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THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF PIERS PLOWMAN C

by
Sandra Gene Malard

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English Language and Literature)
in The University of Michigan
1972

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For my parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For my introduction to Piers Plowman I am indebted to Professor John Reidy, under whose guidance I first began my study of the poem. His thorough understanding of Piers has been a valuable resource for a novice in the study of that difficult work. Professor Bernard Van't Hul graciously shared his knowledge of the poem with me when I was struggling with the prospectus. To my committee I owe thanks for both helpful suggestions and continual encouragement. My chairman, Professor R. T. Lenaghan, deserves more gratitude than can be expressed for the thoroughness and cogency of his criticism at every stage of this work and the patience with which he handled both text and writer. That he also did so with good humor has made this initiation into scholarly research not only profitable, but pleasant.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	v
INTRODUCTION.	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE FIRST VISION	14
CHAPTER TWO: THE SECOND VISION.	43
CHAPTER THREE: THE THIRD AND FOURTH VISIONS	74
CHAPTER FOUR: THE LAST FOUR VISIONS	107
CONCLUSION.	147
APPENDIX: THE NUMBERING OF VISIONS IN THE C-TEXT. .	152
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	154

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELH	English Literary History
ES	Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association
MLN	Modern Language Notes
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association
RES	Review of English Studies
SP	Studies in Philology
TSLL	Texas Studies in Literature and Language

INTRODUCTION

> The names of the speakers in dialogue have been supplied in the margin. I have often found it troublesome in the original during the longer speeches to remember who is speaking, particularly in the second section of the poem.
>
> --Nevill Coghill, trans., Visions from "Piers Plowman"

Professor Coghill might also have added that it is often troublesome for the reader of Piers Plowman to determine who is being spoken to--a character in the poem, or the reader himself. The formal boundaries of the fiction may suddenly dissolve, and the reader may be startled to find himself included among the audience being scolded in a sermon. Such confusion in the rhetorical structure of Piers Plowman would seem to violate a trust the reader must place in the author--a trust based on the reader's need to know at every point what his locus of perception of character, situation, and value is to be.

These problems point to a larger issue--the fluctuations of aesthetic distance in this most fluid of poems. At times, the reader is formally separate from the elaborate concentricity of fictional world within world; he observes a complex of literary microcosms in which the dream events are enveloped by the world of the waking Dreamer, whose responses to both dreaming and waking experiences are

encompassed in turn by his own retrospective narration. At other times, the formal separation of the fictional world from the reader's own world is so dissolved as to bring him into direct contact with the characters and events in the poem. The relationship between form and response in Piers Plowman may best be explored by recognizing the tension caused by the alternation of, first, waking and dream periods, and, second, enclosed fictional contexts and open intercourse between the reader and the inhabitants of the poem.

Wayne C. Booth has made the following statement about the rhetorical variables that affect aesthetic distance in works of fiction:

> In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader. Each of the four can range, in relation to each of the others, from identification to complete opposition, on any axis of value, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and even physical.[2]

It will be the aim of this thesis to provide a descriptive analysis of the fluctuations of aesthetic distance in the C-text of Piers Plowman. Few other works make so many demands on their audience by causing them to shift again and again the locus of their perceptions and the scope and nature of their evaluations. A reliable or unreliable narrator usually remains so; an Everyman does not suddenly become atypical; the range of reference of personifications,

once established, does not ordinarily change. In Piers Plowman, all of these change.

There are three variables--the narrator, the personifications, and the Dreamer--whose functions are crucial to the reader's understanding and participation in the truths of the poem. All three, for example, make gnomic statements whose validity is not limited to the fictional context. The narrator, who shares the reader's world, at various times addresses him directly, interprets the meaning of what he reports, disclaims accurate knowledge of events, or remains silent in some of the most difficult stretches of the poem (as in the third dream, where the reader must look elsewhere for guidance while the Dreamer wanders through the maze of his own psyche). One critic, speaking of Spenser's narrator, has described the task that such a narrator imposes on his audience:

> Conceding that his understanding of the characters and situations in his history is subject to the short-sightedness that flesh is heir to, we are invited to respond to his efforts as he tries to deal with and overcome his own shortcomings and inconsistencies through faith in the importance of his poetic purpose. Thus we become more than mere hearers of his words; we become active participants in his poem, or, more precisely, in a constantly varying relationship between him and his fable. And because of this the ultimate "meaning" of the poem becomes for us a kind of personal creation, the product of our own active perceptions.[3]

The narrator of Piers Plowman more than invites--he demands--our participation.

A second method by which Langland manipulates the relationship between reader and poem is the varying scope of reference of the personifications. Most often, they are objective idealizations of universal qualities or entities, like Patience or Holy Church. At times, these personifications transcend all fictional boundaries and address the reader directly. It is this merging of art and life which is most likely to be the source of confusion for the unwary reader, who may be surprised to find that it is his response to the moral exhortations offered that is, momentarily, the "subject" of the poem. I suspect that it is in the longer passages of this type that Coghill finds it difficult to remember the speaker; Langland himself is occasionally vague or forgetful about the ascription of some of these speeches. Once the authority of the speaker has been established, his name is of peripheral concern. At other times in the poem, these objective personifications act only within the boundary of the fiction, and their relationship to reality depends upon the universal nature of their reference. The behavior of Meed or Envy in their dramatic scenes within the poem is analogous to their force in the real world.

Finally, Langland uses personifications with subjective reference only. These abstractions of the Dreamer's own mental faculties, such as Thought, are immediately pertinent to the Dreamer's experience alone. Hence they are

prone to error or inadequacies, and the reader is to judge them critically.

The role of the Dreamer is rhetorically the most complex in Piers. Attempts have been made to find in him a single dimension throughout the poem. Robertson and Huppé, for example, see the Dreamer as personification:

> When the name Will is first introduced later in the poem it is accompanied by a play on its meaning as the faculty of will. This play on the name of the dreamer and his character as it is developed in the poem together suggest that the dreamer is representative of the faculty will rather than of any individual person.[4]

There is no question that the Dreamer does represent the human will at certain places in the poem--most notably in the B-text passage to which Robertson and Huppé allude:

> Thanne ran Repentance and reherced his teme,
> And gert Wille to wepe water with his eyen.
> (B.V.61-62)

But the Dreamer is active, both before and after this passage, in ways that do not have allegorical significance. In the dreams, and more especially in the waking interludes, he is portrayed as an individual with his own eccentricities, a particular occupation (he is a minor cleric), an avocation (he writes satires), and a wife and child, whose names, Kytte and Kalote, suggest no hidden meaning.

The reader's responses to the Dreamer will thus vary from recognition of the correspondence between his own will and the typical aspects of the Dreamer as Will, and critical

judgments of the Dreamer as individual. In the latter instance, we most often see the truths of the poem because of the Dreamer's failure to do so. He is, particularly in the early dreams, a curiosity-seeker, bumbling his way into the nearest cul-de-sac and finding the right path only after trying all the wrong ones. The effect of these limitations of the Dreamer's perceptions is described by Barbara Nolan, in an article which aims to define the generic characteristics of what she calls "apocalyptic vision allegory":

> As he moves through the visionary landscape of his "historical" pilgrimage, the dreamer reinforces the temporal, linear movement of the narrative. He can rise to the level of spiritual perception only by pausing in his temporal progress to reflect and remember. But he is not often allowed this meditative luxury and so fails to learn all he might from his dream. The audience, on the other hand, may both enjoy the delight of the linear narrative and return to reflect on the whole art work as a fixed form . . . . Drawn into the complexities of the mental scene, he shares the narrator's confusions and questionings. But, having shared his anguish, his elation, his halting movement towards transformation, he may return to enjoy the retrospective view articulated by the voice of the poet and the form of the composition. Through meditation, through gradually enriched understanding of the symbolic import of the imagery, through perceiving beginnings and endings as part of a larger scheme, represented by the form, he has the possibility of discovering in full the visionary meaning in the scenes of the narrative.[5]

While the reader has the advantage over the Dreamer in many instances, however, the general pattern of Will's uneven progress toward a finally elusive spiritual

perfection provides to all but the irredeemably self-righteous a figure with which to identify. We dare not scorn Will for his failings, for they are representative of the flaws in fallen mankind. Further, by the last few dreams in the poem, he is asking the right questions about human salvation, and he therefore asks for all men. In Morton Bloomfield's words, Will stands for "every questing Christian."[6]

Langland's elaborate orchestration of all of these rhetorical methods has the single effect of involving the reader in the religious truths which inhere in the fabric of his poem. The didactic import of Piers Plowman has been the focal point of much of the criticism on the poem--not always to the approbation of Langland's skill as an artist. The first editor of the C-text, Thomas Dunham Whitaker, saw the poem primarily as a satire against the corruptions of contemporary ecclesiastics. Langland's choice of allegory ("the most insipid for the most part and tedious of all vehicles of instruction") was determined by the fact that the churchmen "were as vindictive as they were corrupt: and hence the satirist was compelled to shelter himself under the distant generalities of personification." Artistic success in his chosen form, it seems, necessitated failure in the poet's purpose, for "whatever he gained in personal security, he lost in the point and destructiveness of his satire."[7]

Twentieth century critics have been by default more charitable to Langland the poet. That is, they have often ignored the form of the poem qua poem and sought structural coherence in the content. The Dowel-Dobet-Dobest "triad" has taken up the attention of many of these critics, who have proposed various one-to-one correspondences between the terms in the poem and several extra-literary schemes--the active-contemplative-mixed lives, the purgative-illuminative-unitive stages of the mystic's experience (Wells and Dunning accepting both sets of definitions), and the objective states of layman, priest, and bishop (Coghill).[8] Such studies are valuable as an aid to understanding the intellectual or philosophical bases of the poem, but they do not help much in our comprehension of how the poem means. The problem is stated precisely in an excellent new essay, "The Role of the Dreamer in Piers Plowman," by David Mills:

> We must decide what we mean by poetry and whether Piers can justly be considered as a poem at all. Often it seems to be regarded as something requiring explanation rather than response, a philosophical argument made more obscure by being written in the form of a verse allegory, with certain passages being singled out for their poetic value. Perversely, its alleged poetic deficiencies are cited in justification of its extra-poetic interest.[9]

Other recent studies have begun to consider the relationship between the manner in which themes are developed within the poem and the effects of such developments

on the reader. Elizabeth Salter states in her book, "Piers Plowman": An Introduction, that the reader's comprehension of the poem is guided in several ways; the journey motif encourages us to accept exploration "almost as an end in itself," until we are ready to receive, "perhaps at most unexpected moments, the fruits of exploration." Besides theme and motif, the Dreamer, who is "'in the mase' as we are, is the strongest possible link between us, and the meaning of the allegory."[10]

Gordon Hall Gerould pointed out in a 1948 article that Langland's use of "a considerable series of dreams as the framework for his ideas" has been often neglected by critics. "These successive dreams occur in due order, and each new dream marks the beginning of a new stage in the long search for divine wisdom." The didactic purpose of the poem is related to the progress of the Dreamer:

> It is the allegorized history of a human being who grows in knowledge of his own fallibility as well as of the weakness and sins of his fellow men, but who grows also through his experience into a deeper and deeper knowledge of God's love. It is a personal story only in so far as the dreamer reports what he has learned and how he has acquired his wisdom, for he is neither self-centered nor too greatly concerned with his own destiny. To rouse men to seek the truth and live by it is his single purpose.[11]

The only book-length study of the themes of Piers Plowman and the role of the Dreamer is John Lawlor's "Piers Plowman": An Essay in Criticism.[12] Lawlor proceeds passus

by passus, making note of the development and recurrence of themes--especially the corruption that accompanies wealth, and the need for patient poverty and charity--and he devotes a full chapter to the progress of the Dreamer. In an earlier essay, Lawlor has noted the impact of the form on the reader:

> Langland's poem propounds an answer not to the simple, though profound, question--how do we know ourselves?--but to the question which lies closer to real experience--how shall we be brought to know ourselves? . . . . [In the Visio] the reader, with the Dreamer, is the spectator of vice and folly. But when we think we have found a good man, then the standard that is at once in question will surprise us into examining not the vices of others, but our own. The reader is involved in this development in a way comparable with that employed in Gulliver's Travels. In each instance, the standpoint of the observer is decisively shifted. Dislodged from a comfortable vantage point, our guide, and thus we, find ourselves involved, no longer able to interpose between ourselves and reality that "glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own."[13]

The study which follows will consider not only the Dreamer, but the narrator and the personifications as they relate to the audience of Piers Plowman. Since the distance created by their several rhetorical functions is in continuous flux, the most fruitful method will be to proceed seriatim, dream by dream.

I have chosen the C-text in part because it is the author's final recension and shows evidence of careful revision. In his study of the C-poet's revisions of the B-text, E. Talbot Donaldson says, "Each of the later texts

was, I am sure, expected to replace its predecessor. . . ."[14] In C, Langland heightens the role of the Dreamer, especially in the waking intervals. Finally, the C-text has been widely neglected; Donaldson's excellent book is the only significant study of this version of Piers. It is to be hoped that the coming publication of a new edition of the C-text by A. G. Mitchell and G. H. Russell will stimulate further scholarship on Langland's last recension of Piers Plowman.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1]London: Phoenix House, 1949, p. 143.

[2]The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 155.

[3]James S. Dees, "The Practice of Preaching and the Renaissance Poetic Narrator," a paper presented at the Midwest MLA convention, 1971, p. 2.

[4]D. W. Robertson, Jr. and Bernard F. Huppé, "Piers Plowman" and Scriptural Tradition, Princeton Studies in English (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 34.

[5]"Apocalyptic Vision Allegory: Notes Towards a Definition," a paper presented at the Midwest MLA convention, 1971, pp. 6-7.

[6]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, [1961]), p. 19.

[7]Visio Willi de Petro Plouhman, item visiones ejusdem de Dowel, Dobet, et Dobest (London: J. Murray, 1813), p. iv. Whitaker's emphasis on Piers as satire is not atypical of the opinions of nineteenth-century students of the poem. In the preface to his B-text edition, Thomas Wright stresses the antipapal aspects of the satire, and he gives Langland faint praise for the appeal of his artistry: "The allegory follows no systematic plot, it is rather a succession of pictures in which the allegorical painting sometimes disappears altogether . . . , and it is on that account less tedious to the modern reader . . . ." (The vision and the creed of Piers Ploughman, 2 vols. [London: William Pickering, 1842], p. xvi).

[8]Henry W. Wells, "The Construction of Piers Plowman," PMLA, XLIV (1929), 123-40; idem, "The Philosophy of Piers Plowman," PMLA, LIII (1938), 339-49; T. P. Dunning, "Piers Plowman": An Interpretation of the A-Text (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937); idem, "Structure of the B Text of Piers Plowman," RES, N.S., VII (1956), 225-37; Nevill K. Coghill, "The Character of Piers Plowman Considered from the B Text," Medium Aevum, II (1933), 108-35. These articles, and portions of Dunning's book, are reprinted in a collection edited by Edward Vasta, Interpretations of "Piers Plowman" (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968). For the convincing argument that Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest are three degrees of the same thing and not separable into

the categories mentioned above, see S. S. Hussey's "Langland, Hilton and the Three Lives," RES, N.S., VII (1956), 132-50 and R. W. Frank, Jr.'s "Piers Plowman" and the Scheme of Salvation: An Interpretation of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, Yale Studies in English, Vol. CXXXVI (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957). Hussey's essay is reprinted in Vasta, pp. 232-58. The problem is discussed in more detail in my third chapter.

[9] In "Piers Plowman": Critical Approaches, ed. by S. S. Hussey (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1969), p. 182. The prototype for more recent attempts to uncover the "meaning" of Piers Plowman is Robertson and Huppé's "Piers Plowman" and Scriptural Tradition, essentially an elaborate gloss on the poem using the method of patristic exegesis.

[10] Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 93.

[11] "The Structural Integrity of Piers Plowman B," SP, XLV (1948), pp. 60-61.

[12] New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1962.

[13] "The Imaginative Unity of Piers Plowman," RES, N.S., VIII (1957), as reprinted in Vasta, p. 293.

[14] "Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, Yale Studies in English, Vol. CXIII ([Hamden, Conn.]: Archon Books, 1966), p. 32.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FIRST VISION

> In a somere seyson whan softe was the sonne,
> Y shop me in-to shroudes as y a shepherde were,[1]
> In abit as an ermite vnholy of werkes,
> Ich wente forth in the worlde wonders to hure,
> (I.1-4)

The Dreamer, as we first meet him, is a man who has removed himself from society. We are told nothing of his usual role or occupation, and, indeed, the narrator keeps this figure's identity and purpose highly amorphous. Dressed as a shepherd (but not a shepherd), or perhaps like a disreputable hermit (but not that either), he wanders far seeking "wonders."

Who, or what, is this fellow? Morton W. Bloomfield speculates that "unholy of works" may mean merely that as a new hermit, he is not yet holy or that he is, as a hermit, more sinful than is normal." He goes on to suggest that Will is "possibly a rascally gyrovagus," a type of monk "defined by Benedict of Nursia: the careless, selfish, wandering monk who, free of religious discipline, made a livelihood by his profession; and he [Langland] is no doubt here hinting at this possibility in Will."[2] But it is not till the opening of Passus Six, after the first vision, that we receive any substantial amount of biographical information about the

Dreamer, and he seems there to be a clerk in minor orders, not a monk or priest.[3] In any case, there is nothing in this introduction to the Dreamer to suggest he is a hermit; in fact, the use of "as" makes it clear that he is not, and it is only the similarity of the hermit's habit to the assumed shepherd's clothing (a similarity noted by Skeat),[4] that is the point of connection. The Dreamer emerges from this initial description as an aimless fellow, something of an impostor, who is hoping to come across an interesting adventure. There is no reason to assume, with Bloomfield, that the "wonders" he seeks are "prophetic revelations."[5] Indeed, it is one of the poem's many ironies that Will does fall into dreams with prophetic and apocalyptic content--dreams of the kind that a genuine hermit would court.

There is, however, an implicit suggestion of religious intent in the Dreamer's withdrawal from society and in the manner of dress he chooses. Whatever inspiration the Dreamer has had for this undertaking, it is scarcely conscious; that the dreams he has are of supernatural origin, however, is made clear by the poet, especially in the C-text. In the A and B texts, the dream comes "of fairy me thou3te" (Prol.6); the C-text removes the suggestion of romance in the word "fairy," but maintains the description of the dream as "marvellous."[6]

The major change from the B to the C text in this opening passage lies in the elimination of the natural

setting. Gone is the brook into which the Dreamer was staring as "hit sownede so murie" (A.Prol.10) or "it sweyued so merye" (B.Prol.10). We are rightly warned by Donaldson to avoid "sentimental antiquarianism in dealing with Piers Plowman." The C poet, he says, omitted the lines "describing the natural scenery because he was in a hurry to get to 'the men on the plain.'"[7] I think, rather, that the omission is inspired not by economy directed toward getting on to the "real" business of the poem, but by the desire to make more secure the business at this point in the poem. (In fact, the field or folk is introduced two lines later in C than in B.) The poet has removed all suggestion that the slumber is induced by natural causes, such as the hypnotic lulling of a merry brook. Any expectations of conventional dream romance that A and B may have aroused have been forestalled. As Donaldson observes, the C poet adds the line, "Wynkyng as it were wyterly ich saw hyt" (I.11), "as if he wanted it understood that his was not a usual sort of sleep or a usual sort of dream."[8]

The reader's interest is certainly aroused by this intriguing figure of the Dreamer, but he is not left to his own imagination to make of the Dreamer's experience what he will. The narrator presents himself as an authoritative guide to the proper understanding of the poem. The C-text stresses his concern most fully, with its added lines, "as ich may 3ow telle" (I.9) and "as ich shal 3ow telle" (I.13).

Even more, the C narrator interprets some of the dream's symbols; unlike A and B, he tells us immediately that "truthe" was in the tower, and that "deth" and "wyckede spiritus" lived in the "deep dale" (I.15-18).

The panoramic view of the field full of folk that opens the first dream is a presentation in little of the major thematic and aesthetic concerns of the entire poem. First, we are told that the field contains

> Alle manere of men the mene and the ryche,
> Worchynge and wandrynge as the worlde asketh.
> (I.20-21)

The division of men into "mene" and "ryche" strikes a note that will sound through the poem again and again--the use and abuse of wealth, and the (patient) poverty that is the most likely road to salvation. The division of human activity into "worchynge" and "wandrynge" introduces the problem of reconciling the value of honest labor with the doctrine of ne solliciti sitis.

All of the classes of persons mentioned will appear again in the poem--the hard-working plowman, for example, and the pilgrim and palmer, the friar, the pardoner, and the irresponsible priest. But the ones that should particularly catch the reader's attention now are those that bear oblique reference to the Dreamer. First, the narrator praises those who perform prayers and penances,

> Al for the loue of oure lorde . . . . . .
> In hope to haue a gode ende and heuene-ryche blysse
> (I.28-29)

and he singles out "ancres and eremites that holden hem in hure cellys" (I.30). If the reader misses this initial criticism of the wandering hermit, the role the Dreamer has assumed, he cannot fail to recognize the Dreamer, in part, in the following:

> Eremytes on an hep with hokede staues,
> Wenten to Walsyngham and hure wenches after;
> Grete lobies and longe that loth were to swynke,
> Clothede hem in copis to be knowe fro othere,
> And made hem-selue eremytes hure eise to haue.
> (I.51-55)

The Dreamer may not be going to Walsyngham with a wench--he is not that blatantly irredeemable--but he is at least second cousin to these phony hermits.

There is further reason for the reader to withhold approval of the Dreamer's mode of existence. Like the hermits just mentioned, the "bydders and beggars" (I.41), the "pylgrimis and palmers" (I.47), and the "mynstrals" (I.35) are all wanderers chastised by the narrator. In his article, "Wil as Fool and Wanderer in Piers Plowman," Jay Martin states that Langland undercuts his own artistic convention: "Although Langland uses the mode of wandering to dramatize Wil, the figure with whom we are to identify ourselves, he nevertheless authorially satirizes wanderers and wandering throughout the poem." Further, "nowhere does

he make a distinction between wanderers--those who wander legitimately and those who do not."[9] But Langland does not, at this point, invite reader identification with the Dreamer. On the contrary, we have as yet no reason to see ourselves in this odd figure.

