure, Thinking none to be my equal measure.
And now soget to wormes I am beynge Beryng þair preue mensyngers dayly, As loppes & lyce & oþer wormes right commerowsly, **Vn**knawyng fro whyne þai come trewly. To þis **can I** say **no more** vttyrly, Bot arme me **I must** with gode sufferaunce Oure Lordes will to abyde with **al** þe circumstaunce."	As for these worms who now address me, I bore their messengers each day— Those fleas and lice that sore oppressed me— Not knowing how they came my way. More truly than this I cannot say, But I must myself with patience provide, In all circumstances God's will to abide."
Þe Wormes awnswers to þe Body: "By þis sufferaunce of vs **no** thanke gyt **ȝee**, ffor by ȝour wil lyfed hafe **euer** ȝe walde; Rememor **ȝe sal** with will of ȝour hert fre In holy scripture, & **ȝe wole** behalde Þat þe fayrnes of women talde Is bot vayne þinge & transitory; Women dredyng God **sal** be praysed holy."	The Worms answer the Body: "You get no thanks from us for this admission: If you had your will, to life you'd hold. But if you by your heart's volition Look in holy scripture, you may behold That the fairness of women, as therein told, Is but a vain thing, and transitory. But God-fearing women shall be praised as holy."

This extract follows the body's desperate claim that according to the Psalter, all animals should be subject to humans. The worms demolish this argument quickly, pointing out that it only applies to the living, and the dead body no longer has this ability to rule over other creatures ("with vs may þu not stryfe"). They also predict that the body will turn to ashes along with everyone else, and their listing of lords, ladies and other possible classes serves to stress the universal applicability of this prediction. The body tries to exit the battle, admitting her earlier ignorance and current inability to produce a winning argument: she can "say no more vttyrly". However, the worms are not prepared to accept her tentative resignation so easily, noting that her "sufferaunce" or patience is not very impressive given the lack of options, and highlighting the moral duty of fearing God. Both parties are thus beginning to align on the point that the body lacks any viable alternatives, but have not yet successfully negotiated the end of the conflict sequence.

Sometimes, modals are used to support an argument with completely hypothetical exempla. For example, the devil makes good use of hypothetical *will* in presenting the motivations of a priest. The good man has explained that sloth is a sin, and the devil says men live longer if they are "glad and muri", arguing that rising early to go to church will not be of any use, since the church was only created so that priests could live by the offerings of others. This is his description of the priest:

(167) *The Good Man and the Devil*, ll. 720–750

He **wole** amorwe Belle rynge,	He will ring the bell in the morning, and then he
And þenne **wol** he Matyns synge;	will sing Matins, and if there are only few people
And ȝif þer luite folk comeþ þerto,	that come, he will hurry fast and have it done. But
He **wol** hiȝe faste and haue ido;	if there are many people coming, I tell you he will
And ȝif þer muche folk come, I sigge þe,	make a great ceremony of it!
He **wol** make gret solempnite:	
Reuesten him þenne **wole** he wel	He will then re-clothe himself well, with rich
Wiþ riche pal and sendel,	cloth and sandals[?]. He will put on his robe and
He **wol** don on his canter-cope	go around as if he were a pope!
And gon as he were a Pope;	
Siþen he **wole** wiþ springel-stikke	And after that he will go around will a sprinkler-
Ȝiuen holy water abouten þikke,	stick, splashing holy water all about, and sing
And syngen loude wiþ schil þrote,	loudly with a high-pitched voice, saying that it is
And seiþ hit is þe soule note	to the benefit of the soul what the priest says and
Þat þe prest seiþ and doþ—	does.
Þe folk weneþ þat hit be soþ;	The people think that this is true. He will stand in
Bifore his Auter he **wol** stonden	front of his altar, and hold both his hands up on
And holde vp an heiȝ boþe his honden,	high, and he will sing many times: sometimes
He **wol** synge mony a þrowe,	high and sometimes low. And he will turn and pay
Sum time heiȝe & sum time lowe,	close attention to whether anyone brings him any
He **wole** him turne & take good hede	gifts.
Ȝif **eny** Mon him bringe mede.	
Ȝif muche folk come and þringe	If many people come and flock around him to
Offringe faste him to brynge,	bring him offerings, he will be fast to improve his
He **wole** amende faste his song—	singing – the time does not seem so long to him
Þat tyme þinkeþ him **not** long.	then! But when they don't bring him anything, he
And whon þei **wole** him **no þing** brynge,	is not at all eager to sing. He hurries greatly to
Lust him **no þing** for to synge,	speed up the proceedings, and gives them of his
ffaste he hiȝeþ hym to spede	holy bread, and that's the best of all his deeds, for
And ȝiueþ hem of his holy brede—	it helps those who are in need.
Þat is þe beste of **al** his dede,	
ffor hit helpeþ to monnes nede;	

