

## The Bad Behaviour of Friars and Women in Medieval Catalan *fabliaux* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*<sup>1</sup>

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The anti-fraternal tradition in medieval English literature and in Chaucer's works in particular, has been widely studied by scholars over the last fifty years or so.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, it is a subject that is still worth pursuing from a comparative perspective, considering Chaucer's writings on friars, monks and priests (especially in the 'General Prologue', the 'Miller's Tale', both the 'Wife of Bath's Tale' and its 'Prologue', and the 'Shipman's Tale') in relation to works belonging to other European literatures. This provides a fascinating literary experience which may reveal new Romance analogues of Chaucer or else offer some keys for reading and interpreting medieval anti-clerical satire.

In various medieval Catalan narrative works we find examples of genuine bad behaviour exhibited by priests and especially by friars from mendicant orders (mainly Franciscans and Dominicans). As protagonists of these funny and smutty stories they perpetrate various financial and sexual deceptions, and appear as malicious mischief-makers. Together with these characters, women appear sometimes as deceived victims, sometimes as lustful liars trying to conceal their adulterous affairs from their husbands.

The *Disputa de l'ase* [The Argument of the Ass] by Anselm Turmeda (which includes anti-fraternal stories influenced by Boccaccio's *Decameron*), the *Llibre de fra Bernat* [Book of Friar Bernard] by Francesc de la Via (which contains stories similar in style to those of the *fabliaux* tradition), and the anonymous *Col·loqui de dames* [Symposium of Women] (which is notably misogynist in tone) are all fifteenth-century texts which contain grotesque scenes. Through studying these we can consider some interesting aspects of humour in medieval literature. However, it is also important to bear in mind the true significance of these literary works: in all these examples of transgressive behaviour, there is no indication that the perpetrators of such extremely bad deeds will suffer any kind of punishment in the future; by

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<sup>2</sup> The classic works of Arnold Williams (1953), James A. S. McPeck (1951), John Fleming (1966), Jill Mann (1973) and Penn Szittyá (1986) are still useful in this connection. More recently, the studies of Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta (1992) and Daron Burrows (2005) offer interesting possibilities for comparative studies about anti-clerical satire and the stereotype of the medieval friar. See the bibliography.

negating the consequences of such deeds, these literary texts satirise the norms of moral behaviour.

This article will examine these works in order to consider how bad behaviour is shown in representative examples of the Romance narrative of the Late Middle Ages. It will also relate some of the themes and characters to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* with the aim of establishing points of contact between the two narrative traditions and revealing new possibilities for comparative research in sexual and comic culture in medieval literature.

### **1. 'Les malvades obres i fets dels religiosos' in Turmeda's satire: the confession of Friar Juliot**

Anselm Turmeda, the renegade of medieval Catalan literature, was the author of a very pious and widely read work, the *Llibre dels bons amonestaments* [Book of Good Advice].<sup>3</sup> However, he also wrote the *Disputa de l'ase* (1418), into which he inserted brief stories which are framed in terms of the most humorously ironic anti-clerical satire. In this *disputatio* the character Turmeda debates with a wise and loquacious ass in the court of animals about the superiority of men over beasts. The ass – Turmeda's literary *alter ego* – refutes all of Turmeda's arguments; when Turmeda defends the superiority of mankind because it organises itself into social classes, reflected in the hierarchy of religious and monastic orders, the ass enjoys contradicting this argument by narrating six tales which tell of the evil deeds of friars, priests, bishops, popes and, especially, mendicant orders such as Franciscans and Dominicans.<sup>4</sup>

The first anti-fraternal tale in the *Disputa de l'ase* is dedicated to the sin of lust, and tells of the wicked ruse of Friar Juliot, a Dominican, to fool a young married woman. Madonna Tecla goes to Juliot to make her confession, following the advice of her unworldly husband (who thinks Friar Juliot is a very virtuous confessor, because of his good reputation in Tarragona, where the story takes place). Madonna Tecla is a very beautiful but not particularly bright woman. Friar Juliot does not want to lose the possibility of taking advantage of this situation, so he devises an unusual mode of confession. The lustful friar

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<sup>3</sup> Turmeda was born in Mallorca and became a Franciscan friar, before converting to Islam. He subsequently lived in Tunis, where he worked as a customs officer.

