"LOLLARDY", "ORTHODOXY", AND "RESISTANCE" IN PRE-REFORMATION ENGLAND[1]

Robert Swanson

As recent history has demonstrated, the concept of "resistance" is more ambiguous than is often acknowledged. Resistance is usually, perhaps traditionally, and to some extent emotionally, placed in opposition to domination, with its opponents (and the forces which it itself opposes) being seen as oppressors.[2] In the past few decades, however, the appeal and language of "resistance" have been vigorously appropriated and transformed into a legitimate tool of power to defend societies, economies, and political structures against threats and subversion: resistance validated as *counter*-terrorism and *counter*-insurgency.

This transition merely gives overt expression to an enduring reality. There is nothing novel in the possibility that both sides in a dispute may claim to be engaged in resistance – to the point where it is not unreasonable to view many conflicts as manifestations of mutual or reciprocal resistance. Nor should the idea of reciprocal resistance be restricted to political or armed conflicts: it is characteristic of many other fields, and to instances of prolonged social tensions as well as episodic crises.

Within the history of Christianity, it can be argued that reciprocal or mutual resistance is characteristic of many of the religion's internal conflicts, especially contests focussed on doctrinal evolutions and challenges

[2] This implicitly bottom-up monopoly of resistance is encapsulated in the dictum that "Relations of domination are, at the same time, relations of resistance": James C. **Scott**, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990), 45.

– those in which the victors define orthodoxy, and the defeated are condemned as heretics or are cast out (or break away). In such conflicts, the key point at issue is not simple power (although power and status are often aspects of the dispute), but theological truth and, ultimately, individual and collective salvation.

This paper examines and applies this notion of reciprocal resistance through the mutual antipathy of dissent and orthodoxy in England from around 1370 to the Reformation, as the ecclesiastical authorities grappled with what they perceived to be a subversive movement advocating ideas derived from the thought of late-fourteenth-century Oxford academic John Wyclif.[3] These dissenters – generally labelled as "Lollards", with their ideas bundled under the label of "Lollardy" – resisted hegemonic catholic orthodoxy as doctrinally and spiritually flawed; orthodoxy resisted their perceived threat and challenge as spiritual terrorism.[4]

It is immediately questionable and inherently problematic to identify Lollardy as a "resistance movement", especially as a single phenomenon lasting from the 1370s to the 1530s. Whether Lollardy even existed as a movement, of resistance or anything else, is a subject of intense debate. It is only necessary to contrast Anne Hudson's magisterial reconstruction of a coherent Lollardy seeking a "Premature Reformation" with the rather dismissive approach of Richard Rex to appreciate the academic divisions the subject still provokes. Between their opposing stances, current

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[3]   As used here, the idea of "reciprocal resistance" to some extent incorporates, but also goes beyond, the idea of "reverse discourse" postulated as a strategy for establishing differences between Lollards and their opponents in relation to "Lollard" texts by Helen **Barr**, *Signes and Sothe: Language in the Piers Plowman Tradition* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994), 98–103; or the more pointed starting point of "reverse accusation" advanced (with a different focus but similar outcome) in Carolyn **Dinshaw**, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Duke University Press, 1999), 67–68, 97–99.

[4]   The scholarly debates over Lollardy and the identification of Lollards remain an academic minefield; here the labels of "Lollard" and "Lollardy" will be used simply as indicative terms for those identified, regardless of by whom or why, as in conflict and confrontation with "orthodoxy". This is admittedly imprecise, but it is the only way to avoid the repetitive qualifications that would otherwise be needed to identify where individuals might be placed on the spectrum of religious stances, insofar as such positioning can validly be attempted. Definitional difficulties and traps are well summarised in A.E. **Larsen**, "Are all Lollards Lollards?" – *Lollards and their Influence in Late Medieval England*. Eds. Fiona Somerset, Jill C. Havens, and Derrick G. Pitard (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 66–72.

scholarship identifies and increasingly populates a "grey area" of imprecise religious allegiances, in which texts drift uncertainly on or over the edge of unorthodoxy; communities function without being quite sure of – or rather, not explicit about – how their religious allegiances should be defined; and unorthodoxy itself mutates over time. Accordingly, while Lollardy can sometimes be reconstructed as a local or regional phenomenon, and some more extensive networks or linkages can be established, virtually no evidence suggests solid co-ordination, much less a national organisation.[5] In their own resistance to this imprecise threat, the forces of orthodoxy perhaps gave "Lollardy" more coherence as a programme and movement than it actually possessed, and thus stimulated a more coherent, comprehensive and anxious institutional response.[6]