This is a rather elaborate story, as the speaker inserts two alternative storylines within his argument, depending on whether or not the church-goers bring any gifts to the priest. In addition to modals, absolutes like *any* and *nothing* are used, to highlight the point that the priest is mainly interested in whether or not he can expect gifts from his flock. Interestingly, the good man does not seem to feel a need to defend the poor priests who have been thus maligned, except by noting that the devil's speech is all "nouȝt" and focused on the needs of the body only, while the needs of the soul are best served by going to mass and obeying the priest. Perhaps the situation is similar to that of ludic debates, where defending against accusations is a failure. The difference is that here the accusations are seriously meant, but not lending them credence may still be a wise strategy: the audience may be convinced of the flimsiness of the allegations through the

speaker's disparaging comments, and a more detailed discussion would only serve to draw attention to the accusations. The hypothetical scenarios in this example overlap to a large extent with the category of predictions, but not completely, as they can also be presented as general truths without a predictive or futuric element. They also have some affinity with the *no man* and *all men* arguments discussed below: it is argued that the priest *will always* act in the way described.

It can also be observed that the features sometimes seem to show a tendency to form clusters: there may be a few lines with multiple features co-occurring, but then there might be a long stretch with relatively few features occurring. This varies greatly according to the text, however, since the verse formats and turn length are different. Where the participants go off on a philosophical tangent or exemplary story, they are less likely to use the features examined in this chapter. See example (168) below:

(168) *The Spectacle of Lovers,* 302–323

Amator. To se **you** contynue in erroure I meruayle what man is **so** constaunt / in his lyuynge But loue and nature / **shall** hym ofte assayle with women to haue / theyr bodyly lykynge In age / wysedome / and beaute florysshynge I trowe **none can** be founde in **ony** place But that loue hath / or **shall** his herte embrace	Amator I am amazed to see you continue in error. What man is so constant in his living that love and nature don't often assail him, to have bodily liking with women flourishing in age, wisdom and beauty? I believe none such can be found anywhere, that love has not or shall not embrace his heart.
To beholde women / **so** fayre and swete of vysage Theyr colour shynynge / theyr membres well fourmed Theyr prety countenaunce / with handes fayre & large Theyr eyes twynkelynge / theyr wordes well vttred Theyr behauour & courtesy of kyndnes dothe procede What herte is **so** harde / that **coude** hym selfe refrayne To eschewe theyr company / or at theym to dysdayne	To behold women, so fair and sweet of feature, their complexion shining, their members well formed, their pretty appearance with hands fair and large, their eyes twinkling, their words well phrased, their behaviour and courtesy proceeding from kindness... What heart is so hard that it could abstain from their company, or disdain them?
Consultor. O cruell youthe / full yll **thou arte abused** To suffre **so** quyetly / thy payne intollerable The flames of loue / with colde thought encreased Seynge the pleasure / **so** shorte and abhomynable Moche sorowe for small ioye / is **not** commendable Pondre thy payne / and pleasure in thy mynde For small ioye / soone moche sorowe **thou shalt fynde**	Consultor Oh cruel youth! You are very badly abused, to suffer your intolerable pain so quietly, the flames of love increased with cold thought [?]. Seeing that the pleasure is so short and detestable, it is not commendable [to suffer] much sorrow in exchange for a small joy. Ponder the pain and pleasure in your mind: for a small joy you will soon find much sorrow.
What is beaute / but a floure vanysshynge...	What is beauty but a vanishing flower...

Here, Amator begins emotionally: he claims to be astonished that Consultor (the narrator) persists in his error, and he goes on to suggest that it is impossible to find anyone so "constant" as Consultor has advised him to be. So he is using the *no man* argument, and he makes use of absolutes, emphatics and modals (both of possibility and prediction) to make this case.[45] However, in the next stanza he uses fewer of these features, as he moves to sing the praises of women. Consultor, in his response, again uses negatives, emphatics and predictive *shall* to argue that Amator's suffering is not worth it, as the rewards will inevitably be scant. He follows this by philosophising on the topic of beauty for a few stanzas, with only the occasional negative and emphatic expression.