The narrator does make some concessions, later in the poem, to the possibility of sinless wandering. In the C-text, he excepts from the condemnation of minstrels a small group whom he identifies as "godes mynstrales" (VIII.100; also in B.XIII.440 in MS R only), presumably those with a religious repertory. Some beggars, too, are to be treated with kindness and even respect: "lunatik lollers and leperes a-boute" (X. 107) are God's apostles, and the rich are advised to

> Welcomen and worsshepen and with 3oure goode helpen
> Godes mynstrales and hus messagers and hus murye bordiours;
> (X.135-36)

But here in Passus One we are told that minstrels

> . . . wollen neyther swynke ne swete bote swery grete othes,
> And fynde vp foule fantesyes and foles hem maken,
> And hauen witte at wylle to worche yf they wolde.
> (I.36-38)

Will's kinship with these wanderers assures that our feeling toward him must be relatively negative. While this negative attitude is not strong, it prevents the reader from limiting

his perceptions and evaluations to the Dreamer's point of view. As Lawlor observes, the reader "both explores with the Dreamer and, forewarned of the Dreamer's limitations as a guide, begins to see for himself the progress that must be made if truth is to be attained."[11]

The narrator further implicates the reader in the action of the poem by slipping from past tense report of the corruptions of the fictional field to present tense description of the same corruptions in the real world. The friars on the field, for example, were

> Prechynge the peple for profit of the wombe,
> And glosynge the godspel as hem good lykede;
> (I.57-58)

The narrator then goes on:

> Meny of this maistres of mendinant freres,
> Hure monye and marchaundise marchen to-gederes;
> Ac sutth charite hath be chapman and chef to shryue lordes,
> Many ferlies han fallen in a fewe 3eres;
> Bote holy churche and charite choppe a-doun swich shryueres,
> The moste myschif on molde mounteth vp faste.
> (I.60-65)

The bringing together of real and literary worlds is made more dramatic when we find ourselves berated, by direct address, for the improper use of wealth. The following passage begins with the narrator's past tense description of the pardoner's deception of the ignorant, turns to the reader, then moves to the present tense:

He blessede hem with hus breuet and blerede hure eyen,
And raghte with hus rageman rynges and broches.
Thus 3e 3eueth 3oure golde glotones to helpe,
And leneth it to loreles that lecherie haunten.
Were the bisshop blessid other worth bothe hus eren,
Hus sele sholde no3t be sent in deceit of the puple.
Ac it ys no3t by the bysshop that the boye precheth,
The parsheprest and the pardoner parten the seluer,
That poore puple in parshes sholde haue, yf thei ne were.
(I.72-80)

The narrator's use of the present continues for another fourteen lines, and then he resumes his past tense report of what he saw on the field. In this last episode of the field, Langland has made an interesting and significant change from B to C. In B, he continues the narrator's present tense commentary on irresponsible clergy; in C, the corresponding portion of the commentary is reported in the past tense and put into the mouth of Conscience. The content of Conscience's sermon-harangue picks up and verifies the accuracy of the material that the narrator had presented to us in his earlier report; he charges the clergy, for example, with preferring their own profit over the proper teaching of the people:

Ac for it profiteth 3ow to porswarde 3e prelates soffren
That lewede men in mysbylyue leuen and deien.
(I.101-02)

Since Conscience is a personification of a universal faculty, this concord endorses the narrator's reliability.

The first passus ends with a mock-demurrer of the narrator's courage in presenting his dream:

> What this metals by-meneth 3e men that buth murye,
> Diuine 3e, for ich ne dar by dere god almy3ty!
> (I.216-17)

Surely, what this dream "by-meneth" has been made clear to merry and dour alike--even to those who might prefer to turn away from anything so depressing as an accurate overview of that sinful species, mankind, of which they are members.

The narrator closes with a reminder of the dream framework: "3ut mette me more of mene and of ryche" (I.218), the second half-line of which is a repetition of line twenty. This return to the beginning of the poem is the first example of a recurring structural principle. The same characters or group of characters will appear several times over in the course of the poem to be examined from different perspectives. Themes established now will be refined and expanded upon. The implications for the Dreamer --and for the reader--have so far only been hinted at.

> What the montayne by-meneth and the merke dale,
> And the feld ful of folke ich shal 3ow fayre shewe.
> A loueliche lady of lere in lynnen y-clothid,
> Cam doun fro that castel and calde me by name,
> And seide, "Wille, slepest thow . . . ?"
> (II.1-5)

The narrator's promise to interpret his dream is to be fulfilled by his presentation of his encounter with Holy Church. She bears a manner of unquestionable authority, for this is Holy Church in her ideal form, and not in the corrupt actuality of which we have already had some examples. As a

personification of the universal Church, she knows the Dreamer and calls him by name (a change from the A and B "'Sone, slepestow'" [B.I.5]).[12] Her name is withheld from us, however; we are to see and know of her only at the same pace the Dreamer does. That he is somewhat, though not fully, in tune spiritually is clear enough from his initial response to her: "Ich was aferd of hure face thauh hue faire were" (II.10). The Dreamer is right to react with awe, for this lovely lady has come down from the castle which is the dwelling-place of Truth. We cannot but approve of his first words to her, then: ". . . 'mercy, ma dame what may thys be to mene?'" (II.11).

In several ways, this establishment of the lady's hierarchical position of authority over the Dreamer follows the conventional pattern of the vertical debate as it is found at the opening of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy. Lady Philosophy appears in Prose One as "a woman of majestic countenance whose flashing eyes seemed wise beyond the ordinary wisdom of men." Boethius does not recognize the figure before him: "My sight was so dimmed by tears that I could not tell who this woman of imperious authority might be, and I lay there astonished . . . ."[13] The Dreamer, too, has been blinded by his failure to give sufficient attention to spiritual matters.

One effect of this rhetorical pattern of the vertical debate lies in its enabling the poet to establish the

credibility of fallible characters. Thus when Holy Church herself says,

> "The moste partie of the puple that passeth on this erthe,
> Haue thei worship in this worlde thei willen no betere;
> Of other heuene than here thei holden no tale,"
> (II.7-9)

she gives credence to the objectivity of the narrator's description of the folk in Passus One. She also supports the Dreamer's guess about the meaning of the tower: "'The tour vp-on toft,' quath hue 'Treuthe ys ther-ynne'" (II.12).

A second result of the relationship between the Dreamer and Holy Church is a shifting of the reader's locus of perception. We begin in Passus One as observers of the shadowy, nameless Dreamer, and we depend on the narrator's guidance. Now in Passus Two we are more likely to identify with the Dreamer. With the sudden silence of the narrator, we, like the Dreamer, are in need of an interpreter whom we can trust, and our relationship to him must be all the closer because of the distance between him (and us) and this awesome lady.

Like Conscience in Passus One, Holy Church makes a number of statements whose reference is to both the fictional and the contemporary worlds. While, strictly speaking, she is addressing the Dreamer only in lines 12 to 40, the "3e"-form combines with the universal quality of her statements to include the reader as well. Whereas Conscience pointed

to specific facts (e.g., the corruption of priests) which happened to be true of the contemporary world, Holy Church now speaks of metaphysical and ethical principles:

> "For he [Truth] is fader of faith and formour of alle;
> To be faith-ful to hym he 3aue 3ow fyve wittes
> For to worshepen hym ther-with while 3e lyuen here."
> (II.14-16)

Rather than point to the specific wrongs men do, she sets forth the basic doctrines by which they should live. After her negative exemplum showing the evil results of Lot's failure to practice "mesure," the Dreamer's question about the proper use of wealth inspires Holy Church to break away from audience restrictions altogether. She addresses us all with gnomic statements whose validity exists in what H. Poutsma has called the "neutral time-sphere, the action or state described not being confined to any particular time-sphere, but belonging to all":[14]

> "For ryhtfulliche reson sholde ruele 3ow alle,
> And kynde wit be wardeyn 3oure welthe to kepe,
> And tutour of 3owre tresoure and take hit 3ow atte nede;
> For hosboundrie and he holdeth to-gederes."
> (II.50-53)

The Dreamer's first reaction to Holy Church's instruction reveals one of his most persistent traits--the inability to recognize what is right under his nose:

> Thanne hadde ich wonder in my wit what womman hue were,
> That suche wyse wordes of holy wryt shewede;
> (II.68-69)

The implied rebuke is deserved:

> "Holychurche ich am," quath hue "thow oghtest me to knawe.
> Ich vnder-feng the formest and fre man the made."
> (II.72-73)

Whether or not the reader had already discerned the identity of Holy Church, the Dreamer's particular failure here is representative of a common human failing.

Will's immediate reaction to Holy Church is right-minded and right-hearted:

> Thanne knelede ich on my knees and criede hure of grace,
> And preiede hure pytously to preie for me to amende,
> Al-so to kenne me kyndelich on crist to by-leue,
> "And teche me to no tresour bote telle me thys ilke,
> How ich may sauy my saule that seynt art yholde."
> (II.76-80)

Holy Church's answer sounds the ground-note of the entire poem:

> "Whanne alle tresours ben tried," quath hue "treuthe is the beste;
> Ich do hit on Deus caritas to deme the sothe."
> (II.81-82)

This beginning of another sermon by Holy Church is again addressed directly to the Dreamer ("the"), but, following the pattern of her first sermon, she ends with

an apostrophe that extends beyond her literal audience of one:

> "Lere it thus lewede men for lettrede hit knoweth,
> Than treuthe and trewe loue ys no tresour bettere."
> (II.135-36)

The existence of a double audience allows the poet considerable freedom in his use of the Dreamer as a device for manipulating the reader's distance from the material. On the one hand, the Dreamer's interest in salvation and his encounters with universal qualities ensure his role as an Everyman with whom the reader identifies. The emphasis at these points in the poem is not on teaching us (or the Dreamer) unfamiliar doctrine; rather, as John Lawlor observes, "The focus of imaginative attention in Piers Plowman is upon our habitual incapacity to grasp that what we know as doctrine bears directly upon us, and hence our search for a truth which shall be comprehensive while in fact, and all unwittingly, we would exclude ourselves from the reckoning."[15] The Dreamer's outward gaze in the beginning of the poem is contraverted by moments of increasingly intense and inward scrutiny; there is an analogous process at work in the reader's being pulled into the poem to share the Dreamer's experience.

At the same time, the fact that dream personifications can address us directly allows us sometimes to see more quickly, more accurately, what the Dreamer is slow to learn. His personal eccentricities need not be explained away; he may

be seen as an individual as well as an Everyman. Whatever ironies develop from our amusement at the Dreamer, whatever superior understanding we can bring into play--these do not distance, but rather bring us all the more into contact with the poem as a whole. Barbara Nolan finds this double use of the Dreamer to be typical of the genre of apocalyptic vision allegory:

> In terms of the original penitential purpose of the poem, the charmingly self-indulgent, naive, forgetful, frequently arrogant dreamer facing a figurative vision illustrates the universal limitations of fallen, fallible Everyman. Through him the process of discovering self, confession and conversion in the light of God's grace could be unfolded as it applied to the ordinary sinner. In addition, poets reminded the audience of the double form of the narrative by underscoring the ironic distance between the figurative fable and the narrator's imperfect perception of it; through the humor of his literal-minded obtuseness, they invited readers to aspire to levels of spiritual understanding impossible for the dreamer. [16]

We can, therefore, exclude ourselves from the scolding the Dreamer receives from Holy Church and still attend to her lesson, in the final question-sermon pattern of Passus Two:

> "Ich haue no kynde knowyng," quath ich "3e mote kenne me bettere,
> By what wey hit wexith and wheder out of my menyng."
> "Thow dotede daffe," quath hue "dulle aren thy wittes,
> Ich leue thow lernedist to lyte latyn in thy 3owthe;
> Heu michi, quod sterilem duxi uitam iuuenilem!
> Hit is a kynde knowyng that kenneth in thyn herte
> For to louye thy lord leuest of alle,
> And deye rathere than to do eny dedlich synne;
> Melius est mori quam male uiuere.

> And this ich trowe be treuthe who so can teche
> the betere,
> Loke thow soffrie hym to say and so thow myght
> lerne."
> (II.137-46)

The reader may or may not be a "dotede daffe." If he is, he may take personal note of Holy Church's words to the Dreamer. It is likely, in any case, that the issue of salvation having been raised, and the need for love affirmed, the reader will be as interested as the Dreamer in hearing that loving the Lord and keeping from mortal sin depend upon a knowledge that resides in the heart. The implications of this knowledge will be revealed if the Dreamer can "suffer" patiently enough to heed what others will tell him.

Holy Church now explains both to her larger audience and to the Dreamer the source, action, and benefits of love. Her discourse focuses on the themes that will develop in the course of the poem. She begins with a series of metaphors defining the nature of love, especially as it is crystallized in the Incarnation:

> "For treuthe telleth that loue ys tryacle for synne,
> And most souereyne salue for saule and for body.
> Loue is the plonte of pees and most preciouse of
> vertues;
> For heuene holde hit ne my3te so heuy hit semede,
> Til hit hadde on erthe 3oten hym-selue.
> Was neuere lef vp-on lynde lyghter ther-after,
> As whanne hit hadde of the folde flesch and blod
> ytake;"
> (II.147-53)

She then speaks of the Father, who implanted in man those intellectual faculties which will be the chief subject of Dowel:

> "Of kynde knowyng in herte ther comseth a myghte,
> That falleth to the fader that formede ous alle."
> (II.162-63)

His love is shown in the giving of His Son:

> "On ous he lokyde with loue and let hus sone deye,
> Meekliche for oure mysdedes to amendy ous alle."
> (II.164-65)

The charity of Christ, to be the chief subject of Dobet, is directed to us as an example of the kind of love to be practiced by men who wish to save their souls. Charity is also the key to grace, which is the ultimate means of salvation:[17]

> "Date et dabitur uobis for I dele 3ow alle.
> And that is the lok of loue that vnloseth grace,
> That conforteth alle cristine encombred with synne.
> So loue ys lech of lyue and lysse of alle peyne,
> And the graffe of grace and graythest wey to heuene."
> (II.197-201)

Having indicated the path to salvation, Holy Church starts to leave: ". . . 'lette may ich no lengere/To lere the what loue ys' and leue at me hue lauhte" (II.204-05). The only possible response is the Dreamer's at the beginning of the next passus--an active and intense desire to know more. No doubt this is what Holy Church had in mind, both

for Will and for the reader. The exposition of doctrine which is already part of her audience's intellectual attainment is not enough; Holy Church has succeeded in the more difficult task of making us want to see that doctrine at work.

The remainder of Dream One is now given over to the thwarted marriage and the trial of Meed. These scenes present in dramatic form the operations of those principles of evil, rooted in covetousness, with which the Dreamer will later have to contend. Langland's method in these passus contrasts somewhat with that in the first two: he maintains a strict separation between characters in action on the one hand and the observing Dreamer on the other. Throughout the Meed episodes the reader and the Dreamer are both observers of the dramatic scenes that unfold.

First, we may examine the attitude and position of the Dreamer as they are established before the drama begins. We have already noted that his interest in things spiritual, and especially his own salvation, has been aroused by the scene on the field and his conversation with Holy Church. As she turns to go, the Dreamer once more kneels to her and requests further instruction:

> And thanne ich knelede on my knees and cryede to hure of grace,
> And seide, "mercy, madame for Marye loue of heuene,
> That bar that blessede barn that boughte vs on the rode,
> Kenne me by som craft to knowe the false."
> (III.1-4)

Will now understands that if the experience he is having is to continue, it is to do so "of grace." This special quality of the dream is again emphasized by a phrase similar to the one added to Passus One of the C-text: After Holy Church has given him some final words of advice, the narrator tells us,

> Thus left me that lady lyggynge a slepe.
> And ich sauh how Mede was maried metyng as it were;
> (III.52-53)

If the Dreamer's active role in these episodes is minimized, so too is the narrator's. There are in these three passus only five places where he makes a direct comment to the reader, all of them occurring in Passus Four. In line three, when Meed is first brought before the king, the narrator tells us, "The kyng kallid a clerk ich can nouht hys name;" in lines 127-28 he says,

> The kynge fram consail cam and callyd after Mede,
> And sente for to see hure ac ich say nat hym that ladde hure.

Both of these indications of the narrator's limited knowledge of events emphasize that he is, indeed, merely the Dreamer himself, telling what he dreamed. A third comment is similarly diffident, making a parenthetical judgment of Meed's confession to the avaricious friar, who "Shrof hure of here synnes shameless, y leyue" (IV.46). These constraints on the narrator

mean that the reader must interpret the Meed episodes for himself.

The other two comments by the narrator follow almost immediately. Meed having agreed to pay for the decoration of "'Bothe wyndowes and wowes'" of the Friar's cloister, so that "'euery seg shal see, and seye ich am sustre of 3oure ordre'" (IV.65, 67), the narrator, who usually addresses his readers formally and at large, gives here what amounts to personal advice rather than public scolding:

> For thy leue lordes loue leueth suche wrytinges;
> God in the gospel such grauynge no3t a-loweth,
> Nesciat sinistra quid faciat dextera.
> Let nat thy lyft half oure lord techeth,
> Ywite what thow delest with thy ryht syde.
> (IV.73-76)

The last intervention by the narrator makes emphatic the point that the action of the Meed scenes, though formally separate from the audience, is analogous to the activity in the real world. The emphasis is made more apparent in each recension of the poem. The A-text narrator addresses directly only a certain segment of his audience; he chastises "Meires and maistres and 3e that beoth mene/Bitwene the kyng and the comuns to kepe the lawes," and "Brewesters, bakers bochers and cookes" (III.67-68, 70). In B the direct address is removed, and the present tense implies the merging of fictional and actual conditions:

> Meires and maceres that menes ben bitwene
> The kynge and the comune to kepe the lawes,
> To punyschen on pillories and pynynge stoles
> Brewesteres and bakesteres bocheres and cokes;
> For thise aren men on this molde that moste harme worcheth
> To the pore peple that parcel-mele buggen.
> (III.76-81)

In the C-text, Langland has made a change to call attention to this passage even further. Not only does he expand the length and extent of his criticism, but he sets it off by an abrupt halt in the narrative. The past-tense narration is interrupted after a single line for a parenthesis of thirty-six lines; the narrator then repeats the same opening narrative line:

> 3ut Mede myldeliche the meyre hue bysouhte--
> Bothe shereues and seriauns and suche as kepeth lawes
> To punyshen on pillories and on pynyng-stoles,
> As bakers and brewers bouchers and cokes--
> (For thees men doth most harme to the mene puple,
> . . . . . .
> Hit ys no3t semly forsoth in cyte ne in borwton,
> That vsurers other regratours for eny kynne 3yftes,
> Be fraunchised for a free man and haue a fals name)--
> Ac Mede the mayde the meyre hue by-souhte
> (IV.77-81, 112-15)

The only other commentary on these scenes comes from Holy Church, who describes Meed in the neutral time-sphere, indicating the typical actions of Meed, both within the fiction and without:

> "That ys Mede the mayde," quath hue "that hath noyed me ofte,
> And lowen vp-on my lemman that Leaute ys hoten,

> And lackyd hym to lordes that lawes han to kepe,
> In kynges court and in comune court contrarieth
> my techynge.
> In the popes paleys hue is pryuy as my-selue,"
> (III.19-23)

Having made her point, Holy Church returns to tenses restricted to the fictional world only, as she prepares the Dreamer (and the reader) for the plot about to unfold:

> To-morwe worth Mede wedded to a mansed wrecche,
> To on Fals Faithles of the feendes kynne.
> Fauel thorgh his flateryng speche hath Mede foule
> enchantid,
> And al is Lyers ledyng that lady is thus ywedded.
> (III.41-44)

It remains only to give some final advice regarding the proper attitude toward Meed and her companions:

> "Know hym wel, yf thow kanst and kep the fro hem alle
> That louyeth hure lordsheps lasse other more.
> . . . . . .
> For ich by-kenne the Crist," quath hue "and hus clene
> moder,
> Encombre neuere thy conscience for couetyse of Mede."
> (III.47-48, 51-52)

Except for the few comments by the narrator, already noted, Passus Three through Five present without interruption a plot sequence in which none of the actors are conscious of either the Dreamer or the reader. Langland's concern for maintaining fictional boundaries is especially apparent in the limitations he puts on the personified characters. Heretofore they have been allowed to address "us all," but when

Theology speaks out in anger to protest the marriage, he addresses only the characters before him:

> Thanne tened hym Theologye whenne he thys tale herde,
> And seyde to syre Symonye "now sorwe mote thow haue,
> Such a weddyng to worche that wrathe myghte Treuthe.
> And er this weddyng be wroughte wo to al 3oure consail!"
> (III.116-19)

Throughout his scolding, Theology alternates between "thow" and "3e," consistently varying them as he speaks now to Simony, now to the others in the group.

Similarly, in Passus Four, when Conscience is called by the king to marry Meed, he replies with a scathing recital of the evil conditions which now exist because of her influence:

> "For Mede hath knyt clerkes and couetyse to-geders,
> That al the wit of this worlde ys woxen in-to gyle.
> Thus this lady ledeth thy londe now lord 3eue hure sorwe!
> For pore men der nat pleyne ne here pleinte shewe,
> Suche a maister ys Mede a-mong men of goode."
> (IV.211-15)

Conscience's diatribe against Meed becomes essentially a sermon, but even with such an opportunity for general exhortation he goes on for more than two hundred-fifty lines speaking directly to the king. His choice of pronouns corroborates this restriction of audience; the formal plural occurs once ("'3oure fader hue felde'" [IV.163]), but even that is dropped in the heat of Conscience's zeal ("'Thus this lady ledeth thy londe'" [IV.213]).[18]

Since both Theology and Conscience are universals, their actions and words within the dramatic framework necessarily implicate the reader and his world. At the same time, the aesthetic distance maintained by the existence of an enclosed literary microcosm allows us to judge at large the falseness in a world dominated by Meed.

Having assured our distance from these events, the narrator does use some minor rhetorical devices to intensify our imaginative participation in the drama. For the first time he uses the "historical present" rather than his usual past tense for the narration of events. To impress upon us the hubbub of Meed's journey to Westminister with her large crew of hangers-on, for example, he reports:

> Thanne Fals and Fauel ryden forth to-gederes,
> And Mede in the myddes and alle thuse men after.
> Ich haue no tome to telle the tail that hem folweth,
> Of many manere men for Medes sake sent after;
> (III.194-97)

This four-line shift to the historical present (a device carried over from the A and B texts) has the effect that Poutsma ascribes to the use of that tense--"to remove the relating of past events from the domain of history, and describe them as happening under the very eyes of the listener(s) . . . ."[19]

That the narrator respects the integrity of the literary microcosm is evident even in his fine grammatical control of tenses and pronouns. In checking Skeat's one-volume

edition of the C-text and the Huntington Library manuscript (HM MS 143) for variants of all verbs and pronouns which establish or maintain spatio-temporal boundaries, I have found variation to be surprisingly infrequent. Those variants which do occur are often attributable to common scribal errors such as anticipation of copy.[20]

Reader involvement is also assured by the continuing use of the gnomic statement in the neutral time-sphere. Peace uses it to describe the typical actions of Wrong against him: it is habitually true that "'Bothe my gees and my grys and my gras he taketh'" (V.49). Again, when Reason prepares to ride to Westminster with Conscience, he orders his servants "Caton" and "Tomme Trewe-tonge- telle-me-no-tales/Ne-lesynges-to-lauhen-of- for-ich-louede-hit-neuere":

> "And sette my sadel vppon Soffre- til-ich-see-my-tyme,
> Let warroke hym wel with Avyse-the-by-fore,
> For it is the wone of Wil to wynse and to kyke;
> Let peitrel hym and pole hym with peyntede wittes."
> (V.18-23)

These lines not only perform a universalizing function, but insofar as they are a glance at the Dreamer's name, they recall his rhetorical role as personification. As Reason suggests here, the human will must learn to suffer and endure patiently, rather than kick against the pricks of reason. It is a lesson that the presently observing Dreamer must come to learn by experience. With the triumph of Reason and Conscience over Meed, however, the Dreamer awakes, and

just what he has already gained from his first vision will become apparent in the waking interval that follows.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1]I have changed Skeat's "shrobbis" to the "i"-group MS reading, "shroudes." The latter is carried over from the B-text.

[2]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, pp. 24-25.

[3]For a discussion of the problem of Will's clerical status, see Donaldson's "Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, pp. 199-226.

[4]Walter W. Skeat, ed., The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman in Three Parallel Texts together with Richard the Redeless (2 vols; London: Oxford University Press, 1886), II, 2. All quotations, unless otherwise noted, will be from this text (hereinafter referred to as Parallel Texts).