<sup>4</sup> Although the main source of the *Disputa* is an Arabic apologue included in an encyclopedia edited by the association of Arabian philosophers known as the Brothers of Purity, Turmeda's work differs from the apologue in having a satirical tone which is influenced by other European sources.

asks Tecla how many times she has made love with her husband. The woman obviously does not know and Friar Juliot says to her:<sup>5</sup>

*Quelle chrestienne estes-vous, qui ne tenez compte des fois que vostre mary le vous a faict, combien que par droict en ayez à donner le disme au confesseur à qui vous vous confessez?* (Turmeda 1984: 95).

[What kind of Christian are you not to have taken account of the times when your husband did it to you, when by law you have to give the tithe to the priest who confesses you?]

This tithe on coitus also appears in Poggio Bracciolini's *Facetiarum Liber* [Book of Witty Sayings] and in *nouvelle* thirty-two of *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (A Hundred Novel Tales). However, in Turmeda's version, the combination of a lustful confessor and a foolish woman results in an obscene episode in which Friar Juliot enjoys Madonna Tecla eighteen times on the floor of the monastery on the basis of his right of tithe. (According to Friar Juliot's impromptu calculations, he is entitled to the tenth part of 180 coituses between the woman and her husband). Friar Juliot will remain unpunished for this example of bad behaviour, in contrast to the stories of the *Facetiarum Liber* and *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. Moreover, Madonna Tecla appears even more stupid and unwittingly sacrilegious when she says:

*et je vous prometz en verité que d'icy en avant je y prendray bien garde et conteray combien de foyz mon mary le me fera, et les marqueray avec mes patinostres, afin que je ne les oublye, et chacune foyz qu'il me le fera, je y feray un noud.* (Turmeda 1984: 95).

[and I truly promise that I will take good care and carefully count the number of times my husband does it to me, and I will mark them with my rosary so as not to forget, and every time I'll tie a knot.]<sup>6</sup>

The rest of Turmeda's tales are similarly anti-fraternal and cover all the vices which are conventionally assigned to mendicant orders: pride, avarice, gluttony, lechery, envy and even laziness, hypocrisy and simony. However, the funniest and most polished tale is that of Friar Juliot, who reminds us of Friar Alberto, the protagonist of the second novella of the Fourth Day in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Friar Alberto hears the confession of a foolish married woman named Madonna Lisetta and convinces her he is the angel Gabriel; thereafter she willingly becomes the object of his sexual desires.

<sup>5</sup> Turmeda's work is preserved in a French translation first edited in Lyon in March, 1544. Armand Llinarès is the author of the critical edition of the French version of the *Disputa* from which the quotations in this article are drawn.

<sup>6</sup> All translations of original texts are by the author.

## 2. *Col-loqui de dames: a fierce anti-clerical satire from unfeminine women*

The *Col-loqui de dames* was written circa 1485, in very expressive Catalan poetry.<sup>7</sup> In the work, an old man relates how a Married Lady, a Widow, and a Devout Woman talk together about sexual subjects in a manner unsuitable for the place and occasion in which they find themselves, which is the cathedral of Valencia on Good Friday.<sup>8</sup> As in the *Introduzione alla prima giornata* (Introduction to the First Day) of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, these women '*lasciato satre il dire dei paternostri, seco della qualità del tempo molte e varie cose cominciarono a ragionare* [stopped saying the Paternoster and began to talk about the weather and a lot of other matters]’.

The main features of this anonymous text include the use of social reality as raw material, burlesque and sexual themes, a high level of obscenity, a fierce anti-fraternal and anti-clerical satire, and a highly provocative and metaphoric use of language (employing set phrases about sexual organs).<sup>9</sup>

While we cannot take the *Col-loqui* as a ‘mirror-text’ because it is not a faithful reflection of the social context in fifteenth-century Valencia, it is a good example of a satirical, or even burlesque, representation of some attitudes and situations relating to the bad behaviour of priests, including friars, as well as to female sexuality as understood from a male perspective in the Middle Ages, all addressed in a humorous manner.