Having denied the value of beauty as a vanishing and unreliable phenomenon, irreconcilable with wisdom, Consultor then makes a *no man* (or rather, *no woman*) argument of his own, accusing women of a lack of steadfastness:

(169) *The Spectacle of Lovers,* ll. 344–350

What woman is **so** stedfast / chaste and sure But for prayer / lust or mede she **wyll be** greable That **thou of her sholde** haue thy wyll and pleasure Scante one amonge a thousande **shall** be so stable Yet drede / shame / or wrath that one **shall able** Or elles she is suche / the whiche that lacketh beauty Whome that **no man desyreth** to company	What woman is so steadfast, chaste and resolute that through supplication, desire or a suitor's blandishments, she would not be made agreeable so that you should have your will and pleasure with her? Hardly one in a thousand will be so stable, and that one will be enabled to it by fear, shame or anger, or else she is the type that lacks beauty, whom no man desires as their companion.

Indeed, this type of generalisation about what "all" women or men tend to do is still a big part of the debate about gender issues: on the day of writing, one of the first postings in my social media feed was a lively discussion about 'mansplaining' (the phenomenon where a man explains something to a woman under the assumption that he knows more about it than the woman does). The debate mainly concerned whether this is really something that men in general are prone to, and whether women in turn are likely to overgeneralise this concept and use it in cases where it should not apply. While gender roles and conceptions of gender have changed hugely, the validity of generalisations is clearly still an important issue in any debate.

[45] In the future, it might be worth examining the use of questions in more detail. Amator uses *wh*-questions twice to reinforce his *no man can* argument, by using the phrases *what man is so constaunt* and *what herte is so harde.* The questions are clearly rhetorical, so they are not interactive in the sense that they would require an immediate answer from the interlocutor, but they rather seem to function as a response to the previous discourse.

However, such generalisations can also be questioned, and indeed they frequently are, as we have seen above, for example in example (56) above, where the Magpie summarises the Falcon's earlier argument, claiming that the Falcon concluded all women to be virtuous on the basis of just a few examples, and tried to exclude all men from virtue. The Falcon denies this:

(170) *A Dialogue Defensive,* ll. 921–939

The Fawcon. **Nat** so sayde the Fawcon, for that is **nat** my mynde Grace from **all** men, vtterly to exclude **Nor** by myne examples, **thou canst nat** fynde That **all** women vertuous, I entende to conclude But this conclusyon, of **all** my sayinges take That to knowledge and vertue, women apt be And yf of theyr lyues, comparyson **thou** make More godly than men, they seme vnto me.	Falcon "Not so," said the Falcon, "for that is not my intention, to utterly exclude all men from grace. Nor can you find, by my examples, that I intend to conclude that all women are virtuous. But do take this conclusion from all that I have said: That women are inclined to knowledge and virtue, and if you compare their lives with those of men, they seem to me to be more godly.
The Pye. Theyr proctour **thou** arte made, sayd the Pye I perceyue A rewarde to receyue, theyr parte **thou** dost take But whan they with doblenes, **shall the** deceyue I thynke than this offyce, **thou wylt** forsake.	Magpie "I perceive that you have become their agent," said the Magpie. "You take their part in order to receive a reward! But when they deceive you with their duplicity, I think you will leave this office then!"
The Fawcon. The trouth to defende, why **shulde** I refuse A proctour to be, the Fawcon dyd say Innocentes to helpe, we **shulde** our wyttes vse In theyr causes iust, and helpe them **alway** **None** other rewarde, to receyue I desyre But trouth to trye forth, and malyce to subdue This brought to passe, than haue I my hyre	Falcon "Why should I refuse to defend the truth, and be its agent?" the Falcon said. "We should use our wits to help the innocent in their justified causes, and always assist them. I desire no other reward, but to discover the truth, and to subdue malice. When I have brought this to pass, then I am duly compensated."

The Falcon uses negatives to deny having made an absolute case about all men or all women, and argues that the Magpie will not be able to find evidence for such claims in the examples he has given. The Magpie does not take up this point, but accuses the Falcon of being partial in the hopes of receiving a reward and predicts that he will be deceived and disappointed. The Falcon admits that he is an agent, but of truth and innocence rather than either gender, arguing that defending innocence is a general moral obligation.