Whatever it really was, "Lollardy" perhaps originated in opposition – resistance – to changes and a hardening of "official" attitudes in contemporary religion. One key factor was anxiety about vernacular thought and vernacularised theology, with its potential for unsupervised and unmediated discussion of the core principles of religious theory and practice.[7] This challenged the magisterial interpretative authority of the clergy, and the clergy (or their leaders) resisted.[8] The primacy of understanding of the Eucharist in the accusations at heresy trials points to growing rigidity in the official understanding of "transubstantiation", which quashed the freer thought (perhaps especially at a popular level) of earlier decades.

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[5]   Anne **Hudson**, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford University Press, 1988); Richard **Rex**, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). For the "grey area", see note 44. The possibility that local versions of Catholicism might merge into Lollardy is encapsulated in the "pared down devotional and pious aesthetic" associated with the chapel of Small Hythe in Tenterden parish in Kent: Robert **Lutton**, *Lollardy and Orthodox Religion in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 2006), 103–129 (quotation at 129). For changes in "Lollard" beliefs over time, see J. Patrick **Hornbeck II**, *What Is a Lollard?* Dissent and Belief in Late Medieval England (Oxford University Press, 2010).

[6]   Cf. Robert N. **Swanson**, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989, 2nd Ed. 1993), 333–335; John A. F. **Thomson**, "Orthodox Religion and the Origins of Lollardy" – *History*, 74 (1989), 39–55.

[7]   "Vernacular theology" has become a debated and value-laden concept in literary studies of pre-Reformation England. I use it here with the very simple meaning of writing which conveyed a theological or doctrinal message in the English language.

[8]   For this evolving context, see Fiona **Somerset**, *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 1–17.

Such policing was resented and resisted.[9] A third factor may have been the increasing official emphasis on the priest's sacramental authority as the mediator of salvation through confession, absolution and Mass. An elevation in theoretical status (with an increasingly evident gap between theory and practice) perhaps provoked resistance to so-called "anticlericalism" and more individualistic spirituality.[10] A final strand of resistance possibly derived from contemporary economic changes, as a crisis in clerical incomes produced a more exploitative and extractive church and clergy, whose demands were resisted in deeds and in alternative theorisations of the economic relations between clergy and laity.[11]

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What Lollardy resisted can be reconstructed in part from the records; what it advocated is less clear. A coherent and fully elaborated programme to create a clear alternative to the structures and practices advocated by orthodoxy may not have existed. Even if their forms of resistance were similar, the goals of the resisters might not have been.

Despite occasional early overlaps between politics and heresy, Lollardy lacked a real political dimension.[12] Its "resistance" must be under-

[9] The pre-eminence and primacy of the question about the nature of the Eucharist in the lists of accusations (and the responses to them) in heresy trials is unsurprising, but still remarkable: for trial records, see below, note 28. For the evolving doctrine of the Eucharist in the late middle ages, and the complex intellectual gymnastics of its contemporary analysis, see Gary **Macy**, "The Dogma of Transubstantiation in the Middle Ages" – *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 45 (1994), 11–41; Gary **Macy**, "Theology of the Eucharist in the High Middle Ages" – *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*. Eds. Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen van Ausdall. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 26 (Brill, 2012), 365–398; Stephen E. **Lahey**, "Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology" – *ibid.*, 499–539.

[10] This is the background evoked for Wendy **Scase**, *Piers Plowman and the New Anticlericalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[11] Robert N. **Swanson**, "Payback Time? Tithes and Tithing in Late Medieval England" – *Studies in Church History*, 46 (2010), 131–133.

