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City University of New York PH.D. 1985

THE UNWRITTEN DISPOSITIO: PRINCIPLES OF ORDER AND THE STRUCTURES OF LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

SYLVIA TOMASCH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1985

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

21 February 1985
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Abstract

THE UNWRITTEN DISPOSITIO:
PRINCIPLES OF ORDER AND THE
STRUCTURES OF LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

Sylvia Tomasch

Advisor: Professor Robert O. Payne

The principles of order fundamental to medieval culture are demonstrated also in the structures of literary texts. These organizing ideas, unmentioned in discussions of disposition in rhetorical treatises, are evident upon analysis of representative works. For most public oral and written productions, such as letters or sermons, there existed traditional and thoroughly worked-out rules for organization, but for imaginative literature there were none. It is in this latter case that dispositio remained unwritten.

Examination of a variety of late Middle English literary works leads to the conclusion that certain techniques for structuring poems did indeed recur. "Rondel 57" of Charles of Orleans uses the simplest type of disposition, substitution. The replacement of one mode of discourse with another shifts the reader's attention between invented worlds. Although confession and lyric initially seem to make opposing claims on the audience, this type of disposition ultimately produces

a synthesis of contrasting views. The Chester Mystery Cycle employs the second type of disposition. Incorporation works to separate particular plays by enclosing them in individual frames while serving to unify the plays by encompassing them within a grand, inclusive framework. The alternation of perspective promotes a dual role for the audience, who must actively participate in the creation of fictions while maintaining and furthering a belief in ultimate religious truths.

Troilus and Criseyde uses the third type of disposition. Related to incorporation but enclosing many smaller units of inserted discourse, interpolation utilizes familiar forms, such as letters, to help establish character, carry action, supply motivation, provide forums for the narrator's arguments concerning the contrasting truths of history and story, and structure the poem. Synthesis here depends upon awareness of Chaucer's method and participation in his creation. Pearl employs the most complex type of disposition. Variation, especially as punning wordplay, ensures that all aspects of the narrative cohere in an actual demonstration of the lesson of the poem, that everything in the cosmos, including language, is connected. Readers using this mode of disposition are compelled toward the final synthesis, an identification of the literary with the real.

Acknowledgements

There are many people to whom I owe debts I can never repay. Without them I would not have found the path through the thickets of graduate study, and this dissertation would not have been written. First among all to whom I am indebted are my teachers, especially those who read these chapters. I wish to thank Pamela Sheingorn for clarifying the connections between art and drama in the Middle Ages, and Frederick Goldin for his cheerful willingness to share a remarkable knowledge of medieval literature and for reading this work, on short notice, with care and encouraging words. A large measure of my gratitude goes to Martin Stevens for his constant support and practical advice, his continual calling-back to earth my more fanciful speculations, and his insistence that the form of this dissertation, like its subject, reflect a concern for order. Above all, I owe my first reader more than I can say. The only suitable words are those in Chaucer's phrase of highest praise: "gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche." I am indebted to Robert O. Payne for sharing his learning and his teaching with me.

I wish also to express my grateful obligation to my friends and colleagues, especially the members of the Medieval Seminar. Without their help I know I would not

have made it through. Thanks are due to Diane Marks, Sheila Rabin and Deborah Sinnreich for the high standards they set in their persons and their work. To Gale Sigal for many occasions of concern and cheerful assistance. To Rita Nanes for typing beyond the call of duty. To David Adams for his questions and suggestions. To Ruth Newman for a listening ear. To Bill McClellan for long talks and thoughtful advice. To Sealy Gilles for getting me into all of this and for helping me out. To Anneke Prins for sharing and caring. To Anne Simpson for being a friend.

Lastly, I wish to thank my family for everything I have learned from them, for all they have so freely given. To my aunt, Lil Kaunos, for generously lending me the private place I needed to complete this work. To my grandmother, Sarah Wolfson, for setting an example I can only try to emulate: a life long in involvement and discovery. To my mother, Sadie Tomasch, for her unique combination of determination and tenderness. To my father, Morris Tomasch, for his strength of character and inquiring mind. To my niece, Sari Yanishefsky, for allowing me to grow up with her and share a most generous heart.

It would take the space of another dissertation to begin to describe all I owe my husband, Bruce Vanacour. Most inadequately I thank him for all his loving all these many years.

"It is not easy to analyze the strength of the structural bond which holds rhetoric together; the listener can hardly ever recognize it, and it is certainly not easy to describe."

- Boethius, Speculatio de cognatione rhetorica

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Chapter 1

Principles of Order and the Disposition of Literary Texts

The question with which the dissertation is concerned is, simply, this: what are some common ways by which late Middle English poets organized their poems? This question of *dispositio* is not easily answered, for the case of disposition in the Middle Ages was somewhat paradoxical. For most public oral and written products, such as letters or sermons, there existed traditional and thoroughly worked-out rules for organization. But for imaginative literature there were none. It is in this latter case that *dispositio* remained unwritten.

Yet examination of a variety of late Middle English literary works leads to the conclusion that certain techniques for structuring a poem did indeed recur. The four types of disposition discussed in the chapters of this dissertation, each illustrated by one representative work, are substitution (Charles of Orleans' "Rondel 57"), incorporation (the *Chester Mystery Cycle*), interpolation (Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*), and variation (*Pearl*). One important component of each type of disposition is the general concern for audience involvement in the creation of the text. In addition, these poems evidence an

understanding of rhetorical arrangement as a realization of universal order, a conception which is particularly medieval.

In this introductory chapter, I trace the idea of order through various rhetorical, exegetical and poetical works of the period, leading to a consideration of the concept of dispositio as it was used in the late Middle Ages. The subsequent discussion of each type of literary disposition leads directly to the substantive chapters in which the organizing principles underlying the structures of the works are analyzed in detail.

In the Institutio Oratoria, Quintilian makes what is perhaps the definitive statement on the need for order:

> Order is essential to the existence of nature itself, for without order everything would go to wrack and ruin. Similarly if oratory lack this virtue, it cannot fail to be confused, but will be like a ship without a helmsman, will lack cohesion, will fall into countless repetitions and omissions, and, like a traveller who has lost his way in unfamiliar country, will be guided solely by chance without fixed purpose or in the least idea of starting-point or goal. (206)

Nothing could be clearer: order is everything. Yet, how are we to achieve this essential order? One method, which Quintilian follows, is to present the actual arrangement of a form of discourse, in this case, by listing the six parts of an oration: exordium, narration, partition, confirmation, refutation, and peroration. His admonishment for order is thus helpful, accompanied as it is by rules for disposition.

Such advice without concomitant practical prescriptions becomes almost useless; yet this is the situation we encounter in reading the medieval arts of poetry.

Writers of all three medieval arts, poetria, dictaminis, and praedicandi, were careful to include similar cautions in their own treatises. The anonymous Bolognese dictator, author of the 12th-century Rationes dictandi, appends to his definitions of a written composition, a prose composition, and a letter, the warning to proceed "in a continuous and suitable order" (Anonymous of Bologna 6,7). In the fourth part of his short manual, he goes on to list the standard parts of a letter: salutation, securing of good-will, narration, petition, and conclusion (7). Summing up the need for these five parts, he states: "For truly, every letter must be arranged within the approved format as it is said above, or in accordance with circumstances" (25). His stance is thus rigorous but not rigid. The possibility of situational variations is acknowledged but the necessity for order, seen in literary form, is stressed.

So too, Robert of Basevorn, in his 14th-century treatise, Forma praedicandi, emphasizes order in his prologue when he discusses the four Aristotelian causes. Of the fourth cause, the formal, he writes: "A thing is formally transmitted and taught when a continuation carries through in an orderly way what the beginning of the work promises or proffers for

investigation, and what the end brings to a conclusion" (116). Robert stresses that "one who deals with the divine word -- yes, with any orderly treatise -- should make sure that in discussing a subject he has an organized method of procedure" (116). His procedure is to devote the bulk of his treatises (36 out of 50 chapters) to the 22 ways of ornamenting a sermon. These range from invention of theme and winning of audience through division and statement of parts to amplification and voice modulation. These categories are not strictly comparable, yet his intention is evident throughout. Proper order is uppermost, and rightly so, for it derives ultimately not from some mere manmade system of organization but from the will of God:

> Just as thosetwo rivers, Phison and Tigris, fill their beds in an orderly way, so does God do in the case of those who deal with his wisdom, pouring into them the grace and wisdom, or the knowledge of proceeding in an orderly and formal way, that thus by the opening of His hand all things may be filled with an agreeable goodness. (117)

Just as one justification of preaching is the imitation of the words and actions of Christ on earth, so too one philosophical rationale underlying this emphasis on order in a literary work is the imitation of the greater order, the perfection of the universe. The art, here the verbal art, of the Middle Ages was predicated on conceptions of a universe intrinsically alien to the one in which we live today. Their cosmos was orderly, and the works of men and

women reflected that cosmic, natural, created order. Human imitation of divine order, therefore, involves discovery and adaptation rather than complete fabrication. Neither invention nor disposition, nor any of the parts of rhetoric, proceeds out of whole cloth.

The first step in writing a letter, for example, is determination of decorum of address: what is the relationship between sender and receiver? From this all follows -- mode of greeting, proper wording, even case endings. Alberic of Monte Cassino writes in his Flores rhetorici (c. 1087):

> First we must consider the identity of the sender and the person to whom the letter is sent: we must consider whether he is noble or common in rank, a friend or an enemy, and then what kind of person he is and of what background. The next consideration is the thing dealt with: is it a just or unjust matter, and is it serious or minor? Next the writer should ask himself what attitudes he wishes to project: proud or humble, harsh or forgiving, threatening, flattering, stern or that of a trusted friend. When you have examined the person, the topic and the goal, then you must weigh each according to its importance. (138)

The author of the Rationes dictandi also reiterates the need for careful consideration of the persons involved in the transaction. This is not merely a matter of altering one's tone or word-choice according to age or

education of recipient (though Alberic does consider these aspects in detail), but of a more basic kind of decorum, a judgment of station and relationship: "Among all people, some are outstanding; others are inferior, and still others just in between" (Anonymous of Bologna 9). In other words, what is the placement of each within the human, hierarchical universe? First one discovers the order which already exists; then one can proceed with a work which both illuminates that order and uses it for the author's own purposes:

> ... if you seriously analyze your theme at the very beginning, the words will follow after -- not words which are badly chosen or silly, but words which will flow most fittingly as from a pure and lovely fountain. After all, what can I call a well-planned story but a sort of beautiful fountain from which there flows like a living stream the vibrant richness of the thought? (Alberic 136)

Geoffrey of Vinsauf speaks of order in a similar fashion in his Poetria nova. Following the well-known image of the domus construenda with which he opens his introduction, Geoffrey emphasizes the need for a completely thought-out plan before the actual work, whether a house or a poem, is begun: "Let the mind's inner compass circumscribe the whole area of the subject matter in advance. Let a definite plan predetermine the area in which the pen will make its

way or where it will fix its Gibralter" (34). He makes clear also the connection between all the parts of literary rhetoric: "When a plan has sorted out the subject in the secret places of your mind, then let Poetry come to clothe your material with words" (35). Indeed, there is no aspect of a work which is untouched by the idea of order; it is necessary to the plan of work, and it is just as essential to the actual verbal execution. Geoffrey's plan for his own treatise, which he gives at the end of the introduction, serves as a model for practicing poets to use in their own compositions:

> Since the ensuing discussion takes its own course from a plan, of primary importance is, from what boundary line the plan ought to run; the next concern, how to balance several weights against one another in the scale, if the sententia is to weigh out correctly; the third task, to insure that the herd of words is not wild but domesticated; the final labor, to see that a voice managed discreetly may enter the ears of the hearer and feed his hearing, being seasoned with matched spices of facial expression and gesture. (35)

Geoffrey here outlines his revision of Cicero's five parts of rhetoric. Instead of invention, disposition, elocution, memory, and delivery, Geoffrey's four tasks consist of establishing a boundary line (invention), balancing of parts (disposition), taming words (elocution), and, together, managing voice and gesture (delivery). As actually presented in the course of the treatise, however, Geoffrey's discussion

comprises arrangement (on the beginning of a work), amplification and abbreviation (on the whole structure), style (on diction and syntax), and, very briefly, memory and delivery. The first two of Cicero's five parts of rhetoric have become inextricably intermixed. Invention and disposition are no longer distinguishable except in the most mechanical way, as part of the tradition of rhetorical authority. Order is involved in the choosing and planning of the topic or theme, and order is also involved in the arrangement of the parts of the work which best illuminate that theme. In fact, order underlies every aspect of a work, which must all partake of that order if the work is to be successful. Yet the paradox of medieval order remains; everyone agrees that order is fundamental, but no author of an art of poetry gives precise rules for ordering a poetic work. In this sense, then, dispositio is, finally, lacking.

Geoffrey himself, instead of creating the rules for a real art of poetry comparable to those of the arts of preaching and letter-writing, is content to echo and revise Cicero's divisions even when they are clearly inapplicable. Geoffrey is not writing a rhetorica but rather a poetria, only he does not seem to be able to make the distinction. Nor was he alone in this imprecise differentiation of categories. John of Garland, for example, in the fourth chapter of his encyclopedic Poetria parisiana discusses,

among other topics, the parts of a letter, the parts of an oration, and the parts of a narrative. These sound like parallel topics, but they are not. Concerning the last, although John begins by stating that a narrative has no fixed parts "since [it] takes its shape from the narrator's intention and from the events themselves" (81), he nevertheless goes on to present five parts of comedy and tragedy. Comedy's divisions are based on five traditional characters, husband, wife, adulterer, adulterer's accomplice or critic, and nurse or servant. Clearly, this division is in no way a proper method of arrangement corresponding to those of letters or orations. This confusion of comparable categories is in part, as his editor, Traugott Lawler, says, "one more illustration of John's failure to cope adequately with the problems inherent in his broadened scope" (242), but it is also, and I think more importantly, an illustration of the common medieval failure to work through the whole problem of poetic order.

Both of these medieval rhetoricians fail to grasp the distinction Boethius makes between an art (rhetoric) and the instrument of that art (rhetorical discourse). Geoffrey treats poetry as if it were synonymous with rhetoric, which of course it is not. It is one of the species of rhetoric. Concerning the relationship of rhetoric to oratory, Boethius, in his <u>De topicis differentiis</u>, states:

> Since the parts of rhetoric are parts of a discipline, they are themselves also disciplines. Therefore, they themselves also take a share in the use of the parts of discourse as instruments.... For unless the five aforementioned parts of rhetoric are in exordia, so that the orator discovers, arranges, expresses, memorizes, and delivers, the orator accomplishes nothing. And in the same way, unless all the remaining parts of the instrument have all the parts of rhetoric, they are futile. (83)

Neither Geoffrey nor John is able to maintain the necessary distinction in speaking of poetry, yet they both, in their separate ways, seem to have grasped the central idea behind Boethius' statement: the art of rhetoric must work as a whole, and so must its specific instrument of discourse. John thus attempts a synoptic survey of all the species of medieval rhetoric, while Geoffrey offers a unified theory of specifically poetical rhetoric in which all the parts of a work, just like all the parts of rhetoric, operate together. As he says, "All combine: apt invention, fluent speech, sophisticated construction, steadfast memory" (106). No poem is complete without all of these. In this way, all poems are the same, yet in their own special ways, all poems are different: "Reason does not vary the other [rules of art], but, whether a poem is straitened by the laws of meter or unbound from its law, art is always the same -- although what is decided by art is not always the same" (100). In other words, the individual manifestations of

universal principles will differ even as those principles are eternal and unchanging. Men and works come and go, but order remains.

Order is expressed in literary works through the rhetorical arrangement of the parts of the text. This is dispositio. When he first comes to write about this second of the five parts of rhetoric, John of Garland does not use this term; his focus is much narrower. He entitles his chapter "De arte inchoandi." About this "art of beginning," John says, "The next subject after Invention and Selection of subject matter is how to begin and arrange it" (52; my emphasis). To restrict dispositio solely to beginnings, as some modern scholars would have it, is to limit the concept unnecessarily. In this statement, John implies that beginnings are intrinsically (and intricately) joined to middles and ends, that is, to the whole of the work, poetic or otherwise. For dispositio is the actual expression of the larger concept of order which we have been discussing. Quintilian connects the two when he states that "order is the correct disposition of things in such a way that what follows coheres with what precedes, while arrangement is the distribution of things and parts to the places which it is expedient that they should occupy" (207). Order is thus the primary conception which arrangement must logically follow, but Quintilian stresses that because "arrangement is generally dependent on expediency,... the same question will not always

be discussed first by both parties" (207). Like Quintilian, Geoffrey of Vinsauf understands and even promotes expediency. Concerning dispositio he writes:

> Arrangements' [sic] road is forked: on the one hand, it may labor up the footpath of art; on the other, it may follow nature's main street. The line of nature's avenue governs when the action and the words follow the same course and the discourse does not deviate from the natural order of events. The work proceeds along the footpath of art, on the other hand, if, as being more suitable, the plan places ensuing things first, or draws to the rear things intrinsically prior. (36; my emphasis).

When Geoffrey says "as being more suitable," he seems to mean more in line with some prior, poetic conception of the whole. When one part is "intrinsically prior" to another, it is so not only in relation to the natural course of events but also, and more importantly, in relation to an overall plan. Expediency, therefore, leads Geoffrey to prefer the second of arrangement's two paths:

> Skillful art so inverts the material that it does not pervert it; art transposes, in order that it may make the arrangement of the material better. More sophisticated than natural order is artistic order, and far preferable, however much permuted the arrangement be. (36)

And it is preferable not simply for the artistic effects it will produce, but because, at bottom, it is somehow closer to the truth the poet wishes to communicate. For Geoffrey, straightforward exposition is hardly ever the best way. Thus he lists and illustrates the possibilities of

beginning with a sententia, or an exemplum, at the beginning, the middle or the end (36-41). Without a prior, underlying and orderly plan, however, none of these branches of arrangement's road would help the poet or the reader; rather they would hinder and confuse.

Even as the poet must choose his path, that particular permutation of arrangement which best expresses the fundamental order, there is a tension which inevitably results from the two poles, immutability and change. This tension is something medieval poets knew and used to their advantage. For example, introducing his subject in Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer writes:

> But how this town com to destruccion
> Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle;
> For it were here a long digression
> Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle.
> But the Troian gestes, as they felle,
> In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
> Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write. (1.141-47)

Although he emphasizes here that his "purpos" takes precedence over any prior arrangement of "matere," elsewhere he teases us with his inability to deviate from previous dispositions of the same material: "But syn I have bigonne,/Myn auctour shal I folwen, if I konne" (2.48-49). We more readily believe him when he states, "For every wight which that to Rome went/Halt nat o path, or alwey o manere" (2.36-37), or, "ecch contree hath his lawes" (2.42). The law Chaucer follows is wholly his own, and he chooses the natural or

the artificial way according to expediency. He can play teasing games, and we accept them, because we are aware that Chaucer knows exactly where is is going every step of the way. The task for us is to discover where that is.