[5]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, p. 70. From an examination of the slips to be used by the MED for defining "wonder" and "wonders," I find the most frequent reference is to marvellous events or objects which are sometimes, but not always, miraculous (i.e., contravening the natural order). The connotations are not necessarily positive. R. M. Wilson says in a note on Sawles Warde (a.1225; MED 508) that "OE. wundor 'portent, wonderful thing,' has taken on a depreciative meaning not uncommon in Middle English . . . ." In Juliana (a.1225; 1936 Bodl.) we find: "ma wundres ich [i.e., Belial] habbe wraht thene ich mahte munien . . . ." The Juliana gloss reads: "wundres, pl. miracles, 603, 621; scandalous crimes, 378 [VP wundur; late OE. to wundre, scandalously]" (p. 35/378).

[6]It may be that the use of impersonal expressions to describe the Dreamer's falling into sleep is an intentional device, emphasizing that the dreams are not self-initiated, but granted through God's grace. In all three texts the impersonal "me byfel" is used (A.Prol.6; B.Prol.6; C.I.7), and the phrase, "gan I to meten," in A and B (Prol.11) becomes in C, "me mette" (I.9). A and B's "went me to reste" (Prol.7) is eliminated in C. That Langland did have a choice between a nominative and an objective pronoun may be confirmed by a look at the Chaucer concordance. Chaucer uses a nominative with mette twenty-two times, and an objective form, seventeen. With the first person singular pronoun the objective me takes precedence with fourteen occurrences, but the nominative still occurs eight times. Langland also had available to him the verbs dremen and sweven, with which we would expect the

nominative. See J. S. P. Tatlock and Arthur G. Kennedy, A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer . . . , Publication No. 353, The Carnegie Institute of Washington, D.C., 1927.

[7]Donaldson, "Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, pp. 72-73.

[8]Ibid., p. 64.

[9]TSLL, III (1961), 544-45. Martin's article is chiefly concerned with the A-text.

[10]For a fuller discussion of Langland's attitude toward minstrels, see Donaldson, "Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, pp. 144 ff.

[11]"Piers Plowman": An Essay in Criticism, p. 255.

[12]In preparation for Dowel, where the various faculties of the soul are brought into play, the poet is here establishing one of the Dreamer's roles--a representation of the human will. Certainly, "'Wille, slepest thow'" carries an appropriate suggestion of the rather benumbed spiritual condition of the Dreamer. Most of Holy Church's words in this passus serve to arouse this concern.

[13]Trans. by Richard Green, The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 3,5.

[14]"Tense," in Mood and Tense of the English Verb (Groningen: P. Noordhoff, 1922), p. 7.

[15]"The Imaginative Unity of Piers Plowman," p. 289. This refusal to recognize, for one reason or another, what one already knows is a psychological commonplace. Again, there is a parallel in the rebuke Boethius receives from Lady Philosophy: "'Are you not he who once was nourished by my milk and brought up on my food . . . ? I gave you weapons that would have protected you with invincible power, if you had not thrown them away. Don't you recognize me?'" Only after she has wiped his tears of self-pity with her robe does he know who she is: "I recovered my judgment and recognized the face of my physician. When I looked at her closely, I saw that she was Philosophy, my nurse, in whose house I had lived from my youth" (The Consolation of Philosophy, Prose 2, p. 6; Prose 3, p. 7).

[16]"Apocalyptic Vision Allegory: Notes Towards a Definition," pp. 3-4. The tentative title of Professor Nolan's forthcoming book is "Studies in the Literature and Art of Vision during the Later Middle Ages."

[17]Grace is the gift of the Holy Ghost and the principal theme of Dobest. Henry W. Wells was the first to point out the predominance of one of each of the members of the Trinity over the last three sections of the poem. See "The Construction of Piers Plowman," p. 16.

[18]Skeat attests to Langland's care in using pronouns for particular effect. Just as Conscience shifts from formal to familiar address in this passage, Meed alters her pronouns for the king and Conscience: "It is a mark of respect for Meed to address the king in the plural number, and a mark of familiarity or contempt to address Conscience in the singular. This distinction is very carefully observed by our author . . ." (Parallel Texts, II, 48).

[19]"Tense," in Mood and Tense of the English Verb, p. 90. The C-text MSS MISX have the past tense variant folwede in line 196. For such a brief shift from the past tense and back again, such an error is understandable--possibly as an instance of scribal anticipation.

[20]References are to Walter W. Skeat, The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest . . ., Early English Text Society, O.S. LIV (London: Oxford University Press, 1873) and R. B. Haselden and others, "Piers Plowman": The Huntington Library Manuscript (HM 143), Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, Calif., 1936. This manuscript, designated "X," was discovered in 1924; it will be the base for the new edition of the C-text by A. G. Mitchell and G. H. Russell.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SECOND VISION

The first waking interlude between dreams is of crucial importance for our perception of the Dreamer's role as a medium of his dreams. At the outset of the poem, his ill-defined personal characteristics as a waking figure were matched by the lack of particularizing detail in the dream self. Similarly general was the nature of his request to Holy Church for the knowledge that would save his soul, for it is a question any man might ask. Furthermore, he then wished to know not his own sinfulness, but the general principles of Falseness ("the Fals") at work in the world. His request was granted in the vision of Meed.

There is nothing about the Dreamer as character in these first five passus to provoke strong reaction, either sympathetic or antipathetic, from the reader. Consequently, our attention has been engaged primarily on the subject of salvation rather than on the Dreamer's salvation. But the first dream ends with the king's appointment of Reason to rule the realm, with Conscience as his aide. The second dream will show Reason, at work in the reformation of the <u>individual</u> sinner. As John Lawlor points out, the first dream ends the discussion of the "theoretical aspect of

government, the right ordering of society." There is a new beginning at this point, for "there remains the problem of fulfilling the demand for right conduct which now falls unambiguously upon each subject."[1]

It is important that we now learn something more of the particular character of the Dreamer. Lawlor points out that it is through the Dreamer that "the reader is brought into direct touch with the truths the poem affirms. But where so much is mediated through an 'I,' that 'I' must itself be scrutinized so that there is no final barrier to understanding."[2] The long C-text interpolation between Dreams One and Two shows a corresponding shift in the kind of information we now receive about the Dreamer. He is given a local habitation ("Cornehulle") and a wife ("Kytte"), and he becomes a more clearly defined person with his own peculiar sins. In this new section of the poem, Langland does not abandon the subject of society's corruption. Rather, we are brought to recognize that this general evil inheres in individuals, and the perfection of society depends upon the perfection of the individual. Greta Hort states that our reading of the poem depends upon "whether we regard the field full of folk as representing contemporary society, or whether we regard it as representing mankind, the meeting-place of heaven and hell." The first seven passus (of the B-text), she goes on, form one stage of an _itinerarium mentis in Deum_." The descriptions of contemporary society are only

of interest in so far as they have any bearing on the ultimate fate of the individual.[3]

Of course, evidences of social and ecclesiastical corruption and suggestions for their remedy do permeate the entire poem, which begins and ends with the larger social setting (the field, the Church under attack). But the binding theme of Piers Plowman is the probing of the single soul into its own qualities and capacities and the relationship of the soul to Christian doctrine as codified by the Church. Hort defines the interrelationship of Langland's two major themes: The main subject of Piers Plowman, she says, is the salus animarum, and "as a good medieval Christian Langland does not attempt to divorce it from the question of the Church and its life."[4]

Morton Bloomfield is certainly correct in de-emphasizing the notion that Will is seeking that most self-contained and non-social experience of the mystic. Yet his own emphasis is misplaced, I believe, when he states that

> the journey of the individual soul to God is perhaps also implied, but it is not central. It is Piers, not Will, who, starting as a simple peasant, becomes the human aspect of Christ as man . . . . Both Will and Piers in some senses are Everyman, but Will is basically diachronic, whereas Piers is synchronic, man. Will is incomplete, whereas Piers is complete man.[5]

However, as Bloomfield himself observes, "it is not revealed how Piers becomes elevated to his high dignity, since the

reader sees the events of the poem from Will's point of view."[6] It is Will, then, upon whom the movement of the poem depends, and while he does not seek a special mystical union with God, neither does he show his profoundest concern to be the perfection of society. Indeed, to engage in social criticism without self-scrutiny is one of the faults for which Will is held accountable in this opening passage of Passus Six.

One of the first bits of information the narrator tells us about himself is that he was, at the time of his early visions, a writer of satires against "lollares of London and lewede heremytes" (VI.4). But he has also just told us that he himself went about "clothed as a lollere" (VI.2). He testifies that although he "hadde [his] hele,/And lymes to labore with" and was "in hele and in vnite" (VI.7-8, 10), he spent much of his time drinking and sleeping and "romynge in remembraunce" (VI.11). No doubt his satires were aimed at the genuinely corrupt, "For ich made of tho men as reson me tauhte" (VI.5), but just as surely he was seeing the mote and missing the beam.

The Dreamer's blindness to his own failings is not total, however, and it is significant for his own redeemability that Reason and Conscience, earlier introduced as universal qualities, are now seen to function on the individual level as they rebuke this one man for his particular sins. As Skeat long ago observed, "the dialogue [between Reason and

Conscience and Will] is really carried on between William's carnal and spiritual natures, between his flesh and spirit."[7] Not only is it clear that the impetus for Will's inner debate has come from his first vision, but the very line between the waking and the dreaming world has been rendered ambiguous.

The process of Will's spiritual improvement is not smooth, and he tries as long as he is able to get by with the flimsiest excuses for his present way of life. Reason's first scolding of Will's idleness is weakly refuted:

> "Ich am to waik to worche with sykel other with sythe,
> And to long, leyf me lowe for to stoupe,
> To worchen as a workeman eny whyle to dure."
> (VI.23-25)

When Reason converts Will's reply to the logical question, asking him if he is "'broke, so may be in body other in membre,/Other ymaymed throw som mys-hap wher-by thow my3t be excused?'" (VI.33-34), Will changes tactics by citing Scripture for his own purpose: "'In eadem uocatione in qua uocati estis, manete'" (VI.43). He has been trained, he argues, as a secular cleric, and his wandering about singing and praying for the souls of those who give him sustenance is "'That labour that ich lerned best ther-with lyue ich sholde'" (VI.43).

Will does have some sense of purpose, then, and it is in full accord with what Bloomfield points out as both classic (Platonic) and medieval political theory. "Langland

viewed society as a precisely articulated institution with each part performing its proper function and thereby realizing its perfection."[8] As Will puts it,

> "Hit by-cometh for clerkus Crist for to seruen,
> And knaues vncrouned to cart and to worche.
> . . . . . .
> Some to synge masses other sitten and wryte,
> Rede and receyue that reson ouhte spende;"
> (VI.61-62, 68-69)

On the basis of his knowledge of doctrine, Will faces Reason boldly:

> "For-thy rebuke me ryght nouht Reson, ich ȝow praye;
> For in my conscience ich knowe what Crist wolde that ich wrouhte.
> Preyers of a parfyt man and penaunce discret
> Ys the leueste labour that oure lord þleseth."
> (VI.82-85)

Here Will makes what is to be his fundamental and recurring error--the attempt to make knowledge of the good substitute for the performance of it. Such intellectualizing serves as a comfortable substitute for self-examination. Appropriately, it is Conscience, just invoked in Will's defense, who now takes up the argument:

> Quath Conscience, "by Crist ich can not see this lyeth;
> Ac it semeth nouht parfytnesse in cytees for to begge,"
> (VI.89-90)

Confronted with the incompatibility between his knowledge and his practice, Will admits his sinfulness and

resolves to amend with the help of God's grace:

> "That ys soth," ich seide "and so ich by-knowe,
> That ich haue tynt tyme and tyme mysspended;
> . . . . . .
> So hope ich to haue of hym that is al-myghty
> A gobet of hus grace and bygynne a tyme,
> That alle tymes of my tyme to profit shal turne."
> (VI.92-93, 99-101).

In his first consciously religious act in the poem, Will goes to church to begin his amendment in true contrition:

> And to the kirke gan ich go god to honourie,
> By-for the crois on my knees knocked ich my brest,
> Sykinge for my synnes seggynge my pater-noster,
> Wepyng and wailinge tyl ich was a slepe.
> (VI.105-08)

The importance of this C-text transition into the second vision may be more apparent if compared with the very brief waking interval it replaces in the B-text. The entire B passage may be quoted here:

> Thanne waked I of my wynkynge and wo was with-alle,
> That I ne hadde sleped sadder and ysei3en more.
> Ac er I hadde faren a fourlonge feyntise me hente,
> That I ne my3te ferther a-foot for defaute of slepynge;
> And sat softly adown and seide my bileue,
> And so I babeled on my bedes thei brou3te me a-slepe.
> (B.V.3-8)

All we may gather from B is that the Dreamer's interest has turned to religious matters (he is no longer seeking "wonders"), that the same external power seems to be at work ("feyntise

me hente"), and that he is now co-operating with that power by saying his beads.

The C version contains all that is in B and much more. By the introduction of Reason and Conscience from Dream One, it makes clearer Will's relationship to the largely communal activities in the field and court scenes, in which he has not taken active part. Of great importance is the fact that the successful exposure of his quibbling self-justification occurs in a waking sequence. The dream has had impact on Will's actual, as well as his dream, self-image. This fact may in part explain the reason for Langland's unique use of more than one dream in his poem. One function of the waking intervals, as R. W. Frank notes, is to "motivate the dreams by grounding them in experiences in the real world."[9] Finally, this genuine change of attitude in the Dreamer, now contrite and hopeful of grace, provides a smooth transition into the second vision, with its confessions of the Deadly Sins and the pilgrimage and pardon scenes.

The second vision begins with Reason's sermon. At the end of the first dream Reason was appointed by the king to rule the kingdom. It was Reason who prodded Will into contrition in the waking interlude; it is Reason who now exhorts the field of folk to repentance and reform. This sequence thus merges the dream world, the waking world, and the real world. Reason's fictional congregation is "the

felde ful of folke that I bifore of seyde" (B.V.10). In the pattern of an ever-narrowing spiral, the poet will show the social manifestations of ill-doing, seen earlier, to be rooted in the sinful desires of the individual. The C-poet assumes, however, that we will recognize that this is the same field of folk, and he therefore alters the second half-line in B. V. 10 for another purpose: "Ich sauh the feld ful of folk fram ende to other" (VI.111). The capacity of the field is vast; it is to encompass the readers as well.

In the sermon itself, Langland widens the poem's scope of reference in two ways--by highly specific topical allusions to recent events, and by the intervention of the narrator's voice in address to his audience. Since this process occurs within the short space of ten lines, it will be useful to note that it occurs, with varying success, in all three texts. The C version reads:

> Reson reuerentliche by-for al the reame
> Prechede, and prouede that thuse pestilences
> Was for pure synne to punyshe the puple;
> And the south-west wynd on Saterday at eue
> Was pertelich for prude and for no poynt elles.
> Piries and plomtrees were poffed to the erthe
> In ensample to syggen ous we sholde do the betere;
> Beches and brode okes weren blowe to the grounde,
> And turned vpward here tayl in tokenynge of drede
> That dedlich synne er domys day shal for-do ous alle.
> (VI.114-23)

In the opening lines, Reason preaches to "the puple" on the field, but he speaks of "thuse pestilences," which would bring to the minds of Langland's audience the recent

plagues they had endured. Skeat notes that two of these occurred before the writing of the A-text--in 1348 and 1349, and in 1361 and 1362.[10] The narrator now weaves into his report his own "sermonette" (11.117-23), referring to another disaster of the same period. He chooses "the violent tempest of wind on Jan. 15, 1362, which was a Saturday . . . . It will be observed that the second great pestilence was prevailing at the time."[11] The transition from Reason to the narrator as preacher is thus subtly achieved. That it is the narrator speaking in these seven lines is evident from the pronouns used. In the C-text, the wind is "In ensample to syggen ous we sholde do the betere," and the up-turned trees are a warning "That dedlich synne er domys day shal for-do ous alle." The A-text shows a similar intention of including the narrator's audience: "In ensaumple to men that we scholde do the bettre" (A.V.17).[12] Unfortunately, A is inconsistent in returning to a third-person pronoun in the last of these lines: "That dedly synne or domesday schulde fordon hem alle" (A.V.20).

The B-text version of these seven lines also indicates that the narrator has taken over the preaching: "In ensample, 3e segges 3e shulden do the bettere" (B.V.17). But B, too, makes the disjunctive return to "hem" in line twenty.[13] Only the C-text, then, has a consistent indication of the change from report to direct address (two C MSS, I and X, retain "hem").

The narrator apologizes for his intervention:

> Of this mater ich myghte momely ful longe,[14]
> Ac ich shal seye as ich seih slepynge, as it were,
> How Reson radde al the reame ryght for to lyuen.
> (VI.124-26)

and returns to his report. After a broadcast warning about the catastrophic effects of sinfulness, Reason turns to the individual sinner, and then to different classes of men, especially the clergy:

> He bad wastours go worche and wynne here sustinaunce
> Thorw som trewe trauail and no tyme spille.
> (VI.127-28)

The reader will recall that Reason had just accused the waking Dreamer of being a "spille-tyme" (VI.28). John Lawlor observes that the emphasis in this sermon is on "the individual's application of the truth to himself."[15]

> He preide Purnele here porfil to leue,
> And kepe hit in here cofre for catell at hure nede.
> He tauhte Thomme Stowe to take two staues,
> And fecche Felice home fram wyuen pyne.
> . . . . . .
> And sitthe he preide prelates and prestes to-geders,
> That hij precheth to the puple prouen hit hem-selue;
> "Lyue 3e as 3e lereth ous we shulleth leyue 3ow the bettere."
> (VI.129-32, 141-43)

The sermon thus makes fluid reference to the fictional folk, the Dreamer, and the reader, but the essential lesson remains the same--each person must perform his proper duties.

Let all men reform while they may, then, from the king and the rich to the commoners. And to those whose spiritual exercise would take the form of pilgrimages, Reason has a final word:

> "And 3e that secheth seint Iame and seyntes of Rome,
> Secheth seint Treuthe in sauacion of 3oure saules:
> Qui cum patre et filio that faire hem by-falle
> That suweth my sarmon" and thus ended Reson.
> (VI.198-201)

The Dreamer himself is the first to react:

> With that ran Repentaunce and reherced hus teme,
> And made Wille to wepe water with hus eyen.
> (VII.1-2)

For the first time, the Dreamer is active within his dream. He had been present in the opening vision, of course, when he questioned Holy Church about the significance of the tower, dungeon, and field. But then he was an observer apart, and his activity was limited to a few questions. Now the Dreamer is obviously a part of the field full of folk. He has heard Reason's sermon, and he has been moved to tears.

This change in Will's involvement is part of a developing pattern in which dream and waking worlds blend. Just as Reason and Conscience appeared to Will in the waking episode just concluded, so Will's recognition of his own sinfulness there carries over into his dream. His contrition while

awake will be succeeded by his joining the dream folk in seeking absolution, setting out on the pilgrimage, and sharing in Piers' pardon.

Will's presence in this largely communal dream, however, is not prominent. We are simply reminded of it, once in the questioning of the much-travelled pilgrim, and once in the pardon scene. In the former, the C-text puts the question of the folk (unassigned in A and B) into the mouth of the Dreamer:

> "Knowst thow ou3t a cor-seynt," quath ich[16] "that men clepeth Treuthe?
> Couthest thow wissen ous the way whoder out treuthe wonyeth?"
> (VIII.177-78)

Then again, Will appears at that tense moment when Piers unfolds the pardon for the priest to examine:

> And Peers at hus preyere the pardon vnfolded,
> And ich by-hynde hem bothe by-heeld al the bulle.
> (X.284-85)

In the latter appearance, there is perhaps a touch of that individualizing characterization of the Dreamer's sometimes nosy, sometimes obstreperous curiosity, which will be more dominant in dreams to come. But for now he recognizes himself as one of the sinful crowd. Once Will as a person has been brought to contrition, Will as a representative of that human faculty can take his proper place immediately preceding the confessions of the personified Sins. If "'it

is the wone of Wil to wynse and to kyke'" (V.22), as we heard earlier from Reason, it is Reason's sermon that has now "made Wille to wepe water with hus eyen." A humble and contrite heart, or will, is a prerequisite to true confession.

The Sins of the folk are presented in kaleidoscopically shifting modes. There is personification-allegory, which R. W. Frank defines as the use of abstractions "as though they were concrete substances--people, places, things."[17] The names of the Sins are of this kind, as are some of the lesser details (Envy's clothes are "of corsement and of kene wordes" [VII.65]). Some of the descriptions and actions are stereotypical--Avarice is dressed

> In a toren tabarde of twelue wynter age;
> But 3if a lous couthe lepe I leue hit, as y trowe,
> He scholde not wandre on that welch so was hit threde-bare.
>
> (VII.203-05)

Finally, there are details which have no significance beyond the literal, such as the description of Glutton's digestive problems:

> Hus guttes gonne godely as two gredy sowes;
> He pissede a potell in a pater-noster-while,
> And blew hus rounde rewet atte rygbones ende,
> That alle that herde that horne hulde here nose after,
> And wusched hit hadde be wexed with a wips of breres.
>
> (VII.398-402)

These rapid shifts in mode have their parallel throughout the poem, in the mixture of real people and allegorical characters, and in the several functions of the Dreamer.

The inclusive scope of this scene obviates the need for much direct comment from the narrator, and, with one egregiously bad exception, such is the case.

He makes three very brief, parenthetical comments in the confession scene:

> Thenne cam[18] Couetyse ich can nat hym discryue,
> So hongerliche and so holwe Heruy hym-self lokede.
> (VII.196-97)

> But 3if a lous couthe lepe I leue hit, as y trowe,
> He scholde not wandre on that welch so was hit threde-bare.
> (VII.204-05)

> What by-fel of this felon [Roberd the ryfeler] ich can nouht faire shewe;
> Wel ich wot he wepte faste water with hus eyen,
> (VII.326-27)

The narrator here indicates that his knowledge and his skill are limited. All he knows is what he saw, and the reader will have to do the interpreting himself.

The narrator's immersion in the events as if they were taking place at the moment is attested to by his use of the historical present to introduce the dramatic tavern scene in which Glutton is diverted from his way to confession:

Now by-gynneth Gloton for to go to shryfte,
And kayres hym to-kirke-ward hus coupe to shewe.
(VII.350-51)

The present tense, found in all three texts, is appropriate here, but it occurs only in these two opening lines, and it must be seen less as a conscious rhetorical device and more, I think, as an indication of the poet's habit of mind.