For that reason, we find in this work that characters are reduced to mere stereotypes. The Devout Woman is drawn as an authentic *vetula*,<sup>10</sup> an old procuress, a lustful witch; the Lady is married to an old and impotent man and has no qualms in talking proudly about her adultery with knights and friars; the Widow is a gossipy busybody and deceitful woman who

<sup>7</sup> The *Col-loqui de dames* has been preserved in manuscript 151 of the University of Barcelona Library, under the title *Jardinet de orats* [The Little Garden of Fools], a strange and unusual song book. This song book was copied by Narcis Gual, a notary of Barcelona in 1486. Therefore the *Colloqui* (as an integral text of the *Jardinet*) is presumed to have been written at some point in 1485.

<sup>8</sup> The church as meeting place is not a novelty since during the greater part of the Middle Ages it was one of the few meeting spaces permitted to women (Martínez 2003: 120). Nor is the day on which the women's discussion takes place any surprise: Petrarch fell in love with Laura on a Good Friday, while Ausias March also fell in love at this time in his poem LXVI (March 2000: 218, mentioned by Martínez 2003: 120).

<sup>9</sup> It is said that on the day that the scholar Manuel Milà i Fontanals dared to read it, he afterwards went to confess to a priest.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the old woman was the really sexually experienced woman in the Middle Ages, because she was both conscious of her own erotic desire and had the necessary knowledge to satisfy it. As Martínez (2003: 121) observes, the old woman also may be a counterargument to the Petrarchists. Bailbé (1964: 118) said: '*On comprend que la vieille femme, par sa laideur, par ses vices, par le contraste qu'elle forme avec la jeune beauté, si brillamment exaltée chez les Pétrarquistes, ait retenu particulièrement l'attention de la poésie satirique du XVIe et du début du XVIIe siècle* [one realises that the old woman, because her ugliness, her vices, the contrast between her and the young beauty, who was exalted with such brilliance by the Petrarchists, might have especially caught the attention of satiric poetry in the 16th and early 17th centuries]’.

has been made pregnant by priests. Adultery, procurement, abortion, even sexual affairs with clerics are debated in this work from a point of view that is grotesque and satirical, even seemingly untypical of a woman.<sup>11</sup> Therefore we can say, following Pitarch and Gimeno (1982: 18), that this discussion between women takes sexuality as its main topic.

The theme of marriage with an old man without sexual capabilities appears first in the indignant words of the Married Lady:<sup>12</sup>

*Mes trista visch, ab companyia  
que no-m contenta!*

[...]

*Fér me sembla ab home vell  
qui no té forsa:  
com deu navegar a l'orsa,  
lavors sossega,*

[...]

*Bé fonch leig peccat e vici  
semblar vellea  
en lo camp de gentilesa  
e joventut! (Col-loqui 2006: 154–177)*

[I am sad, living in company which does not please me. It pains me to be with an old man, who has lost his power; he ought to be like a ship under full sail not one that lies becalmed; what a wicked thing it is to sow old age in the field where grace and youth flourish.]

After these words, the Married Lady immediately implies her adultery. In the following lines, she comments on the death of a lover of hers who had been equipped with a good *matràs*, a word that literally means a tool comprising either a wooden stick with a metal head or, simply, a wooden mallet used in farming work; this is one of the many uses of violent imagery as a metaphor for the male sexual organ which the work contains:

*ara és mort hu que m'o feya,  
y com bé, trista!  
No-m lexava una rista  
en tot lo mas:  
tal tenia lo matràs  
per spadar [...] (Col-loqui 2006: 545–50)*

[Alas, now he is dead, the one who did it to me, and so well! He left my farm without a single stalk: such a tool he had for threshing [...]]

<sup>11</sup> See Pitarch and Gimeno (1982) and Martínez (2003: 116).

<sup>12</sup> According to Llàucia Martín's transcription (2006):

[http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/02587285480292995209079/p0000001.htm#I\\_0\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/02587285480292995209079/p0000001.htm#I_0_)

[accessed 2 June 2010] Pitarch and Gimeno's edition (1982) is still useful in order to appreciate the metaphorical and linguistic value of this text.