If we wish to use the concept of dispositio as one method of discovery, however, we must turn to a source other than the arts of poetry for a better understanding of this term. The classicizing friars of the 13th and 14th centuries developed a critical vocabulary, including discussions of dispositio, in their attempts to approach the Bible in literary terms. Their attention was then extended to secular works, and their terminology adapted by secular authors (Minnis, "Literary" 142). Their approach was, as much as any modern method or school of literary criticism, a way of reading. The writings of the friars are thus valuable to us for help in assessing late medieval attitudes toward order and its relation to the disposition of texts. Discussing Jordan of Saxony's commentary on Priscian minor (c. 1220), A.J. Minnis states:

> In Jordan cum suis the organisation of an author's materia into books and chapters -- how the text is divided up into its constituent parts, how the materia is collected together -- is regarded as the physical manifestation of the modes of procedure proper to the scientia of the text.... We may say that the parts of a text are mutually ordered to each other, but this order exists because of the order of the whole text to the finis intended by its auctor. ("Discussions" 61)

Even the smallest component, subordinated in the hierarchy of all the parts of the text ("Discussions" 61), is essentially related to the end, the overall conception of the author, his idea of the text. The late medieval exegetes like Jordan of Saxony thus agree with rhetoricians like Geoffrey of Vinsauf on the importance of order, both ideal and actual. Their terminology reflects an understanding of both the connection and the distinction between the two kinds of order. As Minnis explains:

> The commentators who employed the "Aristotelian prologue" spoke of the forma libri as being duplex. First, a work is composed in a certain form of writing: the auctor employs a certain literary style or technique. Secondly, the work is organised in accordance with a certain form or structure. The first aspect of form is called the forma tractandi: the second the forma tractatus, divisio libri, or ordinatio partium.
>
> ("Discussions" 53)

This first aspect of form is indeed literary style but not in the sense of elocutio. It does not concern figures of diction or thought. Two phrases commonly used as synonyms for it, modus agendi or modus procedendi (Minnis, "Influence" 350), are perhaps more descriptive of the way in which it was thought to work. The forma tractandi is the mode of procedure or method of treatment of any subject. As such, it necessarily precedes the actual form of the treatise, the forma tractatus. To analyze the forma

tractandi is to attempt to reveal the intentions of the author, whether divine or human. To analyze the forma tractatus is to disclose something far simpler, the "literal arrangement of the parts of a text" (Allen 68). Discussing this latter is not only sometimes the only way of getting at the former, but often the best way: "The new notion of the forma tractatus, of form as structure, enabled exegetes to discuss the organisation of materia in a text (whether orderly or not) without giving the impression that they were in any way detracting from the text's auctoritas" (Minnis, "Discussions" 62). This is particularly important when discussing the literary modi of the Bible, but, as we have seen, it is also something which Chaucer well knew (Troilus 1.141-47, above).

Whatever the actual subject of the treatise or the generic method of the forma tractandi, the forma tractatus concerns itself with order on a literal basis. According to Judson Boyce Allen, dispositio is one of the three species of the forma tractatus (126). The other two species, divisio and distinctio, are important in medieval literary criticism, but it is dispositio which, "in the largest sense,... includes all artful orderings, including both the conventional artificial ones, as well as, occasionally, the natural" (Allen 133). Our sense of the word should indeed not be too limited, for as a Corpus Christi manuscript commentary on Geoffrey of Vinsauf's Poetria nova states, dispositio

is "the order and distribution of things which shows what should be put in which places" (Allen 130). While the process of dispositio begins at the beginning, it does not end there. Through the beginning of a work an author makes his first attempt at ordering the structure of the whole. If a work commences properly, it will be followed logically by an appropriate middle and end. If not, then every part of the poem is disordered, every aspect of its disposition suffers. Order is everything, for, as we know, every part must work together.

The late medieval poets with whom this dissertation is concerned also show in their works an understanding of the essential importance of order. The task, and the necessity, of comprehending order is a theme many Middle English poems share, including Pearl, Troilus, and the Chester Mystery Cycle, which all deal with fundamental and troubling questions about order -- in the universe, in society, in one's soul, in one's written work. The structures of these poems reflect this concern. The actual disposition of materials in the poems will be explored in each chapter of the dissertation, but at this point it is useful to examine briefly the poets' views on order in general.

Pearl begins in disorder. The narrator describes the loss of his pearl and his resulting despair. Yet underlying the opening images of decay is a remainder of basic order, seen in the cycle of natural rebirth: "For vch gresse mot

grow of grayne3 dede;/No whete were elle3 to wone3 wonne./Of goud vche goude is ay bygonne" (31-33). Similarly, when the dreamer at first stands amazed at the unfamiliar scenery of his vision, he is nevertheless aware of the profound rightness of the place in which he finds himself. While he easily comprehends the basic physical orderliness of heaven, he cannot quite accept the more profound orderliness of the underlying divine scheme. All his arguments, of course, come to naught in face of the perfection of the heavenly host: "... þe Loumbe hym stand/On þe mount of Syon ful þryuen and þro,/ And wyth hym maydenne3 an hundreþe þowsande,/And fowre and forty þowsande mo" (867-70). The actual physical structure of the heavenly city reflects eternal, immutable, orderliness:

> As John þe apostel hit sy3 wyth sy3t,
> I sy3e þat cyty of gret renoun,
> Jerusalem so nwe and ryally dy3t,
> As hit was ly3t fro þe heuen adoun.
> þe bor3 wat3 al of brende golde bry3t
> As glemande glas burnist broun,
> Wyth gentyl gemme3 an-vnder py3t
> Wyth bantele3 twelue on basyng boun,
> þe foundemente3 twelue of riche tenoun;
> Vch tabelment wat3 a serlype3 ston;
> As derely deuyse3 þis ilk toun
> In Apocalyppe3 þe apostel John. (985-96)

Even the arrangement of this stanza -- the repetition of words and phrases, the recurrent gem-imagery, the echoing of the first by the last line -- models in small the larger, overall structure of the whole poem. The physical plan of the heavenly city is a reflection and a

manifestation of the originating idea of God. So too the overall poetic plan arises in the mind of the poet. The maiden insists on the essential fact of the ultimate order of all creation, but the dreamer comes to knowledge only after his expulsion. The last two lines of the poem present his new-found and hard-won recognition of the Christian truth greater than his own personal sorrow: "He gef vus to be his homly hyne/Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay" (1211-12). These final words of Pearl connect celestial with earthly order; acknowledgement of this connection is the lesson of this narrative.

In contrast to the disorder with which Pearl begins, the beginning of the Chester cycle stresses order by using the word nine times in the first pageant, Creation. In the opening speech of the play Deus announces that he is the origin of all things, the originator of all the orders of existence: "Ego sum alpha et oo,/primus et novissimus./It is my will it shoulde be soe;/hit is, yt was, it shalbe thus" (1-4). In words which recall the vision of John in Pearl, Deus proclaims that

> A biglie blesse here will I builde
> a heaven without endinge,
> and caste a comely compasse
> by comely creation.
> Nyne orders of angells,
> be ever at onste defendinge;
> doe your indevoure and doubte you not
> under my dominacion
> to sytt in celestiall saftye. (36-44)

As in Pearl, divine order is manifested by the inhabitants as well as by the city. Lucifer enumerates the nine orders of angels for us, using the word "order," meaning "class," three times. Yet his speech marks the entrance of disorder in this play as well as the first instance of the elemental struggle between order and disorder which underlies the sacred history the pageants portray. In damning the rebellious angels to hell, Deus decrees: "Therfore I charge this order cleare,/faste from this place looke that yee fall" (218-19). This sense of the word, "command," is recalled in Primus Demon's prophecy: "He will ordeyne mankinde againe/in blesse to be in greate araye,/and wee evermore in hell paine" (263-65). Thus the use of the word "order" sets the stage, helps carry the action, and prepares us for future stage action. It also gives the disorderly elements some motivation; the demons' jealousy of mankind is later echoed in Cain's envy of Abel, in the Jews' fear of Jesus, and in Antichriste's pretense to power. The final sense of "order" occurs in the following lines which Deus again speaks: "Nowe I charge the grounde of grace/ that yt be set with my order" (114-15). This is the fundamental meaning of the word with which we are here interested, for God's plan, his arrangement of the universe, is the ultimate concern of the Chester cycle.

Because of this concern, it is not surprising that

order is not confined simply to the words in this work. The actual sequence of plays constitutes a recapitulation of sacred history which is no less than an earthly representation of God's cosmic plan. This is order on the grandest scale of all. Within the cycle are the smaller, no less significant, portions of that history. These individual episodes are linked to each other by orderly means, language, theme, and character. Most importantly, however, they are connected within the overall scheme through the exposition of Christian truth which the Chester Cycle elucidates.

Chaucer deals with ideas of order somewhat differently in Troilus and Criseyde. Not directly involving a Christian sensibility for most of the work, this poem nevertheless concludes with serious religious statements which ultimately call into question not only the actions of the characters but the sympathies of the audience for those characters and their actions.

In the course of this poem, the order of the Trojan world is torn asunder by the war. This is seen most clearly in the devastation wrought upon the personal lives of each main character. Criseyde's orderly world dies when she is, in effect, orphaned by her father's treachery; she in turn betrays her lover Troilus first by leaving him, then by her affair with Diomede. Pandarus shows his own untrustworthiness by betraying the trust he holds as Criseyde's

guardian uncle. Even Troilus, who dies for love, recants upon his death not only his love for Criseyde but all profane feelings. And all of these actions result from the earliest betrayal, the first violation of social order, which was Helen's.

As in the Chester plays, the use of the word "order" underscores the ideas expressed through the actions of the poem. Troilus, in his first, skeptical speech concerning love declares: "Youre hire is quyt ayeyn, ye, God woot how!/Nought wel for wel, but scorn for good servyse./In feith, youre ordre is ruled in good wise!" (1.334-36) This first mention of order underlines the very lack of order which the poem proceeds to illustrate. And indeed, as long as the characters put their faith in earthly love, they will inevitably be betrayed by it into disorder and even death. The second use of the word occurs when Criseyde debates whether to stay in Troy or go to the Greek camp (though of course she has no real choice in the matter). Again the word is used ironically to foreshadow its opposite condition: "And of myn ordre, til deth me mete,/The observance evere, in youre absence,/Shal sorwe ben, compleynt, and abstinence" (4.782-84). The final occurrences of the word come in Troilus' predestination speech in Book IV, in which he tries to reconcile himself to Criseyde's impending departure. He rejects the idea of an agreeable

and humanly understandable universal plan in favor of an inevitable one. "God," he says, "seeth every thyng, out of doutaunce,/And hem disponyth, thorugh his ordinaunce" (863-64). Because it is not he but rather God who orders the world and disposes of those who live in it, Troilus decides that the best policy is simply to take things, incomprehensible as they may be, as they come:

> But now n'enforce I me nat in shewynge
> How the ordre of causes stant; but wel woot I
> That it byhoveth that the byfallynge
> Of thynges wiste byforen certeynly
> Be necessarie, al seme it nat therby
> That prescience put fallynge necessaire
> To thyng to come, al falle it foule or faire.
> (4.960-66)

Social and personal order are thus seen to be reflections, like the poem itself, of the larger, cosmic order which Troilus later perceives in his vision at the end of the poem:

> And whan that he was slayn in this manere,
> His light goost ful blisfully is went
> Up to the holughness of the eighthe spere,
> In convers letyng everich element;
> And ther he saugh, with ful avysement,
> The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye
> With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie.
>
> And down from thennes faste he gan avyse
> This litel spot of erthe, that with the se
> Embraced is, and fully gan despise
> This wrecched world, and held al vanite
> To respect of the pleyn felicite
> That is in hevene above; and at the laste,
> Ther he was slayn, his lokyng down he caste.

> And in hymself he lough right at the wo
> Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;
> And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so
> The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,
> And sholden al oure herte on heven caste.
> (5.1807-25)

Unlike the dreamer in Pearl, Troilus has been granted not only a vision but the understanding of it. In effect, he is able to read the lesson of what he sees: heavenly order as God's plan, human disorder as a straying from that plan. When Chaucer ends his pagan poem with a Christian prayer, he likewise links his own words to sacred truth: "With al myn herte of mercy evere I preye,/And to the Lord right thus I speke and seye" (5.1861-62). Chaucer's own speech, by means of which he invents this poem, constitutes an act of creation, a willing enactment to power, a calling into real existence an ordered world where only chaos reigned before. This intentional linguistic act, whether by a writer or a deity, concerning a poem or a universe, involves the purposeful transmutation of ideal order into actual arrangement. God alone knows the ultimate plan. We on earth, like Troilus before his death or Chaucer as author of his poem, can only hope to discover and transmit as much as that plan as we are able to understand. And our understanding manifests itself through dispositio, the working out of the ideal plan.

In poetry, dispositio is thus necessary not only for the writer but for his audience as well. For the writer,

and for the rhetoricians who offer helpful guidelines for writers, a poem is a process through which disposition is generated. For the reader, and for the exegetes who present critical terminology for readers, a poem is a product whereby disposition is revealed. Process and product meet in the text. Writing and reading are thus complementary activities. Each is a creative act needing the other for completion (unlike the original act of creation by the first maker). A poem is, therefore, not just one, finished thing but an ever-changing amalgam of process and product.

Chaucer knows that neither of these two aspects, process nor product, is ever truly completed. He admits that his own text, that is, his particular process of telling the Troy story, is very different from his predecessors'. He also acknowledges that his audience has power to participate in the creation of the text as well. He knows they will experience it in different ways, for it is the product of their individual readings:

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinken hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages. (2.22-28)

Chaucer connects love, the language of love, and the changing usage of love and language at various points in this poem. These are mutable aspects of life, controlled by turns of Fortune's wheel. They are contrasted in the

end with the immutable law of God (seen in his love and powered by his word). For his own part, Chaucer hopes that the ultimate purpose of his particular "litel bok" will not be too terribly misunderstood:

> And for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
> So prey I God that non myswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
> And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
> That thow be understonde, God I biseche!
> (5.1793-98)

He is always aware of the different paths by which truth may be reached, by readers and by writers. The continual, explicit awareness of the active role of the audience is perhaps unique to Chaucer among medieval poets, but it is a consciousness shared to some degree by all the writers with which this dissertation is concerned. An understanding of the necessity of audience involvement in the making of the meaning of the text is in fact a hallmark of late Middle English literature.

Each of the four Middle English works discussed in this dissertation ensures the active participation of its audience through the use of a particular method of dispositio. The works are presented in order of increasing complexity, the disposition operating on progressively smaller levels of meaning, from the whole poem to the word. Frequently, more than one type of disposition is used in a poem. However, in all of these works, one type predominates, and so each may be taken as a representative illustration.

"Rondel 57" of Charles of Orleans uses the simplest type of disposition, substitution. The replacement of one mode of discourse with another shifts our attention between invented worlds. Presupposing outside knowledge, this poem thus becomes the very opposite of a self-contained poetic universe. Although confession and lyric initially seem to make opposing claims on the audience, this type of disposition, like all of the others, ultimately promotes a synthesis of contrasting views.

The Chester Mystery Cycle uses the second type of disposition, incorporation, which builds upon the method of substitution but adds another component, a framework. Didactic glosses enclosing individual pageants act to distance us and yet to reinforce our attention on the meaning of episodes and the connection between them. The constant breaking of the frame both produces and subverts a separate, dramatic cosmos. The alternation of perspective promotes a dual role for the audience, who must actively participate in the creation of fictions while maintaining and furthering a belief in ultimate religious truth.

Troilus and Criseyde employs the third type of disposition, interpolation. Related to incorporation but enclosing many smaller units of inserted discourse, this poem makes use of familiar forms, such as letters, to help establish character, carry action, supply motivation, as

well as to provide other forums for the narrator's arguments concerning the contrasting truths of history and story. Audience identification with the pagan world of the narrative is abruptly repudiated in the end by the presentation of another world, containing other realities, both literary and religious, which the author insists embody the only possible truth. Synthesis here depends upon awareness of the poet's method and participation in his creation.

Pearl uses the fourth, most complex, type of disposition, variation, which occurs on every level of meaning. Punning wordplay helps structure the narrative even as it carries the theme. All aspects cohere in an actual illustration of the lesson of the poem, that everything in the cosmos is connected. In the medieval system illustrated in Pearl, language does not simply describe a world but operates upon it as an active component. As self-conscious readers using this mode of disposition and thereby engaging in the creation of the poem, we are compelled toward the final synthesis, an identification of the literary with the real.

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Chapter 2

Substitution: "Rondel 57"

"Rondel 57," one of Charles of Orleans' short English poems, clearly illustrates the first method by which the unwritten dispositio of Middle English literature is expressed. Substitution of models of discourse operates by constant reference to and dependence upon the common cultural bias of an audience. Exploiting external knowledge provides one effective solution to the problem of the lack of explicit rhetorical rules for arrangement in literary texts. Substitution involves the whole poem; here, lyric alternates with confession until, in the end, such a differentiation within the poem becomes impossible. This ultimate melding is contingent upon a concentration on form, an awareness of structure as meaning, which is the essence and importance of disposition in medieval literature.

My gostly fadir y me confesse
First to god and then to yow
That at a wyndow wot ye how
I stale a cosse of gret swetnes
Which don was out avisynes
But hit is doon not undoon now
My gostly fadir y me confesse
First to god and then to yow
But y restore it shalle dowtles
Ageyn if so be that y mow
And that god y make a vow
And ellis y axe foryefnes
My gostly fadir y me confesse
First to god and then to yow (English 133)

In form this poem is a rondel, 14 lines rhyming abba abab abba ab. The refrain of the last two lines also begins and centers the poem. As in any rondel, the story contained in the eight non-refrain lines is necessarily limited in its development.[1] The story here is very simple: the poet, as the narrator, has stolen something (4) but intends to restore it (9). He mentions the circumstances (3) and motives (5) of the crime, though he knows that doing so will not erase the deed (6).

John Fox, writing on Charles of Orleans, explains that in a refrain "the recurrence of the opening line must please, not so much for its own sake, for what it is in isolation, but for the manner of its reintroduction and for its relationship to the overall design" (121). The opening line here meets the critical requirements. The end-word "confesse" carries not only the weight of the line and the repeated couplet but also the weight of the poem itself so that the thrice-repeated formula of confession frames the progression of explanation. However, because it begins and concludes with the very same words, the poem itself is not a simple progression but rather circular. In this way, "the rondel is a poem without an end. Therein lies its peculiarity, and its charm. The last line takes us back to the first, a circular pattern which can easily echo on in the imagination. The reader's participation is invited ..." (Fox 122).

Indeed, in "Rondel 57" participation is inevitable, for everyone in the Middle Ages was familiar with the ritual of confession, and the poet, of course, counts on this. The usual rondel division into three equal quatrains with a trailing refrain ideally fits the three stages of confession, contrition and satisfaction. Confession, thrice-repeated as is customary, is seen in the refrain; contrition lies within lines 3 through 6, the first framed quatrain; satisfaction is contained in the second framed quatrain (9-12). So the initial perception of tripartite symmetry derives from the three repetitions of the refrain, underscored by the audience's own familiarity with the rondel form. However, the narrative portion, neatly divided between the two framed quatrains and their enclosing lines of refrain belies this initial impression. In other editions of the poem (Robbins 183; Davies 201), the editors' punctuation emphasizes that the sentence which begins in line one does not end at line four as is usual in a rondel but is carried over through line six. This simple change makes an important difference. The overall rhythm of the poem, despite the refrain, despite our expectations, is no longer equal thirds but unequal halves. On a superficial level then, the poet has set up a tension between ideal rondel-expectations and poetic fact.

What happens now to the three neat steps of penance? If confession is taken care of in the refrain, contrition

in the first framed quatrain and satisfaction in the second, there would seem to be no problem. But there is. Looking closely at the poem, we see that lines one through five are all concerned with particulars of the first step, confession -- who, what, where, how and why. Only in lines six and 12 are there hints on contrition. Satisfaction, on the other hand, has most of the second framed quatrain to itself. There are two parts to satisfaction, both of which deal with making right, as far as possible, the sin confessed. Reparation means restoring the stolen item (9-10), and amendment means receiving forgiveness (12) from God and the poet's confessor. As R.T. Davies remarks, the poet emphasizes this third part of penance with subtle wit: "That the theft ... was unpremeditated (l. 5) would, in moral theology, reduce the gravity of the sin, and it would be a natural requirement for absolution that the stolen object should be returned (l. 10)" (342). The poet thus constantly points to that object and in doing so emphasizes the key to this rondel.