In Chapter 5, I found competence challenges to be a relatively rare move. This may be partly due to the theoretical framework adopted from Spitz (2006), who was specifically looking at conflictive, face-threatening moves, and defined this move accordingly as questioning the personal competence of the previous speaker. However, it should be clear from the examples in this section that the other speaker's arguments can be challenged in more indirect ways by challenging them to present more evidence. Perhaps a new category of *epistemic challenge* could cover both competence challenges and other types of moves requesting additional proof or questioning the status of the evidence given.

As I suggested above, the *no man* argument presented above can also be seen as hypothetical to a degree, not too far removed from the case presented by the devil, since it is impossible to actually verify what can be done by "all" or "nobody". Indeed, a more in-depth analysis of the use of hypothetical cases in argumentation might be an interesting avenue of further research.

9.7 Summary

This chapter has studied a selection of features which Scott identifies as indexing disagreement in issue-oriented television talk shows (1998, 2002). None of the features were present in more than moderate strength, according to Scott's scale, although absolutes come quite close to qualifying as 'strong'. The lack of a suitable comparison corpus makes it difficult to pinpoint the extent to which this is specific to debate poetry, however. An ideal comparison corpus would be verse dialogue without conflict talk, but since conflict is an important element of drama, it would be hard to find such a corpus, and constructing one would probably require considerable excisions from the source texts. On the other hand, the analysis has met its goal in identifying important issues which were not fully explored in the preceding qualitative chapters. The previous chapters brought to the fore both various types of challenges and evaluations of the opponent's arguments on the one hand, and means of backing a claim on the other. However, the centrality of negotiating admissible evidence (the acceptability of generalisations and provability of arguments, and the multiple ways in which both of these can be challenged) emerges more fully with the approach adopted in the present chapter.

Throughout this chapter, it has been possible to develop a picture of the type of argumentation found in debate poetry: statements are formulated as extreme cases, and arguments or actions are represented as having no viable alternatives. In negation, it is particularly the verse-specific *no* and *ne* that are frequent, but *not, never* and combined forms are also quite common. As for absolutes, *all* and (again) *never* are the most frequent forms. Finally, for modals, especially *can* appears to occur more often than

expected. All of these were occasionally intensified with the use of emphatics and emotional expressions. Although this could not be conclusively proven, the possibility was noted (9.3) that this could imply that debate poetry reflects Scott's category of *personal attack disagreement*.

10 Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, I shall recapitulate the central findings of this dissertation, evaluating their significance and limitations. I shall begin with a revisitation of the central research questions, and then summarise and discuss the main findings. I shall then evaluate the methods adopted for the current study, identifying some key limitations. I shall finish with a consideration of the significance of my findings in a wider context and an outline of some possible paths of future research.

10.1 Revisiting the research questions

The research questions forming the core of the current study, as described in the introduction (page 4), were stated as follows: Firstly, how is disputing portrayed in early debate poetry? Secondly, what are the typical actions performed by the speakers during the conflict? How are these actions responded to, and how are they combined to form sequences? To what extent do they resemble those found in face-to-face interaction? The first overarching question will be discussed throughout the next section, partly through the answers to the smaller questions it was followed by. These are the questions with which I shall begin Section 10.2. Finally, there is the methodological question of how insights from analyses of present-day talk-in-interaction can be usefully applied to early debate poetry, given the differences in medium and the institutionalised setting of the debate? This will be considered in sections 10.3 and 10.4 below.

10.2 Main findings

In terms of the moves employed by the participants, conflict talk sequences found in early English debate poetry are quite similar to modern conflict talk. All the other-oriented moves established in Spitz 2006 are also extant in debate poetry: accusations, directives, threats, relevance challenges, competence challenges, negative evaluations, demands for explanation, unfavourable comments, contradictions, confrontational corrections and counterclaims. Confrontational corrections, which build on an immediate interactive repetition of an element of the previous turn, are quite rare, however. This is probably due to the reduced interactivity of the formal debate when compared to everyday arguments. However, the long monologic speech turns allow different ways of combining the various moves together. In debate poetry, it is common for various moves to be chained together in one speech turn. (To some extent this also holds true of poems with rather short verses.) This tendency can be observed in the full-text example in Section 6.6.