[12] The political dimension of early Lollardy is assessed in Margaret **Aston**, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 1–49. For the Oldcastle revolt of 1414, frequently seen as a Lollard rising, see Edward **Powell**, *Kingship, Law, and Society: Criminal Justice in the Reign of Henry V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 148–167, and the very different analysis denying its Lollard character in Paul **Strohm**, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422* (Yale University Press, 1998), 65–86. A further "Lollard revolt" in 1431 was nipped in the bud (Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, 31–38, 44–46); and for a subsequent scare, John A. F. **Thomson**, "A Lollard Rising in

stood in other terms. Its main weapons seem more like those which James C. Scott has called the "weapons of the weak".[13] They range over the broad gamut of "the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, … feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage" and the "backbiting, gossip, character assassination, rude nicknames, gestures, and silences of contempt which, for the most part, are condemned to the backstage of [social activity]".[14] Possible examples include the fire which badly damaged Rickmansworth Church in 1522, which was at least spun as the work of heretics.[15] "Rude nicknames" derided popular shrines by altering their place-names into abusive words. The major shrines at Canterbury, Walsingham, and Woolpit became "Thomas of Cankerbury", "Our Lady of Falsyngham", and "Our Lady of Foulpitt".[16] Dissimulation and false compliance – the appearance of orthodoxy masking a reality of dissent – might be widespread; but desertion, the refusal to attend church, was maybe too public an act of resistance for most. Flight would, however, count as open resistance, even if in response to an accusation of heresy.[17] Mere absenteeism from church was a possible tactic; but distinguishing between "Lollards" and other parishioners absent for other reasons might be difficult.[18] Dissimulation through continued church attendance might be more disturbing, but this would only carry real force if it also threw down a challenge. A refusal to

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Kent: 1431 or 1438?" – *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 37 (1964), 100–102.

[13] See James C. **Scott,** *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1985). Much of the discussion in this essay is inspired by Scott's analysis, reinforced by Scott, *Domination*. The approach is necessarily adapted for the very different contexts under review, notably being here transferred to power relations within a religious system rather than social structures and what Scott identifies as class relationships.

[14] Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xvii, extended discussion at 29–35.

[15] Margaret **Aston**, *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350–1600* (London and Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1993), 231–233, 247–260; Robert N. **Swanson**, *Indulgences in Late Medieval England: Passports to Paradise?* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 477.

[16] Norman P. **Tanner** (ed.), *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428–31.* Camden Society, 4th series, 20 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 14 and refs.

[17] E.g. Maureen **Jurkowski**, "Lollardy and Social Status in East Anglia" – *Speculum*, 82 (2007), 138.

[18] See the comments on absenteeism in John H. **Arnold**, "The Materiality of Unbelief in Late Medieval England" – *The Unorthodox Imagination in Late Medieval Britain.* Ed. Sophie Page (Manchester University Press, 2010), 83–84.

participate in services would then become a sign of disdain, but might be difficult to respond to.[19]

Resistance tended not to be overt; it was mainly individual and personal. Groups did exist, and there were instructional gatherings identified (perhaps mainly by their opponents) as "schools", but the general impression is of a rather loose structure (if it was a structure at all), in which the groups did not coagulate into a full movement or sect.[20]

These people generally kept their heads down: Lollards were always a minority; open exposure was dangerous. Unlike other types of power relations and structures of domination, here the binary of "us" and "them", "heretics" and "orthodox", exists primarily in the mind and in the system of belief. This makes the "basic antagonism of goals between dominant and subordinate that is held in check by relations of discipline and punishment"[21] much more complex. The "hidden transcript" of Lollardy usually had to be kept hidden; it was shared with some peers, inferiors, and

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[19] E.g. Andrew **Hope**, "Lollardy: the Stone the Builders Rejected?" – *Protestantism and the National Church in the Sixteenth Century*. Eds. Peter Lake and M. Dowling (London and New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 14–15; Margaret **Aston**, "Corpus Christi and Corpus Regni: Heresy and the Peasants' Revolt" – *Past and Present*, 143 (May, 1994), 35–36, 42–43. The interpretative challenge here might make a response problematic: was failure to honour the host a denial of transubstantiation, or a purist (and quasi-orthodox) refusal to cross a line into idolatry? (See comments of Aston, "Corpus Christi", 42). Such problems lie behind the paradox of William Colyns of South Creake, Norfolk, who had wished to perform his public penance in his parish church before the reserved sacrament rather than a Marian image, and was therefore called a Lollard: Tanner, *Heresy Trials in Norwich*, 89–90. (However, Colyns was not an innocent victim: he admitted and abjured a number of charges, but these were not "standard" Lollard beliefs: *ibid*., 91–92.