"Cosse" (4), the stolen object, is a Middle English variant of our Modern English "kiss."[2] It is a kiss the poet has stolen and which he vows to restore. With this in mind, we come to realize that the poem's inward-turning circle has led out through the grating of the confessional and in through the "wyndow" of my lady's chamber. What seemed to be a pretty poetic play on the common medieval

cliché of the ritual of confession now appears to be a very different poem, a rather humorous love lyric. Even as a love lyric, the circularity of the rondel form still works; in fact, it is reinforced by this new meaning of the poem. If we know that the article stolen is a kiss -- which one cannot steal without giving and cannot return without receiving -- then, indeed, the rondel is a poem without an end.

In shifting from poem as confession to poem as lyric, the poet utilizes one of the most common techniques of medieval dispositio. The equivalence set up between these two models is not an equation but a constantly shifting substitution which also serves to define the third sense in which "Rondel 57" is a poem without an end. Charles' method here, of using liturgical and ecclesiastical imagery in love lyrics, was an accepted part of the medieval poetic tradition, and examples of the natural amalgamation of literary, philosophic, religious and physical traditions can be seen in the Roman de la Rose, the Roman de Flamenca, songs of the Carmina Burana, the Confessio Amantis, as well as other poems of Charles himself.[3] Patrick J. Gallacher explains the goal of this deliberate literary technique. When a love song is combined with a penitential stance, he says, "the sacrament of confession is used as a metaphor of effective persuasion" (34). And certainly the confessional form enhances the persuasive power of Charles' rondel. In

contrast, W.T.H. Jackson attributes the prevalence of sacred imagery in secular literature to parody for the sake of satire, as a light-hearted vehicle of reform: "The use of excerpts from sacred texts in contexts anything but holy in itself produced the desired effect of contrasts between the real and the ideal, between the state of religious holiness and the state of profane abuse" (230). Citing a work by the 12th-century Archpoet, "Estruans intrinsecus," which parallels "Rondel 57" in being a pseudo-confession, he notes that the manuscripts entitle it "Confessio," for it too follows the prescribed pattern of prostration of spirit (st. 1-5), enumeration of sins (st. 6-12), and amendment of action (st. 13-15). Yet, "the confession is, however, no confession, but a frank acknowledgement of delight in pleasure and a not too subtly veiled statement that the archbishop [the poet's confessor] enjoys the same things [wine, women and gambling]" (Jackson 235).

This mixing of the sacred and profane is, of course, a widespread attribute of medieval literature and reflects the natural amalgamation of traditions which Middle English writers drew upon in devising their poems. Indeed, the physical manifestations of dogma and belief, the rituals and artifacts of the church, were used over and over again. Writing centuries apart, both the Archpoet and Charles d'Orleans were able to use the religious tradition for

secular parody because they knew it so well. Both were familiar with the sacrament of penance in church. Most likely, Charles was also familiar with vernacular confessional literature and contemporary penitential lyrics, both of which arose in abundance in response to the requirement for annual private confession by the Lateran Council of 1215 (Gray 171; Robertson 171).

One relevant parallel by a near-contemporary of Charles is William Dunbar's "The Tabill of Confession" (163-67). It is an interesting example of a poem written in the penitential mode.[4] In 21 stanzas of eight lines each, Dunbar recites his sins and seeks God's mercy. The bulk of the poem deals with separate types of sins or precepts he has broken, such as "The Ten Commandis" (st. 7), "The Articulis of Trewth" (st. 8), and "The Foure Vertewis Cardenall" (st. 10). "The Tabill of Confession" is a manual of enumeration and definition of confessable sins rather than an actual recitation of Dunbar's own misdeeds. This somewhat impersonal method is common, as Stephen Manning explains:

> the poet [as sinner] may express his sinfulness in formulas rather than in individualizing sins under particular circumstances, for his audience can immediately place his speaker within the emotive context required to make the lyric meaningful. The audience knows what a sinner is and what his relationship to the chosen addressee is.... [So] the words gain in emotive value simply because they are spoken by a particular person to a particular person in a given situation. (50-51)

In Dunbar's poem, stanza one sets out the circumstances for us:

> To The, O mercifull Salviour, Jesus
> My King, my Lord, and my Redemar sweit,
> Befoir they bludy figor dolorus
> I repent my synnys, with humill hairt contreit,
> That ever I did unto this hour compleit,
> Beith in werk, in word, and eik intent;
> Falling on face, full law befoir thy feit,
> I cry The mercy, and lasar to repent. (163)

Line six is particularly relevant to "Rondel 57," for while Charles may have confessed in word and deed, it is exactly the third aspect Dunbar mentions, proper intent, which is absent. In another poem, "The Maner of Passing to Confession," Dunbar directly advises sinners to "repent the, man, and kepe thi conscience clene," and tells just how to prepare for and make confession (167-69). Charles, of course, deliberately does not make a true confession and so violates the counsels of this second poem as well.

While secular poetry often used religious language and imagery for secular ends, audience familiarity with the traditions made the reverse process possible as well. The troubadour poets, for example, count on prior knowledge when they use language appropriate for expressing holy adoration of the Virgin to describe their love for particular women. In fact, according to James J. Wilhelm, "the Christian Neoplatonic tradition ... [portrayed] the love of the divine in the language of human love" (84). This tradition is as old as Augustine and can be seen even today

in interpretations of the Song of Songs. Amor Dei and amor mundi come together in one of Charles' own French poems, which contains this stanza:

> Always in their contemplations
> They keep their hearts ravished in trance
> So they can rise through perfection
> To the high Paradise of Pleasure
> Hot, cold, hunger, thirst they suffer
> With hope, in many a country:
> Such is the discourse
> Of the observances of lovers.[5]

Here, the two spheres of religious and secular connotations are "sufficiently interactive so that Charles could write a poem in which human love was treated as a mystical rite, and in which every important word has at least two possible meanings" (Wilhelm 243). We can fruitfully compare the following from an anonymous poem of the 15th century:

> Trewlove trew on you I truste,
> Everymore to fynde you perseverawnt,
> Ellys wolde my herte yn sondir brest,
> Bot I cowde love yn expyrant.... (Gray 58)

Douglas Gray's note on this poem nicely sums up the ultimate result of this mixing of traditions:

> Sometimes there is a simple transference from one tradition to another, which is occasionally so complete that we are hard put to decide whether a poem is "secular" or "religious" .... The poem [above] might well be called a secular lyric, if it were not for the rubric that accompanies it in the manuscript "querimonia Christi languentis pro amore." (58)

The question thus arises: how are we to view "Rondel 57"? Certainly Charles drew on the same background

and used at least similar techniques in his English poem as his French one. The "cosse" of "Rondel 57" is undoubtedly a profane kiss, but in the context of the confession, another connotation is felt, that of the divine kiss of love. For all that this poem turns on a joke, the poem can be looked on as having at least partially serious intentions. For love, that is, divine love, is the ultimate basis of all the sacraments and rituals of the church. Especially in confession, Christ's merciful love is what is being depended upon. The kiss the poet would return is in imitation of that greater one he has received. If he stole it in sin, he is now prepared to reciprocate in a worthier state. Ultimately, the "gostly fadir" (the poet's priest on the level of confession and his lady on the level of love lyric) seems now to be more directly Christ himself, the Holy Ghost. At the same time, neither the priest, the mediator between man and God, nor the lady, an ideal image of love, is annulled by this third way of viewing the poem.

Obviously, this third level is not the one which first gets our attention nor do I believe it was meant to be. Yet all three levels, confession, secular, and religious lyric, exist together in the poem, and they exist because the poet consciously intended them to be there. Wilhelm says about Charles' French poem that "it is a magnificent and quite conscious exercise in double entendre" (244), and on a smaller scale, this is true for "Rondel 57" as well.

"Double entendre" or "two meanings at once" is indeed an appropriate way to describe the poet's method. But it is not merely individual words like "cosse" or "Paradise of Pleasure" which have two or more connotations; rather both poems as whole entities function on two or more levels. Just as Charles first undercuts the rondel form by narrative asymmetry, so he furthers the tension already created by counterpoising the conventions of confession, courtly, and religious lyrics. Throughout, what we are led to expect is not exactly what we get, and expectations play a very important part in this poem. Here then is the fourth sense in which this poem is without an end: the meaning, or rather the making of the meaning, of the poem is not confined within the poem itself. The poet can utilize purposeful uncertainties of structure and form and model precisely because there is one factor which, though it stands outside the poem, is essential to it and provides the foundation on which these ambiguities rest. The factor is the audience, and the knowledge its members bring to their reading helps create the final product, the poem itself. Charles relies upon their prior knowledge. "Rondel 57" is not merely a poem with an audience, but one that depends on its audience for its effect. If no one gets the joke, the poem has failed.

The overt necessity of audience participation in the making of the meaning of this poem is, I believe, typically medieval. The process which so clearly fashions "Rondel 57," the alternation of meaning due to conjunçtion of models, plays a fundamental role in the creation of much medieval literature. For substitution is a basic technique of disposition and was utilized as such by poets in need of models for organization. This process was not discussed in the rhetorical artes poetriae, but it was certainly practiced. Examples from the literature abound. In fact, the use of confession as a model was minor compared to the popularity of the poem as letter. One short and typical work by Charles' contemporary, the Duke of Suffolk, may serve as an example of this latter mode. Stanzas one and three of his "Lettyr" follow:

> Myn hertys Ioy, and all myn hole plesaunce,
> Whom that I serve and shall do faythfully,
> Wyth trew entent and humble observaunce,
> Yow for to plese in that I can trewly,
> Besechyng yow thys lytell byll and I
> May hertly, wyth symplese and drede,
> Be recomawnded to your goodlyhede.
>
> * * * *
>
> I wryte to yow now more for lak of space,
> But I beseche the only trinite
> Yow kepe and saue be support of hys grace,
> And he yow sheld from all adversyte.
> Go lytill byll, and say thou were wyth me
> Of verey trouth, as thou canst wele remembre,
> At myn vpryst, the fift day of Decembre.
> (Robbins 189-90)

Charles uses the letter model himself for his lyric which begins:

> The God Cupide and venus the goddes
> Whiche power han on alle worldly gladness
> We herty gretyng sende of oure humbles
> To lovers all
> Doyng yow wite the duk that folkis calle
> Of Orlyaunce we hym amytte and shalle
> As oure servaunt which hat but yeris smalle
> Of yowth yit spent. (English 1)

As the editors, Robert Steele and Mabel Day, note, the opening imitates an episcopal letter (261). Writers also used another area of common knowledge, sermons, and drew on related literature as well, including the instructions for ordering sermons found in the arts of preaching. Two well-known examples of poems which utilize this tradition are Piers Plowman and Patience.[6]

In theory, then, almost any familiar mode of discourse could be used as an alternate model for a poem, and in practice, they were. F.W. Galan explains that in terms of literary evolution, they almost had to be used:

> Once an artistic norm [such as the lyric] is officially established, the next generation cannot wholly adopt their predecessors' poetic idion, without risk of becoming epigones. The new school of poets assimilates certain parts of the existing canon and puts them to novel use; in addition, the poets employ their imaginative powers to create new thematic variations within the received tradition or, eventually, seek inspiration in lower, uncanonized genres, like letters, family albums, or travelogues. (279)

Now for medieval poets, letters and sermons were not

"lower, uncanonized genres" but just the opposite. Both of these were universally known and used and, in fact, had treatises devoted to their practice, the ars dictaminis and the ars praedicandi. It was poetry that had trouble claiming itself as a separate and serious form distinct from rhetoric. This begins to explain why the arts of poetry had, as A.C. Spearing says, "no means of considering poems as objects with their own internal structure" (67), why they did not differentiate among genres even as diverse as lyrics and drama. Perhaps this is the reason why the use of alternate forms was so popular. When poets used these other models for structuring their work, the poem was thereby defined, and rather than being lowered in tone, it appealed to the audience's sense of higher seriousness.

In this way then, "Rondel 57" is indeed a typical Middle English poem. Its name "rondel" means "little circle," but cirularity in this medieval poem, as I have shown, is not contained solely in the verbal structure of the work.[7] The largest sense in which medieval poems like "Rondel 57" are circular is in their necessary incorporation of the outside world into the poem and, in some cases, such as Troilus and Criseyde, the overt recognition of that necessity. All poems refer to this outside world in some way or they would make no sense at all, but these Middle English works rely especially heavily on reference. This does not mean that all medieval poetry is symbolically

Christian but rather that medieval poetry as a whole consisted of a universe of discourse which, based on the traditions of Christian thought, tended to believe in the basic and ultimate connectedness of all matter, including poetic matter, as manifestations of the divine spirit. Thus even the most strictly secular poem could be polysemous and was perceived to be part and parcel of its traditions. Authority, therefore, does not tell the author how to write the poem but rather provides the materials for doing so. This explains the lack of instructions for dispositio in the artes poetriae, the lack of differentiation of forms in those artes, and the incorporation of seemingly inappropriate modes of discourse into literary works, such as sermons into drama, letters into lyrics, philosophy into romances. Differentiation of forms and separation of content as a philosophy would have been unthinkable; as a practice it was necessary, but only to the degree that made definition possible. Once we know what the form is and what it is supposed to do -- why, then we can do just about anything with it that we like.

NOTES

N.B.: References to poems by a named author or from the collected works of one writer are listed under the poet's name; short poems in a compilation or anonymous works are cited according to editor.

1
John Fox discusses the limitations of the rondel and Charles' use of the form (121-25).

2
Oxford English Dictionary kiss, sb. a, 3-5.

3
On amalgamation of traditions in these works, se respectively: Tuve 51-77; Brody 221-61; Jackson 229-237; Gallacher 145-50 ; Fox 84-5; Goodrich 187-8.

4
For other penitential lyrics, see Brown and Robbins.

5
Trans. Wilhelm 243. The French text is in Charles of Orleans, Poesies 158-9.

6
On Piers Plowman, see Spearing. On Patience, see Tomasch; also Vantuono.

7
Verbal circularity in Middle English literature is not a new idea; J.A. Burrow calls it "encapsulation" 61-4.

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Chapter 3

Incorporation: The Chester Mystery Cycle

The Chester Play, one of the four complete extant cycle dramas of the late Middle Ages in England, illustrates the second method of dispositio. Incorporation has a double aspect: first, it works to separate particular plays by enclosing them in individual frames; second, it serves to unify the plays by encompassing them within a grand, inclusive framework. Establishing individual frames sets off portions of dramatic presentation as separate, fictional, ahistorical worlds, while breaking these separate frames redirects attention from past or future fictions to contemporary reality and brings all worlds together in one significant present, one cohesive whole. The first type of frame we can call the episodic; the second is the cyclic.[1] The first emphasizes a linear series of events, while the second stresses the essential circularity of action in time and space. This second frame not only imparts significance to the individual episodes but in fact informs the whole Cycle. Various techniques, which will be discussed in this chapter through an examination of five representative plays, are used to produce both types of frames. Because both work towards incorporation of art and reality, both

must be considered in any investigation of the dispositio of medieval cycles.

One other important fact about the Corpus Christi drama should be recognized: it is not simply a chronological presentation of significant religious events but a dramatization of the sacred words of the Bible. In these plays, a complicated circularity of language and event is established so that finally neither any portion of the Cycle nor any part of life itself is excluded from the all-encompassing scope of its conception. According to the Christian theology upon which the Chester Cycle is based, the language which opens the Play and produces the play-worlds contains the very words which created the cosmos in which everything exists, including the events being portrayed and the language used to invent them. This indissoluble connection between art and life, between word and event, between belief and deed, is a truth stressed throughout the Play itself. It is also an essential part of the knowledge which the members of the audience, as participants in the Christian community and as viewers of the drama, bring with them to the performance. Their own subsequent responses become the test of this truth, reiterated in the language which they hear on stage (or platea), which they speak in their own devotions, and which they perhaps read in the originating book.

All these issues confront us in the opening of the

very first Chester play. "The Fall of Lucifer" (I) begins and ends with speeches by Deus, who acts as an expositor, expounding the lesson of the play to the general audience. His explanations occur both before and after he himself takes part in the action of the play, the ordering of heaven and the fall of the angels. The first 50 lines and the last 28 are not all directed specifically to the spectators, yet lines like "doe your indevoure and doubte you not/under my dominacion/to sytt in celestiall saftye" (44-46) at least present the possibility that these words, addressed ostensibly to the angels, also apply to the human audience. When similar phrases are used throughout the Cycle in exhortation or salutation, the resonance works backwards to this first play, for the audience of the Corpus Christi drama was never in any real suspense about the events to come. Their familiarity extended not only to the incidents but to the language, gestures, costumes, settings, and the structure of the entire presentation.[2] The effect of this familiarity is a resolution of ambiguity, a strengthening of didactic lessons, and a reinforcement of the direct involvement of the audience in the Play.

Deus begins Play I by proclaiming his identity and assuming his power. The announcement of a king and the presentation of his acts is a major pattern continually replayed in the Chester Cycle. Octavian is put forth as

the model of a just, earthly monarch, while Balaak, Herod and Pilate are offered in negative contrast.[3] In both form and style, these evil rulers follow Lucifer, the prototypical abuser of power. Seen first in Play I, he appears periodically under other names, Demon, Diabolus, Sathanas, and, lastly, Antichrist in the penultimate play of the Cycle. All of these characters are patterned on the first, the original, the most powerful king, the central figure of the Cycle, seen both as the Father and the Son. The words of Deus which open this first play announce his own unalterable supremacy: "Ego sum alpha et oo,/primus et novissimus./It is my will it shoulde be soe;/hit is, yt was, it shalbe thus" (1-4). These words are echoed throughout the Cycle, not only by himself or by himself as Jesus, but also mockingly repeated by the other, evil characters. It is no accident that of the 24 plays, over one-third begin with one of these echoing speeches.[4] These opening lines, with the addition of the dozens of internal speeches modeled upon or mocking that of the "pearles patron ymperiall" (1.11), constitute not merely a "recurring concern with the nature and defintion of Godhead" (Lumiansky and Mills 105), and its corollary kingship, but a device which is both dramatic and expository, which in its repetitions ties together the plays and their individual scenes, and which, along with the speeches of expositor-figures like Deus, helps create the frames.

Opening and closing a play with short explanatory speeches by one character neatly frames the events while also emphasizing the primacy of that enclosed action. Not all of the individual plays work this way, but it is one effective strategy. Repetition of certain key words and phrases helps define the lesson of what we watch. In this play, for example, Deus, speaking for the first time within the action, reminds Lucifer and the other angels to "exsalte you not to exelente into high exaltation" (71; my emphasis throughout). He warns them also that "pride fall oughte in your intent" (93). Lucifer responds the "Thy greate godhead we ever dreade/and never exsaulte ourselfes soe hie" (91-97). From this point on, however, both language and action make explicit the knowledge which we bring to the Play, that a prideful self-elevation is just that sin to do Lucifer in. After a last warning that "Iche one of you kepe well his place" (112), Deus withdraws, and Lucifer debates with the orders of angels his own right to the celestial seat. The Vertutes are quick to name his sin (134), followed by the Cherubyn (141), Thrones (172), and Potestates (174). Lucifer himself declares -- to us as well as to his opponents when he says, "Behoulde, sennyors one every syde" (178) -- "I ame pearlesse and prince of pride/....Here will I sitt nowe in his steade,/to exsaulte myselfe in this same see" (184, 186-87). Deus, returning, sees the

usurpation of his seat and passes sentence on Lucifer and his minions: "For your fowle pride to hell you shall" (221).