In the *Col·loqui*, we can see that the author takes delight in anti-clerical sentiments because he attributes sexual activity to almost all kinds of ecclesiastics. He even makes a friar collude with some doctors in the illegal practice of suppressing the Married Lady's menstrual flow, which is very useful to the woman in her adulterous relationships, as she declares:<sup>13</sup>

*...que cade mes era deserta  
de ma salut!  
A mi venie hun frare hagut  
ab altres metges,  
e bevien-me los fetges  
e quant he;  
mes quant haguí tirat lo fre,  
jamés lo viu* (Col·loqui 2006: 655–62)

[...] each month, my health failed me. An astute friar came with some doctors and they drained the very last drop from my innards; when I got rid of this curb, I never saw it again.]

Next, the Widow affirms without any hint of shame:

*No ha molt que he parit  
d'un capellà,  
e ja so prenys d'un scolà* (Col·loqui 2006: 692–94)

[Not long ago, I gave birth to a child fathered by a priest and already I'm pregnant again, this time by a sacristan.]

In an earlier passage, the Devout Woman talks about the gluttony and lust of canons and bishops (*Col·loqui* 2006: 296-307). She even claims that the deacon of the parish has been chasing her for three years. He has tried to buy sexual favours from this pious woman and, as she tells, he apparently has a 'bon feix [good bundle]', a good 'punyal de Vich [dagger from the city of Vic]'; and she says, using clear sexual metaphors, he would hit 'a cada tret [every shot]' right in her navel; 308-325).<sup>14</sup> She also talks about the priest's two daughters (*Col·loqui* 2006:352-373): the older one 'shows her arse to the stars and the sun' while the younger one '[d]e vergonya no-n té micha [...] tan chasta vida/ té ab ella / lo qui entra-n la capella/ de Sant Hyeronim [she has not an ounce of shame [...] she has a life as chaste as his who goes with her into Saint Jerome's chapel]' (*Col·loqui* 2006: 364–71).

Later, the Married Lady describes her parish priest who:

*be li escombra les arenes  
hun ypocrit e falsari  
robador:  
de sanctadat dóna color,*

<sup>13</sup> About contraception, marriage and love relationships in the Christian Western world see Flandrin (1981: 109).

<sup>14</sup> For the navel as a erotic zone in the Middle Ages, see Jacquart and Thomasset (1989: 7).

*y, confessant,  
los engonals los va cercant  
com hun furó. (Col-loqui 2006: 409–17)*

[is having it away with one of the women in the parish, an hypocrite and a false thief; he assumes an air of sanctity but during confession, he's like a ferret, groping your privates.]

In addition, the Devout Woman seems to have a recipe for some form of contraceptive or abortifacient, when she says:

*E yo, senyora, tinch scrit  
ab què s'afollen  
les que may consebre volen (Col-loqui 2006: 232–34)*

[And I, lady, have got written down the means whereby women who have no wish to fall pregnant ever again get rid of it.]

Later on, she asserts defiantly:

*Mirau-me amb ull, que-l gran diable  
ab mi-s confessa(Col-loqui 2006: 244–45)*

[Pay attention to me, to whom the devil himself confesses]

Elsewhere, this 'pious' woman declares very clearly her views on sexual pleasure and her own erotic desires:

*y per ço tot hom impotent  
és desamable;  
y volriem hun diable  
que-ns ho fes. (Col-loqui 2006: 525–28)*

[And because of this, we cease to love any man who becomes impotent and would rather a devil to do it to us.]

### **3. *Llibre de fra Bernat: sexual behaviour between friars and nuns***

In the *Llibre de fra Bernat*, written in the second half of the fifteenth century, the main character is a perverse and lustful friar. Friar Bernat has an evident predilection for married women and even inhabitants of the convent, amongst whom he seeks fruitlessly for the favours of a young and beautiful nun. When he witnesses both a canon and a knight receiving, in exchange for money and clothes, courtesies and witticisms from the nun, who then demands a gift from him, the friar becomes very angry with her. The narrator irreverently gives us the friar's reaction:

*Ladoncs mès mans a la braga,  
mostrà-li son rava. (Llibre 1997: 1526–27)*

[Then he put his hands in his drawers and showed his 'radish' to her.]