We come now to a major address by the narrator to his readers. Sloth is the last Sin to confess, and in A and B he is followed by Robert the robber. Repentance then makes his prayer for absolution. But the C-poet, having already incorporated with great skill much of the confessional material that made the B-text Haukyn scene (B.XIII) bulky and repetitive, was moved by thrift or an over-zealous didactic impulse to include a long discourse on "the braunches that bryngeth men to sleuthe" (VIII.70). In the original B-text setting, Haukyn confesses in his own voice to all of the sins, and the narrator himself reports more fully on them as the scene progresses. His discussion of the branches of Sloth (B.XIII. 410-57), however out of proportion to the rest of the episode, is at least not disjunctive. But the confessions in Passus Seven and Eight of the C-text have been in dramatic form, and at the moment when the flow from confession to absolution should continue, the narrator interrupts in perhaps the clumsiest intrusion of the poem:

Thanne sat Sleuthe vp and seyned hym ofte,
And made a-vowe by-for god for hus foule sleuthe,
. . . . . .
"Shal no ale after mete holde me thennes [from church],
Til ich haue hurd euesong ich by-hote to the rode!"
[Narr.]: Ac whiche be the braunches that bryngeth men to sleuthe?
Ys, whanne a man mourneth nat for hus mysdedes;
. . . . . .
Ther-for ich rede 3ow riche reueles when 3e maken
For to solace 3oure soules suche mynstrales to haue;
The poure for a fol sage syttynge at thy table,
With a lered man, to lere the what oure lord suffrede
. . . . . .
For he litheth and loueth that godes lawe despiceth;
Qui histrionibus dat, demonibus sacrificat.
Tho was Repentaunce redy and radde hem alle to knele,
(VIII.63-64, 68-71, 102-05, 119-20)

In contrast to the narrator's sermonizing, the prayer of Repentance is a good example of the skillful integration of doctrine with the texture of the surrounding material. The one common theme of all the confessions, including the Dreamer's, has been the need for God's mercy and grace. Repentance now prays "'for alle synfulle oure sauyour of grace,/To a-menden ous of oure mysdedes do mercy to ous alle'" (VIII.121-22). His brief recital of the chief events of Christ's life all emphasize His humanity, and the usual clash of real and ideal in Piers Plowman yields for the moment to their unity in the God who lived as a man among men:

"God, of thy goodnesse thow gonne the worlde make,
And of nouht madest ouht and man lyke thi-selue,
. . . . . .
. . . thy sone sent was tyl erthe,

> And by-cam man of a mayde mankynde to a-mende,
> And madest thi-selue with thy sone oure soule and body lyche;
> Ego in patre, et pater in me est; et qui uidet me, patrem meum uidet.
> And sitthe in oure secte as hit semed, thow deydest,
> On a Fryday, in forme of man feledest oure sorwe;
> . . . . . .
> The thridde day ther-after thow ȝedest in oure secte;
> . . . . . .
> And al that Marc hath ymad Matheu, Iohan, and Lucas,
> Of thyne douhtieste dedes was don in oure secte;
> Uerbum caro factum est.
> . . . . . .
> That art ferst oure fader and of flessh oure brother,"
> (VIII.123-24,127-31, 137, 140-41, 144)

At perhaps no other point in the poem are heaven and earth so in touch and in tune. The mercy of which Repentance speaks encompasses all; Hope blows his horn

> That alle seyntes with synful men songen with Dauid,
> Homines et iumenta saluabis, domine, quemadmodum multiplicasti misericordiam tuam, deus!
> A thousend of men tho throngen to-gederes,
> Cryyng vpward to Crist and to hus clene moder,
> To haue grace to go to Treuthe god leyue that thei mote!
> (VIII.154-57)

What it means to "go to Treuthe," as Reason had directed, is the subject of this next episode. The abrupt change in tone from the near-ecstatic cry of saints and sinners to,

> Ac ther was weye non so wys that the way thider couthe,
> Bote blostrede forth as bestes ouer baches and hulles,
> (VIII.158-59)

is a typical Langlandian juxtaposition of the sublime and the ludicrous, of climax and deflation. The journey will apparently be a difficult one.

The "pilgrimage" which the repentant sinners are to take is not intended to be literal. Literal pilgrimages, although technically acceptable forms of penance, are disparaged; they are used instead as metaphors for the inner, spiritual "pilgrimage" implied in the words of Holy Church, of Reason, and (soon) of Piers. Truth lies in the heart, and it is there the Dreamer, and now all the folk, must journey. At the end of his sermon, Reason contrasted pilgrimages to St. James and Rome to the pilgrimage to Truth (VI.198-99). Referring to this same passage, John Burrow says that "the pilgrimage proposed by Reason signifies, one might almost say, anything but actual pilgrimage." He points to the criticism of the pilgrims and palmers in the B Prologue (11.46-49; C.I.47-50), and to the palmer, who is the first person the folk question about St. Truth. Burrow calls him a "pure grotesque,"[19] and it would be difficult to disagree. Dressed like a "paynym,"

> He bar a bordon ybounde with a brod lyste,
> In a weythwynde wyse ywrythe al aboute;
> A bolle and a bagge he bar by hus syde,
> And an hondred hanypeles on hus hatte seten,
> Signes of Syse and shilles of Galys,
> And meny crouche on hus cloke and keyes of Rome,
> And the fernycle by-fore for men sholde knowe,
> And se by hus sygnes wham he souht hadde.
> (VIII.162-69)

Not only does this fellow not know of St. Truth, but he claims:

> "Ich seyh neuere palmere with pyk ne with scrippe
> Asken after hym, er now in thys ilke place."
> (VIII.180-81)

Such unmitigated satire can leave little room for a positive attitude towards pilgrimages for the salvation of the soul.

It is into this vacuum of ignorance that Piers puts forth his head, and he becomes the authoritative figure to whom the pilgrims and the reader look for guidance. Piers has the answers that are needed. He knows Truth "kyndeliche," for "'Conscience and Kyndewit kende me to hus place'" (VIII.183, 184); that is, he has the "kynde knowyng" of which Holy Church has spoken. For forty years he has served Truth satisfactorily at the plow:

> "In alle kynne craftes that he couthe deuyse
> Profitable to the plouh he putte me to lerne;
> And thauh ich seye hit my-self ich seruede hym
> to paye." (VIII.190-92)

Piers can therefore direct them to the place where Truth dwells.

Piers' directions, based on the decalogue, confirm the metaphorical nature of the pilgrimage; he tells them how to live, not where to go:

> "Ac who so wol wende ther as Treuthe dwelleth,
> This ys the heye weye thyderwarde wyteth wel the
> sothe.
> 3e most gon thorwe Meknesse alle men and wommen,
> Tyl 3e come to Conscience knowen of god selue,"
> (VIII.204-07)

Conscience we have met as a personified human faculty; Meekness has no concrete referent. Piers is not describing a movement through space, but rather a temporal journey by the soul. The final goal is similarly intangible:

> "And yf Grace graunte the to go yn thys wise,
> Thow shalt se Treuthe sytte in thy selue herte,
> And solace thy soule and saue the fro pyne."
> (VIII.254-56)

That the pilgrimage is for the first time understood by the folk to be a life-long endeavor to search their hearts and live good lives makes more understandable the defections which follow Piers' instruction:

> ". . . Peers Plouhman ich praye the telle hit Treuthe,
> Ich may nat come for a Kytte so hue cleueth on me;
> Vxorem duxi, et ideo non possum uenire."
> (VIII.303-04)

But Piers himself is ready to continue his own pilgrimage by plowing his half-acre, although he is not yet ready to be a pastor and devote his full time to teaching the ignorant:

> "Hadde ich ered that half-acre and sowen hit after,
> Ich wolde wende with 3ow and the way teche."
> (IX.3-4)

He is prepared, however, to share his present task with the others in a life-long devotion to what should be an ideal community:

"For ich shal lene hem lyflode bote yf the lond faile,
As longe as ich lyue for oure lordes loue in heuene."
(IX.15-16)

To the knight he says:

"Ich shal swynke and swete and sowe for us bothe,
And laboure for the while thou lyuest al thy lyf-tyme,
In couenaunt that thou kepe holy kirke and my-selue
Fro wastours and wyckede men that this worlde struen."
(IX.24-27)

John Burrow points out that the duties Piers assigns are those of a life-time; "the main point to note in Passus VI [of B; IX in C] is the disintegration of the time-scheme proposed in its opening passage. The long morning's work stretches out to a whole year."[20]

That Piers understands his life at the plow to be a proper exemplification of the pilgrimage to Truth is apparent from his actions:

"Ich shal aparaile me," quath Perkyn "in pylgrymes wyse,
And wende with alle tho that wolle lyue in treuthe."
He caste on hym hus clothes of alle kynne craftes,
Hus cokeres and hus cuffes as kynde witt hym tauhte,
And heng hus hoper on hus hals in stede of a scrippe;
A boussel of bred-corn brouht was ther-ynne.
(IX.56-61)

Again, in his testament, he vows to worship Truth "'al my lyf,/And be a pilgrym atte plouh for profyt of poure and ryche'" (IX.110-11).[21]

Truth himself confirms the value of Piers' work. The pardon is granted to him for his lifetime of honest labor.

Those who assist him in related occupations (i.e., in pursuit of the work to which they have been called), are included in the pardon:

> Treuthe herde telle here-of and to Peers sente
> To take hus teeme and tulye the erthe;
> And purchased hym a pardon *á pena et á culpa*,
> For hym and for hus heyres for euere to be asoiled;
> And bad hym halde hym at home and erye hus leyes,
> And alle that hulpe hym to erye to setten other to sawe,
> Other eny manere myster that myght Peers a-vayle,
> Pardon with Peers plouhman perpetual he graunteth.
> (X.1-8)

What that pardon means to the folk is yet to be explored. We have noted that the sermon and confession scenes include all men. The same is true of the plowing and pardon scenes. In the former, the narrator at one point weaves in a typical present tense narration where the problems besetting the fictional scene are coincident with problems in his own world:

> Laboreres that *han* no londe to lyuen on bote here handes
> Deyned noght to dyne a-day nyght-old wortes.
> . . . . . .
> Bot he *be* heyliche yhyred elles *wol* he chide,
> That he was a werkman ywroght waryen the time;
> (IX.331-32, 336-37)

The narrator follows, as he has elsewhere, with a direct address to the offenders ("Ac ich warne 3ow werkmen wynne whyle 3e mowe") and a prophecy:

> Thorwe flodes and foule wederes frutes shullen faile,
> Pruyde and pestilences shal muche puple fecche.
> (IX.344, 349-50) [22]

All classes of men have worked, or refused to work, for Piers. This broad fictional representation of society, the use of plowing as a symbol for all honest labor, and the inclusion of the real world by direct address--all make the pardon of universal relevance. The narrator moves fluidly between past and present tense throughout his presentation of the document:

> Kynges and knyghtes that holy kirke defenden,
> And ryghtfulliche in reames ruelen the comune,
> Han pardon thorw purgatorie to passy ful lyghtliche,
> . . . . . .
> Marchans in the margine hadden menye 3eres,
> Ac á pena et á culpa Treuthe nolde hem graunte;
> (X.9-11, 22-23)

With the thematic emphasis on the necessity to perform one's duties, the question of begging is germane, and it has additional relevance to the Dreamer. The C-text narrator expands this passage, refining the distinction between the honest poor, who deserve charity, and the beggars "the which brewhouses ben here churches" (X.98). Among the former are those who "wanteth here witt men and women bothe,/The whiche aren lunatik lollers and leperes a-boute" (X.106-07). These wanderers are associated with minstrels of a special kind. Like the fool, the learned man, and the bedridden woman whom the narrator had recommended as "entertainers" for the

rich, these folk of unbalanced wit "aren murye-mouthede men mynstrales of heuene,/And godes boyes, bordiours . . ." (X.126-27). They neither preach nor perform miracles, "ac meny tymes hem happeth/To prophecien of the puple pleyinge, as hit were" (X.113-14); to God, they are "as hus aposteles, suche puple other as his priuye disciples" (X.118).

The narrator's association of himself with these "minstrels" is not made explicit here, but the parallels between his description of them and that of the Dreamer imply as much. The waking interval in Passus Six contains reference to "lollers," to the Dreamer's making of satirical verses, and to his wandering about "'With-oute bagge other botel bote my wombe one'" (VI.52), just as these folk walk about and "bereth no bagges ne none botels vnder clokes,/The whiche is lollaren lyf . . ." (X.139-40).[23]

To some degree, this discussion of beggars and minstrels is digressive, but in C the poet has made another change that integrates it more fully into the text and the dramatic situation. To that portion of B that criticizes beggars, C adds approximately one hundred lines, but he puts these into the mouth of Piers, who now takes up a pastoral role. The narrator's last words on lollers find correspondence in the pardon--or rather, in Piers' exfoliation on it:

> "Lolleres lyuyng in sleuthe and ouer-londe strykers
> Beeth nat in this bulle," quath Peers "til thei ben amendid,
> Nother beggers that beggen bote yf thei haue neede."
> (X.159-61)

It cannot be coincidence that Piers ends with the warning that the unworthy priest will go to purgatory or perpetual hell, where "'shal no pardoune praye for 3ow ther nother princes letteres'" (X.281); the lines immediately following these read:

> "Peers," quath a prest tho "thy pardoune most ich rede,
> Ich can construen ech worde and kenne hit the in Englishe."
> (X.282-83)

Surely, we have been prepared to look upon this priest with suspicion. He claims to find no pardon in the two lines he reads ("Qui bona egerunt ibunt in uitam eternam:/Qui uero mala, in ignem eternum" [X.287]). But we have been told that the pardon has come from Truth, and as Donaldson points out, "there seems to be an increasing tendency from text to text to omit the Pope and make the transaction direct."[24] The validity of the pardon is further attested to by its close correspondence to words of Holy Church in C.II.130-34, which are "almost a translation of the Latin of the pardon":[25]

> "Alle that worchen that wikkede ys wenden thei shulle
> After hure deth-day and dwelle ther wrong ys;
> And alle that han wel y-wroght wenden they shulle
> Estwarde to heuene euere to abyde,
> Ther treuthe is, the trone that trinite ynne sitteth."
> (C.II.130-34)

The C-text omits the dramatic but confusing scene in which Piers argues with the priest, tears the pardon, and

vows to abandon his plowing for prayers and penance. The only debate we hear concerning the meaning of the pardon takes place within the Dreamer himself:

> The preest thus and Perkyn of the pardon Iangled.
> Throgh here wordes ich awook and waitede aboute,
> . . . . . .
> And meny tymes this meteles made me to studie
> Of that ich seih slepynge yf hit so be myghte,
> And of Peers Plouhman ful pensyf in herte,
> And which a pardon Peers hadde the puple to gladen,
> And how the preest inpugned hit thorwe two propre wordes.
>
> (X.292-93, 297-301)

What the narrator concludes is that, while the Pope has power "pardon to graunte/To puple, with-oute penaunce to passen in-to Ioye" (X.324-25), yet "to trysten vpon triennels treweliche me thynketh/Ys nat so syker for the saule certys, as ys Dowel" (X.330-31). This is not an either-or question, but a matter of degree or precedence, just as pilgrimages, although an acceptable form of penance, are not comparable to staying at home and doing one's work.

The first part of the Dreamer's quest is completed, for he had asked how he might save his soul, and the search for Truth, undertaken by the Dreamer as one of the folk, has led to a pardon promising salvation for those who do well. The question he will now pursue is, "What is Dowel?" Since the narrator decides that his dreams deserve serious interpretation, he makes direct appeal to his readers to apply the present question to their own lives:

For-thi ich rede 3ow, renkes that riche ben on thys erthe,
. . . . . .
At the dredful day of dome when dede men shullen ryse,
And comen alle by-fore Crist a-countes to 3elde,
Howe we ladde oure lyf here and hus lawes kepte,
And how we dude day by day the dome wol reherce.
(X.332, 338-41)

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1]Lawlor, "Piers Plowman": An Essay in Criticism, p. 40.

[2]Ibid., p. 285.

[3]"Piers Plowman" and Contemporary Religious Thought (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: The Macmillan Company, [1938]), p. 63.

[4]Ibid., p. 22.

[5]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, p. 105.

[6]Loc. cit.

[7]Parallel Texts, II, 61.

[8]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, p. 102.

[9]"Piers Plowman" and the Scheme of Salvation, p. 4.

[10]A third plague took place in 1369. "The second pestilence is the one to which William more immediately alludes . . . . Allusions to them as God's punishments for sin are common in the writers of the period" (Parallel Texts, II, 64). All three texts use the demonstrative pronoun "these" (in a few MSS, "this pestilence") except the A-text MSS RUHJLEAWNM, which have "the" (See George Kane, ed., "Piers Plowman": The A Version, Will's Visions of Piers Plowman and Do-Well [London: Athlone Press of the University of London, 1960]).

[11]Ibid., 64-65.

[12]Kane ("Piers Plowman": The A Version . . .) chooses the Trinity MS variant for this line: "in ensaumple, se[gges], that 3e shulde do the betere"--a reading that makes more direct the narrator's appeal to his readers. It also accords with the B-text version.

[13]J. F. Goodridge's translation of this passage from the B-text indicates the problem that the rhetorical fluidity of Langland's poem causes when rendered into modern English. Goodridge assigns the narrator's interpolation to Reason:

> "Your pears and plum-trees toppled before the blast," he said, "as a parable to warn you to do better. And beeches and mighty oaks were dashed to the ground, with their roots twisted high in the air, as a terrible sign of the destruction that deadly sin will bring upon you all, on the Day of Doom" (Piers the Ploughman, [Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1966], pp. 61-62).

But in none of the texts is there a "he said" or a "you all," and neither Skeat nor Kane begins direct quotation until later in the sermon.

[14]Skeat's Parallel-Texts edition reads "master," but this is clearly a misprint; his single-text edition of C has "mater," and there are no variants reading "master" in any MS of any text.

[15]"Piers Plowman": An Essay in Criticism, p. 46.

[16]Only MS I of the C-text has "they," which accords with some B-text MSS.

[17]"The Art of Reading Medieval Personification-Allegory," in Vasta, p. 222.

[18]From Skeat's single-text C edition. Parallel Texts has the misprint "can."

[19]"The Action of Langland's Second Vision," in Robert J. Blanch, ed., Style and Symbolism in "Piers Plowman": A Modern Critical Anthology (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p. 214.

[20]Ibid., p. 215.

[21]There are some statements by Piers that suggest he is planning a literal pilgrimage--but only after he finishes his life at the plow:

> "For ich wolle sowe hit my-self and sitthe wol y-wende
> To pylgrimages, as palmers don pardon to wynne."
> (IX.62-63)

The meaning seems to be, simply, that when he gets old, he may have time for the performance of additional religious activities:

> "For now ich am old and hor and haue of myn owene,
> To penaunces and to pilgrimages ich wol passe with othere;"
> (IX.92-93)

Piers has not said anything negative about religious pilgrimages; he has just relegated them to secondary importance, supplementary to the main business of one's life.

[22]The tense shift in mid-sentence allows the poet to make the transition from fiction to life without the kind of phrase that would be required in modern English. Goodridge, for example, has the following: "And so it is nowadays--the labourer is angry unless he gets high wages, and he curses the day that he was ever born a workman" (p. 90).

[23]Donaldson ("Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, p. 152) points out this particular parallel, and he gives a full discussion of the poet's relationship to the subject of mendicancy and minstrelsy. See pp. 130-155, passim.

[24]Ibid., p. 161, n. 1.

[25]R. W. Frank, Jr., "The Pardon Scene in Piers Plowman," Speculum, XXVI (1951), 319. The reader is referred to this article for a review of the various critical positions concerning those aspects of the pardon scene omitted in C.

CHAPTER THREE

THE THIRD AND FOURTH VISIONS

The rhetorical circumstances of the third dream put the reader in a new relationship to the poem. He loses most of the guidance that was present in the first two dreams. The narrator, once an eager guide, is now reluctant to do more than report. Personification of universal qualities yields to personification of the Dreamer's personal faculties; the authoritative nature of characters like Holy Church is therefore replaced by the fallibilities of characters like Thought.

The gradual emergence of an individualized Dreamer has been reinforced by his movement onto the field of folk and by the thematic direction of the poem--each man must take responsibility for his own salvation. Will must now turn his eyes inward. But it is nevertheless the Dreamer who will provide such guidance as we need in the third dream. His role as a personification of the human will has been established. We have already been associated with him and his quest by the merger of his world and ours, and we may yet learn something of our own failures by watching him struggle with his.

The third dream of Piers Plowman is both the low point and the turning point in the Dreamer's spiritual quest. Intimations of his coming failures are found in the waking

period prior to the dream. Having learned in Dream Two that salvation is contingent upon doing well, Will sets out in a fashion strongly reminiscent of his first quest for "wonders" at the very beginning of the poem:

> Thus robed in russett ich romede a-boute,
> Al a somer seson for to seke Dowel, (XI.1-2)

He is somewhat better directed, for at least he has a specific and laudable goal. But if Will knows *what* to seek, he still does not know *how*. His method of inquiry is as haphazard and literal-minded as the blundering search for St. Truth was in the vision just concluded:

> And frainede ful ofte of folke that ich mette,
> Yf eny wiht wist wher Dowel was at ynne,
> And what man he myghte be of meny man ich askede.
> (XI.3-5)

When he does find an answer, it is a presumptuous one. The well-traveled friars, whom Will greets courteously, claim to know where Dowel dwells:

> "Sothliche," seide the frere "he soiourneth with ous freres,
> And ay hath, as ich hope and euer wol her-after."
> (XI.18-19)

After questioning Holy Church, the Dreamer had listened submissively to her explanations. Now, however, he is faced with human rather than divine authority, and he initiates a theological debate:

> "*Contra*," quath ich as a clerke and comsede to dispute,
> And seide sothliche "*septies in die cadit iustus*,
> . . . . . .
> And ho so syngeth," ich seide "certys, doth nat wel;
> For ho so syngeth sikerliche doth vuele,
> And Do-wel and Do-vuele may nat dwelle to-gederes.
> *Ergo*, he ys nat al-way at hom among 3ow Freres;

He is som while elles-wher to wisse the puple."
(XI.20-21, 25-29)

Will's eager presumption is easily undermined by the unctuous condescension of the friar:

"Ich shal sei the, my sone," seide the frere thenne,
"How seuene sithes the sadde man syngeth on the day.
By a forbusene," quath the frere "ich shal the faire shewe."
(XI.30-32)

For all his glib manner, however, the friar responds neatly to both the scholastic style and the rigid either-or ethical concept in Will's argument. He offers a parable that is simple enough for the rudest understanding; yet it makes a more sophisticated theological distinction than Will's tight little syllogism would allow:

"Let brynge a man in a bot in-myddes a brode water;
The wynde and the water and waggynge of the bote
Maketh the man meny tyme to stomble, yf he stande;
. . . . . .
Ac 3ut he is saf and sounde; so fareth hit by the ryghtful.
. . . . . .
Thawe he thorgh fondinge falle he falleth nat out of charite;
So dedliche synne doth he nat for Dowel hym helpeth.
The water ys likned to the worlde that wanyeth and wexeth;
The godes of this grounde aren lyke to the grete wawes,
That as wyndes and wederes walwen a-boute;
The bot ys lykned to oure body that brotel ys of kynde,
That thorgh the fende and oure flesch and this frele worlde
Syngeth seuene sithes the saddest man on erthe,
And lyfholiest of lyf that lyueth vnder the sonne.
Ac free wil and free wit folweth a man euere
To repenten and ryse and rowen out of synne,

To contricion, to confession til he come to hus ende."
(XI.33-35, 38, 42-53)

Doctrinally, the friar's parable is close to what Holy Church had already told the Dreamer. Charity, which is maintained by Dowel, keeps one from mortal sin.[1] Holy Church, having rebuked the Dreamer for his inexcusable ignorance, had said:

"Hit is a kynde knowyng that kenneth in thyn herte
For to louye thy lord leuest of alle,
And deye rathere than to do eny dedlich synne;"
(II.142-44)

It is important for us to notice in these definitions the one thing Will chooses to ignore. Charity, or love, is an attitude within the heart of the individual, and Dowel depends, not on external performance, but on the condition of the will. The humbling of self that occurred as a spontaneous reaction to Reason's sermon in the second vision is not yet one of Will's permanent attributes. He denies to the friars what he had denied to Holy Church:

"Ich haue no kynde knowyng," quath ich "to conceyue al thy speche,
Ac yf ich may lyue and loke ich shal go lerne bettere."
(XI.56-57)

A second weakness of the Dreamer, already manifested in his rigid syllogistic exercise, is defined by David Mills: Dowel is very clearly a "verb-adverb" construction

suggesting a finite action, but the Dreamer, oddly, treats it as if it were a noun, ... as if it were a definite thing which could be sought and found.[2]

These two errors--the inclination to ignore the essential role of the will in doing well, and the attempt to freeze into a static intellectual abstraction the daily process of living a good life--are to continue into the dream sequence that follows. The process of falling asleep is indicative of what is to come. The Dreamer withdraws completely from human intercourse and enters an area with no familiar landmarks:

> Ich wente forth Wyde-where walkyng myn one,
> In a wylde wyldernesse by a wode-syde.
> (XI.61-62)

The wilderness corresponds to the terra incognita of his own faculties as he wanders about, in his dream, from one to the other.