This damning speech of 15 lines (214-29) occurs almost exactly in the middle of the play. In terms of the significance of the action, it is the central moment. When Deus condemns the rebels and causes their expulsion and fall, we see the proof in his actions of the power of his words. The first lesson of the Chester Cycle, then, is the foolishness of disobedience and the inevitable consequences thereof. Subsequent events demonstrate this same lesson in many guises. In the second half of Play I which follows this speech, the demons squabble about guilt and vengeance. The disorder of their present domain contrasts with the "comely creation" (41), the celestial city with which the play begins. Deus's closing words transfer the lesson from pride, the specific motive in this play, to the general precept of obedience, which all, not excluding the members of the audience, must learn. His "will" (176, 197), the source of his power, is emphasized throughout this final speech; his "blessinge" (290, 301), the force behind all creation, may turn to punishment through the exercise of this will. The spectators thus see enacted the lesson they also come to hear: no one may hope to escape judgment. Only obedience leads

to salvation.

These particular framing speeches, presenting ideas of sin and rightful dominion which are heard throughout the Play, create the scene, delimit the action and its meaning, and look forward to the inexorable progression of events which constitutes the Chester Cycle. They also define the speaker as an expositor. As his role shifts from commentator to character, Deus functions both as the medium of our understanding of the action and as the mediator between us and that action. We are allowed no complete and comfortable separation of spheres, for he and others continue to speak directly to us, as if we were part of the making of the events themselves -- as indeed we are. The framing strategy which emphasizes that this is a play also focuses our attention on the enclosed action so strongly that we are drawn in to it. Far from being passive spectators we are active participants[5]; salvation history is still occuring now. As the frame is broken by direct address and anachronism, we must come to acknowledge our places within and our responsibility to that sacred scheme.

In terms of incorporation, the second technique of dispositio, these speeches are important in a number of ways. First, they neatly enclose this opening play; with the addition of the central speech of damnation, the episode is divided into two unmistakable portions of

cause and effect. Second, they use direct address to break the frame and thereby actively engage the audience in the world of the play. Third, as didactic exposition they make explicit the significance of the enclosed action. Fourth, they state themes and use language subsequently repeated throughout the Cycle, linking this play and its events to others yet to come. Fifth, they specifically foreshadow the enactment of the significant subjects of the Cycle, including the centrality of the trinity and the judgments of doomsday. Sixth, by placing God at the beginning, middle, and end of the play, they anticipate the perhaps unconscious expectations of the audience about the proper structure of this or any cycle drama, for, as Deus himself informs us, he is indeed the start and finish, the first and last, and the midmost. The incorporative aspects of framing which here have their literal roots in the originating words of God thus extend to include the structure of the entire Cycle.

A different type of framing occurs in Play VI, "The Annunciation and The Nativity." This play consists of eight small scenes which present, through a series of questions and answers, a progressive accumulation of knowledge by the characters within the play as well as by the spectators who watch from the audience. Each scene furnishes one step in the advancing resolution of doubt and acquisition of faith that ultimately results

in the transformation of ignorance into knowledge, disbelief into conviction, and part of this earth into a piece of heaven. In each scene one character acts as the questioner who stands for every dubious onlooker, while another functions as the authority who prophesies, presents, or proves the sacred truth of the events seen.

There are three main blocks of action. The first, lines 1-176, consists of three scenes announcing the forthcoming birth; Gabriel convinces Maria, Maria tells Elizabeth, and Angelus persuades Joseph. The second main block is a complex alternation of four spearate scenes, at court and in the stable, which prepare for and then present the Nativity. Lines 185-563 introduce Octavian and his court, Joseph and Preco, Angelus and Maria, and finally Maria and her companions at the birth. The third main block of action shows the aftermath of the blessed event. Lines 644-98 take place back in court, where Sibil explains the significance of the child to Octavian and the others.

Between each main block of action, and at the very end, speeches by a player known as Nuntius (177-84) or Expositor (564-643) serve to separate each distinct group of scenes even as they provide transitions among the sets of events and between the audience and the action. Unlike Deus in Play I, the Expositor here takes no direct part in the action. The frame is not broken in

this particular fashion, yet audience involvement is nonetheless insured by the use of the device of questions and answers. Any unspoken doubts the spectators might have are satisfied in three ways: first, by witnessing the events themselves; second, by accepting the answers characters receive as their own; third, by responding to the lessons the Expositor declaims. The series of questions and answers which forms the underlying structure of Play VI sets up expectations in the audience that doubts will be assuaged and questions answered, expectations which prove to be thoroughly justified. With this in mind, we can now proceed to analyze Play VI in detail, noting how this serial device supports the overt framework provided by the didactic expositions.

Gabriel opens scene one (1-48) with his salutation and annunciation to Mary. When she asks the first question, "How may this bee, thow beast so bright?/In synne knowe I noe worldly wight? (25-26), he explains that "The Holye Ghoste shall in thee light" (27). As further proof that "nothinge to Godes might and myne/impossible is" (39-40), he gives her foreknowledge that Elizabeth also has conceived. Mary accepts this knowledge and in the second scene (49-120) takes it to Elizabeth who is amazed that Mary will be "Godes mother" (54) and that she herself now feels "the childe stirred in my bodye" (58). In answer to Elizabeth's query, "Lord, how may this befall?"

(56), Mary sings, according to the stage directions, then explains in a long hymn the actions of the triunal divinity.

The knowledge which Gabriel brought to Mary and Mary to Elizabeth, Elizabeth now suggests they both bring to Joseph. Thus these are the first three in the play's long series of receivers of knowledge. Although Mary was a sufficient figure of authority to Elizabeth, in scene three (121-76) Joseph needs more than her word to answer his question, "Whoe hasse made her with chylde?" (124). He does accept the explanation of Angelus: "The child that shee shall beare, iwys/of the Holy Gost begotten yt is/to save mankynd that did amisse,/and prophecye to fulfill" (165-69). After a short speech in which Joseph accepts the truth of what he has been told, Nuntius' arrival interrupts the scene in an abrupt transition to the next setting, full of personages ripe for new knowledge. "Make rowme, lordinges," he cries, "and give us waye/and lett Octavian come and playe/and Sybell the sage, that well fayre maye,/to tell you of prophecye" (177-80). There is no mistaking that the intended audience for these lines lies outside the bounds of the play. Using a timely anachronism as he departs, Nuntius thereby recalls to us the place of this one play within the complete cycle as well as the unity of all these significant actions:

"That lord that dyed on Good Frydaye/hee have you all both night and daye" (181-82). Thus we are readied for a new scene, for a new field of action for earthly events, and for a reminder in this Nativity play of the death to come in this Corpus Christi cycle.

Scene four (185-372) opens with a long speech by Octavian, whose language is reminiscent of those others in the Chester Play who also announce themselves as princes of power, divine, infernal, or earthly. Octavian is a just, terrestial king, who, despite the willingness of his subjects to honor him "as God" (306), is himself quick to make proper distinctions. Though he guards his worldly power, he understands the ultimate source of his personal might: "I, preeved prince most powere,/under heaven highest am I here" (185-86). Like Herod and Pilate in later plays, he speaks French (209-17) and can easily threaten the world with complete destruction (189-92). Unlike those evil kings, however, he uses his power only for the good of his kingdom and his subjects. Though he willingly takes what is his due, in riches, land and worship, he refuses what is not rightly his:

> I thank you, all that every I maye,
> the homage yee doe to mee.
> But follye yt were by manye a waye
> such soveraygntye for to assaye,
> syth I must dye I wotte not what day,
> to desyre such dignitye.

> For of all flesh, blood, and bonne
> made I am, borne of a womane;
> and sycker other matter nonne
> sheweth not right in mee.
>
> ....
>
> And godhead askes in all thinge
> tyme that hath noe begininge
> ne never shall have endinge;
> and none of this have I. (315-24, 329-32)

This lesson of rightful dominion applies doubly, to his subjects and to the audience as well. It lies at the heart of this play. Scenes one through three portrayed celestial workings on earth, while scene four presents contrasting terrestial actions. The two realms meet in the culmination of the play, the Nativity of Jesus. Octavian's concerned words regarding kingship lead him to ask of Sibil, the authority in this episode, "Shall ever be any earthlye kinge/to passe mee of degree?" (347-48). Her answer, "Yea, syr, .../a bab borne shalbe, blys to bringe/the which that never hase begininge/ne never shall ended bee" (349-52), directs us onward, to the scene in which that child arrives.

A short scene five (373-428) between Preco, Octavian's messenger, and Joseph, provides the motivation for the removal to Bethlehem as well as the first example of the

impingement of the state on the lives of the holy family. It thus connects the two realms which, after the events to come in the Play, will be for the Christian community in reality evermore inseparable. Preco answers Joseph's questions -- "A, lord, what doth this man nowe here?" (390) and "A, leeffe syr, tell mee I thee praye:/shall poore as well as rych paye?" (413-14) -- then warns him "to Bethlem to take the waye/leste thow in danger falle todaye" (419-20).

The authority of scene six is once again Angelus, who answers Mary's question on the puzzling sights of the trip to Bethlehem: "A, lord, what may this signifye?/Some men I see glad and merye/and some syghinge and sorye:/ Wherfore soever yt bee?" (429-32). Angelus responds by giving her a "tokeninge" (438), the lesson that the joyful folk are those who welcome "Abrahams seed/Christe" (443-44), and "the morneinge men .../are Jewes that shalbe put behinde" (445-46) for willfully holding to their ignorance of the Messiah. This scene thus continues the theme of earlier plays in which were divided the righteous from the disbelievers: obedient vs. fallen angels in Play I, Abel vs. Cain in II, Noe and his family vs. the rest of sinful mankind in III, and Moses vs. the idolators in V. As Angelus points out, the consequences of individual action are clear: only belief and

obedience lead to salvation. In this play the proofs for that belief mount up with each new scene. The most powerful earthly king joins the fold in scene four, and two humble midwives bow to incontrovertible proof in scene seven.

The Nativity of scene seven (453-563) contains Joseph's interesting question ad obstetrices: "Weomen, God you save and see!/Is yt your will to goe with mee?" (477-78). Both Tebell and Salome aver their readiness to be led by him, but Salome's physical inclination is not matched by the spiritual. Professing that "was never woman cleane maye/and chyld withowt man" (535-36), she reaches out to touch Mary, an attempt which results in a shriveled hand. Neither the appearance of the child, whose birth Mary announces in one short stanza (501-08), nor that of the star, which goes unregarded by the characters in this play, would have as much direct dramatic impact without the proof provided by the withering and healing of Salome's hand. Angelus, as authority in this scene, advises that she pray for forgiveness. As she does so, she becomes whole once again. Peter Travis accounts for the importance of this part of the action in this way: "In a pageant of so many discrete episodes, some ordering principle was obviously necessary to give to these various events an observable dramatic unity. This principle is suggested by the repetition of 'tokeninge'

[which means] a preternatural event or sacred sign revealing a truth normally beyond man's ken" (112).[6] Each character's recognition by means of a tokening adds to the accumulation of recognitions which culminate in the audience's own.

The Expositor, speaking under this name for the first time at the end of the scene, provides a transition to the next, as did Nuntius earlier. His speech emphasizes both the miraculous nature and the truth of what has just been "played" (567). As further proof, he relates as historical event the tale of a Roman temple that collapsed "that tyme that Christ was bore" (630). He recounts a past event, contemporaneous with the miracle just seen, as a substitute for the direct revelation unavailable to us in the present. Thus he keeps the continuity of the play's past time even as he speaks as our authority today.

Having reached the Nativity, the action of Play VI should logically be over. However, there is one more scene, eight (644-98), which provides the play with a coda to this central action. Two questions are asked in this last scene. Octavian first provides his own questions with the only possible answer: "Should I bee God? Naye, naye, witterlye!" (661). Through his acceptance of knowledge, he becomes the authority for his own subjects, those he rules by right. Thus this question and answer

closes the issues of proper sovereignty raised earlier in the play. Sibil then speaks the lesson of the vision they both see, but Primus Senator, the last speaker within Play VI, distrusts even the truth of this "wondrouse sight" (651): "a mayden bright,/a yonge chylde in her armes clight,/a bright crosse in his head" (652-54). The senator then asks Octavian the last question of the play: "Syr, shall this child passe yee/of worthines and dignitee?" (695-96), thereby refusing to understand what Octavian knows and what we in the audience must acknowledge as well. His willful disbelief withstands all the proofs enacted; he thus represents those here on earth who, like Cain, refuse not only grace but the very possibility of salvation.

The Expositor closes the play by relating an event which contrasts neatly with the earlier, fallen temple:

> "Lordings, that this is verey
> by verey sygne knowe yee maye;
> for in Rome in good faye,
> thereas this thinge was seene,
> was buyld a church in noble araye --
> in worshipp of Marye, that sweete maye --
> that yett lastes untyll this daye,
> as men knowe that there have binne. (699-706)

Thus, the past meets the present as the two parts of the action, the truth of Octavian and the truth of Mary, are joined together. The lesson has been well taught: "Wherby you may take good teene/that unbeleeffe is a fowle sinne,/as you have seene within this playe" (720-22).

For the members of the audience, only one questions remains: can they accept that lesson as their own?

We see that the framework of Play VI is not provided in a straightforward manner by the Expositor alone. Many figures with proper authority interpret events and reveal eternal truth. Some of these figures are earthly, like Octavian; some of them are heavenly, like Angelus; some partake of both realms, like Mary; and some seem to be of no time and no place, like the Expositor. This chain of authority in a sequence of scenes combines with the series of questions and answers and the succession of tokenings to bring the audience gradually to knowledge, to place this play within the Cycle as a whole, and to structure the play itself. The framework is open-ended, and as such allows us to look forward even as it encourages us to look within. Only by making connections in all directions are we fulfilling our own roles in the Chester drama.

Elsewhere we have seen how God takes center stage, literally and figuratively. Literally, in Play I ("Lucifer"), Deus' speech puts him squarely in the middle, in terms of actual numbers of lines as well as in terms of the action and lesson of the play. Figuratively, in Play VI (the "Nativity"), the events of Jesus' life are seen to give meaning to and control the actions of many others, even those unaware of or unwilling to

recognize his divinity. In the two plays which in Chester lead to and include the Crucifixion, "The Trial and Flagellation" (XVI) and "The Passion" (XVIA), Christ is again at the center of these events just as these events are at the core of the entire Cycle. The omission in these plays of Chester's typical framing device of Expositor or expositor-figure emphasizes the immediacy of the events; it almost seems to deny the audience the possibility of merely being spectators.

In the "Trial," the frantic efforts of the Jews to find Jesus guilty, or as Annas says, "to dampne him we binne throo,/lest he us all destroye" (132-33), contrast with the minimal responses of Jesus himself. Of the 394 lines in the text, Jesus speaks a total of 33, all within the action proper, none addressed to the audience directly, and none explicating that action for us. He is the still center around which all else revolves, and his few lines, as Martin Stevens says concerning the Wakefield "Buffeting," are "a ringing testament to the eloquence of silence" ("Language" 102). The "Passion" is more balanced that the "Trial" in its presentation of supporters and opponents, but Jesus remains quite passive throughout, the same purposeful and effective contrast as in the preceding play. Of the 479 lines of this play, only 28 are said by Jesus. These are also very powerful, however, all but eight being spoken from the

cross. The plot passes from Jesus' opponents through the Crucifixion to his supporters, but none of the characters provides an overt, didactic frame for the actions of this play.

A case can be made for the propriety, the necessity even, of eliminating the didactic frame from these two plays. V.A. Kolve's view of expositor-figures is that "their function is to enclose the action, whether natural or mythic, in a frame of commentary which puts the playing unmistakably at a distance from reality" (27). According to this theory, the Expositor should rightly be eliminated so that nothing comes between Christ's death and the audience's experience of that essential event. An analogy might be made to the cropping of illuminated miniatures, a practice which "serves to press the figures forward, bringing the scene closer to the viewer. Close framing of a devotional subject reflects the popularity of the pictorial half-length in the late fifteenth century..., an attempt to heighten the supplicant's experience of the devotional subject" (Kren 63).[8] This is a possible explanation for the lack of an expository framework around these particular Chester plays. Only by elimination of this device can the Passion, the central event of salvation history, be presented as closely, vividly, and directly as possible. If this were the case, however, none of the cycles would use such a framing

device, yet N-Town, the other mystery which regularly stresses exposition by a separate character, begins its "Passion Play II" with Contemplatio's 20-line speech to "Sofreyens and frendys," and York's "Christ's Death and Burial" concludes with Joseph's four-line apostrophe to the audience. Traditions of dramatic presentation of the material were not so rigid as to prevent wide variation in the playing of even these most sacred events.

There was a correspondingly wide variation in the presentation of the Crucifixion in contemporary art. One doubly framed artistic Passion was produced by the Master of Mary of Burgundy.[9] In this illumination there is a framing window ledge, containing a lady's scattered jewels, cushion and book, as well as an inner vision seen through the window. Within this inner crucifixion scene, the placement of other figures serves as a second frame to the crucial events occurring at the center. Otto Pächt describes the miniature: "The main event is pushed back toward the middleground, leaving the foreground to a row of figures seen from behind. These figures take no active part in the drama, they are part of the huge crowd of curious onlookers, spectators that had gathered for the momentous occasion" (35). The result of using the crowd of figures is not that the main scene is overlooked but rather that the pathos of the event is heightened by the spectators' indifference. However, we who bring

our external knowledge to the scene cannot be indifferent. As we, in effect, push our way through the crowd, we must work that much harder to participate in the spectacle ourselves.

The Chester "Passion" actually incorporates a similar, indirect framework of indifferent figures, although here they are not only onlookers but actual participants in the action. Not surprisingly, their inclusion results in the same effects as in the illumination. These characters, Cayphas, Annas and four undifferentiated Jews, are unlike the figures of the miniature in that they are not merely indifferent to Jesus' sufferings but cruelly and carelessly so. Virtually the entire first half of the play (240 lines) is given over to their quarreling, gambling, and competition in binding, nailing, and raising Jesus on the cross. This is very effective theater, for the intensity of dramatic anticipation grows throughout this delaying series of actions. Even an audience dreading the consummation of the play soon would be yearning to get the evil deed over with and done.

The central portion of Play XVIA consists of the Marys' lamentations and Jesus' consolations and last words. He speaks five times, for a total of 21 lines, and he alone appears untouched by the tumult swirling around him (first the brawling of his torturers and then

the laments of his followers). This too could be forcefully played, with the supporters mourning on the right and the opponents squabbling on the left, positions recalling those of the fallen vs. steadfast angels in the first play and forshadowing those of the damned vs. saved souls in the last. In addition, a division into halves around a still center holds as well in terms of the action of this play. The last 120 lines comprise a solemn aftermath to Jesus' death which directly contrasts with the hellish disorder of the first half of the play. The restoration of Longyus' sight illustrates the miracles of Jesus' grace freely given, while the removal and burial of the body by Joseph and Nicodemus reveals the actions which faith makes possible.