[20] Tanner, *Heresy Trials in Norwich*, 28–30. Hudson, *Premature Reformation*, 168–171, 175–195. Margaret **Aston**, "Were the Lollards a Sect?" – *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life*. Essays in Honour of Gordon Leff. Eds. Peter Biller and Barrie Dobson. Studies in Church History subsidia, 11 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), 163–191; Jeremy **Catto**, "Followers and Helpers: the Religious Identity of the Followers of Wyclif" – Biller and Dobson, *The Medieval Church*, 142–143, 159–160; Richard G. **Davies**, "Lollardy and Locality" – *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 1 (1991), 191–212. For suggestion of more structure in East Anglia, Tanner, *Heresy Trials in Norwich*, 30. The ambiguities are perhaps encapsulated in Derek Plumb's frequent reference to the Lollards as a "sect", which seems to sit ill with his statement that they were "not separatists": Derek **Plumb**, "A Gathered Church? Lollards and their Society" – *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520–1725*. Ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 148.

[21] Scott, *Domination*, 193.

superiors, yet concealed from others.[22] Most Lollards seemingly merged into – or concealed themselves within – their communities without any difficulty, and were not seen as a problem by their neighbours. "Resistance" was chiefly passive and low-key. Dissent in introspective rural communities could resist detection through a combination of silence and dissimulation in response to enquiry. Dissenters among local elites might thereby refuse to reveal themselves, and use mechanisms of power to lessen the likelihood of their being revealed by others.[23]

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These forms of "resistance" do not amount to a "strategy", nor do they have the coherence of a "campaign". Arguably, such a strategy was needed only when individual Lollards became embroiled in direct confrontations with orthodoxy and had to defend themselves. Their resistance might be purely defensive, seeking to avoid confession and formal identification as a heretic; but it might be more active, rebutting or subverting the claims and authority of the "orthodox". This was a dangerous option, but was not unknown. One man who was required to abjure in 1511 was sentenced to go on annual pilgrimages to Lincoln. In 1512 or 1513 he seemingly used these trips to continue to broadcast his views (notably his derision for pilgrimage), without incurring any immediate penalty – but he was burnt as a heretic in 1522.[24]

More intriguing – and more subtle and strategic – is the evidence of defensive resistance, seeking to rebut accusations without actually denying dissent. Here the schedule of questions used in heresy trials could be undermined by using evasive "model answers" to deflect the attack, such as those proffered in the tract itemising the "Sixteen Points on which the Bishops accuse Lollards".[25] The responses usually appear to affirm and accept the particular doctrinal point which had supposedly been denied, before adding obfuscations and qualifications that undermine

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[22] Here, while the dynamics of the reciprocal resistance are as set out in Scott, *Domination*, 192–193, the contextual pattern he posits at 193 does not actually hold for quasi-voluntary religious structures, where subordinates may well buy into the norms of the dominant to secure the salvation promised by the religious beliefs.

[23] Jurkowski, "Lollardy and Social Status", 150–151.

[24] Hope, "Lollardy", 14–15.

[25] Printed in *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings.* Ed. Anne Hudson (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 19–24; commentary at 145–150.

that affirmation and subvert the charge by suggesting that its unqualified acceptance would itself be a denial of catholic doctrine, or a legitimation of immorality.

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This seemingly impotent yet enduring Lollard resistance faced the power and forces of orthodoxy, offering their own reciprocal resistance. Here it may be appropriate to talk of a strategy or campaign of resistance, even if it was often fragmented. The orthodox resistance to Lollardy had to defend its own view of the church and of doctrine. Its focus on the Eucharist ensured that the notion of transubstantiation gained greater definition, so that only one understanding of it was considered acceptably orthodox. It defended the cult of saints, purgatory and many of the non-biblical additions to apostolic Christianity that Wyclif had derided. Here the whole armoury of orthodoxy could be deployed, ranging from the establishment of university colleges to train thinkers to oppose heresy,[26] through miracles like the survival without damage of the consecrated host among the wreckage resulting from the arson attack allegedly carried out by Lollards on Rickmansworth Church in c.1522.[27]

One version of this orthodox resistance developed as a kind of "shock and awe" campaign, in heresy trials. That took some time to develop, and appears surprisingly episodic in the surviving records. Effectively organised resistance to Lollardy as a national and nationwide counter-insurgency effort only began in the 1420s. This created a much more effective disciplinary system, which aimed to quell dissent by judicial action. England may not have had a formal Inquisition in the pre-Reformation centuries, but its mechanisms for dealing with heresy were firmly inquisitorial. These local investigations trawled for dissent, seeking both recantations and the hold over the future which such recantations conceded.[28]

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[26] Alan B. **Cobban**, *The Medieval English Universities: Oxford and Cambridge to c.1500* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1988), 131–133, 235–237.