Before examining the Dreamer's experience in this third vision, we may make one observation about the peculiarity of its use of space and time. The first two dreams had fixed, though non-detailed, settings. However abrupt the shifts from one to the other, the field, the court at Westminster, Piers' half-acre all serve as symbolic backdrops for the events and discourse taking place. Time sequences, although sometimes disjunctive, nevertheless have in these dreams durational qualities measured by the actions of the

characters. The interiority of the third vision is emphasized by the total absence of spatial settings and, except for the narrator's statement that he and Thought conversed for three days (XI.112), by the lack of any indication of temporal duration.[3]

This exploration of the inner space of the Dreamer's mind is carried on chiefly by his one-to-one dialogues with personifications nearly all of which are, or are extensions of, his intellectual faculties. In general, he converses with them one at a time, and as one dialogue concludes and another begins, the personification with which Will has been speaking simply vanishes in silence. Langland thus imitates in dramatic form the ruminative thinking process of his Dreamer.

In these conversations, Will is more than ever <u>in propria persona</u>--an individual wrestling with a lifetime of his own doubts, beliefs, and speculations. Skeat has observed that Thought, the first in the long procession of faculties, "is, in fact, merely William's double, the personification of his own contemplative power, . . . and therefore like himself in all respects."[4] It should be no surprise that he fails to recognize Thought, just as he had earlier not recognized Holy Church. The failure is characteristic of Will's selective vision:

> A muche man, me thouhte lyke to my-selue,
> Cam and callede me by my kynde name.
> "What art thow?" quath ich "that my name knowest?"

"That wost thou, Wille," quath he "and no wight betere."
"Wot ich," quath ich, "ho art thow?" "Thouhte," seide he thenne;
"Ich haue the suwed this seue 3er seih thou me no rather?"
(XI.68-73)

How far the Dreamer has yet to travel is made apparent, then, by the narrowly circumscribed area of his search and by his unfamiliarity even with that territory. Introspection is to be valued when it bears some relation to objective realities; otherwise, the solipsism that results may lead to the Slough of Despond. In his article on the Dreamer's role in Piers, J. V. Holleran takes notice of the change in the personifications (all are "associated with the intellect") and the absence of physical details in the settings.

> Langland is telling us that when the dreamer begins his actual quest for salvation, he goes off in the wrong direction by trying to find it in the world of intellectual abstractions. Salvation cannot be found in a world of ideas. Words must be united with actions to be efficacious.[5]

This detour of the Dreamer demands of us the broadest exercise of our critical powers--more so than at any other point in the poem. We have already learned to be wary of the Dreamer's interpretations. The narrator, who had been a reliable enough guide through the first dream, has been a decreasingly helpful presence, and now in this recounting of his rather bewildering foray into his own intellect he finds

himself quite at a loss for words. The narrator offers no commentary in this dream, much less any direct conversation with the reader. Indeed, he says nothing beyond the minimal "quath ich" or "quath he." In the inner vision he makes only two very diffident remarks--"Meny selcouth ich seih aren nouht to seggen nouthe" (XIV.175), and "to carpen hit were to longe" (XIV.179); even confidence in his bare report seems beyond him. Finally, the change in the type of personification requires a new alertness. As Mills puts it,

> By avoiding any clear-cut division between the Dreamer's faculties and the objective faculties which must provide him with new knowledge, Langland has created a situation in which the reader must question the arguments advanced by the abstractions at every point.[6]

The opportunity to do so is immediate, for the Dreamer's question about Dowel is answered by Thought as follows:

> "Dowel and Dobet," quath he "and Dobest the thridde
> Beth thre fayre vertues and beeth nauht ferr to fynde."
> (XI.76-77)

Before following the Dreamer into the labyrinth of the three "Do's," we may consider a possibility put forth by Mills. Since Thought is the Dreamer's personal faculty, it is the Dreamer who, "on the basis of his initial syntactical misunderstanding, creates a false triad in his own mind which he then attempts to establish as an objective reality."[7]

If the reader has been alert, he knows that the ideas to be set forth in this dream may be unreliable, and he will not follow the Dreamer into his intellectual quagmire. From the proliferation of fixed triads offered up by modern critics as correlatives for the three Do's, one may perhaps conclude that the desire for such an objective handle on reality is universal. But the reader (or critic) who takes Will uncritically to his bosom is in for a bewildering experience.

One student of the poem who has resisted the temptation to do so is R. W. Frank, Jr. After a cool and thorough analysis of the use of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest throughout the poem, he presents the following general conclusions: 1) The relationship between the terms and their assigned meanings is highly unstable; the same meaning may be applied to more than one of the terms; 2) Dobet and Dobest are sometimes omitted, and Dowel is frequently used as a synonym for all three terms; 3) There is never a reference to Dobet or Dobest alone; Dowel is never omitted when the other two terms appear.[8]

It seems a safe conclusion that only Dowel has central importance in the poem; it has, after all, a grounding in the words of Holy Church and in the pardon. When the triad appears, it does so in what seems to be a rather ad hoc manner. Frank calls it "a literary device to elaborate . . . meaning." Thus Dowel, he says, is a generic term for

> the good life that leads to salvation. Because the personifications vary in their capacity to inform the Dreamer, and because various activities considered good fall into two or three parts, statements about Dowel are sometimes broken into two parts . . . or into three . . . . The three-fold division of ideas in medieval thought is, of course, a commonplace. Moreover, there are degrees of effort in the struggle to lead the good life. And the triad of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest is, after all, a comparison of the adverb "wel" and therefore represents degrees of effectiveness in the effort to "do well."[9]

With these general qualities of the Dreamer's experience in mind, we may now follow his itinerary through his own intellect. Thought's definition of Dowel is in accord with the virtues the Dreamer has already seen embodied in Piers:

> Who-so is trewe of hys tonge and of hus two handes,
> And thorw leel labour lyueth and loueth his emcristine,
> And ther-to trewe of hus tail and halt wel his handes,
> Nouht dronkelewe ne deynous Dowel hym folweth.
> (XI.78-81)

Dobet is a more intense version of Dowel:

> Dobet doth al this ac 3ut he doth more;
> He is lowe as a lombe and loueliche of speche,
> And helpeth herteliche alle men of that he may aspare.
> (XI.82-84)

The qualities of humility and charity will assume more and more importance in the poem, but here Thought puts them in terms of external behavior only. Accordingly, he continues his definition by linking Dobet with the objective state of a religious (Dobet "'is ronne in-to religion'" [XI.88]).

Dobest, like Dobet, is defined as a prelatical state: "'Dobest bere sholde the bisshopes croce'" (XI.92). Robertson and Huppe comment that Thought's definitions are of limited help to the Dreamer, since they are put "in terms of externals, with no suggestion of the necessary preparation of the will for good action through faith and grace."[10] Realizing the inadequacy of Thought's teaching, Will thanks him anyway and indicates his desire for better instruction:

> "A more kynde knowyng coueite ich to huyre
> Of Dowel and of Dobet and Dobest of alle."
> (XI.108-09)

Thought now refers Will to Wit, who is also an aspect of the Dreamer's own mind, for he, like the Dreamer, is "long and lene lyke to non other" (XI.115). Wit's first set of definitions seems to have as its chief concern a reverence for the body and soul. Dowel dwells in the castle (the body) with his "lemman," Anima (the soul), whom he protects from "'A prout prikyere of Fraunce princeps huius mundi'" (XI.134). Dobet seems to be included only for the sake of completeness. She is illogically subordinate to Dowel, and her nature and function are ill-defined:

> "Dobet ys here [Anima's] damsele syre Doweles douhter,
> To serue that lady leelly bothe late and rathe."
> (XI.138-39)

As in Thought's definition, Dobest has prelatical status (he is "a bisshopes peer" [XI.140]).

The most important inhabitant of the castle, however, is not one of the Do's, but Inwit, a collective term encompassing both the proper functioning of all the rational faculties and their translation into the various acts of well-doing:

> "The constable of that castel that kepeth hem alle
> Is a wys knyght with-alle syre Inwit he hatte;
> And hath fyue faire sones by hus furste wyf,
> Syre Seewel, syre Seiwel syre Huyrewel the hende,
> Syre Worchewel with thyn hand a wight man of strengthe,
> And syre Godfaith Gowel grete lordes alle.
> These fyue ben ysett for to sauye Anima,
> Til Kynde come other sende and kepe hure hym-self."[11]
> (XI.142-49)

The ability of man to do well depends, then, on his maintaining sound faculties which he may put to proper use:

> "Every man that hath Ynwitt and hus hele bothe,
> Hath tresour ynow in treuthe to fynde with hym-selue."
> (XI.180-81)

Wit's representation of a mind at work is apparent in the course of his rambling monologue.[12] The quality of his thought moves with uneven progress. As he addresses himself to disparate issues and topics, he returns again and again to the idea that love, in its many forms, is the essential element in man's attempts to do well:

"And thanne dude we alle wel and 3ut wel bet to louye
Oure enemyes entyreliche and help hem at here neede."
(XI.187-88)

All the clergy should "'wenden as wyde as the worlde were,/To tulien the erthe with tonge and teche men to louye'" (XI.198-99); the married man "'lyueth in lawe and in loue doth wel'" in sustaining this world (XI.202-03). Wit laments that folk marry their children "'For couetise of catel and connynge chapmen'" (XI.257), with the result that the couple do not love each other and therefore bring forth no children but "'foule wordes,'" "'cheste,'" and "'choppes hem by-twyne'" (XI.274-75).

Wit's second set of definitions is an improvement on the first; it focuses on the dominant theme of charity, intensified at each stage. Dowel is "'to do as lawe teche-eth,/To louye and to lowe the and no lyf to greue'" (XI.304-05). Charity here extends to the minimal requirement of obeying the Commandments and avoiding injury to others; it also requires an attitude of humility--a subject which will be stressed more as the Dreamer learns to subdue his intellectual pride. Dobet is "'to louye and to lene . . .'" (XI.306), that is, to perform active deeds of charity. Dobest is, for the first time, defined in the same vein as Dowel and Dobet--not as a prelatical state, but as an all-embracing charity:

"Ac to 3eue and to 3eme bothe 3onge and olde,
Helen and helpen is Dobest of all"
(XI.307-08)

The consistency of definition that Wit finally attains and the variety of particulars on which it is based suggest that the Dreamer has made some progress in understanding. The validity of Wit's definitions may be substantiated by the fact that he is given a direct address to the reader: "For-thi ich counseile alle Crystine . . ." (XI.279). That one of Will's faculties may address "all Christians" in the manner previously reserved for personifications like Holy Church underscores the Dreamer's achievement. For the first time, Will expresses no dissatisfaction with what he has been told.

Indeed, Will has no time for any comment, for Dame Study, Wit's wife, scolds her husband sternly for casting "'margerie-perles/A-monge hogges . . .'" (XII.7-8). She represents the steady and proper application of Wit, and the theme of her long tirade is the abuse of study.[13] Some of her criticisms are apropos both to the fictional and to the contemporary worlds, and not specifically to the Dreamer himself. Her first complaint is broadside:

"Wysdom and wit now is nat worth a carse
Bote hit be carded with couetyse as clothers kemben wolle."
(XII.14-15)

Study also complains of the lack of charity in the world--

especially in the rich, whom she berates for not sharing their wealth with the needy.

It is difficult to tell precisely what Dame Study thinks the Dreamer is or how her discourse relates to him. She certainly means it to be relevant to him, for she returns to her original text, with reference to Will:

> "For-thi," quath hue to Wit, "be war holy writ to shewe
> Amonges hem that hauen hawes atte wille,
> The whiche is a lykynge and a lust and loue of the worlde."
> (XII.81-83)

From her observation of society, however, she is suspicious of anyone who might misuse learning, either to further his worldly profit, to make intellectual sport, or to puff himself up with pride. Will is occasionally guilty of all of these faults, and he will soon (in the inner vision) reveal his own "lykynge and . . . lust and loue of the worlde."

Wit now gives the Dreamer a sign that he should get in Dame Study's good graces. Will courteously accedes:

> When ich was war of hus wille to that womman ich loutede,
> And seide, "mercy, ma dame 3oure man shal ich worthe
> As longe as ich lyue bothe late and rathe,
> And for to worche 3oure wil the while my lyf dureth,
> With that 3e kenne me kyndeliche to knowe what is Dowel."
> (XII.88-92)

Once more the Dreamer shows a bit of humility and earnestness, and for his "meeknesse" and "mylde speche" (XV.93) Dame Study promises to direct him to Clergy and Scripture. Nevertheless, she leaves Will with some emphatic words which are accurately directed at those faults in him which still have not been rooted out. Her own admitted difficulty with the fine points of theology reflects the Dreamer's muddle over the meaning of the three Do's and foreshadows the intricacies of questions to come, such as the debate over predestination. Dame Study suggests a resolution of the problem by giving a simple definition of the final <u>purpose</u> of theological study (teaching men to love), and by linking this definition to the object of Will's quest:

> "Ac Theologie hath teened me ten score tymes,
> The more ich muse ther-on the mystiloker hit semeth,
> And the deppere ich deuyne the derker me thynketh hit.
> Hit is no science sothliche bote a sothfast by-leyue;
> Ac for hit lereth men to louye ich by-leyue ther-on the bettere."
> (XII.129-33)

Whatever the intricacies of his intellectual pursuit, the Dreamer always finds that love is the key term for Dowel. The "better" and "best" are merely refinements of the well-doing that theology teaches:

> "Lerne for to louye yf the lyke Dowel,
> For of Dobet and of Dobest here doctor is dere Loue."
> (XII.134-36)

One might well expect, at this point, that Will would be satisfied. But he is after knowledge--inordinately so--and he reacts with impatience when Study promises to send him on to Clergy and Scripture: "'And tell me som tokne,' quath ich 'for tyme is that ich wende'" (XII.106).

The Dreamer's experience with Clergy and Scripture is disastrous to the point of crisis. In the B-text Clergy responds to Will's question with a speech of about one hundred lines. C omits or transfers elsewhere all but twenty-one lines of this discourse, in the process omitting another set of definitions for Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. What remains in C is a rather simple triad based on inner qualities that have nothing to do with the intellect:

> "Thus By-leyue and Leaute and Loue is the thridde,
> That maketh men to Dowel Dobet, and Dobest."
> (XII.161-62).

It is significant that of all the personifications in this dream, it is Clergy, or Learning, who should stress the importance of these subjective and non-intellectual states--faith, devotion to the laws of Holy Church,[14] and charity.

Will has now had adequate answer to his questions, and each answer he has received has pointed more and more away from intellectual understanding and toward the proper condition of charity of heart--the only means by which man can <u>do</u> well. Hence a crisis ensues:

> Thanne Scripture scorned me and many skyles shewede,
> And contynaunce made to Clergie to congie me, hit semede,
> And lakkede me in Latyn and lyght by me sette,
> And seide, "multi multa sapiunt, et seipsos nesciunt."
> (XII.163-65)

What follows immediately in C is the first inner vision (Dream Four); weeping for "wo" and anger, Will falls asleep (XII.166-67). Why C begins the dream within a dream here and not later, as in B (XI.4), may be more apparent if we consider the other major alteration C makes--the change of speaker from the Dreamer himself to Recklessness. Having been snatched by Fortune and her followers ("Couetyse-of-eyen," "Concupiscentia-carnis," and "Pruyde-of-parfit-lyuynge"), the Dreamer, who is still "'3ong and 3ep and hast 3eris ynowe/For to lyue longe and ladyes to louye'" (XII.179-80), is warned by Elde that Fortune will desert him in time of need. It is Recklessness who replies with a spate of theological argument that occupies more than a hundred lines.

The content of Recklessness' speech may be summarized as follows: Neither the rich, nor the wise, nor those who do good all their lives, nor the learned get to heaven except by the preordained gift of God's grace. The recognition of grace as essential to salvation is admirable. What is disturbing about this speech is the abandonment of concern for all learning and for doing well. The advice of the learned personifications is not refuted; it is dismissed as irrelevant:

"Ac ich countersegge the nat, Clergie ne thy
connynge, Scripture;
That ho so doth by 3oure doctrine doth wel, ich
leyue.
Ac me were leuere, by oure lorde a lippe of godes
grace
Than al the kynde witt that 3e can bothe and con-
nynge of 3oure bokes."
(XV.224-27)

The examples of Mary Magdalen and the repentant thief on the cross are cited to verify his point of view. In stressing the importance of faith, Recklessness claims that the ignorant fare better than the learned. Explicating a sentence from Saint Augustine, he affirms:

"This is to mene no more to men that ben lewede,
'Aren none rathere raueshed fro the ryghte by-
leyue
Cominliche than clerkes most knowynge and connynge;
And none sonnere ysaued ne saddere in the by-
leyue
Than plouhmen and pastours and poure comune peuple;'
And lewede leele laborers and land-tylynge peuple
Persen with a pater-noster paradys other heuene,
Passinge purgatorie penaunceles for here parfit
by-leyue;
Breuis oratio penetrat celum."
(XII.289-96)

What is being brought into question by Recklessness in this inner vision is both the process and the aim of the search the Dreamer has been undertaking in the enveloping outer dream. Some restoration of balance is certainly required, for Will has pursued learning to the exclusion of faith and grace. But the turnabout is now extreme in the other direction. Thus it is appropriate for the inner vision to begin just after the scolding Scripture gives the

Dreamer ("Multi multa sciunt . . ."), and just as the Dreamer's reaction (as voiced by Recklessness) occurs.

Why Recklessness should be substituted for the Dreamer is a more difficult question, but I believe the reason has to do with the poet's desire for a shift in perspective. Recklessness fits into the sequence of personifications whose words are subject to criticism. But he is of a different quality from the others; he does not embody a mental faculty of the Dreamer, but an attitude. The errors of the former are morally neutral; the vagaries of the latter can be damning. The use of this personification who exemplifies the Dreamer's worst qualities at the moment thus protects the Dreamer from the extreme opprobrium that must follow from Recklessness' careless rejection of learning and good works. It is one thing to go off in wrong directions; it is a more damnable thing to support the error with theological reasoning gone amuck.

The Dreamer does go off in the wrong direction, following Fortune until he grows old and poor. Then she and the friar to whom Will, like Lady Meed, had made easy confession desert him. This turn of luck, and Scripture's sudden appearance, finally put Will back on the right road. Scripture delivers a sermon based on the text, "Many are called . . ." (XIII.40-48), and Will, having hit bottom, takes "ful good hede" of her text (XIII.44), as he trembles in doubt concerning whether he is "chose other nat chose"

(XIII.49-51). That crucial question determines his direction for the rest of the poem. The fact that Will comes to ask it creates a paradoxical relationship between him and the reader. At no other time in the poem is Will more his individual self, all alone with his rather grimy soul. Yet at no other time in the poem is this trembling sinner more representative of the human race.

Only after he thinks back over his positive religious experiences does Will, skirting the edge of wanhope (a relative of Recklessness [XII.198]), pull himself out of the spiritual slough into which he has fallen:

> . . . . . on Holy-churche ich thouhte,
> That vnderfong me atte fount for on of godes chosene.
> (XIII.51-52)

The "recheles caitif" who tries to renounce his faith will be dealt with by forces with which Will is already familiar:

> "Ac Reson shal rekene with hym and rebuke him atte laste,
> And Conscience a-counte with hym and caste him in arerages,
> And putte hym thenne in prison in purgatorie to brenne,
> Rewardynge him ther for hus rechelesnesse ryght to the day of dome,
> Bote Contricion and Confession crye, by hus lyue,
> Mercy for hus mysdedes with mouthe and with herte."
> (XIII.65-70)

Reason and Conscience have rebuked Will for his "recklessness" earlier in the poem; he has made contrition

and confession with the folk. He cannot turn back, even after this latest of failures. Having sinned to the point of despair and loss of faith, Will now reaffirms that, "'Qui crediderit et baptizatus fuerit, saluus erit, & cetera'" (XIII.58). Scripture, whose words in the enveloping vision precipitated the Dreamer's descent into this inner dream, gives her valuable assent to the Dreamer's words:

> "That is sothe," seide Scripture "may no synne lette
> Mercy, that hue ne1 al amende yf meeknesse here folwe;
> Thei bothe, as our bookes telleth aren aboue godes werkes;
> Misericordia eius super omnia opera eius."
> (XIII.71-72)

The Dreamer has recovered some lost ground, but, typically, Langland does not allow uninterrupted progression. After Scripture's brief comment, Trajan breaks in: "'Ye, baw for bookes!'" (XIII.74). He goes on to present himself as one who, without Christianity (or right belief) or singing of masses, was saved from hell. The seemingly gratuitous presentation of a new issue, the salvation of a righteous heathen, is a kind of mockery of the Dreamer's intellectual habit of calling up new problems that we, and he, could well do without. On the other hand, Trajan's speech has a thematic function, for his salvation came about through his performance--his doing well--on the basis of love and devotion to law. He was saved by nothing else

"Bote onliche loue and leaute as in my lawes demynge!
Gregore wiste this wel and wilnede to my soule
Sauacion, for the sothness that he seih in myn werkes;"[15]
(XIII.79-81)

Trajan having made his point, Recklessness again makes an exceedingly long speech (from XIII.88 to XIV.128), which serves as a welcome summary of the positive aspects of the dream experience and looks forward to the development of new themes and narrative material. A brief resume of the speech will be helpful.

Recklessness picks up from Trajan the emphasis on love and "leaute" put into action and places them now in a Christian context. First he turns to the audience to make application of these truths to their own lives:

"Wel auhte 3e lordes that lawes kepen this lesson to haue in mynde,
And on Troianus treuthe to thenke alle tymes of 3oure lyue,
And louye for 3oure lordes loue and do leaute euere more."
(XIII.89-91)

The essential nature of these virtues for all men is then confirmed by reference to their central role in Christ's own teaching:

"Lo, loue and leaute been oure lordes bookes,
And Cristes owen cleregie he cam fro heuene to teche hit,
And sitthe seynt Iohan seide hit of hus techynge;
'Qui non diligit, manet in morte:'"
(XIII.96-98)

Christ now serves as a touchstone for the exploration of old and new themes. The atonement on the cross not only freed men from sin, but it made them "'blod-brethrene'" (XIII.109). All are obliged, therefore, to bear one another's burdens, and this mutual charity is associated with the doing well mentioned in Piers' pardon, which is cited verbatim:

> "For-thy loue we as leue children and lene hem that nedeth,
> And euery man help other for hennes shulleth we alle
> To haue as we han deserued as holychurche witt-nesseth,
> Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in uitam eternam; vero mala, in ignem eternum."
> (XIII.116-18)

The meaning of these truths for daily living is now embodied in the key term, "patient poverty," with Christ again serving as the example to be followed. This new concept of patient poverty provides a recapitulation of the dominant ideas in the poem. The reference to Christ as both means to and example of the mercy attending a life of patient poverty looks forward to further development of that theme and to the presentation of scenes from the life of Christ in subsequent dreams. The confidence of Recklessness in his doctrine, and the importance of it in the poem, is reflected in the space devoted to the praise of patient poverty. In addition to the usual exempla and the citation of authorities, Langland provides his speaker with some of the finest metaphors in the poem, and the C-text

adds over 150 lines of occasionally inspired verse. The fact that Recklessness turns to the audience in direct address is a sign that he speaks with authority:

> "Lo, lo, lordes, lo and ladies, taketh hede,
> Hit lasteth nat longe that is lycour swete,
> As pees-coddes and pere-Ionettes plomes and chiries!
> That lyghtliche launceth vp litel while dureth,
> And that that rathest rypeth roteth most saunest."
> (XIII.219-23)

It is noteworthy, too, that this speech by Recklessness, although it contains some typically dour warnings, dwells for the most part on the exploration and development of a positive theme. This in itself is a kind of turning-point, both for the Dreamer and for the overall tone of the poem. There is even a new note of moderation in the attitude toward wealth:

> "Ac leueth nouht, 3e lewede men that ich lacke richesse,
> Thauh ich preise pouerte thus and preoue hit by ensamples
> Worthiour, as by holy writ and wise philosopheres.
> Bothe two beth goode be 3e ful certayn,
> And lyues that our lorde loueth and large weyes to heuene."
> (XIV.26-30)

It is the old story of the camel and the eye of the needle--or, as Recklessness puts it, the difference between the easy passage of a messenger slowed only by the letter he carries and the halting journey of a merchant burdened by his goods (XIV.33-98).