My study of early English debate poetry has identified two additional moves which, to my knowledge, have not been identified as conflict moves in earlier research: formulations and predictions. As discussed earlier (see 5.10), formulations consist of

brief summaries of the earlier discourse, while predictions in debate poetry often function similarly to threats. It is not particularly surprising that these conversational moves have not been identified as conflict moves before, given the different types of data studied. Research on conflict talk has generally focused on conflict within everyday contexts, often between family members or friends (e.g. Vuchinich 1990, Spitz 2006). Predictions may not be as salient in such contexts, unless the conflict is specifically concerned with the selection of a future course of action. I would certainly expect a high proportion of predictions in various types of political debates, for example. As for formulations, they are well attested in modern spoken data, but they are overwhelmingly used for constructive purposes. More importantly, short turn length is characteristic of most heated arguments (Scott 2002: 315), and with short turns, the turn-organisational function of the formulation is not necessary. This would mean that other attack moves would be more effective, for example confrontational corrections and other moves combined with some kind of format binding which would make explicit the connection between the attack and the provocation.

As for self-oriented moves, these generally seem to follow similar rules as early modern controversies (cf. Fritz 2005, 2010). However, there are some differences. For example, in debate poetry, the types of authorities referred to when backing a claim are more wide-ranging, since much more vague types of backing are acceptable. Self-praise is another element which has not been described as a feature of modern conflict talk as far as I am aware, and modesty maxims forbade it throughout the period under examination. On the other hand, it has been commonly observed in contexts of verbal duels both in the modern period (e.g. rap battles, playing the dozens) and in various cultures historically (e.g. flyting). This is the type of interaction sometimes referred to as ritual conflict, which has been defined as a form of conflict which does not seek resolution – instead it serves other functions, such as showing off one's verbal skills or gaining in social status (Eder 1990: 67).

Does this then suggest that debate poetry should be seen as a genre depicting ritual conflicts? There is much to recommend such a reading. This would be in contrast with the reading of Burt (2014), who assumes that debate texts, being at least partially instructional, should resemble textbooks in showing clearly designated authority figures: one of the debaters should take the teacher's role, or if this does not happen for some reason, the author would be seen as the authority figure. Indeed, she refers to the character's attempts to gain authority over their opponent as "[c]onfusions in the student-teacher relationship" (2014: 95).

While Burt's study of the antecedents of medieval debate poetry is wide-ranging and thorough, I find this conceptualisation of debate poetry deeply problematic. To start with,

it seems to assume that all debates aimed to discover the truth about a question. However, the purpose of a dialectical (as opposed to scholastic) disputation was winning, not truth-finding (Weijers 2007: 143). Contemporaries also recognised the dangers of disputation (Novikoff 2013: 102): sometimes it could deteriorate into useless bickering, and the competitive nature of the exercise might tend to promote pride and arrogance, as participants attempted to show off their skills. It might also reduce the qualty of reasoning (see Cattani 2007: 131). The scholastic disputation was never too far removed from the everyday language of conflict, where authority is negotiated anew in every interaction. Indeed, Bax has suggested that ritual duels were the original model for the academic disputation (2009). The presence of conflictive features (particularly the other-oriented ones) in such high numbers as attested in my corpus seems to support reading debate poetry as modelled on ritual verbal duels.

It is true that early English debate poetry differs in some ways from the typical ritual conflict situation: only rarely is there an actual battle between the participants (*Heart and Eye* is the only example in my data). So to use Parks's terminology, debate poetry tends to be internally resolved, instead of a prelude to an actual fight. As for the modern, ludic type of ritual conflict, such as the later Scottish flytings or playing the dozens, they are typically said to be non-serious (see e.g. Parks 1990: 42–43): the insults are expected to be so far-fetched that the participants are not genuinely hurt, only impressed with the verbal creativity of the opponent (Labov 1972: 347). This also does not fit the behaviour observed in the characters of debate poems, who sometimes object to what they consider untrue or unfair criticism, and are in other cases reported by the narrator to be emotionally affected by such attacks. This will be discussed in more detail below, but first I shall outline the main findings of Chapters 7 and 8.