[27] See note 15.

[28] John A.F. **Thomson**, *The Later Lollards, 1414–1520* (Oxford University Press, 1965); Tanner, *Heresy Trials in Norwich*; Tanner, *Kent Heresy Proceedings*; Shannon **McSheffrey** and Norman **Tanner** (eds.), *Lollards of Coventry, 1486–1522.* Camden Society Publications, 5th ser., 23 (Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2003); Anne **Hudson**, *Lollards and their Books* (London and Ronceverte, WV: Hambledon Press, 1985), 125–136; Henry G. **Richardson**, "Heresy and the Lay Power under

This resistance to heresy was a joint clerical and secular enterprise: the crown and local rulers were throughout implicated in the processes of detection, trial, and punishment.[29] The absence of evidence leaves the full extent of the church's institutionalised activity unclear. There are trial records, some providing evidence of concerted campaigns, some targeting individuals or small groups, throughout the fifteenth and into the sixteenth century. The machinery was still in place, and still being used, in the early years of the Reformation.[30] The approach suggests a concern to control and contain more than to punish; to resist heresy by preventing its resistance to orthodoxy from becoming too overt and too vocal. Humiliating or constraining penalties were imposed rather than the death penalty: badges which marked the wearers as spiritual hazards; public penances to lodge the crime in the memories of spectators; written abjurations as potential future evidence of relapse; and the general assault on reputation brought by rumour.[31] Here the forces of orthodoxy could subvert the Lollard challenge. This orthodox resistance inverts the idea of subordinates' resistance through a "hidden transcript", as orthodoxy exposed and appropriated the hidden transcript of heresy, changing its meaning and undermining its appeal with recantations and public denigration. The overall stance was still one of domination and the defence of aspirations to hegemony, but justified as resistance to subversion and its threats.[32]

Alternatively, orthodoxy sought to win hearts and minds by providing

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Richard II" – *English Historical Review*, 51 (1936), 4–28; Ian **Forrest**, *The Detection of Heresy in Late Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 35–59; John H. **Arnold**, "Lollard Trials and Inquisitorial Discourse" – *Fourteenth-Century England, II*. Ed. Chris Given-Wilson (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), 81–94 (see esp. 92).

[29] Richardson, "Heresy and the Lay Power"; Alison K. **McHardy**, *"De heretico comburendo, 1401"* – *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*. Eds. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (Stroud and New York: Sutton Publishing, 1997), 112–126.

[30] Alec **Ryrie**, "England's Last Medieval Heresy Hunt: Gloucestershire 1540" – *Midland History*, 30 (2005), 37–52; Kenneth G. **Powell**, "The Beginnings of Protestantism in Gloucestershire" – *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 90 (1971), 141–157**.**

[31] Norman **Tanner**, "Penances Imposed on Kentish Lollards by Archbishop Warham, 1511–12" – *Lollardy and the Gentry*. Eds. Aston and Richmond, 235, 237–238, 247; Aston, *Lollards and Reformers*, 97. The aburations recorded in McSheffrey and Tanner, *Lollards of Coventry*, 266–276, are pre-written forms with a gap left to allow the name of the abjurer to be inserted. They in fact bear multiple names, added at varying dates, and were clearly not tailored to individual cases.

[32] Cf. Scott, *Domination*, 57–58.

an alternative spirituality and by persuading Lollards back into orthodoxy: resisting Lollardy not by confrontation, but by challenging its appeal and its opportunities to be appealing. One version of this approach is exemplified in Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, written in 1409. This devotional text offered readers access to an expanded life of Christ which incorporated many non-biblical details. Approved by Archbishop Arundel and containing a definite anti-Lollard message, it became a popular text of the fifteenth century.[33]