In the final section of the "Passion," the connection between the episodic and the cyclic frames becomes most evident. When Joseph's role replaces that of Mary, her faith in the Nativity is succeeded by his hopes for the Resurrection.[10] As these two characters surround the central figure in this play, so these two most significant events in the life of Christ encircle this central play of the Cycle. As Pamela Sheingorn explains:

> on the level of the entire cycle framing works around the central core of the Passion, as ensembles in the pictorial arts sometimes do. The deep grief of the Passion is framed most closely by the joyous moments of Nativity and Resurrection to create a complete cycle of the life of Christ. Framing this are the historical events of the Old Testament and of the church on earth from the apostles through Antichrist. And embracing all is the cosmic frame of Creation and Doomsday. (28)

In the "Passion" we are presented with the innermost core of the ever-widening circles of thematic and structural frames. We see also that both types of framing, episodic and cyclic, use similar techniques toward the same ends: enclosure of action, intensification of response, and clarification of meaning.

Whether or not shaped by an Expositor, the frames of the plays of the Chester Cycle make the necessity of audience participation clear to its members. In fact, the frames provide the possibility of that participation in the first place. We see that frames are not barriers but transition zones, which not only allow but encourage entrance into the world of the play. As we are continually reminded, the words, actions, miracles, and doubts exhibited in this "Passion" are played for our benefit. Anyone who refuses the lesson of his or her own eyes must then stand on the left, stay behind like the Jews, or remain in the initial condition of Longyus: "What

I doe I may not see,/whether yt be evell or good" (382-83). The framing devices of the Chester Play ensure that the distinction between good and evil is set out clearly; it is up to all in the audience to decide for themselves if they will choose to see.

Play XXII, "The Prophets of Antichrist," contrasts strongly with "The Passion" in its almost complete dispensation with visual spectacle. This play seems almost anti-dramatic at first, yet further consideration of the possibilities of dramatic effect leads to the realization that the Chester playwright once again skillfully manipulates his audience's involvement in the world of the play. The bulk of XXII consists of direct address, a series of speeches in which the Expositor alternates with the prophets, Ezechiell (1-14), Zacharias (49-72), Danyell (125-56), and John Evangelista (173-212). After each prophet announces his identify, he declares his vision; after each speech, the Expositor interprets the signs to the audience: "Nowe, lordeinges, what these thinges may bee,/I praye you herken all to mee" (213-14). It is only in the concluding lines of the play that anything resembling action is even hinted at. Until the last, the writer relies for dramatic effect upon the vivid pictures of the horrors attendant upon the coming of Antichrist which the prophets paint through their language. Yet

this is very effective stagecraft, because by denying us the usual cathartic release in action, we are forced to rely upon our imagination. Because throughout much of the Play we are dependent upon what we actually see, here, in contrast, the pictures of beasts and other wonders become more effectively horrifying when they remain unshown. If this were the method of the entire Cycle, it would be dull indeed, but the contrast between this and other, more active plays is striking. And the contrast between this and the following play is all the more telling. The visions of the prophets prepare us for Antichrist to come. More unexpectedly perhaps, the apparent straightforward framing speeches of the Expositor serve not only to clarify the arcane words of the prophets but to emphasize the drama of the anticipated arrival as well.

Even though they all speak directly to us, there is an important difference between the role of the Expositor and that of the prophets. The prophets, even in their apostrophes, such as the first "Herken, all that loven heale!" (1), are characters strictly within the play. The Expositor, by contrast, while not quite one of us, is not exactly just a part of the play either. He is not merely filling the role of preacher, though he sounds like one when he says,

> Nowe for to moralyze aright
> which this prophett sawe in sight,
> I shall found through my might
> to you in meeke mannere,
> and declare that soone in height
> more playnlye, as I have teight.
> Lystens nowe with hartes light
> this lesson for to learne. (73-80)

His speeches are logical and argue particular interpretations, as do sermons, yet the Expositor himself is more than a preacher in his manipulations of our understanding, perception, and reception of events. The last lines of the play show how truly complex seemingly simple exposition can be:

> Nowe have I tould you, in good faye,
> the tokens to come before doomesdaye.
> God give you grace to do so aye
> that you then worthye bee
> to come to the blysse that lasteth aye.
> As mych as here wee and our playe,
> of Antechristes signes you shall assaye.
> Hee comes! Soone you shall see! (333-40)

In this short passage, the Expositor reminds us of the fictionality of what we have just witnessed even as he recalls to us the truth of the meaning of these events. He hints at the superiority of seeing over merely listening, an emphasis on the need for active participation which is stressed throughout the Play. He also recalls us from the dramatic and ahistorical past which is, as long as the play is being played, the only real time and directs us to the inevitable future, to doomsday when what we have witnessed here in the play will become in fact the

only reality. In addition, he reminds us of the possibility of salvation through God's grace and our own worthiness. He thus joins together all the times of sacred history. To puzzle this all out might seem confusing, but in his presentation everything becomes clear, and we are set neatly in our places.

Unlike that of "The Fall of Lucifer," the framework of this play is open, for the same speaker does not begin and end the play, thereby neatly enclosing the action. Yet, in analogy to the demi-vinets of paintings, an open framework is a common enough procedure. More important here is the fact that the frame is broken in a very interesting way. These last lines of the Expositor point directly to events not in the future of that sacred history we are seeing dramatized but in the immediate future of the play series. Antichrist, and his lines parodying those of Deus' creation in Play I, opens the very next play himself. It is by no means unusual for characters or events in one play to foreshadow another; that is, after all, what typology is all about. That is also just what the prophesying in this play is all about. But the prophets who speak to us speak only of their visions; it is the part of the Expositor to speak of the Antichrist -- and so he does, first by his explanations and then by his actions. With these last words it is as if, as does indeed occur, Antichrist rises

off the pages of text which the prophets are in effect reading; it is as if he rises up alive out of the world of the play and enters, as he truly does, into this, our world, where we sit, viewers of the dramatic spectacle. However moved we may be by the words of the prophets, we know they are but words. Then suddenly any remaining complacency is interrupted by the terrible, echoing cry: "Hee comes!" Travis refers to this line as "a last-minute redirection of dramatic expectation" (230), and indeed it gets its power from the unexpected move from a more distant dramatic time and place to one closer and more real, from a world of words to one of action. It is worth stressing that the force of this move results from the skillful utilization of the framing speech of the Expositor.

The author seems to play here with levels of truth and reality. Each level appears, in its place, real, yet can they all be real? Analysis of a similar technique employed by the Master of Mary of Burgundy may help answer the question. When viewing this miniature, we willingly follow as the artist draws us in through the window ledge, past the furnishings of the lady, between the indifferent figures of the crowd, to the central scene of crucifixion. Only upon reflection do we pause to ask which of these levels, the border or the illustration, is real. On the one hand, the border zone is more

detailed, life-like and larger; on the other hand, the important theme lies in the enclosed picture. The Master is playing with traditional ideas of frame and enframed here: "The still-life in the border has the intensity of a close-up while life itself seems to have the remoteness of a distant vision. One could also say: we get the illusion that the marginal zone is alive and the scene in the centre only a picture" (Pächt 27). At the same time, however, "what we see distantly through the window is now the main story, illustrating the text of the subsequent pages, while ... the still-life on the window-sill ... [is] merely the introduction to it" (Pächt 27). Although we can still ask which is real, it is more important to realize that the very act of manufacturing and breaking the illusion helps create the relationship between scene and spectator which lies at the heart of all visual spectacle, artistic or dramatic. It is, in fact, precisely the switching back and forth between two or more places of illusion that intrigues and delights viewers of both forms. There is no need to determine which of the illusions, border ornament or interior scene, didactic exposition or enclosed action, is the real one. They are both real although perhaps not quite on the same level of reality. In art, it is a basic principle that a larger object appears closer to the viewer and often, therefore, more important and truer.

Medieval painters purposely employed enlargement for emphasis, even when it went against natural representation. In drama, this principle appears as tradition transmuted. In this sense, the largest figure in the "Prophets" play is, finally, not any of the prophets nor the Expositor. Larger than life, looming even -- or especially -- in his absence, is the Antichrist. Heralded yet unseen, he commands the stage, and we anxiously await his presence. As we saw in the earlier "Passion," an event delayed is an event more actively anticipated, even -- or especially -- an evil one. This recognition and manipulation of human nature and human vision for dramatic power is seen throughout the Cycle. In every play examined thus far, the use of framing devices has served to augment these effects. In the final play to be investigated, no exception to this practice is found.

In the Chester Cycle we find many partial visions and many levels of truth, resolvable only in the ultimate truth of God which individual plays attempt to capture, however imperfectly. The continual succession of action, speech, and exposition affords us glimpses of the complete, albeit ineffable, mystery.[11] Even so, Chester tells us that these partial truths remain contradictory only to those unwilling to reconcile them through obedience

and faith. In the culminating play of the Cycle, the essential connection between partial truths is made explicit, as many loose ends are tied up in an ultimate synthesis of theme, language, character, action, structure, and significance.

Play XXIV, "The Judgement," opens in a familiar way, with a speech by Deus beginning[12]

> I, God, greatest of degree,
> in whom begyninge non may bee,
> that I am pearles of postee,
> nowe appertly that shalbe preeved.
> In my godhead are persons three;
> maye non in faye from other flee.
> Yet soveraygne might that ys in mee
> may justly be meeved. (1-8)

This first stanza of Deus' three-stanza speech sets out the important ideas which will shortly be seen and heard: the divine origin of the universe, the verity of the trinity, and the rightfulness of judgment. These lines refer to the beginning of all things (which was played in"Creation") and the end (which is about to occur in "Doomsday"). They are specific too in their reminder that this is a play, for it is in the actual enactment of these events that all truths have been "preeved." In terms of disposition by incorporation, this play continues to employ techniques encountered earlier: framing of one play by an expositor-figure and the breaking of the individual play-frame by direct audience address; framing of the Cycle by recapitulation and foreshadowing of action and the centering of that action on the figure

who opens and closes the entire work.

As in earlier plays, Deus also holds the midmost position. Visually, he stands at the center as Jesus, ordering the saved to his right side and the damned to his left. Verbally, he declaims his longest speech (357-436) at almost the exact midpoint of this text of 708 lines. In it he describes his bleeding as both a proof and a warning to the attendant audience. Dramatically, he is the center of the activity; by his judgments, his grace, and his will are the saved brought by angels to heaven and the damned by demons to hell.

Unlike the closed framework of the very first play, the "Judgement" does not end with words of Deus himself. In one important sense, this is indeed an open-ended play. If, as we have been continually told, everything has been enacted for our benefit -- not only the events of the Cycle but the events which that Cycle replays -- then ultimate incorporation lies not in the Play but in our individual acceptance of its lessons. In his central speech, Jesus says,

> Nowe that you shall appertlye see
> freshe blood bleede, man, for thee --
> good to joye and full greate lee,
> the evyll to damnatyon.
> Behould nowe, all men! Looke on mee
> And see my blood freshe owt flee
> that I bleede on roode-tree
> for your salvatyon. (421-28)

The recurrence on stage of this sanguinary act re-emphasizes that the truth of the events portrayed lies not in dramatic consistency but in the Christian philosophy which unifies the world and all its parts. Jesus says here that he bleeds so that we will believe: "that you shall appertlye see." He bleeds also that we will be saved: "I bleede on roode-tree/for your salvatyon." There can be, finally, no separation of these three, action, belief and salvation. Salvation is dependent upon belief just as belief follows logically from prior action. The very speeches of the salvati emphasize their faith; thereby they are saved. The damnati stress their lack of faith; their present words, like their past actions, now ensure damnation. Through action and through words, we are held responsible for our own final fates. On the day of God's deeming, no longer will any be able to count on Christ's mercy. That time, the period of grace under which we now are living, will be ended, and all will stand or fall on merit only.[13] The justification of that harsh reality is one of the lessons set forth in this play. If, after all we have seen and heard here, we still do not heed the lessons of obedience and faith, then even the All-mighty must act righteously. As Secundus Demon successfully argues:

> Therefore, righteouse yf thou bee,
> these men are myne, as mote I thee,
> for on good deede here before thee
> have they not to shewe.
> Yf there bee anye, saye on! Lettes see!
> Yf there be nonne, deeme them to mee;
> or elles thou art as false as wee --
> all men shall well knowe. (565-72)

The lesson is logical: if we also refuse to believe, as evidenced through our actions as much as by our words, then our fates too are sealed.

The speeches of the four apostles which end this play and cap the entire Cycle reiterate the need for faith, the inexcusableness of ignorance, and the essential connection between words and actions. In this short coda to the Chester Cycle, the language and events of human lives, of salvation history, and of the Play itself are finally all bound together. John speaks the concluding words:

> And I, John the Evangeliste,
> beare wytnes of thinges that I wyste
> to which they might full well have truste
> and not have donne amysse.
> And all that every my lord sayth here,
> I wrote yt in my mannere.
> Therfore, excuse you, withowten were,
> I may not well, iwysse. (701-08)

Like the speeches of the other three apostles, these lines emphasize written words, specifically those of the Gospels but also those of the Play itself. The words of his speech reflect the thrice-occurring, circular reality of the Play, the Bible, and life itself. John

says here that he wrote in the past the words which Jesus speaks today concerning events which have not yet occurred. Like the others, he stresses that ignorance now can provide no "excusation" (698) for anyone, but one significant pronoun switch shifts this lesson from exposition to exhortation. The other three speak in general terms of the need for men to "save <u>their</u> soules" (682; my emphasis throughout), especially having been "warned <u>they</u> were by manye a waye" (686). John's words, in contrast, put an interesting twist on the usual humility formula of many Middle English poems. It was a commonplace for medieval poets to apologize for their humble efforts; Chaucer, as we know, employs this trope ironically by blaming his "auctors" for any inadequacies. An audience which anticipates words like "Please excuse me ...," hears instead this unexpected phrase, "Therfore, excuse <u>you</u>." Because this Play is not merely a theatrical work but an actual enactment of Christian truth, inadequacy of presentation is far less significant than inadequacy of response. The burden is shifted from the writer to the audience. John, as a character in the Play and as the author of his Gospel, has fulfilled his role as authority; he wrote and taught in life and speaks and teaches now. There is no question of us having to excuse him. Nor, he tells us, is there any longer the possibility of him excusing us. Having been addressed as

spectators, readers, listeners, and participants, if we still fail to heed the lessons of all which has been "rehearsed here" (680), the fault is ours alone.

Thus we see that the circularity of audience knowledge, poetic presentation, and audience response which was at work in "Rondel 57" appears here too, greatly magnified in scope. The episodic, linear arrangement of the series of individual plays rests upon the circular, inclusive conformation of the whole Cycle. Only by making the complex and necessary connections between language and event which Chester presents can we hope to begin to understand that Cycle. Examination of the framing devices thus fosters not only a more precise comprehension of the structural arrangement of this one Play and of the organizing principles behind Middle English drama in general, but a better understanding of the elusive and important ideas of order and disposition which underlie much of medieval culture as well.

NOTES

1

I thank Martin Stevens for suggesting this terminology. Whatever strengths this chapter contains are at least partly due to his perceptive and cogent criticisms. The weaknesses, which he did his best to eradicate, remain my own.

2

Audience identification with the stage proceedings was enhanced by the use of anachronisms of time, place, and even person. Anachronism occurs only by the breaking of a frame. In fact, I believe that in the Middle Ages frames were made in order to be broken, for it is in the intersection of and interaction between adjacent worlds that real interest lies.

Kolve discusses at length this important and often puzzling quality of the cycles, devoting two excellent chapters in The Play Called Corpus Christi to anachronism of time and place, both of which he says are "pervasive" in the drama, sometimes used for "the sake of convenience," sometimes involving "conscious artistic intention" (104). Williams, in The Drama of Medieval England, agrees that "some of this anachronism is unconscious, imputable to ignorance; some is for comic effect," yet he states that "the dominant principle of selection and presentation of material in the cycles is constantly to establish connections between scriptural story and the personal experience of the audience. Both history and dogma have to be fitted out in familiar garments" (123). Kolve explains that anachronistic localization in time and place does more than merely give "vividness and immediacy to the stories dramatized" (114):

> By means of a pervasive anachronism and anglicization it [the drama] furnished a critical image of moral and social life as lived in the later Middle Ages. It is possible that these cycles felt no need to stage actions from present time because they staged all past actions as if they were of the present. The Corpus Christi drama managed to hold a mirror to the times while imitating the structure of human time. (104)

The structure of the Chester Play, at least partly imitative of the perceived order of the universe in space and time, is my concern here. Anachronism, by emphasizing the framework even as it breaks it, strengthens that structure.

3 For clarity, I list here the relevant plays in which appear the rulers mentioned in this paragraph: I. "The Fall of Lucifer," Lucifer; II. "Adam and Eve," Demon; V. "Balaak and Balaam," Balaak; VI. "The Annunciation and The Nativity," Octavian; VIII. "The Three Kings," Herod; X. "The Slaughter of the Innocents," Herod; XII. "The Temptation," Diabolus; XVI. "The Trial and The Flagellation," Herod, Pilate; XVIA. "The Passion," Pilate; XVII. "The Harrowing of Hell," Sathanas; XVIII. "The Resurrection," Pilate; XXIII. "Antichrist," Antichrist.

4 The nine plays opening with kingship speeches are I. "Lucifer," Deus; II. "Adam," Deus; III. "Noah's Flood," God; X. "Slaughter," Herod; XII. "Temptation," Diabolus; XIII. "The Blind Chelidonian," Jesus; XVIII. "Resurrection," Pilate; XXIII. "Antichrist," Antichrist; XXIV. "The Last Judgement," Deus.

Speeches by Deus or Jesus open **four other plays:** V. "Moses and the Law," Deus; XIV. "Christ at the House of Simon the Leper," Jesus; XV. "The Last Supper," Jesus; XX. "The Ascension," Jesus. In these plays, neither speaks a kingship speech per se, but the initial positioning strengthens the pattern. Once again, the Cycle relies upon audience involvement and satisfies expectations which it has set up itself. In addition, we also note four other plays which open with words referring to the highest king: VIII. "The Three Kings," Primus Rex: "Mightye God in majestye"; IX. "The Offerings of the Three Kings," Primus Rex: "Myghtie God and most of mayne"; XI. "The Purification," Symeon: "Mightie God,.../that most art in majestee"; XVII. "The Harrowing of Hell," Adam: "O Lord and soveraigne saviour".

5 Stevens discusses the identification of spectators as participants from the perspective of Brechtian aesthetics ("Illusion").

6 Travis' stress on discrete episodes opposes Strohm's emphasis that the audience begins its viewing of this play with the knowledge that the characters must acquire. This, of course, is true, but I think that the dramatic effectiveness of Play VI lies in the steady acquisition of knowledge, that of the audience outside of the play along with that of the characters within it.

7 Lumiansky and Mills present these as two separate plays but note that they appear as one (XVI) in manuscript H (Harley 2124) (Chester xxxiii).

8 On cropping, see Ringbom as well.

9 Reproduced in Pächt.

10 Similarly, Sheingorn notes the framing resulting from the use of "the wholly earthbound character of Joseph both before and after the mystery of the Annunciation, and the soldiers at the tomb before and after the Resurrection. These frames, which at first seem incongruous, also create subjective transitions that facilitate identification with the central scene" (28).

11 And, according to Stevens, one not only ineffable but "unrepresentable" as well ("Illusions" 457). Indeed how to portray the unknowable is the main problem of the cycles. This chapter on incorporation is thus not a discussion of a completely satisfying solution but of some aspects of an attempt at one.

12 Concerning the Latin phrase which precedes this speech, "Ego sum alpha et omega, I, primus et novissimus," we cannot be certain if Deus was actually meant to speak these words. As Lumiansky and Mills point out, Chester cites numerous passages from the Bible in Latin, though it is not clear if all of these passages were acted or spoken during the performance (100).