The shameless nun is not embarrassed by this example of exhibitionism,<sup>15</sup> and the narrator describes in detail the ‘gift’ that the well-hung friar gives her. As in the case of the Married Woman’s lover, it is a good *matràs*:

*La monja:s mostrà fort brava  
a fra Bernat,  
quan viu son matràs ben format  
e stech drets,  
car n-ach un gran palm e tres dets,  
ab gran squena,  
sí que-l clarejava la vena [...]* (Llibre 1997: 1528–34)

[Friar Bernat found the nun was very game when she saw his well-formed ‘mallet’, his upright ‘cudgel’, for it was a good hand’s span and three fingers in length with skin so taut the veins beneath showed through.]

#### 4. From Friar Huberd to Friar Juliot and Friar Bernat and from the Wife of Bath to the women of the *Col.loqui de dames*: the common threads that link Chaucer to fifteenth-century Catalan *fabliaux*

Obviously, Chaucer's sources and analogues are different from the sources of these Catalan *fabliaux* of the fifteenth century but they share a number of ideas and stereotypes which may be suitable for a comparative study.<sup>16</sup> These ideas are related to the anti-fraternal tradition and to portrayals of female sexuality and present conventional *topoi* and well-known commonplaces. Comparing fragments like the ones quoted above with lines from the *Canterbury Tales*, especially the portraits of the Monk, the Friar, the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner in the General Prologue brings interesting results. The estates satire<sup>17</sup> in Chaucer’s portraits of various characters surfaces in the lines describing their gluttony, lechery, avarice and moral corruption: the Monk (‘a lord ful fat and in good point [a fine, plump man]’ *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 200); the Friar (‘he hadde maad ful many a mariage / of yonge wommen at his owene cost [he had arranged many marriages for young women at his own expense]’ *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 212-13); the Wife of Bath (‘gat-tothed was she [her teeth were set wide apart]’ *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 468) and the Pardoner (‘he moste preche and wel affile his tonge/ to winne silver, as he ful wel koude [he had to preach, softening his speech in order to earn money, as

<sup>15</sup> In the *Sermó del bisbetó* [The Sermon of the Little Bishop], we read about the promiscuous habits of some nuns: ‘*van més per vila cavalcant / ab los fadrins* [they go riding with the lads through the village as well]’ (Pacheco 1997: 190).

<sup>16</sup> See Correale and Hamel (2002-2005) *Sources and Analogues of The Canterbury Tales*.

<sup>17</sup> See Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire. The Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973)

he knew full well how to do]’ *Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, 2005: 712-13).<sup>18</sup> In this sense, what Friar Huberd has in common with Friar Juliot and Friar Bernat and the similarities between the Wife of Bath and the three women of the *Col·loqui de dames* may provide a point of departure for a comparative study of satire and misogamy in medieval English and Catalan literature and offer new possibilities for discovering literary connections in medieval Europe.<sup>19</sup>

The theme of marriage and love affairs with old men in the ‘Miller’s Tale’ connects it to the discussion of sexual matters in the *Col·loqui de dames*.

*Jalous he was, and heeld hire narwe in cage,  
For she was wylde and yong, and he was old  
And demed himself been lik a cokewold.  
He knew not Catoun – for his wit was rude –  
That bad man sholde wedde his similitude.  
Men sholde wedden after hire estaat,  
For youthe and elde is often at debaat.*

(*Canterbury Tales*, Miller’s Tale, 2005: 3224-30)

[Jealous he was, and held her close confined  
For she was young and wild, and he was old  
And feared he would become a cuckold.  
He had not read his Cato, for he was not learned,  
And did not know he should have married someone of his own kind.  
Men should marry according to their age and rank,  
For youth and age often disagree.]

The *senectutis molestiae* [inconveniences of old age] and the sexual *impotentia* of old men is discussed in a range of works, from Juvenal to the Romance poetry of the Late Middle Ages, passing through literary, scholastic and medical works such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus’ *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (On the Properties of Things), Bernard de Gordon’s *Lilium Medicinae* [The Lily of Medicine] and Boncompagno da Signa’s *De malo senectutis et senii* [On the Evils of Old Age and Decline]. It is an important theme in the ‘Merchant’s Tale’ and in some Catalan works of the fifteenth century, such as the poems, *Lo procès de les olives* [Processing the Olives] and *Lo somni de Joan Joan* [The Dream of Johan-Johan]. The Wife of Bath in her ‘Prologue’ seems to be an expert in the matter of marriage to an old man. She introduces herself in a way similar to that of the Married Lady of the *Col·loqui*, while her knowledge of sexuality is similar to that of the Widow and the Devout Woman (suggesting that both Chaucer and the anonymous author of the *Col·loqui de dames* employ similar misogynist themes). Moreover, the Wife of Bath expresses her opinion of the human sexual

<sup>18</sup> All the quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* are from Jill Mann’s edition (2005).