A riskier tactic was to resist Lollardy by theoretical persuasion. John Barton produced several anti-Lollard works in the early 1400s, including a debate with the catholic protagonist as its victor.[34] Some of these responses offered more formally reciprocal resistance by shaping the debate on bases acceptable to the opposition. In this spirit, Thomas Netter used only authorities accepted by Wyclif. Reginald Pecock went further, and sought to base his argument on reason alone, addressing his Lollards in ways which matched their own argumentative techniques, and he did so in English. Much about Pecock's career and writings remains unclear, including the extent of his engagement with actual Lollards. He was an advocate for orthodoxy, but possibly not for the hegemonic orthodoxy which others were urging. His willingness to compromise, or at least to

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[33] *Nicholas Love: The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ, a full Critical Edition, based on Cambridge University Library Additional MSS 6578 and 6686 with Introduction, Notes and Glossary.* Ed. Michael G. Sargent (Exeter University Press, 2005); see especially intro, 57–75. On the text and its sometimes uncertain integration into the struggle against Lollardy, see Kantik **Ghosh**, "Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* and Wycliffite Notions of 'Authority'" – *Prestige, Authority and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts.* Ed. Felicity Riddy (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), 17–34; Michelle **Karnes**, "Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ" – *Speculum,* 82 (2007), 380–408.

[34] On Barton and his works see Monica **Hedlund**, "Johannes Barton – *magister, medicus, hereticus purgatus*" – *Hortus troporum: florilegium in honorem Gunillae Iversen: a Festschrift in Honour of Professor Gunilla Iversen at the Occasion of her Retirement as Chair of Latin at the Department of Classical Languages, Stockholm University.* Eds. Alexander Andrée and Erika Kihlman. Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis: studia latina Stockholmensiana, 54 (Stockholms Universitet, 2008), 281–289. His *Altercatio lolardi cum catholico* may have been circulated (if it circulated) in English as well as in Latin (see *ibid.*, 286). I have not had access to the tract as edited in Monica **Hedlund** and Alf **Härdelin**, "Lollarden och katoliken: en kontrovers i förreformationens England" – *Libens merito: Festskrift till Stig Strömholm på sjuttioårsdagen 16 september 2001.* Ed. Olle Matsson. Acta Academiae Regiae Scientiarum Upsaliensis, 21 (Uppsala: Kungl. Vetenskassamhället i Uppsala, 2001), 179–93.

enter the debate in a spirit of compromise, clearly upset the hardliners.[35]

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It may appear misguided to read this anti-Lollard activity as resistance; a top-down vocabulary of "control" or "repression" may instinctively seem more appropriate. The intention clearly was to control and repress, but this required resistance, with goals both offensive and defensive. Orthodoxy had to be defended, and the perceived threat to it defeated. If seen as resisting "a profound threat to their society and salvation", these defenders of orthodoxy become "less repressive zealots and more educated ecclesiastics working methodically in an attempt to save the souls of their flock".[36] Their role, and possibly their moral and ethical standing, is subtly changed.

An assessment of the effectiveness of this anti-Lollard activity as resistance throws into sharp relief the challenges the ecclesiastical authorities faced. A simple binary of David (the Lollards) and Goliath (the Church) takes insufficient account of the realities and internal contradictions of the Church's own situation, real or perceived. Thomas Netter saw himself as David defending Israel against Wyclif as Goliath – presumably with the Lollards as Philistines.[37]

The church authorities clearly aimed and aspired to maintain their doctrinal and spiritual hegemony, resisting challenges that would also undermine the social, political, and economic structures associated with it. However, the desire to resist – or to control and repress – was

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[35] Mishtooni **Bose**, "Vernacular Philosophy and the Making of Orthodoxy in the Fifteenth Century" – *New Medieval Literature*, 7. Eds. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford University Press, 2004) 83–84. On Pecock and his project see e.g. Charles W. **Brockwell, Jr.**, *Bishop Reginald Pecock and the Lancastrian Church: Securing the Foundations of Cultural Authority*, Texts and Studies in Religion, 23 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985); Kantik **Ghosh**, "Bishop Reginald Pecock and the Idea of "Lollardy" – *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson.* Eds. Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison. Medieval Church Studies 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 251–265; Ian Christopher **Levy**, *Holy Scripture and the Quest for Authority at the End of the Middle Ages* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 222–231. Robert M. **Ball**, "The Opponents of Bishop Pecock" – *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 48 (1997), 230–251, avoids any mention of Lollardy.