The beginning of the conflict tends to show one participant in attack mode, forcing the other participant to focus on defending their actions. The attacker's initial turn (from now on termed 'first attack') typically contains directives, accusations, negative evaluations and demands for explanation. The second turn (henceforth 'first defence') shows fewer of these moves. Again, this replicates what is known of present-day conflicts (Hutchby 1996): attacking first is an advantageous position, since the defender has to focus on answering the attack before they can go on the offensive themselves. In my data, the difference between first attack and first defence is particularly striking with the negative evaluations, which occur 16 times in a first attack turn, but only 3 times in the first defence turn. This particular detail is slightly odd from the viewpoint of Hutchby's explanation, as many of these negative evaluations are simply name-calling and do not necessarily require a rebuttal of any kind. Audiences would probably also find these instances of impolite behaviour equally entertaining regardless of which character engages in them. A more likely explanation is that these negative evaluations

are meant as an intentional provocation, on both layers of the text. That is to say, in a challenge to a verbal duel, the initiator of the duel will attempt to provoke their opponent for more than one purpose, for example to goad a reluctant opponent into risking battle, or infuriating them to the point that they cannot argue coherently. On the other hand, a strong initial attack will also serve to awake the interest of the reader. The fact that the numbers of negative evaluations go up again suggests that the functions on Layer 2, the characters' layer, are more important – if it were otherwise, one would expect either a steady rate or a steadily declining one.

The ending sequences in debate poetry tend to be more conciliating than the initial ones. Submission can be found especially in texts with a religious theme, where other types of ending might have been too radical. Successful submission appears to have required a full admission of guilt and preferably a commitment to never repeat one's error. When negotiating termination on their own, characters can either request the arbitrator to pronounce a winner, or they can mention lack of time as a reason for finishing the interaction. Violence by third parties is also one possible solution to the problem of how to close a debate. Interestingly, technical stand-offs are sometimes found in cases where the winner projected by the narrator is quite clear, as in *Jesus and the Masters of Law, Covetous Miser* and *Death and Life*. In cases where the arbitrator chosen by the characters gives a resolution, that resolution always stresses the importance of both participants to society.

As Pagliai argues in connection with the Tuscan contrasto, "[t]he duels produce entangled knowledge rather than establishing clear domains of right and wrong" (2010a: 97). This reflects the differing aims on different layers of the text: the characters are concerned with winning, and they do everything in their power to achieve this goal. In this way, the texts seem designed to highlight existing contradictions, as the characters engage in constructing differences between each other. However, on the authors' layer the aim is generally not to resolve a question, producing a clear winner. Indeed, the questions tend to be either obvious, as in *The Debate between Mary and the Cross*, or nearly impossible to resolve completely, as in debates concerned with the question of women. Instead, the authors seem to be poking fun at the seriousness of all the squabbling while allowing the audience to draw their own conclusions. So, while the conflict is serious on the characters' layer, it is not viewed as such on the audience's layer.

In Chapter 9, the qualitative analyses of the previous chapters were complemented with a quantitative examination of some frequent linguistic features indexing conflict. Closer examination of the items in context shows how the argumentation style adopted in debate poetry tends to accentuate the conflict: the speaker's own arguments or actions are

represented as having no viable alternatives, and statements about the opponent are formulated as extreme cases. While it is hard to say to what extent the high frequencies of these items are related to conflict per se and to what extent they are to be seen as just indexing high levels of involvement, it is indeed clear that the argumentation style exhibited by the characters is involved and emotional rather than solely rational. On the other hand, the analysis in Chapter 9 also brought to the foreground the centrality of evidentiality, and the suggestion that a broader notion of 'epistemic challenge' might be a useful addition to the catalogue of moves.

10.3 Evaluation of the approach, its limitations and impact

Overall, the move analysis seems to have functioned well, yielding interesting results such as some previously unidentified conflict moves (predictions and formulations). Of course, the analysis is not a complete inventory of all possible moves, and further analysis might bring to light yet more moves. One limitation of the qualitative analysis is that the sequential aspects of moves were not examined in much depth. This is partly due to space constraints, but partly also to the complexity of the sequences in debate poetry. In everyday conversation, one can generally expect that the second-pair part in a two-part exchange will be a response to the first-pair part. Indeed, this is the assumption on which implicatures are based, as in Grice's maxim of relevance: hearers will understand utterances from this viewpoint. In debate poetry, a typical speech turn will contain more than one move, and it is not always clear from the response which move(s) it is intended to counter. However, in spite of this challenge, the newly identified moves add to our understanding of conflict talk, and the examination of the typical moves has also shown that conflict is an important aspect of debate poetry. All in all, then, the qualitative analysis has proved productive.