A good example of the difficulty in ascertaining what occurred during an actual performance can be seen in the following lines in which a rough English translation, spoken by the Expositor, precedes the Latin original:

> Anon Phinees, a younge man devowte,
> captayne hee was of that whole rowte,
> and of these wretches, without dowbt,
> xxiiii thowsand the slewe.
> And then God was well content
> With Phinees for his good intent,
> as the prophett wryteth verament,
> and here wee shall yt shewe:
>
> 'Stetit Phinees, et placavit, et cessavit
> quassatio, et reputatum est ei ad justitiam
> in generatione sua' etc. (5.428-35 sd)

Even eliminating the editors' punctuation at the end of the Expositor's speech, it is not apparent whether the playwright intended to bolster the authority of these words by the additional proof of a mime show within the play or whether the very words of the prophet in Latin would have been convincing enough. At the end of the cycle, this second option is the one chosen by Demon Primus in his arguments for the damnation of the deserving:

> Yea, this thou sayd, verament,
> that when thou came to judgment
> thy angelles from thee should be sent
> to put the evyll from the good
> and put them into great torment,
> there reemynge and grennynge verey fervent,
> which words to clearkes here present
> I wyll rehearse.
>
> 'Sic erit consummatione seculi: exibunt
> angeli et [separabunt] malos de medio
> justorum, et mittent eos in caminum ignis, ubi
> erit fletus et stridor dentium.'
>
> Therefore delyver mee these men ... (24.572-81)

Demon Primus certainly feels that his argument is made secure by the Latin quotation.

The continual citation of scripture throughout the Chester cycle is itself part of a more basic structural pattern, a reliance on the simple fact that these are words being spoken, Latin or otherwise. From first to last, "alpha et oo" as it were, we are reminded that these plays are simply -- though not merely -- a production of

a book, the book, Holy Scripture. The opening speech of Play I informs us that all that exists is created by the will of God and that all that we will see is contained in his words. And the last speeches of Play XXIV remind us, in the paraphrase of his gospel which each apostle speaks, that we have been presented here with an imitation of the words of the sacred book.

13

Jesus makes this contrast himself: "When tyme of grace was endurynge,/to seeke yt you had no lykinge./ Therefore must I, for anythinge,/doe rightuousenes todaye" (24.609-12).

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Chapter 4

Interpolation: Troilus and Criseyde

Troilus and Criseyde, Geoffrey Chaucer's "most complex and finished poem" (Payne 171), illustrates the third method of the unwritten dispositio. Interpolation consists of the insertion of smaller portions of discourse into a larger work, thereby helping to order it. Letters work in two ways in this poem. Individually, they reveal character, intensify mood, and carry theme. Collectively, they repeat form, strengthen narrative flow, and link books. Following the letters through the poem allows us to trace the separate stages in the course of the love affair with which Chaucer is concerned. Interpolation of letters, therefore, acts as a dispositional device which helps structure the entire work.[1]

Like substitution, the method of disposition analyzed in Chapter 2, interpolation involves alternate modes of discourse but not, however, as replacements for the entire work. It differs also from incorporation, examined in Chapter 3, in that it does not utilize frames to enclose larger portions of narration. The particular additions of letters into this poem are far smaller than the whole, but they are not therefore inconsequential,

superfluous, or merely decorative embellishments. On the contrary, Chaucer's method here seems so naturally interpolative that we would no more think of excising the "Litera Troili" than we would of eliminating Troilus himself.

Interpolation is not limited to Chaucer, of course, but is one of the major methods of disposition in Middle English literature. Often it is one of the most puzzling. The contrast between the works of Chaucer and William Langland, for instance, can be seen as the difference between the successful handling of this method and the unsuccessful. In Troilus, interpolations are not digressive nor do they appear to be tangential; in Piers Plowman, unfortunately, they often do. Instead of helping to unify the work, Langland's embeddings of alternate types of discourse frequently confuse or appear to interrupt. Chaucer's interpolations, on the other hand, are integral components of the poem.

We can begin our examination of the letters with an overview of their placement throughout the Troilus. The five major instances of letters written out or described in full or in part are:

1.655-65: Oenone writes to Paris; Pandarus reads to Troilus

2.1065-92: Troilus writes to Criseyde; Pandarus instructs Troilus

2.1218-25: Criseyde writes to Troilus; Pandarus instructs Criseyde

5.1317-1421: Troilus writes to Criseyde; the "Litera Troili"

5.1590-1631: Criseyde writes to Troilus; the "Litera Criseydis"

From this table we see that Chaucer concentrates the major letters at the beginning and at the end of the poem. Book III has only minor references to letter exchanges (488, 501), and Book IV has no mention of letters at all. Minor references occur also in Book V (470, 1423-31, 1583). The only other letter of which more than a passing mention is made occurs in 2.1697-1705 and will be discussed in turn. Like letter one, it places the characters within the larger context of the Trojan War and foreshadows the end of the poem, even though -- or perhaps because -- it does not directly concern the central love affair. In sum, the five major letters work in the following way: letter one presents background which ties the main characters to broader circumstances; letters two and three begin the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde; letters four and five end it. Other letters are exchanged during the affair and in its aftermath, but we are left to imagine their specific contents.

The first letter in Troilus is not authored by either of the lovers but by Oenone, Paris' abandoned wife.

Pandarus reads a portion of her letter aloud to impress Troilus with his own fitness to advise in love although he himself has not had amorous success. In this part of her"compleynte" (l.6557) which Pandarus quotes, Oenone prays to Apollo to aid her quest to retain Paris' love:

> 'Phebus, that first fond art of medicyne,' '
> Quod she, 'and couthe in every wightes care
> Remedye and reed, by herbes he knew fyne,
> Yet to hymself his konnyng was ful bare;
> For love hadde hym so bounden in a snare,
> Al for the doughter of the kynge Amete,
> That al his craft ne koude his sorwes bete.'
> (l.659-65)

Although Chaucer's source for this portion was spurious (Meech 112), nonetheless Chaucer finds important uses for Oenone's complaint. As the first in the series of love letters, it readies the reader for the others to come, it links Troilus and Criseyde to similarly loving couples, and it presents Pandarus with the opportunity to expound on love. Comparing his condition to Oenone's, Pandarus assures Troilus that he understands what the younger man is undergoing: "Right so fare I, unhappily for me./I love oon best, and that me smerteth sore" (l.666-67). Although he cannot cure his own lovesickness, he will do his best for Troilus: "And yet, peraunter, kan I reden the,/And nat myself" (l.668-69). No matter who the lady is, Pandarus will help Troilus win her: "Ne, by my trouthe, I kepe nat restreyne/The fro thi love, theigh that it were Eleyne/That is thi brother wif" (l.676-78).

In this context, the reference to Helen naturally calls Oenone to mind again. Helen's liaison with Paris being the direct cause of the Trojan War, it would appear to be somewhat inappropriate for Pandarus to allude to it at this point. It also would seem rather indelicate of him even to hint to Troilus that he might, with any propriety, love his brother's wife. Pandarus' references to Oenone and Helen are meant to inspire Troilus' confidence, to validate his passion, and to promote his future happiness. Chaucer, however, uses these parallel love affairs to opposite ends. For his audience, with knowledge that the characters within the story lack, these allusions to Paris and his loves only point up the unhappy consequences of love. Paris loves Helen, and eventually their love destroys Troy. Oenone loves Paris, and eventually her love (and concurrent jealousy) destroys first Paris and then herself. To finish the analogy, Troilus loves Criseyde, and -- the rest is history long foretold. As Chaucer himself states in the opening lines of the poem,

> The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,
> My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.
> (1.1-5)

There is never any doubt as to the outcome of this affair or the consequences of the lovers' actions.

Since Chaucer is so straightforward about the ultimate outcome it is interesting that he uses only this small portion of Oenone's complaint. When Pandarus begins, he says that he will speak of "hir hevyness" (655), but he reads instead an obscure reference to Phoebus Apollo. As Sanford B. Meech says, "without annotation, the pseudo-Ovidian Latin reference to the God and his amours would be unintelligible to the generality of readers, medieval or modern; and, in point of fact, glosses usually did accompany it in medieval manuscripts" (113). The image presented in this portion of Oenone's letter is of the physician who cannot cure himself. Apollo cannot, Oenone cannot, Pandarus cannot, and, when the same circumstances befall Troilus, neither will he be able to cure his own lovesickness. Only Criseyde can do that -- and this leads us to a further irony, for when Criseyde jilts Troilus (as Paris has jilted Oenone), he too will write a begging letter. In terms of the realism of the narrative, of course, Pandarus cannot remind Troilus of Oenone's ultimate destruction, for in their time this ending has not yet occurred. As far as they know, Paris is well and living with Helen, and Oenone is pining for Paris and writing pitiful, pleading letters. Troilus of course has not yet loved and lost; he has not even met the lady. Yet from the very beginning, we are not allowed to forget the end.

Readers are thus suspended between their knowledge of Troilus' end and the ignorance of the other characters. Chaucer plays on the resulting uncertainty in a game of reference and allusion which in certain respects is not unlike that of the Chester playwright. The overall plan -- of the innermost plot of the love affair, of the larger enclosing actions of the Trojan War, and indeed of the course of the entire poem which surrounds all -- is never in question. Yet particular instances are presented as if the outcome were unknown. Unlike Chester, the Troilus uses direct, anachronistic references infrequently. In just this one instance, however, levels of allusion pile up. Oenone employs Apollo's love affair with "the doughter of the kynge Amete" in explanation of her own position. Pandarus then cites Oenone's love as a parallel case to his own and as a support in his arguments for furthering Troilus' passion. Chaucer, however, explicitly states none of this background. Although he continually emphasizes the fictionality of his presentation, he holds back information which would help us make sense of such obscure allusions.

We cannot know for sure exactly what knowledge of Troy Chaucer had or expected his audience to possess. At the least, he knows Oenone's identity, and so there is some irony to having Pandarus mention her unhappiness at

this point to the brother of her husband. At the most, he is aware of the conjunction of her fate with Paris' at the fall of Troy. Either way, Chaucer establishes a complicity with his readers, whose knowledge goes beyond that of any of the characters. As much as we are compelled to sympathize in reading Troilus and Criseyde, the continual reminders of the fictionality and incompleteness of what we read works in the opposite direction. It distances us and intellectualizes our responses. The poet's purpose throughout seems to be the establishment of a double sense of action and understanding. Caught up in Troilus' story, we are yet continually reminded that it is only a story. There is no clear demarcation between history and story here. Chaucer reminds those who catch the reference that like Oenone's letter, the story we are reading (or hearing) is a literary work. His tale of Troilus is but one small part of the larger story of Troy which began with the unstated subject of Oenone's letter, Paris' abduction of Helen. As Chaucer says earlier, he has no intention of relating the whole tale: "[it] falleth naught to purpos me to telle;/For it were here a long digression/Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle" (1.142-44). His stated concern is only with Troilus' part of the greater "matere." Those who wish to know more can look to "the Troian gestes" (1.145). For Chaucer, real interest seems to lie

in the means by which old lessons are retold, ancient history re-presented, and old books made new. In other words, it is the individual and original disposition of material that is his main concern.

Yet despite these disclaimers, the ultimate outcome of the siege is not irrelevant to the action which appears within this narrative. If Criseyde's father Calchas had not foreseen the destruction of Troy, he would not have gone over to the besieging Greeks, he would not have sent for Criseyde, she would not have met Diomede and betrayed Troilus, and Troilus would not have died for love. In the same way, by recalling Oenone to us, Chaucer leads us to remember also Oenone's bane, the love of Paris for Helen which began it all. In an important sense, then, this is indeed the letter which begins the tale. By means of this letter, Chaucer sets out for his audience the subject of his poem (love and the double sorrow engendered by the human search for it), the characters (Troilus, Pandarus, Criseyde, et al.), the setting (Troy and the Greek camp), and the method (allusion and ironic distancing). It is not of course, entirely by dictaminal means that all of these are presented, but the use of the letters reinforces our perceptions, focuses our attention, and strengthens the disposition of this poem.

The second letter is quite different from the first. As letter one promoted an awareness of history and story, letter two encourages a consideration of rhetoric and language. In this letter Chaucer relies for background less on ancient histories of the Trojan War and more on the contemporary artes dictaminis. In terms of the art of letter-writing as utilized in Troilus and Criseyde, this letter is perhaps the most important, even though it is presented not in full but only in summary. The first mention of this letter, which Pandarus directs Troilus to write to Criseyde, comes in 2.1006. Having confessed the name of the lady of his affections, Troilus is then instructed to further his quest for love by writing a letter, plainly stating his case. As Pandarus says,

> ... if I were as thow,
> God help me so, as I wolde outrely,
> Of myn owen hond, write hire right now
> A lettre, in which I wold hire tellen how
> I ferde amys, and hire biseche of routhe.
> (2.1003-07)

This is somewhat odd advice for Pandarus to proffer. Having recently read Oenone's letter, he knows that she too wrote for pity. Unlike Troilus, currently on the upswing of Fortune's wheel, she received none. However, the real irony of the reference lies not with Pandarus but with the author, who knows that although Criseyde takes pity now later she will have none. Nonetheless, Pandarus advises Troilus to be a man of action and forge ahead:

"Now help thiself, and leve it nought for slouthe!" (2.1008).

Before Troilus begins his letter, Pandarus gives him instructions regarding the writing of it (2.1023-43). Both Pandarus' instructions and Troilus' letter are derived by Chaucer from passages of Ovid, Boccaccio and Horace (Robinson 820-21) which discuss the proper methods of composition. Yet Chaucer's more modern tradition of letter-writing goes beyond that of any of his preceptors. As J.W.H. Atkins states, in Pandarus' prescription, "Chaucer suggests epistolary methods of a more liberal kind" than the usual "mechanical" dictamen (159). In fact, rather than giving (in Meech's phrase) "pedantically detailed instructions in the ars dictaminis" (45), Pandarus surprisingly concentrates not on structure but on style:

> Towchyng thi lettre, thou art wys ynough.
> I woot thow nylt it dygneliche endite,
> As make it with thise argumentes tough;
> Ne scryvenyssh or craftily thow it write;
> Biblotte it with thi teris ek a lite;
> And if thow write a goodly word al softe,
> Though it be good, reherce it noughte to ofte.
> (2.1023-29)

And so on for another 14 lines (2.1030-44). In the Filostrato, Boccaccio's Pandaro also counsels writing a letter, but his advice as to the proper form and content constitutes only part of two stanzas:

> But nevertheless, if I were in thy place, I would write to her in mine own hand all about mine anguish, and beyond this, I would beeseech her by the gods, and by Love, and by her courtesy, that she should care for me. (2.91)
>
> ....
>
> Therefore write and put therein all thy faith, all thy grief, and then thy desire. Omit nothing: tell all. (2.92)

This advice, which pleased the lover greatly, cannot compare to the detailed counsels of Pandarus. An analysis of Pandarus' words shows just how familiar Chaucer was with the precepts of the ars dictaminis and how easily he adapted them to fit his characters and their circumstances.

One of the best examples of this important medieval rhetorical art is the immensely popular Summa dictaminis (ca. 1228-29) of Guido Faba, one of the three masters of Bolognese dictamen. This practical guide begins by listing four vices to avoid in composition: (1) parts that do not follow logically; (2) irrelevancies which stray into the argument; (3) letters which are too short; (4) mixture of styles used in one letter (Faulhaber 93). Only after a full discussion of these vices does Guido list the necessary parts of a letter, for he assumes that they are well known. The order and emphasis of discussion indicate that presentation is a letter-writer's first concern. This is Pandarus' concern as well. He deals with illogicality (the first vice), irrelevancy (the second), and mixture of styles (the fourth) in the

following lines:

> Ne jompre ek no discordant thyng yfeere,
> As thus, to usen termes of phisik
> In loves termes; hold of thi matere
> The forme alwey, and do that it be lik;
> For if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk
> With asses feet, and hede it as an ape,
> It cordeth naught, so nere it but a jape.
> (2.1037-43)

Pandarus' emphasis here is the same as Guido's in the tenth section of the Summa, on style. Pandarus reverses the third vice, undue brevity, and reminds Troilus not to go on too long (1029, above). If Chaucer did not know Guido's Summa (and his ignorance is likely) he was certainly aware of the tradition which followed it. After all, one of the reasons for the popularity of the dictaminal arts all over medieval Europe was that "their study formed an indispensable step in the training of all those who made their living running the administrative machinery of church and state" (Faulhaber 108), as did Chaucer.

Chaucer only alludes to the actual words of these treatises, however, for his intention was not simply to repeat dictaminal traditions. A bureaucrat would blindly mine the dull vein in repetition; on the contrary, as Atkins states, "in this plea for restraint, decorum, the expression of personal feeling and unity of effect, Chaucer breaks away once more from earlier formulae and prescription" (159). That he does so is interesting in

terms of his background as a poet. James J. Murphy argues strongly against Chaucer's first-hand knowledge of rhetorical treatises such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf's, because,he says, "English literary figures of Chaucer's day did not look to rhetorical manuals for advice on composition" ("New Look" 14). He agrees, however, that in France such manuals were important throughout the 13th and 14th centuries ("New Look" 14). If France was where Chaucer learned so much of his poetry, could he not have learned his "letters" there as well? For Chaucer, that "there is little evidence of an active rhetorical tradition in fourteenth century England" (Murphy "New Look" 14) does not change the fact that Chaucer obviously knew the principles of letter-writing.[2]

The approved format of the medieval ars dictaminis consisted of the five parts first proposed in the anonymous Rationes dictandi (ca. 1135). Salutatio, captatio benevolentiae, narratio, petitio and conclusio replace the six divisions of the Ciceronian oration (exordium, narratio, divisio, confirmatio, refutatio, and peroratio) (Murphy, Rhetoric 225). Each of these parts is present in Troilus' letter as described to us.[3] Interestingly, describing Troilus' letter rather than fully presenting it makes the five divisions especially clear.

Troilus naturally begins his letter with the

salutation, whose purpose is a "formal greeting of the addressee by his titles and praises" (Anonymous of Bologna 22). He fulfils this function by addressing his beloved with certain complimentary phrases:

> First he gan hire his righte lady calle,
> His hertes lif, his lust, his sorwes leche,
> His blisse, and ek thise other termes alle
> That in swich cas thise loveres alle seche;
> And in ful humble wise, as in his speche,
> He gan hym recomaunde unto hire grace.
> (2.1065-70)

His opening salutation thus consists of almost an entire stanza (excluding one and a half lines [1067-68] for narratorial commentary) of the three which describe the letter. This disproportion agrees with the emphasis the dictatores put on the importance of this first letter division. The author of the Rationes dictandi, for instance, devoted the longest of his 13 sections to the salutation in a "complex discussion of social levels and the language appropriate to each" (Anonymous of Bologna 4). Similarly, Guide Faba's discussion of the salutation in the Summa constitutes almost a third of its length, eight times more than the exordium, narratio, and petitio together (Faulhaber 95).