The C-text ascription of this speech to Recklessness performs a function similar to the earlier change of speaker from the Dreamer (in B) to Recklessness, for our attention is focused on the ambiguous nature of this one quality of the Dreamer. As Donaldson explains, the personification is "first the recklessness of wanhope, second the reck-less-ness of St. Francis. He is an entity with extension in two directions, while a human being is an entity with extension in an infinite number of directions."[16] If the first speech of Recklessness diverts some opprobrium from the Dreamer by isolating and objectifying his negative attitude, this second appearance of the personification makes clear that, as yet, the "reck-less-ness of St. Francis" is a potential, not an actual, quality of the Dreamer.

That Will has not attained perfection is apparent from his response to what he sees in the mirror of Middle-earth, into which he now looks. The view is similar to that of the opening vision of the field of folk, and it is no more encouraging:

> Pouerte and plente bothe pees and werre,
> Blisse and biter bale bothe ich seih at ones;
> And how that men mede token and mercy refuseden.
> (XIV.140-42)

Even on the most elemental level of existence ("etynge," "drynkyng," and "gendrynge of kynde") Reason seems to guide all creatures "Saue man and hus make" (XIV.144). Will makes his old error of putting the blame in the wrong place:

> Then ich aresonede Reson and right til hym ich seide,
> "Ich haue wonder in my witt so wis as thow art holde,
> Wher-for and why so wide as thow regnest,
> That thow ne ruelest rather renkes than other beestes?"
> (XIV.184-87)

And Will is again rebuked:

> And Reson aresonede me and seide, "recche the neuere
> Whi ich suffre other nat suffre . . . ."
> (XIV.196-97)

Obviously the Dreamer has not learned the lesson set forth by Recklessness; his patience runs out when his curiosity is stimulated. Reason's advice that Will should rule his tongue moves him to such shame that he wakes from his inner vision and then realizes that he has again lost an opportunity to learn:

> Tho cauhte ich colour a-non and comsed to be ashamed,
> And awaked ther-with; wo was me thenne,
> That ich ne hadde ymet more so murye as ich slepte,
> And sayde a-non to my-self "slepynge, ich hadde grace
> To wite what Dowel ys ac wakynge neuere!"
> (XIV.215-19)

Of Dowel we have heard nothing in the entire inner vision. That it may be used ad hoc is now apparent in the Dreamer's first and only definition of the term himself. When the new character present at his waking asks him for a definition, Will doesn't hesitate to give a most rueful and appropriate answer: "'y-wys, syre,' ich seyde,/To see

muche and suffren al certes, syre, ys Dowel'" (XIV.221-22). Finally, Will has learned something. Or rather, he has been driven by shame to find within himself the knowledge sufficient for right living. Appropriately, therefore, the new character identifies himself as another of Will's faculties, Imaginative. He has been trying during the Dreamer's whole lifetime to teach him what Dowel is, having hoped to keep him from some of the sins he has committed and to enable him to follow the teachings of Holy Church:

> "Ich haue yfolwed the in faith more than fourty wynter,
> And wissede the ful ofte what Dowel was to mene,
> And counsailede the for Cristes sake no creature to by-gyle,
> Nother to lye nother to lacke ne lere that is defendid,
> Ne to spille speche as to speke an ydel,
> And no tyme to tyne ne trewe thyng to teenen;
> Lowe the to lyue forth in the lawe of holychurche;
> Thenne dost thow wel, with-oute drede ho can do bet, no forse!"
>
> (XV.3-10)

Clearly, the Dreamer ought to be satisfied with trying to do well, and not aim for superlatives. That, as the pardon promised, is enough to be saved.

Imaginative now turns to some of the specific theological problems raised in this vision, and he solves them with dispatch.[17] Although "kynde wittes" alone will never earn heaven, books are inspired by the Holy Ghost and may therefore teach the lewd the way to salvation (XV.46-57). God Himself set the precedent which established the importance

of learning when He "'wrot in stoon with hus fynger,/Lawe of loue oure lorde wrot longe er Crist were'" (XV.37-38). Christ "confirmed" this example with his own, when he wrote in the sand that only the sinless should cast the first stone (XV.39-42). Finally, Imaginative explains the value of learning in the parable of the two strong men cast into the Thames. Only one of them can swim, and the moral is clear:

> "Ryght so," quath that renke "reson hit sheweth,
> That he that knoweth cleregie can sonnere a-ryse
> Out of synne, and be saf thow he synegy ofte,
> If hym lyketh and lust then eny lewede sothliche."
> (XV.110-13)

The other specific problem raised by Recklessness' first speech was the seeming injustice of the saving of those who have lived wickedly and have repented at the last moment. The thief on the cross was saved, says Imaginative, because "'he 3elde hym creaunt to Crist and hus grace askede'" (XV.133). Since God wishes that no man be lost unless by his own will, He saves those who cry unto him. Nevertheless, the degree of heavenly reward varies, justly, according to the degree of well-doing:

> "And thauh the theef hadde heuene he hadde non hye blisse
> As seynt Iohan and other seyntes that han a-serued bettere."
> (XV.136-37)

Similarly, the righteous heathen, Trajan, "'ys in the lowest heuene'" (XV.152).

The fact that the Dreamer is at last getting some answers, and that these come from within himself, is of great significance for his spiritual growth. Even more important, however, is the new recognition of man's limited ability to comprehend the ways of God:

> "And so ich seye by the that sekest after weyes,
> How creatures han kynde witt and clerkes comen to bokes,
> And how the floures in the fritth cometh to feyre hewes;
> Was neuere creature vnder Cryst that knew wel the bygynnynge
> Bote Kynde, that contreeuede hit furst of corteise wil.
> . . . . . .
> Ac whi he wolde that wikkede were ich wene and ich leyue,
> Was neuere man vpon molde that myghte hit aspye."
> (XV.157-61, 167-68)

Will's last half-hearted attempt to argue a point provides Imaginative with an opportunity to remind him of the arrogance with which he had begun his search for Dowel. Will points out that clerks of the Church say in their books that those who are not baptised cannot be saved. Imaginative answers in the same manner in which Will had contested the position of the friars:

> "Contra," quath Ymaginatif tho and comsed to loure,
> And seide, "uix saluabitur iustus in die iudicii;
> Ergo saluabitur," quath he and seide no more Latyn.
> (XV.202-04)

With that humiliating rebuke Imaginative vanishes, and Will wakes from his third vision.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1]The connection between Charity and Dowel, found in lines 42-43 in C, is made more emphatically in the B-text: "'Ac dedly synne doth he nou3t for Dowel hym kepith,/ And that is Charite the champioun chief help a3ein synne;'" (B.VIII.45-46).

[2]"The Role of the Dreamer in Piers Plowman," in Hussey, pp. 194-95.

[3]In a brilliant essay, "Locus of Action in Medieval Narrative," Romance Philology, XVII (1963-64), 115-22, Charles Muscatine makes the following analysis of the use of space in Piers:

> And so the poem goes, existing in no one system of space and locations, invoking successive spatial concepts for limited and temporary effects, without tending to the relations between them. The peculiarity of space in Piers Plowman . . . works powerfully in concert with such other traits as the periodic establishment and collapse of the dream frame, the alternation of allegory and literalism, the violent changes of tone and temper, the peculiar equivalence of concrete and abstract terms, and the indistinctness of the genre. Along with these, the shifting locus of action produces an effect that, for lack of a better term, I have called "surrealistic" (p. 121).

[4]Parallel Texts, II, 134. Dorothy Owen, in her comparison of Piers with French allegories, also notes that the personifications here have "a personal rather than a general reference (i.e. Thought stands for the intellectual experience of Longe Wille) . . . ." ("Piers Plowman": A Comparison with Some Earlier and Contemporary French Allegories [London: University of London Press, 1912], p. 37).

[5]"The Role of the Dreamer in Piers Plowman," Annuale Medievale, VII (1966), 39.

[6]"The Role of the Dreamer in Piers Plowman," in Hussey, p. 196.

[7]Loc. cit.

[8]"Piers Plowman" and the Scheme of Salvation, pp. 38-41 passim. Frank's conclusions are well documented; the reader is referred especially to Chapter Four, "Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest the Third" (pp. 34-44). The probability of a relationship between the three terms within the text and

their use in the colophons is small. As Frank points out, if there is no fixed meaning for Dobet, there can be no one meaning for the Dobet section to dramatize (p. 36).

[9]Ibid., p. 37. In an article published a year before Frank's book, S. S. Hussey focuses on the various "three lives" theories, exposes their weaknesses, and comes to essentially the same conclusion that Frank does--namely, "that Dowel was Langland's main concern throughout the poem, and that by it he meant something like 'living a good life in whatever state you are called.'" Dobet and Dobest then follow "as degrees of the same thing." ("Langland, Hilton and the Three Lives," in Vasta, p. 256.) Similar interpretations are to be found in G. H. Gerould's "The Structural Integrity of Piers Plowman, B."

[10]"Piers Plowman" and Scriptural Tradition, p. 104.

[11]The A-text gives a fuller description of the operation of Inwit--especially its control over and direction of the senses:

> He eggeth the ei3e-siht and herynge to goode,
> Of good speche and of cunnynge he is the biginnere,
> In monnes brayn he is most and mihtiest to knowe,
> Ther he is bremest but 3if blod hit make.
> For whonne blod is bremore then brayn then is Inwit i-bounde,
> And eke wantoun and wylde withouten eny resoun.
> (A.X.52-57)

The MED supports both of these definitions of Inwit: See 2.(b) "will, intention"; 3.(a) "the collection of inner faculties."

[12]The important difference between Thought and Wit is that Wit is an active intellectual process (See OED 2. "The faculty of thinking and reasoning in general." More specifically, "wit" may refer to "any one of certain particular faculties of perception, classified as outer (outward) or bodily, and inner (inward) or ghostly . . . ." (OED 3.). OED refers the reader to "inwit," 2b (pl.), which cites Wyclif, Sel. Wks. III.117: "These ben also thy fyve inwyttys; Wyl, Resoun, Mynd, Ymaginacioun, and Thogth."

[13]OED defines "study" as: (4) "thought or meditation directed to the accomplishment of a purpose . . . ." It is the purpose of Will's questions that Study belittles. Dame Study may, perhaps, also carry a suggestion of Will's growing confusion; see OED (3), "a state of mental perplexity or anxious thought."

[14]The meaning of "Leaute" is difficult to fix exactly, since both this substantive and its adjectival and adverbial forms occur in such varied contexts. I prefer Donaldson's idea of "'exact justice; strict adherence to the letter of the law'" ("Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, p. 66, n. 4), but with more emphasis on inner motivation--hence my "devotion to the law" implies both motivation and performance. Clergy seems to have something of this sort in mind when he begins his speech with the advice that the Dreamer will find Dowel if he heeds the following: "'And al that holy churche here-of can the lere,/By-leyf lelly there-on and look thow do ther-after'" (XII.147-48). MED (b) suggests "loyalty" or "faithfulness"; (c) provides a more formal commitment--"allegiance"--which would be better suited to the use of the word in Piers, wherever it occurs in the context of a Christian's duty to his Faith. Goodridge's note on the word seems to accord with this latter definition: "Lewte," he says, "implies loyalty to the original teaching of Holy Church" (p. 287). At III.20 Holy Church calls Leaute her "lemman." For a fuller discussion, see Donaldson, pp. 65-67.

[15]Trajan's salvation has theological support from the Gospel of Paul, in Romans 2:13-15:

> It is not by hearing the law, but by doing it, that men will be justified before God. When Gentiles who do not possess the law carry out its precepts by the light of nature, then, although they have no law, they are their own law, for they display the effect of the law inscribed on their hearts.

Trajan's "leaute" is allegiance or devotion to this natural law.

[16]"Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, p. 174.

[17]Langland evidently forgot that it is Recklessness, and not the Dreamer himself, who posed some of the specific questions Imaginative answers. It was Recklessness who mentioned the thief on the cross, for example, but Imaginative speaks as if it had been Will ("'as thow toldest'" [XV.132]). The error has negligible effect, however, considering the close relationship between Recklessness and the Dreamer.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LAST FOUR VISIONS

The sudden vanishing of Imaginative causes the Dreamer to wake from his nightmarish third dream "wittlees ner hande" (XVI.1).[1] He has been deserted by the friars and "menacede" by Elde (XVI.6). Further, his excursion into the intellect has not provided much ease for his spiritual anguish. Patient poverty has been extolled at length, but the Dreamer has not yet seen it in action. Hounded by timor mortis, he dons clothes that are symbolically appropriate for one who has been chastened and is now a more humble seeker after the gift of salvation:

> As a frek that feye were forth gan ich walke
> In manere of a mendinaunt meny 3eres after.
> (XVI.2-3)

Although he is not a mendicant in the literal sense, there is no connotation here of the religious hypocrisy suggested in his earlier attire of a hermit "unholy of works." Indeed, he is now, for the first time in the waking state, concerned entirely with the safety of his soul, and his attention is occupied with the last words of Imaginative:

> And ich meruailede in herte how Ymagynatif saide,
> That iustus by-fore Iesu in die iudicii
> Non saluabitur bote uix helpe;
> (XVI.21-23)

And Will is certainly aware that he is not one of the iusti.

Musing on the words of Imaginative, the Dreamer falls asleep and is immediately invited by some old friends, Conscience and Clergy, to go with them to dine with Reason. Since Reason was last seen (at the end of the inner vision) scolding the Dreamer for his excessive curiosity, the invitation is a sign that Will may be back in his good graces. As Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall explain in a note to their edition of selections from the C-text, "The invitation to dinner is a probationary reward."[2]

The tentative improvement in Will's spiritual condition is accompanied by a significant change in the rhetorical structure of the poem. Beginning with this banquet scene the role of the Dreamer as a generator of events is considerably lessened. He is more active, however, as the representative of all mankind, asking for them (that is, for us) the important and fundamental questions regarding those doctrines directly related to salvation.

The banquet scene is evidence of this shift in the function of the Dreamer. The seating arrangement puts him at the side table with Patience (a recent friend), while the doctor of divinity sits alone at the head table. The association of the Dreamer with Patience is further established by the two different menus: the doctor gorges himself on "mortrewes and potages" (XVI.47), but Will and Patience are served quite other fare:

Thenne Reson radde ryght a-non after,
That Conscience comaunde sholde to do come
Scripture,
And brynge bred for Pacience bytynde apartie,
And to me that was hus mette tho and other
mete bothe.
He sette a soure loof and seide, "agite penitentiam,"
And sitthe he drow ous drynke diu-perseuerans,
"As longe," quath he, "as the lyf and the licame
may dure."
(XVI.52-57)

The first test of the Dreamer's patience is now provided by his recognition of the friar's hypocrisy. He does well, for he makes his first comment to himself, loudly enough for only Patience--not the doctor--to overhear (XVI.68ff.). His restraint comes from his recognition that all men are brothers in sin:

"Ac me is loth, thow ich Latyn knowe to lacky eny
secte,
For alle we ben brethren thauh we be diuersliche
clothede."
(XVI.78-79)

The Dreamer has succeeded, at a particular moment, in restraining his temper, but his patience is still a fragile and sometime thing:

"Ich shal Iangly to thys Iordan with hus Iuste wombe,
And a-pose hym what penaunce is and purgatorie on
erthe,
And whi he lyueth nat as he lereth!" "let be," quath
Pacience,
. . . . . .
Ich sat stille as Pacience wolde and thus sone
this doctour,
As rody as a rose roddede hus chekes,
Kowede and carpede and Conscience hym herde,
And tolde of a trinite and to-warde me he lokede.
(XVI.92-94, 107-10)

Finally granted permission to speak, Will does not "jangle" at all, but rather he poses the familiar question, "What is Dowel?" It is the question that got Will himself into great difficulties because of his intellectual pride, and it has the effect now of revealing in this gluttonous friar the great gap between knowing and doing. His first answer, "Do thy neyhebore non harme ne thyselue nother?" (XVI.113), describes a minimal virtue at best--the absence of active malice--and Will chides him for his failure to perform deeds of charity:

> "Certes, sire," thanne seide ich "hit semeth nat here,
> In that 3e parteth nat with ous poure . . . ."
> (XVI.115-16)

When Will begins to do what he has just said he ought not--to blame the friar in Latin--Conscience has Patience silence him and takes up the questioning himself.

The central importance of Will's struggle to maintain patience is reflected in the last discussion of the three Do's, with Conscience as moderator. The friar's answer is acceptable in its emphasis on performance of one's duties, and Dobet is specifically related to one kind of duty to one's neighbor ("That trauaileth to teche othere for Dobet ich it holde" [XVI.126]). Clergy excuses himself from offering definitions, but in referring to Piers's command to shun all knowledge and crafts "Saue loue and leaute and louhnesse of herte" and to take no

text "Bote *dilige deum & proximum* and *domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo, &c.* . . ." (XVI.133, 135), he, too, dwells on the virtues already affirmed several times as the basis of living a good Christian life. Clergy's reference to Piers also prepares us, as well as we can be prepared, for the sudden entrance of Piers himself.

It is Piers who, in a brief epiphanic appearance,[3] makes it clear that only the patient can carry out the commandment of charity:

> Quath Peers the Plouhman "*pacientes uincunt.*
> By-for perpetual pees ich shal preoue that ich seide,
> And a-vowe by-for god and for-sake hit neuere,
> That *disce, doce, dilige deum* and thyn enemye;
> . . . . . .
> Conforte hym with thy catel and with thy kynde speche,
> And leye on hym thus with loue tyl he lauhe on the;
> And bote he bowe for this betynge blynd mote he worthe!"
>
> (XVI.138-41, 146-48)

Piers vanishes, Reason follows, and Patience takes up Piers' theme, stressing the peace to be found in the practice of charity. It is too much for the doctor, who, with his eye on the world as it is, disputes the ideal set forth by Patience:

> "This is a *Dido*," quath this doctour "a disours tale!
> Al the witt of this worlde ne Wyghte mennes strengthe
> Can nat performen a pees of the pope and of hus enemys
> Profitable for bothe parties"-- and put the bord from hym,

> And tok Conscience and Cleregie to counsel, as hit were.
> (XVI.171-75)

The friar's impatience causes him to be dismissed, and Conscience and Patience set out to find "parfitnesse" (XVI.184). Will knows where, and how, to go: "Thus thei wente forth here way with gret wil ich folewede" (XVI.185). The three pilgrims meet, not "parfitnesse" at all, but Activa-Vita. In the C-text, this episode has several major changes from B, all of which alter to some degree the relationship of this character to the Dreamer and to the reader. The greatest change, quantitatively, is the excision of more than 140 lines in which is described Haukyn's coat, made filthy with stains of sin. Much of the material has been transferred in C to the confession of the Seven Deadly Sins in the second dream, and Haukyn's confession and tears of repentance are removed.

One result of these changes is the considerable muting of parallels between Activa-Vita and the Dreamer. After his confession, for example, Haukyn "wepte water with his eyghen" (B.XIV.324), a verbal echo of the Dreamer's own sorrow after Repentance had urged contrition upon the field of folk:

> With that ran Repentaunce and reherced hus teme,
> And made Wille to wepe water with hus eyen.
> (C.VII.1-2; similarly, B.V.62)

If Activa-Vita has fewer similarities and thus less direct relationship to Will, he has all the more indirect relation to both Will and the reader, for he stands more substantially in the C-text as an average man. Busy about his own "belly-joy,"[4] he supplies bodily food for all:

> "For lordes and lorelles luthere and goode,
> Fro Myhel-masse to Myhel-masse ich fynde mete and drynke."
> (XVI.215-16)

Stella Maguire says of Haukyn (and it is true of Activa-Vita) that he "is, in his own person the embodiment of that world [of the Visio]."[5] What Activa-Vita lacks is the spiritual food that sustains the Christian soul. As Patience offers this food to Active, the Dreamer, otherwise silent and unmentioned throughout this episode, looks on with interest and shares the sacrament:

> "3e," quath Pacience, and hente out of hus poke
> A pece of the pater-noster and profrede to vs alle.
> And ich lustnede, and lokede what lyflode hit were;
> Thanne was hit fiat-uoluntas-tua that sholde fynde vs alle.
> "Haue, Actyf," quath Pacience "and eet this when the hungreth,
> Other whenne thow clomsest for colde other clyngest for drouthe;
> And shal neuere gyues the greue ne grete lordes wratthe,
> Pryson ne other payne for--pacientes uincunt;
> (XVI.248-55)

The opportunity to explain the intimate relationship between poverty and patience is now seized upon by Patience.

For the last time, man's preoccupation with the goods of this world is dealt with thoroughly here and in the next scene. Patience gives the rich little hope for heaven:

> "Alas! that Richesse shall reue and robbe mannes soule
> Fro the loue of oure lorde at hus laste ende!
> Thei that haue hure hyre by-fore aren eueremore poure,
> And shulle nat deye out of dette to dyne er they deseruen hit.
> . . . . . .
> So ich say by 3ow riche hit semeth nat 3e shulle
> Haue two heuenes for 3oure her-beynge."
> (XVII.1-4, 8-9)

Further, the long Distinctio Paupertatis (XVII.121ff.) points out, though often unconvincingly, that the poor are less susceptible to sin than the rich. For example:

> "(3) Selde is the poure ryght riche bote of hus ri3tful heritage,
> He wynneth nat with wyghtes fals ne with vnseled mesures,
> Ne borweth of his neyghebore bote that he may wel paye,
> And lyghtly men leneth to fewe men and men wene hym poure."
> (XVII.129-32)

Nevertheless, poverty is not in itself a virtue, and Patience suggests that one's worldly condition is not the crucial factor in salvation, since God allows both rich and poor to exist. Rather, it is poverty, that is meekness, of heart which is the proper condition for all men:

> "Ac for the beste, as ich hope aren somme poure and some riche.