[36] John H. **Arnold**, "Repression and Power" – *The Cambridge History of Christianity, volume 4: Christianity in Western Europe c.1100-c.1500.* Eds. Miri Rubin and Walter Simons (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 357.

[37] Bose, "Vernacular Philosophy", 83.

not matched by the ability to do so. Possibly the greatest success was to deflect evolving lay spiritual and devotional practices into the "traditional religion" that now provides the standard picture of lay Catholicism in pre-Reformation England.[38]

Basic organisational and structural weaknesses limited the ability of the authorities effectively to resist and annihilate the Lollard challenge – orthodoxy could not overcome or eliminate the logistical and practical weaknesses that reduced its real power over many of its claimed flock, no matter what their formal religious identities. There were too many gaps in the system for its aims and aspirations to be achievable simply through blunt power. This inherent weakness of orthodoxy may be part of its own "hidden transcript", "something to hide from the public gaze of subordinates", obscured by the way in which power was actually used to resist (or repress) the perceived threat of Lollardy.[39]

At mundane but important levels, the weakness of orthodoxy appears in its impotence when local communities closed ranks against the ecclesiastical authorities in response to accusations of heresy levelled against settled and prominent members, as probably happened at Lynn in 1429, when three prominent townsmen were arrested by the bishop's steward on heresy charges but were soon released.[40] Legal loopholes, their effect possibly compounded by misplaced readiness to accept abjurations at face value, allowed Lollards to evade punishment.[41] The retention of compurgation to refute charges and declare innocence allowed resistance to Lollardy to be subverted by collusion, or through local patterns of influence.[42] More strikingly, weakness appears in the Church's inability to enforce the

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[38] Eamon **Duffy**, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (Yale University Press, 1992; 2nd Ed. 2005); Jeremy **Catto**, "Shaping the Mixed Life: Thomas Arundel's Reformation" – *Image, Text and Church, 1380–1600: Essays for Margaret Aston.* Eds. Linda Clark, Maureen Jurkowski and Colin Richmond. Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies: Papers in Mediaeval Studies, 20 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), 94–108, esp. 104–105.

[39] Cf. Scott, *Domination*, 53 note 16.

[40] Jurkowski, "Lollardy and Social Status", 129.

[41] Catto, "Shaping the Mixed Life", 97–98. Thomson, *The Later Lollards*, 234–235, refers to "the trust which the churchmen appear to have had in their penitents", although in several instances this trust was clearly misplaced.

[42] Jurkowski, "Lollardy and Social Status", 133 (see also 145–147); Catto, "Shaping the Mixed Life", 97–98.

restrictions proclaimed in Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions issued for the province of Canterbury in 1409, which sought to control preaching and limit access to English versions of biblical texts. In their aspirations, they may merit their label as "one of the most draconian pieces of censorship in English history"; in reality they proved much less potent.[43]

The core weakness for "orthodoxy" was the difficulty in identifying precisely what it was resisting and what it was defending, and then setting a clear line between them. Beliefs and practices spread over a broad spectrum, and at some point were almost impossible to police; Lollardy and the acceptably orthodox overlapped and merged into one another. In some respects they were indistinguishable.[44] They used the same vocabu-

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[43] Nicholas **Watson**, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409" – *Speculum*, 70 (1995), 826. (The judgement appears more tempered in Nicholas **Watson**, "The Politics of Middle English Writing" – *The Idea of the Vernacular: an Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520*. Eds. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans (Exeter University Press, 1999), 343–344; and for his most recent statement, Nicholas **Watson**, "A Clerke Schulde Have it of Kinde for to Kepe Counsell" – *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*. Eds. Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh, Medieval Church Studies 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 579–580, 582, 587.) For comments on the impact of the Constitutions, see Kathryn **Kerby-Fulton**, *Books under Suspicion*: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writings in Late Medieval England (University of Notre Dame Press, 2006)," 397–401; Catto, "Shaping the Mixed Life", 96–97; Fiona **Somerset**, "Professionalizing Translation at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century: Ullerston's *Determinacio* and Arundel's *Constitutions*" – *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*. Eds. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (Penn State University Press, 2003), 152–154 (with comments on the policing intentions at 146–147); Michael G. **Sargent**, "Censorship or Cultural Change? Reformation and Renaissances in the Spirituality of Late Medieval England" – *After Arundel*. Eds. Gillespie and Ghosh, 65; Ian **Johnson**, "Vernacular Theology/Theological Vernacular: a Game of Two Halves" – *After Arundel*. Eds. Gillespie and Ghosh, 89.