Alberic of Monte Cassino (ca. 1087) states in his discussion of the salutatio that there are three important considerations a letter-writer must take into account: the identity of sender and receiver (noble or common,

friend or enemy); the topic (just or unjust matter, serious or minor); and the goal (proud or humble attitude, harsh or forgiving) (138). The writer must first "weigh each according to its importance" (138), for the style must suit the person both in tone and in choice of language. In this stanza, the primary emphasis is indeed on the appropriateness of Troilus' gentle language and attitude. The proper presentation of his humble courtliness rightly takes precedence over the actual topic. Alberic's advice on broaching a topic, to "govern [one's] words according to the powers of [one's] correspondent" (138), is also well-illustrated, for Troilus chooses the very words, the "termes alle," to appeal to Criseyde. Only thirdly should the letter-writer consider his goal; he does this by "balancing the subject with the goal he is seeking" (138). Again, the emphasis is on the words one uses: speak confidently for justice, cleverly to get around it, in an elevated tone to a haughty thinker, openly and frankly to the rich or noble, and with reservation and grace to the common folk (138-39). Troilus is well aware of the proper techniques or he would not have spent so much of his letter establishing what Alberic calls the "proper respect both for the person and for the subject" (139). Both the treatises and the model-letter collections emphasize "that the writer's chief problems are solved

once he decides on an appropriate greeting to his addressee" (Murphy, "Introduction" xvi). In this one stanza, Chaucer presents Troilus' own solution to these problems.

The remaining divisions of the standard letter appear in the next two stanzas. The word "first" of line 1065 (above) prepares us for the subsequent parts of the letter, which are also set off by verbal markers:

> And after this, ful lowely he hire preyde
> To be nought wroth, thogh he, of his folie,
> So hardy was to hire to write, and seyde
> That love it made, or elles most he die;
> And pitousli gan mercy for to crye;
> And after that he seyde, and leigh ful loude,
> Hymself was litel worth, and lasse he koude;
>
> And that she sholde han his konnyng excused,
> That litel was, and ek he dredde hire soo;
> And his unworthynesse he ay acused;
> And after that, than gan he telle his woo;
> But that was endeles, withouten hoo;
> And seyde he wolde in trouthe alwey hym hold, --
> And radde it over, and gan the lettre folde.
> (2.1072-85, my emphasis)

According to Anonymous of Bologna, the second part, the captatio benevolentiae, stresses "a certain fit ordering of words effectively influencing the mind of the recipient" (16). Lines 1072-76 appeal to a courtly lady with words which speak most strongly to her pity and her pride. Again, Troilus follows the suggestions for proper letter-writing set out in the Rationes dictandi, according to which there are five ways for securing goodwill: "from the person sending the letter, or from the person receiving it, or by both at once, or from the effect of circumstances,

or from the matter at hand" (Anonymous of Bologna 17). Troilus, by presenting himself, the sender, in a humble manner, by praising the recipient, and by setting forth the advantages of the proposed connection between them, uses the captatio benevolentiae most effectively. When Pandarus brings Criseyde the letter, he slyly emphasizes these same arguments by echoing the very words of Troilus' letter: "Lo, he that is al holy youres free/Hym recomaundeth lowely to your grace" (2.1121-22). Pandarus makes plain that if she does not answer, the consequences are on Criseyde's head: "Or, helpe me God, so pleynly for to seyne,/He may nat longe lyven for his peyne" (2.1126-27). To counter her fear of dishonor, he asks indignantly,

> Wold I a lettre unto yow brynge or take
> To harm of yow! What list yow thus it make?
>
> But thus ye faren, wel neigh alle and some,
> That he that most desireth yow to serve,
> Of hym ye recche leest wher he bycome,
> And whethir that he lyve or elles sterve.
> But for al that that ever I may deserve,
> Refuse it naught... (2.1147-54).

Thus, Troilus fulfils the purposes of the captatio benevolentiae, and Pandarus supports his efforts.

The last three letter divisions appear in only eight lines. Traditionally these sections were given less weight, both in the treatises and in the model letters. Of the narration, Alberic says that it "will be quite

good if it is short and clear" (139). Lines 1077-81, contained between the two repetitions of "And after that," are certainly short and clear, yet they are not so much a direct representation of the facts prompting the letter as an inversion of the captatio benevolentiae.[4] After discoursing on Criseyde's merits, Troilus denigrates his own. The definition of the narratio in the Rationes dictandi is "an orderly account of the matter under discussion, or even better, a presentation in such a way that the materials seem to present themselves" (Anonymous of Bologna 18). By revealing his "unworthynesse" to Criseyde, his "sorwes leche," Troilus does in fact present himself as the very picture of the unrequited lover. Nowhere does he ask her directly to be his love. He states the case of his affliction and leaves it to her to supply the cure. Of course, no courtly lover would attempt a direct request for his lady's favors on first acquaintance. So Troilus goes from an indirect exposition of his case (narratio) to a covert plea for her generosity (petitio). Of the nine species of petition (Anonymous of Bologna 19), supplication, not direct request, is surely best suited to Troilus' needs.

The conclusion is achieved in only one line (1084), and this too is appropriate. As Charles Sears Baldwin explains, "conclusio in a letter is not, as in a speech,

the logical result of proof. Rather it is the satisfaction of whatever expectations have been aroused. It may be affirmative, negative, or conditional, as long as it is a satisfying close" (222). Troilus uses a significant word in his conclusio, "trouthe," which has the meaning "truth" or "trothe, promise" or "fidelity".[5] By using this word, Troilus avers the truthfulness of the case he is making, calls to mind the reciprocality of lovers' vows, and promises his own unending devotion.

Even after this conclusion, however, the letter is not properly ended without the addition of Troilus' "salte teris" (1086), seal (1088), thousand kisses (1089-90), and envoy: "...Lettre, a blisful destine/The shapyn is: my lady shal the see!" (2.1091-92). This envoy is written not to the recipient or the audience as are the other instances of Chaucer's use of the convention,[6] but to the work itself. It thereby anticipates the "Go, litel bok" envoy of Book V (1786-92). Chaucer would have his book "...kis the steppes, where as thow seest pace/ Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (5.1791-92). As the book goes "to do homage to its poetic masters" (Tatlock 625) by implication Chaucer wishes to follow in the footsteps of the great classical "auctors." In the same way, the happy disposition of Troilus' letter is the fate he wishes for himself.

Where the first letter was perhaps confusing in its oscillation between history and story, between past, present and future, within the tale and without, this second letter presents some of Chaucer's other concerns about language and its effects. This letter raises issues of truth and falsity and of the manipulation of fact, appearance, persons, and poetry by verbal means. When Pandarus instructs Troilus in the writing of this letter, he is also educating him in the possibilities of ordering the world according to his desires, of remaking truth to fit a new conception -- the very act of disposition which Chaucer himself commits as author of this poem. Like Chaucer, Pandarus is open about his revisions. When in Book II he prepares Criseyde to look favorably on Troilus' wooing, he acknowledges, to himself at least, the necessity of verbal manipulation. With some few variations, these words might serve as a description of Chaucer's own method:

> ...If I my tale endite
> Aught harde, or make a proces any whyle,
> She shal no savour have therin but lite,
> And trowe I wolde hire in my wil bigyle;
> For tendre wittes wenen al be wyle
> Thereas thei kan nought pleynly understonde;
> Forthi hire wit to serven wol I fonde.
> (2.267-73)

The important realization here is not only that Pandarus purposely lies but also that he is thereby fulfilling médieval prescriptions, which the dictaminal rules support,

for effectiveness of language. This effectiveness is not limited to some insubstantial realm of fiction, confined between the covers of a book. It is in fact a necessary component of the world and, even as we heard in the words of Chester's Deus, a sufficient cause of creation. Just as Criseyde is caught in the web of words spun by Pandarus and by Troilus too, so we, the readers, are bound even faster, likewise enchanted by Chaucer's verbal snares.

Letter three is Criseyde's answer to Troilus. Initially demurring from writing, she allows herself to be prompted by Pandarus, although, as she says, "God help me so, this is the firste lettre/That evere I wroot, ye, al or any del" (2.1213-14). John McKinnell notes that these lines recall Helen's capitulation to Paris in the Heroides, for she too made this protestation (83), and we have already been reminded of the consequences of that act. Nonetheless, once in her "closet" (2.1215) Criseyde quickly "sette hire down, and gan a lettre write" (2.1218). Before relating the letter, the narrator adds his own, distancing comments: "Of which to telle in short is myn entente/Th'effect, as fer as I kan understonde" (2.1219-20). Then, in five lines, Chaucer sums up the contents:

> She thanked hym of al that he wel mente
> Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde
> She nolde nought, ne make hireselven bonde
> In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,
> She wolde ay fayn, to doon his herte an ese.
> (2.1221-25)

The choice of words here, "make hireselven bonde," is interesting, for the narrator has just told us that when she went into her closet, she "gan hire herte unfettre/Out of desdaynes prison but a lite" (2.1216-17). Troilus is love's captive, but Criseyde too is bound on Fortune's wheel. While she may depart "desdaynes prison" for Troilus' arms, she cannot escape the bonds of "this litel spot of erthe, that with the se/Embraced is" (5.1815-16).

This third letter is important more because of what it omits than what it includes. Unlike his presentation of Troilus' letter, Chaucer does not here give a full and complete description of Criseyde's words, thoughts and intentions. The restraint of her response mirrors the very real limitations of her possible courses of action. The limits of Chaucer's reportage are self-imposed. His restraint illustrates his choice and the subtlety of his method. Concerning the dispersal of interpolated lyrics, Robert O. Payne notes that "of these most graphically emotional projections in the poem, Criseyde is given only one, the first of the two aubades which conclude the consummation scene" (186-87). Of all the letters, Criseyde again gets only one full exposition, the last of the poem, the "Litera Criseydis." In the case of letter three, Chaucer's brief description, especially coming as it does so soon after his lengthy presentation

of Troilus', emphasizes "the careful removal of the reader from any direct contact with the feelings of Criseyde" (Payne 182-83). This distancing unbalances our responses. Even at the end of the poem, we know Troilus in a way we never do Criseyde. It is as if a concentration on Troilus' joys and sorrows necessitates the neglect of Criseyde's own. Modern scholars generally agree that character type rather than personality development was Chaucer's goal. Even so, the type of fickle woman which Criseyde exemplifies is somehow not nearly as satisfactory as Troilus' type of lovesick swain. It helps if we realize that this is part of Chaucer's method, that such imbalances are intentional. And we know this from his assignment of the lyrics and from the concurrent and supporting apportionment of the letters. Again the letters assist in structuring the poem. They reveal character; they help create it. Their use is never haphazard but deliberate and, when studied, quite revealing.

Pandarus carries Criseyde's letter to Troilus, who is comforted that she answers at all. At the same time, however, "thorough this lettre, which that she hym sente,/Encressen gan desir, of which he brente" (2.1336-37). The correspondence which ensues then between them (about which we are told only in passing) brings Troilus to the point where "al this blake" (2.1320) seems thoroughly

insufficient. Pandarus' plan to quench Troilus' yearnings involves still another letter, one written by neither Troilus nor Criseyde. This next, although it holds only minor interest in terms of its form or content, plays an important role in the lives of the title characters. It gives Troilus an excuse to be relieved of his brother Deiphebus in order to be visited by Criseyde. Pandarus has lured her to Deiphebus' house on the pretext that Deiphebus, a powerful man in Troy, would protect her from "false Poliphete" (2.1467), who, according to Pandarus, is about to sue Criseyde. Waiting for Criseyde to come to his bedside, Troilus thinks how to apply Pandarus' counsels of deception (2.1499-1503):

> Lay al this mene while Troilus,
> Recordyng his lesson in this manere:
> 'Mafay,' thoughte he, 'thus wol I sey, and thus;
> Thus wol I pleyne unto my lade dere;
> That word is good, and this shal be my cheere;
> This nyl I nought foryeten in no wise.'
> (3.50-55)

These words could be a meditation on composing a letter. They stress a process which turns on intended effect, just as the rules for salutatio suggest. It is a very appealing touch that upon Criseyde's arrival, Troilus forgets everything he planned to say. Unlike Pandarus, he is not a practiced philanderer. Neither has he initiated these actions, although he seems unbothered by using his brother or deceiving his lady. He calls in Deiphebus on the pretext of showing him

> ... at his beddes hed,
> The copie of a tretys and a lettre,
> That Ector hadde hym sent to axen red
> If swych a man was worthi to ben ded.
> (2.1696-99)

Deiphebus, and his guest, Helen,[7] wander into the garden to peruse this letter, Pandarus brings Criseyde in, and Troilus meets his beloved at last.

Once the prospective lovers have met, letters further their affair: "Pandarus, to quike alwey the fir,/....He lettres bar whan Troilus was absent" (2.484, 488). The narrator, however, declines to elaborate on the content of these letters, nor could he if he would, he says, for he has no source to tell him how nor time nor space:

> For sothe, I have naught herd it don er this
> In story non, ne no man here, I wene;
> And though I wolde, I koude nought, ywys;
> For their was som epistle hem bitwene,
> That wolde, as seyth myn autour, wel contene
> Neigh half this book, of which hym liste nought write.
> How sholde I thanne a lyne of it endite?
> (3.498-504)

How indeed? Illusion-making is hard at work here. For Chaucer, refusing to speak is as much a creative act as choosing to say. Whether writing a poem or a letter -- or omitting the same -- an author inevitably orders and arranges. The narrator prefers to stress his naivete, even as Pandarus emphasizes his own deviousness. Feigned ignorance or intentional lies -- these are the extremes of the choices any author makes. Chaucer elects a more

complicated role, choosing now one of these extremes, now the other. Because he alone has the constant support of a vision of an underlying truth and a cosmic plan, he can afford to play with his readers as he brings them slowly, and yet suddenly, to that knowledge as well. From his remarks throughout this poem, it would appear that he knows of no better method, no more proper disposition, of arriving there.

By the time we next hear of a letter, the joyous portion of the love affair is over. "Lettre" is used in all of Book IV only once, when Troilus responds to Pandarus' attempts at consoling him for the imminent exchange of Criseyde for Antenor, a prisoner of the Greeks. Speaking of Priam's decision, Troilus says, "He nyl for me his lettre be repeled" (4.560). In this one instance, the sense of the word is "decree." It is interesting that this is also the one place, after the very opening of the poem, where the end of Troy is revealed to us. In the prohemium of this book, the narrator discloses that Fortune "from Troilus she gan hire brighte face/Awey to writhe...../ And on hire whiel she sette up Diomede" (4.8-9, 10). In the ensuing discussion of Antenor we hear of events which occur after those contained within the poem proper. In an apostrophe to Juvenal which becomes an apostrophe to the world, the narrator declares:

> This folk desiren now deliveraunce
> Of Antenor, that brought hem to mesehaunce.
>
> For he was after traitour to the town
> Of Troye; allas, they quytte hym out of rathe!
> O nyce world, lo thy discrecioun!
> Criseyde, which that nevere dide hem scathe,
> Shal now no longer in hire blisse bathe;
> But Antenor, he shal com hom to towne,
> And she shal out; thus seyden hire and howne.
> (4.202-10)

The history of Troy, much of which is only subtly hinted at throughout the poem, is here declared aloud. The audience joins Calchas in his knowledge of the ultimate end. Only the characters within the poem remain ignorant, to play their parts as fortune decrees.

After a mention of some minor "lettres ek that she of olde tyme/Hadde hym ysent" (5.470-71), the fourth major letter occurs. The well-known "Litera Troili," by far the longest letter in the poem, is also the first presented in its entirety. In response to Troilus' sufferings caused by Criseyde's absence and broken promises, Troilus writes her. Once again he follows Pandarus' suggestion that "My red is this, syn thow kanst wel endite,/That hastily a lettre thow hire write" (5.1292-93). So he does: "And to Criseyde, his owen lady deere./He wrot right thus" (5.1315-16). Although the letter is too long to copy out (we sound like the narrator now), we can analyze it in terms of the five-part letter structure to see if Troilus does indeed know how to "wel endite."

Norman Davis shows that Chaucer adapted Boccaccio's original to his own purposes when he halved the length of the letter, changed its tone and added his own inimitable touches (236). Davis compares this letter to one of the 15th-century Paston letters and finds that "what gives Chaucer's version of Troilus's letter much of its shape and point is his use, indeed, exploitation, of the conventions of ordinary letter-writing of the time in English" (236). So we see that Chaucer is equally adept at using contemporary epistolary practices as he was at employing more ancient theoretical principles. Just as the use of letters constitutes a technique which helps order the entire poem, the more modern dictaminal usages help structure individual letters. Davis sees the same use of seven formulas in both letters (236-38). The usual five-part division is varied here, but variation was frequently encouraged if the desired effects warranted it. The circumstance under which Troilus writes this "Litera" contrasts to that of the first letter he wrote. In the previous instance, he was eager to start an acquaintance with a lovely, but essentially unknown, lady. His tone, therefore, was deferential and entreating in an appeal to her multitudinous good qualities. Now, however, he feels himself betrayed, hurt, unsure, angry and upset. The tone of this plea verges on the disrespectful.[8]

The bulk of the first stanza of Troilus' letter consists of the salutatio:

> Right fresshe flour, whos I ben have and shal,
> Withouten part of elleswhere servyse,
> With herte, body, lif, lust, thought, and al,
> I, woful wyght, in everich humble wise
> That tonge telle or herte may devyse,
> As ofte as matere occupieth place,
> Me recomaunde unto youre noble grace.
> (5.1317-23)

Remembering Alberic's advice to fashion the salutation according to topic, person and purpose, we see that this is just what Troilus has done. He confines the usual effusive compliments to the first line, and (excluding the ritual commendation of the last line, the captatio benevolentiae, which is a virtual repetition of his phrase in the previous letter) he concentrates in the rest of the stanza (and indeed in the rest of the letter) on rendering his suffering as a "woful wyght." Just as in Troilus' first letter, where verbal clues set off the sections, here we also find formulaic phrases marking the parts. For instance, according to Davis, "right" is the commonest English salutation opener. The equivalent phrase is not in Chaucer's French or Italian models (238).[9] Chaucer may have relied upon one of the numerous formulary collections which offered alternatives among set phrases to use as needed.

After the salutation, Troilus goes directly into

the narration and sets forth in the following two stanzas the facts of his situation. He states his case: she has left him (5.1325-35), he suffers for it (5.1326-30), and proof of his sorrow lies in the tears (5.1336) which mar this letter he feels compelled to write (5.1331-34). The phrase which begins the narratio, "liketh yow to witen" (5.1324), is a common transition from the salutation and securing of goodwill (Davis 238). It too is original with Chaucer.

Petitio, "that discourse .. in which we endeavor to call for something" (Anonymous of Bologna 18), begins with a supplicatory phrase, "Yow first biseche I" (5.1338) and continues for 10 stanzas, the bulk of the letter. The effect of this amplification is to emphasize the plaintive aspects of his discourse. In fact, Troilus uses the word "compleyne" (and its variants) eight times in his letter (5.1336, 1338, 1339, 1373, 1374, 1375, 1388, 1402). According to John Norton-Smith, a poetic complaint is

> a poem of any length, clearly entitled "complaincte," having an amatory theme in which the causa or aim of the poem was to complain.... [It was] a remarkably elastic form having no fixed rules for metre, rhyme scheme, stanza length or dispositio. It might take the form of a letter, debate or any variety of poetic genre. (16)

Except that this poem is clearly labeled "litera" rather than "complaint," this definition would fit it nicely.

Arthur K. Moore suggests that the 15th-century love epistle is "nothing more than the conventional complaint, with salutation or complimentary closing or both tacked on" (147),and indeed this appears to be what we have here. Nancy Dean explains what is special about Chaucer's use of the form:

> the personal love lament became in Chaucer's time a highly imprecise expression of woe, lacking place, time, and often names. Chaucer's poetic "complaints" are sometimes conventional (Complaint of Pity, Complaint of his Lady), but usually the precision of Chaucer's "complaints," if only in his careful placing of it within a biographical background, suggests that he opposed current practices. (1)

Certainly this "litera" has been carefully adapted to Troilus' circumstances and character. The overlong petitio suits the spurned, uncertain lover who begins with the logical "first" (5.1338) but never gets to "second" or "third," for he loses the train of rational argument in "sorwful teris salte" (5.1374).