> Ryght so haue reuthe of ous alle that on the rode deydest,
> And amende ous of thy mercy and make ous alle meeke,
> Louh and leel and louynge and of herte poure;
> (XVII.21-24)

This very long monologue by Patience, with its direct address to the audience, indicates a return to the use of authoritative personifications as teachers of both Will and the reader. The direction of events is no longer to depend on the peculiar vagaries of Will's mind. That has been brought to a satisfactory, if not an exemplary, state. The Dreamer may once more look outward for spiritual enrichment. In the next scene, therefore, he is placed more decidedly in the background--especially in the C-text, which omits a waking interval that occurs here in B. In the earlier text, Haukyn's wailing for his sins wakens the Dreamer, who wanders about with his wit waxing and waning "til [he] a fole were" (B.XV.3). He is rude to his social superiors, and he raves in his folly until Reason takes pity and "rocks" him to sleep (B.XV.11) and he meets Anima. In C, continuity with the Activa-Vita scene is maintained. After Patience's last speech, we are told:

> Thenne hadde Actyf a ledere that heyhte Liberum-Arbitrium,
> That knewe Conscience ful wel and Clergie bothe.
> (XVII.158-59)

Will makes his last appeal for permission to speak (Patience then dropping out of the scene):

Thenne ich wondrede what he was this Liberum-arbitrium,
And prayede Pacience that ich a-pose hym moste.
And he suffrede me and seide "assay hus other name."
(XVII.162-64)

Just as the previous scene, in its C-text form, was more explicatory than dramatic, this scene contains only a few brief interrupting questions by Will. The pattern of the vertical or hierarchical debate is similar to that in the opening conversation between Will and Holy Church. But there has been some growth in Will's character, and nowhere is he called a "dotede daffe." He is even allowed a little joke, although Liberum-Arbitrium teases him into a momentary lapse into idle curiosity. After Liberum-Arbitrium describes for Will his many different functions and names, the narrator reports:

"3e ben as a bischop," quath ich al bordynge that tyme,
"For bischopes blessed thei bereth meny names,
Presul and pontifex and metropolitanus,
And other names an hepe episcopus and pastor."
"That is soth," he seide "now ich seo thy wil
How thow woldest know and conne the cause of alle here names,
And of myne, yf thow myghtest me thynketh by thy speche!"
"3e, syre," ich seyde, "by so that no man were a-greued,
Alle the science vnder sonne and alle sotile craftes
Ich wolde ich knewe and couthe kyndeliche in myn herte."
"Thanne art thow inparfyt," quath he "and on of Prydes knyghtes;
For suche a luste and lykynge Lucifer fel fro heuene;
Ponam pedem meum in aquilone, et ero similis altissimo."
(XVII.202-13)

After this sharp reminder to Will that his intellectual pride is always just below the surface, Liberum-Arbitrium laments the present evil condition of society, much of which he blames on the corruption of the clergy. It is important for the final scenes of the poem that Langland again have an authoritative personification stress the Church as the instrument which leads men to either salvation or corruption:

> "As holyness and honeste out of holy churche
> Sprynget and spredeth and enspireth the peuple
> Thorgh parfit preest-hood and prelates of holi-
> churche,
> Ryght so out of holychurche al vuel spredeth,
> Ther imparfit preest-hod is prechours and techours."
> (XVII.242-46)

With the dramatic focus off the Dreamer, Liberum-Arbitrium addresses the audience directly, reminding them that the conditions he describes are the same conditions they suffer under:

> "Alas! lewede men muche leese 3e that fynden
> Vnkynde creatures to beo kepers of 3oure soules!"
> (XVII.272-73)

It is avarice that causes such corruption, and lack of charity. But charity is to be found in all classes of men, and most particularly in those who make their "pilgrimages" by visiting and aiding the poor and imprisoned.

Will now earnestly wishes to find charity, and this desire foreshadows both his pursuit of the Samaritan and the close relationship to be established between Piers and Christ:

"Were ich with hym, by Crist," quath ich "ich wolde neuere fro hym,
Thauh ich my by-lyue sholde begge a-boute at menne hacches.
Wher clerkus knowe hym nat," quath ich "that kepen holy-churche?"
"Peers the Plouman," quath he "most parfitliche hym knoweth;
Et uidit deus cogitationes eorum."
(XVII.334-37)

The whole of the next passus is taken up chiefly with Liberum-Arbitrium's rehearsal of the lives of saints who depended entirely on God's charity for their sustenance (another reminder to Will that begging, one of his own frequent occupations, is not necessary). The Dreamer's request that his guide now "teche [him] to Charite" (XIX.2) precipitates a new scene--that is, removal to a new location:

Then louh Liberum Arbitrium and ladde me forth with tales,
Til we comen in-to a contree Cor-hominis hit hyhte,
Herber of alle pryuytees and of holynesse.
(XIX.3-5)

This change of location signifies for the Dreamer a new relationship to the personifications he meets and, from here to the last passus of the poem, a change in the kind of experience he undergoes.[6] From now on, Will plays the role of an observer of scenes having to do with the central mysteries of the Christian religion and the Biblical history in which they are grounded. Will, has, and needs, no guidance from without; he either accompanies one personification of whom he asks interpretation, or he operates on his

own. Further, his questions are no longer indicative of his individual peculiarities of spirit or character--nor of his own ignorance. His eccentricities, although they lurk close to the surface, are now merely vestigial so far as their rhetorical function is concerned. They persist, however muted, as a reminder that this is still the same character with whom we began. When Will asks about some elementary doctrine of the Faith, no one chides him, as did Holy Church, for not knowing what he ought; he asks for all men.

One indication of the Dreamer's new status, in the B-text, is a second inner vision. Anima's reference to Piers as the gardener of the Tree of Charity causes the Dreamer to swoon with joy, and Piers then takes over the role of explicating the allegory of the Tree. In the C-text, however, Langland seems to have omitted the inner vision at this point, and Liberum-Arbitrium continues to explain the meaning of the Tree to Will. C has eliminated Piers as a character here, probably because Liberum-Arbitrium is just as well suited to the role of explicator, and Piers himself will soon take on his most elevated role in the poem.

The C-text elimination of the inner vision at this point in the poem also allows for continuity in the now rapidly improving quality of the Dreamer's experience. The role of the Trinity (the three props supporting the Tree) in warding off assaults by the World, the Flesh, and the

Devil, the representation by the apples of the three types of life (marriage, widowhood, and virginity), and the descent into limbo inferni (XIX.116) by the souls of the Old Testament patriarchs all prepare for the climactic moment of Christian history to follow--the intervention of Christ into human time and in human form.

The transition into the next scene is at first startling. As the devil runs off with the souls of men, Liberum-Arbitrium, suddenly transformed into Libera-Uoluntas-Dei, chases after the devil. Two lines later he is identified as Spiritus Sanctus, who speaks through Gabriel to inform Mary of the Incarnation:

> Thenne meuede hym mod in maiestate dei,
> That Libera-Uoluntas-Dei lauhte the myddel shoriere,
> And hitte after the fende happe hou hit myghte.
> Filius, by the faders wil flegh with Spiritus Sanctus,
> To ransake that rageman and reue hym hus apples,
> That fyrst man deceyuede thorgh frut and false by-heste.
> And thenne spake Spiritus Sanctus in Gabrielis mouthe
> To a mayde that hihte Marie a meek thyng with alle,
> That on Iesus, a Iustice sone moste Iouken in hire chaumbre,
> Til plenitudo temporis tyme ycome were,
> That Elde felde efte that frut other fulle to be rype,
> That Iesus sholde Iuste ther-fore in Iugement of armes,
> Who sholde fecche this frut the feend other Iesus self.
>
> (XIX.118-30)

The rapid movement from the allegory of the Tree, presenting in brief the pre-salvific history of man from the Fall to John the Baptist, to the Annunciation and

succeeding Biblical scene contributes to the sense of climax in the Dreamer's experience. From here till the attack of Antichrist in the last passus of Piers Plowman, the previous method of expansion and digression in the longer speeches and the Dreamer's alternating progress and retrogression is abandoned for a concentrated and well-focused exploration of the story of Christian salvation. As Donaldson points out:

> The scene in the Garden of Heart provides in a very real sense the turning point in the poem. Hitherto, the discussion has dealt in general and specific terms with a wide variety of topics related to the problem of salvation: with grace, with predestination, with the status of the heathen both before and after Christ, with the relative merits of learning and ignorance, the active life and patience. But from the moment the Holy Ghost speaks in Mary's ear the poem begins to deal with the first great cause of salvation, both directly in the Incarnation and in the organization whose aim is to perpetuate the effects of the Incarnation, the Church. The central figure in the turning point is Liberum Arbitrium.[7]

Alone now, the Dreamer witnesses, in a highly compressed time sequence, the Annunciation, the early ministry of Christ (the miracles of healing, the raising of Lazarus, the feeding of the multitude), the betrayal by Judas, and the bringing of Christ before the tribunal.

What follows immediately is either a brilliant device or an egregious error by the C poet:

> Thus Iewes to the Iustices Iesus thei ladden.--
> With muche noyse that nyght ner frentik ich awakede,

> In inwit and in alle wittes after Liberum-Arbitrium
> Ich waitede wyterly, ac ne wiste whider he wente,
> And thanne mette ich with a man on Mydlentens Soneday,
> As hor as an hawethorn and Abraam he hihte.
> (XIX.179-84)

At the beginning of the Tree episode in the B-text, the Dreamer had swooned from joy into a dream within this dream (B.XVI.19), and he now wakens from that inner vision. In C, the swoon is replaced by a sigh of joy (XIX.16), and hence there is no inner dream in the Tree episode. There are two possibilities to explain this C-text waking as something other than error. Constance Hieatt suggests the following:

> If we simply take the first "waking" as a dream experience, a transition from one dream to another, it is, perhaps, even closer to our usual experience in dreams than the inner dream which is carefully and consistently set apart from its surrounding dream.[8]

If we did not have the B-text inner vision for reference, and, more significantly, if we had not already had a number of genuine wakings from both inner and outer dreams, Hieatt's tentative suggestion might be more convincing.

My own speculation is equally tentative and dubious, but failing any attempts by critics other than Hieatt to find a reason for C's lines, I would propose that the C poet may have intended to include an inner vision here--probably not at the point where the Dreamer sighs, but at the moment when Gabriel speaks to Mary. The sudden shift

of scene is not, of course, a sure sign in this poem of a new dream level; it has occurred before within the dreams. Most of these scene changes do, however, have some few lines telling us that the Dreamer walked along to a new location with whatever companion he has at the moment--as we have just seen him walk with Liberum-Arbitrium to Cor-hominis. A more convincing argument might be made, however, if we observe that this scene change to the Holy Land is a change in time--and not just from one fictional dream time to another, but from present dream time to actual historical time; the Dreamer has been transported there in what may be a mystical vision.[9] It is this from which he "awakes," nearly frantic at what he has seen and desirous of finding his guide, Liberum-Arbitrium.

Whether the above suggestion be plausible or not, the Dreamer's new temporal location is what now becomes important to both theme and rhetorical relationships. He has shown himself capable of asking the right questions about charity and salvation. He has next been allowed a vision of the events leading up to the last few days of the life of Christ, when the charitable sacrifice upon which salvation depends was performed. His waking from this scene now puts him into history as a participant, though chiefly as an on-the-scene questioner or one of the crowd.

With the introduction of Abraham, Moses, and the Samaritan, Langland brings together those key moments in history where God has intervened in human time and made

manifest the dependence of all times, for their meaning, on the eternal. The Dreamer is about to witness the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell, and to prepare for the fullest possible understanding of these events, he is allowed to question Biblical figures who represent the three virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity. It should be emphasized again that Will's ignorance in these scenes is merely a rhetorical device and not an indication of a defect of character. He becomes, for the moment, one who lives at the same time as these people he meets--that is, the time just preceding the Crucifixion. Consequently, he is now unfamiliar with the Trinity and with Christ's commandment to love one's neighbor.

Will's discourse with Abraham reveals that Faith which has a sense of things to come but does not press for evidence or full understanding. When he refers to the Trinity and the Dreamer protests that such a thing is too mysterious to be given credence, Abraham advises him that full knowledge of it must not be expected; rather, one must live "leely" (XIX.198-201). Abraham himself saw the Trinity in the form of the three strangers to whom he once extended hospitality (XIX.241-45). His faith was tested in the near-sacrifice of Isaac (XIX.249), and he now awaits his deliverance from hell with the other patriarchs who, resting in his bosom, are visible to the astonished Dreamer. Abraham's expectation prepares us for the Harrowing of Hell, ironically near at hand in the poem:

" . . . . . may no wed ous quite,
Ne no bern beo oure borghe ne brynge ous out of daunger,
Fro the poukes poundfalde no maynprise may ous fecche,
Til he come that ich carpe of Crist is hus name,
That shal delyuery ous som day out of the deueles powere,
And betere wed for ous wagen than alle we beon worthi,
And that is, lif for lyf other ligge thus euere,
Lollynge in my lappe thus til such a lord ous fecche."
(XIX.280-87)

For the second time in the poem, Will weeps in anguish. Formerly, he had wept for his own sins; now, he is near despair for the sinfulness of all men, since it hinders the ready mercy of God. Fortunately, further help on the problem immediately comes running by:

"Alas!" ich seide, "that synne so longe shal lette
The myght of godes mercy that myghte ous alle amende!"
And wepte for hus wordes; with that ich seyh an other
Rappliche renne the righte wey we wente;
And ich fraynede hym furst fro whennes he come,
What he hihte, and whider he wolde and wyghtliche he ous tolde.
(XIX.288-93)

Their new companion is Spes (Moses), who, like Abraham, is seen as he would be just before the Crucifixion. He has with him the two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets: "Dilige deum et proximum tuum" (XX.13). Rather than help, this new commandment "to loue and to leue for that lordes sake/Alle manere of men as muche as ous self" (XX.38-39) is, like the doctrine of the Trinity, too

difficult for men. The Dreamer has seen enough of human nature to believe such a law to be viable:

> "Go thy gat," quath ich to Spes "so me god helpe,
> Tho that leorneth thi lawe wolle litel while hit vsen!"
> (XX.44-45)

Again, the Dreamer's response brings us to an apparent dead-end which is immediately opened up by the entrance of a new character:

> And as we wente in the way thus wordyng of this matere,
> Then seih we a Samaritan cam syttynge on a mule,
> Rydynge ful raply the ryght way that we wente,
> Comynge fram a contreie that men callide Ierico,
> To Iusten in Ierusalem he Iacede awey ful faste.
> (XX.46-50)

The action of the parable of the Good Samaritan which follows is sufficient answer to the Dreamer's protest. Selfless charity towards others is possible, but only with the aid of the crucified Christ. The Samaritan explains in this way the failure of Faith and Hope to succor the stricken man (that is, mankind in its state of sin):

> Ac ich suwede the Samaritan and seide hou thei bothe
> Weren afered, and flowen fro the man y-wonded.
> "Haue hem excused," quath the Samaritan "here help wolde nat vaille,
> Ne medecine vnder molde the man to hele brynge,
> Nother Faith ne fyn Hope so festered aren hus wondes;
> With-oute the blod of a barn he beoth nouht ysaued,
> The whiche barn mot neodes be bore of a mayde,

> And with the blod of that barn embaumed and
> baptized."
> (XX.79-86)

Off now with the Samaritan, Will asks him to verify those precepts offered by Faith and Hope. In so doing, the Samaritan places emphasis on the obligations of men who would receive the mercy of God. The Trinity is compared first to the fist (Father), fingers (Son), and palm (Holy Ghost). Should a man sin against the Holy Ghost, he would render the whole hand inoperative and lose the opportunity to receive grace:

> "So ho so synegeth a3ens the seynte espirit hit
> semeth that he greueth
> God, ther he gripeth and wolde hus grace quenche."
> (XX.166-67)

Similarly, the Trinity is like a taper with wax (Father), wick (Son), and flame (Holy Ghost); again, the Holy Ghost is the essential means to mercy:

> "So grace of the holy gost melteth al to mercy,
> The grete myghte of the Trinite to mercyable, and
> to none othere."
> (XX.195-96)

The sin against the Holy Ghost is identified with the lack of charity toward one's fellow men, either as failure to make restitution for sin or as failure to help those in need. All religious activities devoid of charity are fruitless:

"So wol the fader for-3yuen folke of mylde hertes,
That rufulliche repenten and restitucion maken,
. . . . . .
Beo vnkynde to thyn emcrystene and al that thow canst bidde,
Dele and do penaunce day and nyght euere,
And porchase al the pardoun of Paumpelon and of Rome,
And indulgences ynowe and be ingrat to thy kynde,
The holygost huyreth the nat ne helpeth the, be thow certayn."
(XX.200-01, 216-20)

Having assured Will that even the man who repents *in extremis* can receive God's mercy, the Samaritan speeds away to joust in Jerusalem, and the Dreamer wakes.

The Dreamer's waking condition now corresponds to his condition in the dream world--a fact that will be so for the three brief dreams that end *Piers Plowman*. Just as his rhetorical function has been simplified, so, too, the tension has lessened between the Dreamer as he is in the waking world and as he has become in the dream world. The effect is heightened by the quickly alternating periods of waking and dreaming.

In this waking interval after the fifth dream, Will is clearly in a penitent mood:

Wollewaerd[10] and wetschod wente ich forth after,
As a recheles renke that reccheth nat of sorwe,
And 3eode forth lyke a lorell al my lyf-tyme,
Til ich wax wery of this worlde and wilnede efte to slepe,
And lenede me til lenten and longe tyme ich slepte.
(XXI.1-5)

The wearing of wool against the body, as Skeat observes, is an act of penance,[11] and the lack of attention to bodily comfort is carried out in the fact that Will is also "wetschod." The second line carries strong reminiscence of the better side of Recklessness, who would "take no thought . . . ." Robertson and Huppé, commenting on the B-text, point out the significance of Will's comparison of himself to a "lorell":

> He is called lorel, literally a lost one, because he has not yet found Salvation--that is to come in the Redemption. But he has become weary of the world, and in this weariness lends himself to Lent: his vision is now, as it was when he saw the Tree of Charity, the contemplative vision of true forgetfulness of the world.[12]

So in tune now with the spirit of his dreams, the Dreamer desires to return to them, and for the first time he is able to <u>will</u> himself to sleep. As he falls asleep during Lent, so he "wakens" into the last week of that season, beginning with the procession of Palm Sunday.

Not only is Will in closer harmony with the dream world, but that world itself now becomes temporally continuous with the real world. It is the history of Will's--and our--world that we now watch, and he becomes our link, not just to the fictionalized contemporary world of the poem, but to the real historical past which we share with him.

What the Dreamer now witnesses is a gift that affirms the spiritual growth he has made. Elizabeth Zeeman [Salter]

points out that the directions Piers gave to find St. Truth have been followed, however deviously:

> As confirmation of what he is learning about divine love and truth, he is allowed to witness the Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell; the gates are indeed opened to him, by grace, as he sees Truth bound by charity, Christ willingly sacrificed in love, so that he may gain entry to man's heart. Piers' words:
>
> And if Grace graunte the to go in this wise,
> Thow shalt see in thi-selue Treuthe sitte in thine herte,
> In a cheyne of charyte . . .
>
> prophesy the dreamer's experience in no uncertain manner.[13]

The working out of the scenes in this dream, as many critics have noted, owes much to religious drama. When Faith cries, "'a! filij Dauid!'" (XXI.13) to the "knight" riding by on an ass, Will asks him, "'what al that fare by-mente,/And ho sholde Iusten in Ierusalem?'" (XXI.16-17). Faith replies that it is Jesus, who will joust in Piers' armor--that is, in "humana natura" (XXI.21-22). The dialogue between Faith and the Dreamer constitutes a kind of choric commentary on the action, assuring that the audience (we ourselves) will understand the crucial relationship between the story enacted and the salvation of our souls:

> "Ho shal Iouste with Iesus," quath ich "Iewes, other scrybes?"
> "Nay," quath Faith, "bote the feond and Fals-dom-to-deye.
> Deth seith he wol for-do and a-doun brynge
> Al that lyueth other loketh a londe and a watere.
> Lyf seith that he lyeth and hath leyde hus lyf to wedde,
> That for al that Deth can do with-inne thre dayes,

To walke and fecche fro the feonde Peers frut
the Plouhman,
And legge hit ther hym lyketh and Lucifer bynde,
And forbete and bringe adoun bale and deth for
euere;
O mors, ero mors tua!"
(XXI.26-34)

There follow immediately the dramatic scenes of the trial, the Crucifixion, and the piercing of Christ by Longinus, whose blindness is at once healed. Faith berates the "false Iewes" (XXI.96) and prophesies their loss of land and freedom and their having to turn to usury to live. Will reacts to these scenes in fear and wonder, and he withdraws--directly to the next place of action:

What for fere of this ferly and of the false
Iewes,
Ich drow in that deorknesse to descendit ad inferna,
And ther ich seyh sothliche secundum scripturas,
Out of the west, as it were a wenche, as me thouhte,
Cam walkynge in the way to-helleward hue lokede.
(XXI.115-19)

The debate among the Four Daughters of God concerning whether the Lord who justly damned sinners to hell will rescind that judgment adds to the dramatic as well as the theological tension. We know the answer, of course, but the strong case put forth by Truth and Righteousness makes all the more climactic the overriding mercy to be shown in the Harrowing scene:

"Rauest thou?" quath Ryghtwisnesse "other thou
art ryght dronke!
Leyuest thou that 3on light vnlouke myghte helle,
And saue mannes soule? suster, wene hit neuere!

> At the begynnynge of the worlde god gaf the dom hymselue,
> That Adam and Eue and hus issue alle
> Sholden deye doun-ryht and dwelle in peyne euere,
> Yf thei touchede the treo and of the frut eten.
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . recorde this with treuthe,
> That here peyne is perpetuel no preyere may hem helpe.
> For-thi let hem chewe as thei chose and chide we nat, susteres,
> For hit is a botles bale the byte that thei eten."
> (XXI.194-200, 205-08)

Jesus' command to unlock the gates resounds in hell, as his presence floods the place with light. The first evidence of his success is given by Satan:

> "Suche a light a-3eyns our leue Lazar hit fette;
> Colde care and combraunce is come to ous alle."
> (XXI.277-78)

Now the full power of God's mercy, so often referred to in the poem, is revealed in action. The devils are rendered absurd in their efforts to block every chink and louver so the light may not penetrate. Lucifer's claim that he has a right to these souls (XXI.301) is refuted by Satan:

> "For thow gete hem with gyle and hus gardyn breke,
> A-geyn hus loue and hus leue on hus londe 3eodest,
> Nat in forme of a feonde bote in forme of an addre,
> And entisedest Eue to ete by heore on,
> Ve soli!"
> (XXI.315-18)

The extent of the despair now rampant among the fiends causes them to turn against their leader, Lucifer, who deceived them, as he did Eve, with lies:

"For thi lesynges, Lucifer we loste furst our Ioye,
And out of heuene hider thi prude made ous falle;
For we leyuede on thy lesinges ther losten we
oure blysse.
And now, for a later lesynge that thow lowe tyl
Eue,
We han lost oure lordshep a londe and in helle;
Nunc princeps huius mundi eicietur foras."
(XXI.348-52)

Between this speech and the magnificent oratory of Christ there is now, for the first time since the second dream and for the last time in the poem, a direct comment from narrator to reader. Satan's rebuke to Lucifer for his lying is an indication that the Lord, too, finally rebukes all liars:

Beo yware, 3e wise clerkes and wytty men of lawe,
That 3e be-lei3e nat these lewed men for atte
laste Dauid
Witnesseth in hus wrytynge what is lyeres mede;
Odisti omnes qui operantur iniquitatem, et
perdes omnes qui loquntur mendacium.
A lytel ich ouer-lep for lesynges sake,
That ich ne segge as ich seih suynge my teme!--
(XXI.357-61)

This interruption is not digressive, for those learned men, clerical or secular, who deceive the "lewd" are the servants of Antichrist, whose battle with the Church we will see shortly. It is thematically appropriate for the narrator to say what he does. Nevertheless, his little lecture is highly disruptive of the dramatic effect of this very powerful scene, and the meaning of the scene has been made quite clear without the narrator's comment. Since the passage is not in the B-text, we may take it to be the

result in C of the narrator's uncontrollable exuberance, perhaps brought on by the recognition of the high quality of what he has wrought. The best we can do is accept his apology.