[44] An important aspect of "Lollard studies" is the recognition of a "grey area" between heresy and orthodoxy, the parameters of which are uncertain. The idea of the "grey area", implying a "between" which is neither one nor the other is of course value-laden. It might be more productive to think of a central mainstream that at its margins (which are not necessarily of equal extent) shades off into "radical dissent" or "rigid orthodoxy", as competing extremes seeking to attract adhesion from the middle ground. For relevant comment see Jill C. **Havens**, "Shading the Grey Area: Determining Heresy in Middle English Texts" – *Text and Controversy*. Eds. Barr and Hutchison, esp. 337–339 and refs; see also Matti **Peikola**, *Congregation of the Elect: Patterns of Self-Fashioning in English Lollard Writings*, Anglicana Turkuensia, 21 (University of Turku, 2000), 23–37, with the pointed comment cited at 36 from an unpublished paper by Jill Havens that the "grey area" risks becoming "a black hole sucking up every text that doesn't fit into either camp" of Lollardy or orthodoxy. Cf. Stephen **Kelly** and Ryan **Perry**, "Devotional

lary; at the margins orthodoxy could be subverted by intellectual dissimulation, and by the way in which orthodoxy set the boundaries. Lollards might still spread their ideas without formally breaching the rules: if they "talked *within* power, within the accepted strategies power permits for the regulation of its subjects' positions and responsibilities" and "call[ed] upon a pre-existing discourse of legitimation", they might well wrong-foot their opponents, depriving them of the moral high ground and forcing them onto the defensive.[45] Lollards claimed to be "true" Christians, identifying their opponents with heresy and the Antichrist. They presented themselves as seeking to return the church to the purity that even their opponents often acknowledged it had lost.

If the clear definition of what was being resisted was elusive, so was a clear definition of what was being defended. The imprecisions in orthodoxy obstructed its effective defence. Changing religious practices meant that orthodoxy itself had to be policed. Traditional religion had to be kept in check, yet was constantly evolving. While some attitudes clearly hardened, orthodoxy remained fluid, and often close to Lollardy: fifteenth-century "orthodoxy" absorbed much which fudged the boundaries between itself and Lollardy. This included absorption of much of the academic Wycliffite reform programme (if it was an exclusively Wycliffite programme). Most strikingly of all, perhaps, orthodoxy absorbed the Wycliffite Bible.[46]

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Cosmopolitanism in Fifteenth-Century England" – *After Arundel*. Eds. Gillespie and Ghosh, 375–379 (n.b. 376 note 40). For a "grey area" in personal identifications, without using the phrase, see John A.F. **Thomson**, "Knightly Piety and the Margins of Lollardy" – *Lollardy and the Gentry*. Eds. Aston and Richmond, 95–111. For the contingent nature of such personal grey areas, see the remarks in Kelly and Perry, "Devotional Cosmopolitanism", 364–365.

[45] John H. **Arnold**, "Margery's Trials: Heresy, Lollardy, and Dissent" – *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*. Eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 91–92. This is precisely one of the resistance tactics identified by Scott whereby subordinates subvert the claims of their rulers: Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 309–311, 335–40; Scott, *Domination*, 54–55, 94–96, 102–103, 105–106.

[46] Catto, "Followers and Helpers", 154, 160–161. See also Vincent **Gillespie**, "Vernacular Theology in England after Thomas Arundel" – *After Arundel*. Eds. Gillespie and Ghosh, 3–42 (see esp. 19, 21). For "absorbed" Lollard Bibles see e.g. Hope, "Lollardy", 18; Robert N. **Swanson**, "A Small Library for Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction in Late Medieval England" – *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 5 (2002), 107–108; Ball, "Opponents of Bishop Pecock", 252.

The reciprocity of resistance between Lollardy and orthodoxy in the last 150 years of pre-Reformation England reveals the ambivalent place of resistance in the country's internal religious divisions. As a trial run for the application of the notion of reciprocal resistance, this discussion also indicates that further testing would be worthwhile in relation to similar internal conflicts within religions, and other instances where religion and resistance combine, in order to assess the wider utility and applicability of the idea of reciprocal resistance in analyses of such situations.