<sup>19</sup> See the article of Hodges (2000) about Friar Huberd, the character of the *Canterbury Tales*.

condition (lines 27-28) in the same words as Friar Bernat uses in de la Via's work, both of them parodying *Genesis* I, 28: 'God bad us for to wexe and multiplie'. Sexual relations between women and friars as well as with priests appear in the 'Wife of Bath's Tale' (lines 865-81), the 'Pardoner's Prologue' (lines 370-71) and the 'Shipman's Tale', too, where the combination of a handsome and impudent monk ('a fair man and a bold' *Canterbury Tales*, Shipman's Tale, 2005: 25) and a beautiful woman (not so innocent as Turmeda's Madonna Tecla but finally deceived) also presents bad behaviour and adulterous affairs, mixed with financial business in this case.

All these moral and social transgressions receive a final indirect punishment in the 'Parson's Tale', which stands as a form of redemption at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*. In the section dedicated to lechery, we can find an implicit condemnation of all sins related to the sexual bad behaviour previously exhibited by the characters: 'Soothly, the vengeance of avowtrye is awarded to the peines of helle, but if so be that it be destourbed by penitence [Truly, adultery deserves the punishment of hell unless this can be avoided by penitence]' (*Canterbury Tales*, Parson's Tale, 2005: 890). The Catalan works, in general, offer neither rebuke nor any convincing explanation concerning the shameless audacity of either lustful, gluttonous and avaricious friars or lascivious, adulterous women.<sup>20</sup> These works were written in the fifteenth century, some decades after Chaucer's tales, and the use of anti-clerical and anti-fraternal satire was more automatic and mechanical by then. However, the main literary aim seems to be similar: to amuse while rendering ambiguous the final moral message of the works. Therefore the authors use the literary device known as *prodesse et delectare* [to instruct and amuse], as a way of legitimising their smutty stories before a medieval reader who does not necessarily share their sense of humour (in this case, an ecclesiastical or female reader).<sup>21</sup>

In all these stories, female sexuality is related to adultery with clerics and therefore antifeminism is mixed with anti-clerical satire. Chaucer is more analytic, meticulous, explicit, presenting more extensive portraits in which the features of every character are depicted. His *modus operandi* is closer to a novelist's narrative art. On the other hand, the Catalan narrations are synthetic, with attention focused on action over description. We do not find any

<sup>20</sup> In only one of these Catalan narrations can we find an actual punishment, but it is a physical punishment: in the *Llibre de fra Bernat* the protagonist is brutally beaten by nuns at the end of the story.

<sup>21</sup> The medieval anti-clerical, and specifically anti-fraternal satire is based on literary subjects which, according to Szittyá(1986), are ideas and charges against the friars that appeared previously in the writings of William of St. Amour, FitzRalph and their followers and originally came from biblical attacks against the Pharisees.

lengthy portraits of characters, only general satirical features which depict the characters as obvious stereotypes (if a friar is handsome, he will also be lustful; if a woman is beautiful she will also be foolish). This narrative practice is poor in the description of characters (based on stereotypes) but it is rich in something that Chaucer is seemingly not interested in: brevity. The Catalan *fabliau* or short narrative form is close to a good short story-writer's literary *modus operandi* in this sense.<sup>22</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The comparison of these Catalan narratives with the work of Chaucer results in a confirmation of shared themes and similar characters but, broadly speaking, different literary ways or *modus operandi*. It can be thought as a fruitful comparative practice which crosses literary boundaries, showing that the bad behaviour of friars and women was a common topic in medieval European literature generally, from an anti-fraternal as well as anti-feminine perspective, demonstrating the continuity of the anti-fraternal tradition in the comic culture of the Late Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Turmeda is perhaps closest to Chaucer in his literary art because of his use of irony.

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