After the triumphant procession of souls from hell, the scene (and the dream) ends with the rejoicing of all--with angels harping, Peace piping, and Peace and Righteousness kissing in reconciliation. The Dreamer's waking state is now in full harmony with that in the dream, and his two worlds blend into one on Easter morning:

> Treuthe trompede tho, and song "Te deum laudamus;"
> And then lutede Loue in a lowd note,
> "Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum est habitare fratres in unum!"
> Tyl the day dawede these damseles daunsede,
> That men rang to the resurreccioun and with that ich awakede,
> And kallyd Kytte my wyf and Kalote my doughter,
> "A-rys, and go reuerence godes resurreccioun,
> And creop on kneos to the croys and cusse hit for a Iuwel,
> And ryghtfullokest a relyk non riccher on erthe
> For godes blesside body hit bar for oure bote,
> And hit a-fereth the feonde for such is the myghte,
> May no grysliche gost glyde ther hit shadeweth!"
> (XXI.469-79)

Will is aware of the significance of his most recent vision; before he goes to Easter mass, he writes what he has dreamed. We know from the biographical passage in Passus Six that he has been in the past a writer of moral polemics or satires against the corruptions of his time; we now see him turning his talent to the more positive aspects of what is, essentially, another side of the same subject. Will at

this stage of the poem is close in sensibility to the narrator he is to become--he perceives and communicates both gloom and glory.

Falling asleep during the Easter mass, Will finds himself at the first Whitsuntide:

> Ich fel eft-sones a-slepe and sodeynliche me mette,
> That Peers the Plouhman was peynted al blody,
> And cam yn with a croys by-fore the comune peuple,
> And ryght like in alle lymes to oure lord Iusu;
> And thenne calde ich Conscience to kenne me the sothe.
> "Is this Iesus the Iouster?" quath ich "that Iuwes duden to dethe,
> Other is hit Peers Plouhman? ho peynted hym so rede?"
> Quath Conscience, and kneolede tho "these aren Cristes armes,
> Hus colours and hus cote-armure and he that cometh so blody,
> Hit is Christ with his crois conquerour of Crystine."
> (XXII.5-14)

The Dreamer's confusion of Piers and Christ, followed by Grace's (the Holy Ghost's) ordination of Piers/Peter as the first pope, indicates the ideal unity of the Kingdom of God in heaven and the Kingdom of God on earth:

> Thus Conscience of Crist and of the croys carpede,
> And consailede me to kneole ther-to and thenne cam, me thouhte,
> On spiritus paraclitus to Peers and to hus felawes,
> In liknesse of a lyghtnynge a-lyghte on hem alle,
> And made hem conne and knowe alle kynne languages.
> . . . . . .
> And Grace gaf hym the croys with the corone of thornes,
> That Crist vp-on Caluarie for mankynde on peynede;
> And of hus baptisme and blod that he bledde on rode
> He made a maner morter and Mercy hit hihte.

> And ther-with Grace by-gan to make a good foundement,
> And watelide hit and wallyde hit with hus peynes
> and hus passion,
> And of alle holy writt he made a roof after,
> And cald that hous Vnite holychurche in English.
> (XXII.199-203, 323-330)

The ideal society is established on the foundation of Christ's sacrifice and triumph. Conscience is king, and the Holy Ghost distributes to men all the various occupational talents they will need--preaching, teaching, tilling the land, buying and selling, and so on. Piers is given a plow teamed with four oxen (the Evangelists) and seeds representing the cardinal virtues. But Langland's strong sense of things as they are causes him to bring us immediately back into the present with all of its corruption and strife. The ideal has been shown as it was established for one brief moment in history. From that moment, it has been under attack by the forces of Antichrist:

> Now is Peeres to the plouh; Pruyde hit aspide,
> And gadered hym a gret ost greuen he thenketh
> Conscience, and alle Cristene and cardinale uertues,
> To blowen hem doun and breken hem and bite a-two
> the rotes;
> (XXII.337-40)

The burden from here on is on Conscience. Frank observes that he is the most important character in Dobest (XXII and XXIII): "Conscience . . . is the human faculty which enables man to retain, or more important, to regain grace. He enables man to avoid evil, and to repent truly when he has sinned."[14] It is Conscience who calls all the

Christians into Unity, bidding them to repent for their sins. Tears flow freely, and Conscience is about to offer them the sacrament, in full confidence that Pride's attack can be withstood. We are back on the field, however, and just as many balked at the difficult pilgrimage to Truth and the hard labor in Piers' half-acre, so now the command to make restitution proves too much for the weak souls who prefer profit and an easy life:

> "Ich care nat," quath Conscience "thauh Pruyde come nouthe,
> The lord of lust shal beo lett al this lente, ich hope.
> . . . . . .
> Her is bred yblessid and godes body ther-vnder.
> Grace gaf thorw godes worde to Peers Plouhman power
> And myghte to maken hit and men for to eten hit,
> In help of here hele ones in a monthe,
> Other as ofte as thei hadde neode thei that hadden payed
> To Peers pardon the Plouhman redde quod debes."
> . . . . . .
> "3e, bawe!" quath a brewere "ich wol nat beo rueled,
> By Iesu! for al 3oure iangelynge after spiritus iusticie,
> Ne after Conscience, by Crist for ich couthe selle
> Bothe dregges and draf and drawe at one hole
> Thicke ale and thynne ale and that is my kynde,
> And not to hacke after holynesse; hold thy tonge, Conscience!
> Of spiritus iusticie thow spekest muche an ydel!"
> (XXII.383-84, 387-92, 398-404)

Not only the lay folk, but the highest members of Church and state are stewed in corruption. A "lewd" vicar attests to the fact that the cardinals of the pope (the vicar being unfamiliar with the cardinal virtues) go about in furred robes, riding around the country and whoring as they go; a

lord boasts that he accepts without question the accounts of his auditor (who extorts money from the tenants);[15] a king claims he may take what he wishes, for he is the "hefd of lawe" and "a-boue alle" (XXII.471, 472).

Conscience's answer to the king resembles his guidance of the king of the Visio--the king may have what the law permits if he rules the realm in reason. But there is no response to the three lines that Conscience speaks, and the dream that began with the descent of the Paraclete on Peter and the apostles, and with the founding of Holy Church, fizzles out:

> The vicory hadde fer hom and faire tok hus leue,
> And ich a-wakede ther-with and wrot as me mette.
> (XXII.482-83)

The effect of this radical change of tone shows in Will's mood. Early in this dream, he had joined in the reverent hymn-sing at the moment of the ordination of Piers:

> Kneole now," quath Conscience "and yf thow conne synge,
> Welcome hym and worshupe hym with 'veni, creator spiritus.'"
> And ich sang that song tho and so dude meny hondred,
> And cryden with Conscience "help ous, god of grace!"
> (XXII.209-12)

From that moment, it has been a downhill slide. Will, now awake, goes about "Heuy-chered" and "elynge in heorte," not knowing "wher to ete ne in what place" (XXIII.2,3). His

conversation with Need recalls his earlier conversation with Reason and Conscience, who had scolded him for begging. Need scolds him for not taking what he requires to live. There are among critics two antithetical points of view regarding need. The first is that Need is right to scold Will, since orthodox teaching supported the position that men in extreme need could take what was necessary to survive. Goodridge says:

> The king of the last Book was wrong in claiming to be entirely above the law; but Will, who is in real, physical need, goes to the other extreme--he is overscrupulous and immoderately self-denying. His discussion with Need represents his own self-questioning about this point. He now has nothing worse to reproach himself with than that he is too meek, and unwilling to beg for his food--a trivial fault compared with the presumption and despair which he gave way to earlier.[16]

Similarly, Bloomfield states that "need is the determinant of superfluity, the crucial issue in man's humanity to man," and it is therefore appropriate for Need to appear to Will and reproach him "for having doubts about poverty and for not completely trusting in God."[17]

The first of these quotations does not take several things into account. The king was wrong to place himself outside the law, and Will's circumstances are certainly different from the king's; but Need does <u>not</u> point out this difference to Will--he cites the king as a positive example to be followed:

> "Couthest thou nat excuse the," he seide "as dude
> the kyng and othere,
> That thou toke to lyue by to sustinaunce and
> clothes,
> As by techynge and tellynge of spiritus temperancie,
> And that thow nome no more than Neode the tauhte?
> Neode hath no lawe . . . .
> (XXIII.6-10)

Secondly, Need is not urging Will to beg only, but to steal. The latter is the more serious offense, and the former has been condemned throughout the poem, both in general and with particular reference to Will.

Need's appeal to the virtue of temperance is sophistical, for he rejects both Conscience and the cardinal virtues, then chooses the one virtue which will make stealing "reasonable":

> "So Neode at grete neode may nyme as for hus owene,
> With-oute consail of Conscience or cardinal uer-
> tues,
> So that he suwe and saue spiritus temperancie."
> (XXIII.20-23)

This is no time to be undermining Conscience.

It is difficult to see, too, how Bloomfield's statement holds, even on a factual level. The Dreamer is not "having doubts about [the value of?] poverty"; indeed, he is evidently doing nothing to cure his(except to be very humanly unhappy about it), and it is this fact that prompts Need to speak. Need is, as Goodridge suggests, a function of Will's own inner struggle, but he is much more like the voice of temptation calling for the overthrow of Conscience

than the voice of common sense or "mesure." To be "completely trusting in God" is, as Bloomfield says, one of the issues in this discussion. To show such trust implies the doctrine of ne solliciti sitis, not the idea of taking from others what one fears God will not provide.

Finally, R. W. Frank points out that Christ's being "willfully needy" was a favorite argument of the friars with respect to their theoretical poverty.[18] In citing Christ as an example, Need rightly claims that need is an honorable condition, but he ignores the fact that Christ did not beg or steal to eradicate his need--he endured it:

> "He was so neody, seith the bok in meny sondry places,
> That he seide in hus sorwe on the selue rode,[19]
> 'Bothe fox and fowel may fleo to hole and crepe,
> And the fisshe hath fynnes to flete with to reste,
> Ther Neode hath ynome me so that ich mot neode abyde,
> And suffre sorwes soure that shal to ioye turne.'
> For-thi beo nat a-basshed to bydde and to beo neody,
> Sithe he that wrouhte al the worlde was wilfulliche neody;
> Neuere non so neody ne non so poure deyede."
> When Neode hadde vnder-nome me thus a-non ich fel a-sleope,
> (XXIII.42-51)

Will's response--to fall asleep--seems to be the clearest repudiation of Need's arguments.

The last great scene in the poem returns us to the field of the Visio--but with a difference.

> Antecrist cam thenne and al the crop of treuthe
> Turned tyte vp-so-doun and ouer-tilte the rote,

> And made fals to springe and sprede and spede
> menne neodes;
> In eche contreie ther he cam he cutte away treuthe,
> And gert gyle growe ther as he a god were.
> (XXIII.53-57)

In the second vision of the Visio, says R. W. Frank, the world shown

> is as real and as contemporary as the field of folk with which the poem opened. Now, however, the world is no longer portrayed as by an observer ignorant of the true meaning of what he sees, reporting only the appearance of things, the noisy coming and going of a confused crowd. Now the world is viewed by one who has witnessed and understood God's scheme of salvation for mankind, and who sees the field of folk as in fact a vast battleground for the souls of men.[20]

Will, appropriately, is included among the participants. He is, as Bloonfield puts it, one of the "saintly fools" who do not welcome Antichrist.[21] Indeed, he accepts his physical decline and approaching death with extraordinary aplomb. He is a little crabby about it, but that is hardly to be condemned. In fact, what he is humorously concerned about is Elde's bad manners:

> And Elde hastede after hym [Lyf] and ouer my hefde
> 3eode,
> And made me balled by-fore and bar on the croune;
> So harde he 3eode ouer myn hefde hit wol be sene
> euere.
> "Syre vuel-ytauht Elde," quath ich "vnhende go
> with the!
> Suththe whanne was the hey wey ouer menne hefdes?
> Haddest thow be hende," quath ich "thow woldest
> haue asked leue!"
> (XXIII.183-88)

The fear of imminent death is enough, however, to make Will seek immediate advice from Kynde, who has been aiding Conscience by striking men with natural catastrophes and diseases. The advice Kynde gives the Dreamer is familiar:

> "Yf thow wolt beo awreke wende in-to Unite,
> And hold the thare euere til ich sende for the,
> And loke thou conne som craft er thou come thennes."
> "Consaileth me, Kynde," quath ich "what crafte be best to leere?"
> "Lerne to loue," quath Kynde "and lef alle other thynges."
> "Hou shal ich come to catel so to clothe me and to feode?"
> "And thow loue leelliche lacke shal the neuere
> Wede ne worldlich mete while thy lyf lasteth."
> (XXIII.204-11)

Here, in brief summary, is the final advice for the individual Christian. Live within the bosom of the Church, and forego all concerns except love. Need's arguments are emphatically refuted by Kynde's assurance that he who lives in "leel" love will never lack for bodily sustenance.

The last we see of Will is his performance of the sacrament which will cleanse his soul:

> And ich thorgh consail of Kynde comsede to rome
> Thorgh Contricion and Confession til ich cam to Unite;
> And ther was Conscience constable Crystine to saue.
> (XXIII.212-14)

Will has not won the final battle. He is still his fallible self and has the rest of his life to live. "That the dreamer has not won his salvation is no more than saying that no man can be absolutely certain about his salvation. Certainty

comes only after death. But the dreamer has discovered the way."[22]

The last focus of the poem is not on Will per se, then, but on the world and the Church in which he--and the audience--must live. The worst danger comes from those within the Church who subvert her purposes. Such is the friar who resembles his brothers whom we met earlier in the poem:

> He goth and gropeth Contrition and gaf hym a plastre
> Of "a pryue payement and ich shal preye for 3ow,
> And for hem that 3e aren holden to al my lyf-tyme,
> And make 3ow, my lady in masse and in matynes,
> As freres of oure fraternite for a litel seluer."
> Thus he goth and gadereth and gloseth ther he shryueth,
>
> (XXIII.363-68)

Lady Meed and her friends are still with us, and Conscience must continue his search for Piers Plowman. What happens next is in the future--Will's and ours. When the Dreamer wakens this time, there is no need for Langland to describe for us the world he wakes into; he already has.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1]In his Parallel Texts, Skeat calls the second part of the third dream the fifth vision. See my appendix for discussion of this problem and for a parallel listing of my numbering and Skeat's.

[2]Piers Plowman, York Medieval Texts (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 132.

[3]The C-text gives even more weight to the theme of patience than B, where the contents of Piers' speech is shared by Conscience and Patience, and Piers himself makes no appearance.

[4]An apt phrase used by Piers when he decides, in anger at the priest who impugns the pardon, to turn more of his attention to prayers and penance and less to earning earthly bread (B.VII.118). The episode is excised from the C-text.

[5]"The Significance of Haukyn, Activa Vita, in Piers Plowman," RES, XXV (1949), 97-109 as reprinted in Blanch, p. 196.

[6]The B-text begins the first passus of Dobet here (XVI), preceded by the Prologue to Dobet (XVII), which contains Will's long conversation with Anima. While Skeat's C-text labels this present passus as the second of Dobet, this division is characteristic only of the "p"-group of MSS. The "i"-group calls this passus (XIX) "Passus primus de dobet" (e.g., HM MS 143, f. 78b). While the titles and colophons are not necessarily reliable guides to the poem's structural divisions, the title here does coincide with the thematic change at this point.

[7]"Piers Plowman": The C-Text and Its Poet, p. 190.

[8]The Realism of Dream Visions: The Poetic Exploitation of the Dreamer-Experiences in Chaucer and His Contemporaries (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967), p. 94.

[9]I have deliberately avoided reference to mysticism thus far, because undue emphasis has been placed by some critics on the Dreamer's progress in relation to various mystical schema. Will does not undergo a steady discipline that leads him from purgation to illumination to union with God. Even when he is fairly well in tune with the spiritual matter at hand--as in the scene with Liberum-Arbitrium, for example--he is in occasional need of a reminder to restrain his intellectual pride. This brief vision in which he sees

the life of Christ may be a special gift of grace, not as such a gift is granted to the genuine mystic, but as it is offered to a Christian with no extraordinary spiritual qualifications except dogged, if often inept, determination.

[10]From the Huntington MS HM 143(X). Skeat's Parallel Texts has "Wo-werie," but X has support from MSS IFT. "Wolleward" is also the B-text reading. The other C-text variants are "wellenward" (M) and "Wollewerie" (G).

[11]Parallel Texts, II, 247.

[12]"Piers Plowman" and Scriptural Tradition, p. 212.

[13]"Piers Plowman and the Pilgrimage to Truth," Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, N. S., XI (1958), 1-16, as reprinted in Blanch, p. 125.

[14]"Piers Plowman" and the Scheme of Salvation, p. 101.

[15]As explained in a note in Goodridge, Piers the Ploughman, p. 312.

[16]Ibid., p. 313.

[17]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, p. 135.

[18]"Piers Plowman" and the Scheme of Salvation, p. 113.

[19]Need's error regarding the words on the cross may be evidence of a satirical thrust at him.

[20]"Piers Plowman" and the Scheme of Salvation, p. 96.

[21]"Piers Plowman" as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse, p. 143.

[22]J. V. Holleran, "The Role of the Dreamer in Piers Plowman," p. 50.

CONCLUSION

> In the end, the poem will have entirely missed the mark unless we, with the Dreamer, are forced, in the words of a modern allegorist, "not to propound but to live through, a sort of ontological proof."[1]

By a skillful interplay of rhetorical devices, Langland succeeds in involving his reader at every stage of Piers Plowman. The narrator, the personifications, the Dreamer, and the literary microcosm itself are in fluid relationship to the reader--now sharing his world, now distant from it. The pattern of increasing reader involvement is articulated not by any one of these variables, but by the complex interaction of all. The narrator's chief task is to present his dream experiences in such a way that the reader will make application of their truths to himself. The direct method is the most certain to attract the attention of even the dullest reader, and hence in the initial scenes of the poem the narrator speaks directly to his audience, cajoling and scolding and interpreting for him. Once the reader has become engaged with the substance of the poem, the narrator abandons his direct address and leaves the reader to the more sophisticated devices of the personifications and the Dreamer.

The personifications are in most constant touch with the reader, but the nature of this contact varies. The most prevalent type of personification throughout Piers Plowman is the representation of a universal quality or entity which cuts across the distinction between fiction and real life. The Holy Church who lives in Will's world is the same Holy Church who lives in the reader's, and she therefore speaks to both simultaneously. Those personifications which are time-bound (e.g., Spes) or are immediately referent to Will only (e.g., Imaginative) relate to the reader by the fact that they are specific representatives of universal qualities.

The more limited personifications are concentrated in the third dream, and this pattern is coincident with the development of the Dreamer's rhetorical functions. In the beginning of the poem Will is a shadowy figure whose spiritual inclinations are rather suspect. When he does become involved with the crucial question of salvation, his role as an Everyman is established in the communal context of the field of folk and in the specialized form of his representation of the human will.

In the third dream the Dreamer as individual takes precedence. In accordance with the thematic recognition that salvation begins with the right-heartedness of the single soul, the reader is confronted with a situation in which the personifications are fallible, the narrator is

silent, and the Dreamer is confused by his intellectual meanderings. Only when his pride has been subdued and his whole person--not just his intellect--has become engaged in the quest does his role as an Everyman become consistent and predominant.

In the larger sense, the Dreamer is throughout the poem a representative of the average Christian. Within that framework, however, the predominance of that role varies. His initial questions about salvation are of common interest, but the answers at first do not cut very deep. After the third dream, however, when Will finally trembles in doubt whether he is "chose other nat chose," he becomes our most trustworthy guide in the poem--not because of what he can tell us directly, but because of his proper focus on the essential spiritual issues.

The nature of the Dreamer in the waking periods is another example of his growing engagement with spiritual concerns. At first Will is a highly particularized character in these intervals; he is aimless and rather contemptuous of mankind. Beginning with his encounter with Reason and Conscience in the waking period after the first dream, however, he begins to see the personal implications of his dream experience for his "real" self. In each succeeding interval his eagerness to continue his visions increases and the impact of the dream experience on his waking life becomes more intense and immediate. By the end of Piers Plowman his two worlds have in effect become one.

This touching of dream and waking worlds in the Dreamer's experience finds its parallel in the merger of the fictional microcosm and the macrocosm of the reader. Just as the truths of his dream impinge upon Will, the truths of the poem impinge upon us. The fact that the Dreamer's progress is never fixed at any stage, that relapse into his old ways is always a threat, and that the question of his salvation is, necessarily, unfinished business are the same facts with which the reader himself is confronted.

Langland's skill in handling these difficult rhetorical methods has been for the most part overlooked or underplayed. That he occasionally misses the mark is to be admitted, but it is also to be recognized as almost inevitable in a work whose complexity is so vast along other axes, such as theme. That he chose such a fluid form is indicative of a keen artistic awareness that the subject of a work of art is partly defined by the manner in which it is presented to the audience. The aesthetic assumption implied by the free movement between life in the poem and life in the real world is that the two are inextricably united. We respond to and learn from the work of art not only because in its separateness from us it provides an analogue for our experience, but also because its order of truth is ours.

NOTE TO CONCLUSION

[1]John Lawlor, "Piers Plowman": An Essay in Criticism, p. 236, citing C. S. Lewis, The Pilgrim's Regress (London, 1943), p. 10.

APPENDIX

THE NUMBERING OF VISIONS IN THE C-TEXT

There has been confusing variation from critic to critic in the numbering of the dreams in Piers Plowman. My own system follows two principles suggested by R. W. Frank, Jr. in his article, "The Number of Visions in Piers Plowman" (MLN, LXVI [1951], 309-12). First, an inner vision is numbered separately from its enveloping vision; second, the outer dream section which follows the end of an inner vision is not counted as a new dream, but as the remainder of the dream in which the inner vision occurs.

Skeat does not follow the second of these principles. He also considers a new dream to begin at XVII.158 ("Thenne hadde Actyf a ledere that heyhte Liberum-arbitrium"). In the corresponding passage of the B-text there is a waking interval (B.XVI) followed by another dream, but in C the two visions of B have been merged, and the waking interval has been omitted. Further, Skeat fails to note the second inner vision in B and the facts that: 1) the C-text omits the dream, and 2) it later erroneously indicates the Dreamer has wakened from it. Both of these changes in C are discussed in my fourth chapter.

For the reader's convenience, the correspondence between my numbering and Skeat's follows:

Thesis	Skeat
Dream One	Dream One
I.9-V.96	same
Dream Two	Dream Two
VI.110-X.293	same
Dream Three	Dream Three
XI.67-XV.217	XI.67-XII.167
Dream Four (Inner Vision)	Dream Four (Inner Vision)
XII.167-XIV.216	same
	Dream Five
	XIV.220-XV.217
Dream Five	Dream Six
XVI.26-XX.332	XVI.26-XVII.157
	Dream Seven
	XVII.158-XIX.180
	Dream Eight
	XIX.183-XX.332
Dream Six	Dream Nine
XXI.6-479	same
Dream Seven	Dream Ten
XXII.5-483	same
Dream Eight	Dream Eleven
XXIII.52-386	same

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