There are some findings, in particular, which suggest ways in which the theoretical framework adopted could be developed further. For example, the moves utilised in exiting the conflict were not really a part of the framework, and thus Chapter 8 made limited use of the moves established in the earlier part of the study. To some extent, this is probably a natural result of having adopted the conflict talk framework, which tends to focus on what happens during the conflict, and pays less attention to the ways in which it can be ended. The relatively small number of texts in my corpus also makes it difficult to proceed very far in making generalisations about this particular matter, since the number of termination sequences naturally somewhat restricts the number of moves which can occur within them. Much more valid generalisations can be made about moves which occur throughout the texts. On the other hand, terminating a conflict sequence could also be viewed as a return to the normal, cooperative situation, which has been researched more extensively already.

The analysis in Chapter 9 also suggested that the notion of 'competence challenge' may be too specific and person-oriented to cover many types of 'epistemic challenge' or negotiation about acceptable evidence more broadly. This, again, is probably a result of the analytic focus implicit in a study of conflict talk: Spitz (2006), from whom the concept of competence challenge was adopted, presumably intended her selection of moves to cover only those that were face-threatening in a rather more direct way, or analysable as aggressive. Of course, given the right situation, it can be very face-threatening to suggest that an argument lacks sufficient evidence, but in a debate context it would seem to be a normal and expected part of that mode of discourse, rather than a personal affront.

Certain reservations apply to the quantitative section of this study. For example, the selection of features was very focused, based on ease of access: only features easily searchable in basic corpus software were included. The fact that no suitable normalised comparison corpus exists also makes it difficult to assess the significance of the findings. These limitations mean that the quantitative findings should be regarded more as identifying areas deserving of further research than as definitive proof. However, the adaptation of Scott's methodology was also fruitful in that the results pinpoint specific items as being of interest for further study, and support the qualitative analysis in highlighting issues of importance for debate poetry. With the exception of emphatics, all the features examined were present in moderately high numbers, and specific items could be identified as contributing more significantly to this effect. So, the overall findings do tentatively support the importance of the conflict aspect for understanding debate poetry.

In the preceding chapters, I have adopted a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to build a comprehensive picture of conflictive features in debate poetry. In addition to combining established methods in an innovative way, I argue that the present study breaks new ground in applying insights gained from analyses of present-day speech-in-interaction to the literary genre of early debate poetry. Some of my findings are relevant beyond historical study, for example the conflictive use of formulations and predictions, which has not to my knowledge been identified in present-day data, but may well be present even if less salient in everyday conflicts. In many ways, my findings also confirm those of earlier literary critics (e.g. Reed 1990 on the significance of irresolution), while foregrounding the actual linguistic building blocks used to achieve the overarching goals of the text.

10.4 Conclusion

The topic of linguistic representations of conflict in debate poetry has not been studied in any detail previously. Fritz remarks that historical dialogue analysis should examine patterns of dialogue organisation such as "characteristic utterance forms" (1997: 49).

This dissertation contributes towards this goal by examining the typical moves and their realisations in debate poetry. It is impossible to establish how well the representation of conflict agrees with the reality of disputes in the medieval and early modern periods. However, expectations formed by such literary representations of conflict may also have had (indeed, may still have) an effect on the outcomes of real conflicts. Take the high frequency of submission, for example. If people expected their real conflicts to end with submissions that were as docile as those sometimes found in debate poetry, and behaved accordingly, the unrealistic expectation may lead to an escalation of the conflict and negative consequences for both them and their opponents. For this reason, further research is needed both on real-life conflicts and their literary representations.

Possible directions of further research springing from the current study include, for example, a comparison of debate poetry with literary debates in prose form. Among other things, this would enable a more in-depth analysis of the items examined above in Chapter 9, which would allow a distinction between features typical of verse only and those typical of literary debates in general. Another option would be to extend the variety of conflict situations studied, but limit the examination to conflict sequences only. This could involve localising such sequences from the CED, which would probably yield a small but very focused dataset. Diachronic developments within the long tradition of debate poetry would also merit further study.

The present study has shown that features of conflict are present in significant numbers in debate poetry, both on the lexical and discourse levels of language, and that they tend to closely reflect what is known of present-day conflict talk in many ways. It has identified some new conflictive moves, combined established methodologies in a new way, and thereby enhanced our understanding of the ways in which conflict was understood and represented in the medieval and early modern periods.

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Appendix 1. A table of primary sources

Short title	Full original title	Words	Date
The Owl and the Nightingale	Incipit altercacio inter philomenam & Bubonem	10650	1270-1300?
The Thrush and the Nightingale	Ci comence le cuntent parentre la Mauuis et la Russinole	1104	1272-1282
In a Thester Study I Stood	Hic incipit carmen inter corpus & animam	2494	1272-1282
As I lay in a Winter's Night	none in the Laud MS (Digby MS: disputacio inter corpus & animam)	3146	late 13th c.
Mary and the Cross	Explicit disputacio inter Mariam / Et Crucem.	3216	1390–1400
Jesus and the Masters of Law	Her is a disputison bitwene child jhu & maistres of þe lawe of jewes	1340	1390–1400
The Good Man and the Devil	A dispitison bitwene a god man and þe deuel	7782	1390–1400
Mercy and Righteousness	Merci passith Riȝtwisnes	1291	ca. 1430
Nurture and Nature	none	521	15th c.
The Cuckoo and the Nightingale	(later add.): Of þe Cuckow & þe Nightingale	2223	mid-15th c.
Winner and Waster	Here begynnes a tretys and god schorte refreyte bytwixe Wynnere and Wastoure	4763	mid-15th c.
The Clerk and the Husbandman	I herde a meruolse comynycacioun be-twene a clerke and a husbandeman	389	mid-15th c.
The Carpenter's Tools	none	1939	late 15th c.
The Clerk and the Nightingale I	none	573	late 15th c.
The Clerk and the Nightingale II	Explicit disputacio inter clericum et philomenam	499	late 15th c.
The Merle and the Nightingale	none	930	late 15th c.
The Body and Worms	A Disputacione betwyx the Body and Wormes	1777	1460–1500
Horse, Goose and Sheep	none	3715	1477
The Heart and the Eye	Here begynneth a lytel treatyse called the dysputacyon or complaynt of the herte thorughe perced with the lokynge of the eye	6598	1516?
Man and Woman	He begynneth an interlocucyon with an argument betwyxt man and woman & whiche of them could proue to be most excellent	1713	1525?
A Lover and a Jay	Here begynneth a lytel treatyse called the contrauerse bytwene a louer and a Jaye lately compyled.	2634	1527

Short title	**Full original title**	**Words**	**Date**
Summer and Winter	The debate and stryfe betwene Somer and wynter with the estate present of Man.	1075	1528?
The Spectacle of Lovers	The spectacle of louers. Here after foloweth a lytell contrauers dyalogue bytwene loue and councell / with many goodly argumentes of good women and bad / very compendyous to all estates / newly compyled by wyllyam walter seruaunt vnto syr Henry Marnaye knyght Chauncelour of the Duchye of Lancastre	6624	1533
A Dialogue Defensive	A Dyalogue defensyue for women / agaynst malycyous detractoures.	9531	1542
Age and Youth	The Ressoning betwix Aige and Yowth	581	late 16th c.
Pride and Lowliness	The debate betweene Pride and Lowlines, pleaded to an issue in Assise: And hovve a Iurie vvith great indifferencie being impannelled, and redy to haue geuen their verdict, were straungely intercepted, no lesse pleasant then profitable.	16935	1577?
The Soul and the Body	A Dialogue betwixt the Soule and the Bodie	2823	1622
Saint Bernard's Vision	Saint Bernards Vision. OR, A briefe Discourse (Dialogue-wise) betweene the Soule and the Body of a damned man newly deceased, laying open the faults of each other: With a speech of the Divels in Hell.	1350	ca. 1640
Death and Life	Death and Liffe	4079	1640–50
Covetous Miser	A Looking-glass for a covetous Miser: or, Comfort to a Contended minde. Being a serious discourse between a Rich Miser in the West Country, and a poor Husband-man, as they accidentally met upon the way: Their dispute being so tedious, and of so great concernment, A neighbor of theirs hearing them, took pains to write down the subject of their discourse, after he had heard what had befallen to the Rich-man; He sent a Letter to a friend of his in *London*, and desired that he would get it Printed for an example to all unthankful men.	935	1670–1677
		103230	

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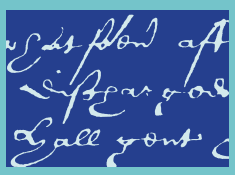

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