Halfway through the petitio, Troilus uses some other formulaic phrases that suggest he is reaching the close of the letter:

> And if you liketh knowen of the fare
> Of me, whos wo ther may no wit diseryve,
> I kan namore but, chiste of every care,
> At wrytyng of this lettre I was on-lyve,
> Al redy out of my woful gost to dryve.
> (5.1366-70)

As Davis points out, these lines might be almost direct

paraphrases of Elizabeth Poynings' words to her mother Agnes Paston: "And yf it lyked youre moderhod to/here of me and how I do, at the makyng/of thys letter I was in gode hele of body" (236-7). Not only does Chaucer here present "a skillful and witty turn to the 'health' formula" (Davis 239), he also plays on the standard English conclusion. "I kan namore" is repeated five stanzas later, after the true end of the petition: "I say namore, al have I for to seye/To yow wel more than I telle may" (5.1408-09). It is as if the letter-writer knows how to write a proper letter (and we know he does, for he did it before), but because of his emotional turmoil is able to follow the rules only with difficulty. His passion overules his learning.

The conclusion appears in the last two stanzas:

> But wheither that ye do me lyve or deye,
> Yet praye I God, so yeve you right good day!
> And fareth wel, goodly, faire, fresshe may,
> As ye that lif or deth may me comande!
> And to youre trouthe ay I me recomande,
>
> With hele swich that, but ye yeven me
> The same hele, I shal non hele have.
> In yow lith, whan yow liste that it so be,
> The day in which me clothen shal my grave;
> In yow my lif, in yow myght for to save
> Me fro disese of alle peynes smerte;
> And for now wel, myn owen swete herte!
> (5.1410-21)

According to Anonymous of Bologna, "the ending of a letter contains nothing that relates to the subject matter of

the letter itself" (19) and often consists of a simple valete formula phrase (Murphy 225). The last line here is precisely that, but line 5.1412 is also a valete. By this confusion we see that the breakdown of the neat five-part structure is almost complete. The rest of these two stanzas illustrates Troilus' continued inability to close what might be his last words to Criseyde. He keeps going over the same ground. He commends himself to her (5.1414) just as he did in the captatio benevolentiae at the beginning of the letter; he returns again to the health formula (5.1415-16) and even includes a prayer for her health (5.1411) right after he states that she has the power to kill him. The ending of this letter mirrors the agitation of Troilus' thoughts and emotions. Chaucer, by playing on the rhetorical backgrounds of the verse epistle, has presented us with a finely drawn portrait of a courtly lover on the edge of derangement.[10] As we saw with "Rondel 57," once a form and its purposes are clearly set out, departures from it become all the more effective.

No wonder, then, that Troilus is unhappy with the reply he receives from Criseyde. No letter, no action but her prompt return, could cure him of such intense dissatisfaction. Once again, in marked contrast to the length and completeness of presentation of the "Litera Troili" (105 lines), Chaucer disposes of Criseyde's

response in less than 10 lines:

> This lettre forth was sẽnt unto Criseyde,
> Of which hire answere in effect was this:
> Ful pitously she wroot ayeyn, and seyde,
> That also sone as that she myghte, ywys,
> She wolde come, and mende al that was mys.
> And fynaly she wroot and seyde hym thenne,
> She wolde come, ye, but she nyste whenne.
> (5.1422-28)

The seeming sincerity of these phrases is undercut by the narrator's remarks: "But in hire lettre made she swich festes/That wonder was, and swerth she loveth hym best;/Of which he fond but botmeles bihestes" (5.1429-31). The narrator speaks directly to Troilus at this point in a series of most uncomforting consolations:

> But Troilus, thow maist now, est or west,
> Pipe in any ivy lef, if that the lest!
> Thus goth the world. God shilde us fro
> meschaunce.
> And every wight that meneth trouthe avaunce!
> (5.1432-35)

He makes Troilus' sorrows sound as if they were some skipping steps in "th'amorouse daunce" -- as I guess, to him, they are.

After a mention of some further letters which Troilus writes "Bisechyng hire, syn that he was trewe,/That she wol come ayeyn and hold hire trouthe" (5.1585-86), Criseyde replies in the sixth and last major letter of the poem (5.1590-1631). The beginning and ending of the "Litera Criseydis" clearly correspond to the respective parts of the standard five letter divisions. "Cupides

sone, ensample of goodlyheede,/O swerd of knyghthod, sours of gentilesse" (5.1590-91) composes the salutatio, and "And fareth now wel, God have yow in his grace!" (5.1631) forms the conclusio. The first four words of this final line recall the end of Troilus' own letter, "And far now wel, myn owen swete herte!" (5.1421). The second half of Criseyde's concluding line is particularly touching, reminiscent as it is of Troilus' earlier "Me recomaunde unto your noble grace" (5.1323). Here is possibly the cruelest of all lessons of verbal manipulation: that the same words may be used, in very similar circumstances, even between the same parties, to almost opposite effect. In this letter Criseyde expresses covertly what she has not the courage to admit outright -- that she will not be returning to Troy, that her future lies with the Greeks, and the Troilus would better serve himself if he would renounce her service and render it to God.

Without any of the verbal markers seen before, the rest of this letter is basically a narratio of her situation, including a somewhat feeble explanation of her behavior. Because the parts of the standard letter are barely distinguishable, this letter does not well fulfil Anonymous of Bologna's requirements that a letter be "composed of coherent yet distinct parts signifying fully the sentiments of its sender" (7). Precise letter-divisions are lacking.[11]

Just as the breakdown of order of parts of the "Litera Troili" mirrored the dissolution of Troilus' courtly ideals and approach, so here too the lack of definite order in Criseyde's letter reflects the deterioration of her situation. Unlike Troilus, she is not emotionally overwrought. Her attitude arises from the hard decisions she has had to make, the difficult lessons she has had to learn, as daughter of a traitor, betrayer of a lover, and paramour of a Greek. That she tries to justify herself is understandable; that she promises what she knows she cannot keep is less so.

This short epistle contains many words pertaining to the writing of letters: "Youre lettres ful, the papir al yplented" (5.1597), "Youre lettre" (5.1600), "But whi, lest that this lettre founden were" (5.1602), and

> That it is short which that I to yow write:
> I dar nat, ther I am, wel lettres make,
> Ne nevere yet ne koude I wel endite.
> Ek gret effect men write in place lite;
> Th'entente is al, and nat the lettres space.
> (5.1626-30; my emphasis)

The repetition of words referring to the process and the product of letter-writing stresses the artificiality of the convention. Unlike Troilus' letter, this one does not have the feel of a plea from the heart.[12] As she says, intent is all. Despite her well-chosen words, her intent is obvious. Some words and phrases used earlier in the poem and repeated here enhance the effects of the

contrast between her words and her intentions. "Wel endite" was employed by Pandarus before. Since his instructions, every letter has been progressively less well indited. The health formula is transformed by Criseyde into: "I herteless, I sik, I in destresse!/Syn ye with me, nor I with yow, may dele,/Yow neyther sende ich herte may nor hele" (5.1594-96). Troilus' death follows shortly on these wishes for his health. The repetition with perhaps the greatest resonance is "trouthe."[13] "Trouthe" was part of Troilus' original argument, and in the "Litera Troili" he also desired her to "thynketh on youre trouthe" (5.1386). Her own vows and promises are nothing now; she admits herself capable of "dissymulyng" (5.1613). Yet she still acknowledges Troilus' own faithfulness: "But now no force, I kan nat in yow gesse/But alle trouthe and alle gentilesse" (5.1616-17). Thus, the final contrast between the two lovers is made explicit by their use of the language of letters.

We have seen how the letters of both Troilus and Criseyde are finally degenerated into distorted reflections of their separate states, mirroring also the imminent dissolution of their society, and anticipating the forthcoming destruction of Troy. As the old Trojan order collapses, it is not replaced in this poem by the newer order of Greece. This too would be but temporary. What

lasts, what constitutes the only true order, is that which removes all living beings from the barren revolutions of Fortune's wheel. In his concluding palinode, Chaucer presents an alternative, an all-encompassing circularity of infinite, eternal life: "Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve,/That regnest ay in thre, and two, and oon,/Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscrive" (5.1863-65). The joys and sorrows of the lovers contrast with the everlasting love Chaucer finds elsewhere, out of "this world, that passeth soone as floures faire" (5.1841) altogether. Unlike Criseyde's, Chaucer's intent in writing his book matches his language: "But for what I to writen first bigan/Of his love, I have seyd as I kan" (5.1768-69). Throughout, he acknowledges his language as the means of creating fictions, yet what he says, and what he means, is true.

In the book which Chaucer writes, letters act collectively as an important dispositional device. At each significant junction of the love affair, especially before the first meeting and after the separation, letters reveal feelings, allow for narratorial (and authorial) commentary, distinguish character types, and promote continuity of action. In sum, they help structure the poem. Interpolation of letters parallels the embeddings of other modes of discourse, such as lyrics, which Chaucer uses in his reordering of old books. The same questions of the

truth of fictions and the possibility of creation by linguistic means which were raised in the Chester Cycle are advanced here as well.[14] Examination of Chaucer's use of letters reveals a similar solution to the problem of potentiality of form and significance of structure.

NOTES

1

Payne points out that the dispersement of lyrics throughout Troilus is consistent with the overall reworking of Boccaccio's Filostrato which Chaucer undertook (184-88). Similarly, his use of letters constitutes another instance, perhaps more covert, of the same, interpolative technique.

2

In fact, Murphy cites a passage from the "Prologue" to the "Clerk's Tale" to show that if Chaucer knew any of the three rhetorical modes, it was probably with letter-writing that he was familiar:

> Youre termes, youre colours, and youre figures,
> Keepe him in stoor til so be that ye endite
> Heigh style, as whan that men to kynges write.
> (16-18)

Of this passage, Murphy concludes, "Chaucer probably means that this kind of style was reserved (in his experience) for letters to kings and thus may indicate that his entire experience with dictamen prosaicum was at a practical level and did not include the reading of the rhetorical manuals" ("New Look"). Even this would be enough for our purposes, for the letter Troilus goes on to write on Pandarus' advice is proof that Chaucer knew the practice, if not the theory, of letter-writing.

3

McKinnell (81) divides this letter differently: 1065-68: salutatio and captatio benevolentiae combined; 1072-76: petitio; 1077-81: captatio benevolentiae again; 1082: narratio; 1084: conclusio. It was well within the rules of proper form that parts be repeated or rearranged according to circumstantial necessity. For my purposes, it is enough to acknowledge Chaucer's utilization of the form.

4

It could be that these lines are simply a continuation of the second letter division, that narratio comprises lines 1082-83, that petitio is left out, and that Troilus goes straight to the conclusio. "In fact, any of the parts of a letter could be and were omitted as the occasion fell.

For example, a letter might contain only the salutation and the narration, but it could never include only the captatio benevolentiae nor just the conclusion" (Anonymous of Bologna 20).

5 Chaucer, Robinson Glossary 985.

6 "L'Envoy to Scogan," 43-39; "L'Envoy to Bukton" 25-32; "Womanly Noblesse" 27-31; "Fortune" 73-79; "Truth" 22-28; "Lak of Stedfastnesse" 22-28; "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse" 22-26; "The Complaint of Venus" 73-83; "The Clerk's Tale" 1177-1212.

7 Helen is well-chosen to be with Deiphebus in Troilus' sickroom. Her elopement with Paris, we were reminded in Oenone's letter, is the direct cause of the Trojan War. No one of these brothers, though they must risk their lives in the war which she caused, ever treats her here with less than true courtesy. And the words the narrator uses to describe her are only gentle. After Troilus is taken ill, we are given this description of her:

> Eleyne, in al hire goodly softe wyse,
> Gan hym salue, and wommanly to pleye,
> And seyde, 'Iwys, ye moste alweies arise!
> Now, faire brother, beth al hool, I preye!'
> And hym with al hire wit to reconforte;
> As she best koude, she gan hym to disporte.
> (2.1667-73)

Like a loving sister she acts -- but this is Helen, and Troilus is lying in bed waiting for the first meeting with his intended lover. The adjective the narrator repeats concerning Helen suggests that she is not merely his brother's wife: "the faire queene Eleyne" (2.1556), "Eleyne the queene" (2.1687-1703), "My lady queene Eleyne" (2.1714). Why should she be titled a "queene" when Paris is but a prince? She was indeed queen to Menelaus, the king of Sparta, but does she retain her Greek title behind the walls of Troy? Is this word a punning comment on her character, a hint that she is not so much queen as a "quean," a harlot?

Deiphebus and Eleyne are linked throughout the scenes at his house. The narrator devotes a stanza to explaining their relationship:

> The morwen com, and neighen gan the tyme
> Of meeltide, that the faire queene Eleyne
> Shoop hire to ben, an houre after the prime,
> With Deiphebus, to whom she nolde feyne;
> But as his suster, homly, soth to seyne,
> She com to dyner in hire pleyne entente.
> (2.1555-60)

Although this action would seem to need no explanation, the narrator proceeds to present an ambiguous one: "But God and Pandare wist al what this mente" (2.1561). He thus sets a doubt in our minds that there could be another reason for their getting together, other than Pandarus' machinations of which they, like Criseyde, are "al inocent of this" (2.1562).

After Troilus shows Deiphebus the letter Hector sent, Deiphebus and Helen remain in the arbor an hour "on it to reden and poure" (2.1708), while Pandarus brings Criseyde to join Troilus. When they return at the end of Criseyde's visit to take leave of her before she goes home and of Troilus before he goes to sleep, this is the last we hear of this couple (though not of Deiphebus) in this poem. However, if we know their relationship does not end there, that after Paris' death Deiphebus marries Helen by force, and that on the night Troy falls she betrays him to the Greeks so that he is killed and his body mutilated, then all these hints the poet gives us of an underlying negative attitude toward them makes sense. What none of the characters know, what even the ignorant narrator does not know, perhaps we are meant to know. Readers are certainly meant to be aware that the two women, Helen and Criseyde, are linked by their actions, the betrayal of the men they were sworn to love.

8 Meech notes that Chaucer's version remains milder than its source. Troilus, like Boccaccio's Troilo, "promises to eschew complaint against her as temerity unbecoming a servant. And though he does not keep the promise, he violates it less flagrantly than his model" (126).

9 According to Moore, this salutatio, beginning "Right fresshe flour" may have been the basis for two later poems "Fresche flour of womanly nature" and "O resplendent floure! prynte this yn your mynde" (147).

10 Although he divides the parts of this letter differently, McKinnell also sees the disordered state of the letter as reflecting Troilus' unstable condition (84).

11

McKinnell notes that 5.1621-26 constitute a petition which includes Alberic's virtue of brevity: 629-30 also make use of sententia, another recommended technique (87).

12

Mckinnell thinks it is perhaps too controlled in its use of rhetorical devices, such as apostrophe, interrogatio, determinatio, and antithesis (87).

13

This word is important through to the very end of the love affair. When Troilus reads her letter, he is finally sure that Criseyde is not his; rather "hym thoughte it lik a kalendes of chaunge" (5.1634). Deiphebus, who appeared in Book II, is involved again at the end of the poem. It is the "cote-armure" (5.1651) "as telleth Lollius/Deiphebe it hadde rent fro Diomede" (5.1654-55) which gives Troilus the final proof of his love's breaking of their "trouthe." Once more the narrator declares his incapacity to do more than follow his sources. He cannot help that Troilus "on the color fond withinne/A broche, that he Criseyde yaf that morwe/That she from Troie moste nedes twynne" (5.1660-62). Troilus, "compleynying of hire hertes variaunce" (5.1670), apostrophizes the absent Criseyde. "Where is youre trouthe?" (5.1676) he asks, even as he wishes that "syn ye nolde in trouthe to me stonde,/That ye thus nolde han holden me in honde!" (5.1679-80).

14

Manning touches on a number of points which are clearly relevant to this discussion, but his article appeared too late for inclusion in this chapter.

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Chapter 5

Variation: Pearl

Pearl, one of the gems of the 14th-century alliterative revival, illustrates the fourth method of dispositio. Variation[1] operates on every level of meaning so that the smallest constituents of words and phrases are seen to be essentially connected to the largest components of the poem and the world it embodies. Each of the structural devices analyzed in the preceding chapters promotes the coherence of the work in which it occurs. In every case, the particular method of disposition is a means of expressing, and discovering, order in that work. The identification of structural and thematic order is perhaps made most explicit in Pearl. In this poem the use of puns creates a play of sound and sense which compels a recognition of the fundamental unity of all aspects of its poetic universe.

Although the word "pun" dates only from the 17th-century, the concept, called by other names, is ancient. According to the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, a pun is "a figure of speech depending upon a similarity of sound and a disparity of meaning" (681).[2] This definition is close to the first portion of what Bede, in his De

schematibus et tropis, calls paronomasia: "Paronomasia, or wordplay, is the figure in which the words used closely resemble one another in sound but differ in meaning; the letters or syllables have obviously been changed" (101). However, paronomasia is not the term used by most medieval writers. The Rhetorica ad Herennium gives three varieties of punning wordplay: traductio, which is "the use of the same word in different connotations or a balancing of homonyms"; adnominatio, which involves the "repetition of a word with the addition of suffixes, prefixes, or with transposition of letters of sounds"; and significatio, which occurs when a word can be taken in more than one sense. This last is closest to our modern pun and includes the double entendre (Princeton Encyclopedia 681).[3] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in his Poetria nova, followed the system of the ad Herennium, but Matthew of Vendôme in his Ars versificatoria, changed the terminology slightly, preferring paronomasia, which became the general post-medieval term for all kinds of wordplay (Kökeritz 942-43).[4]

Instead of arguing terminology, Paull F. Baum suggests that it would be more "helpful to divide play with words into two groups, as the medievals did, though without too much clarity: into play with the sound primarily ... and play with the meaning of words" (227). In the ad Herennium, traductio and adnominatio (as figura verborum) belong to the former group and signi-

ficatio (as one of the figura sententiarum) belongs to the latter, but the distinctions between the two groups are not always easy to maintain. Certainly in Pearl these figures lead one into the next so that sound and sense are mutually dependent and reinforce each other. Thus it would seem to be more fruitful to focus on the poem itself than to argue about conflicting nomenclature. After all, as Roberta Frank says, "since wordplay itself operates by breaking down conventional verbal boundaries, it is not surprising that the terminology devised by rhetoricians to differentiate its various forms (paronomasia, annominatio, traductio, figura etymologica, et al.) is equally slippery and inconsistent" (206).[5] Therefore, in discussing the poet's deliberate wordplay that results in intentional ambiguity, I will use the very post-medieval word "pun."

Barbara Herrnstein Smith proposes repetition as "the fundamental phenomenon of poetic form" (38). This statement can truthfully be applied to Pearl, a poem of manifold repetitions: "the four-accent verse; the twelve-line riming stanza; the twenty groups of five stanzas each [with one well-known exception]; the alliteration employed in about three-fourths of the total number of verses; and, finally, the concatenation or linking between stanzas and between groups" (McGalliard 279). In addition, there is pun, an inescapable sort of repetition in this poem.

Indeed, the very first word has been recognized as meeting the definition of pun given in the Oxford English Dictionary: one word which suggests "two or more meanings or different associations." "Pearl" has been variously seen as having two meanings: "the innocent" -- referring to infants and their salvation (Hoffman 101); three meanings: a righteous person, a perfect (or potentially perfect) soul, and the kingdom of heaven (Johnson 48); and even four meanings: a gem, the perfectly innocent, the soul, and "the life of innocence" in heaven (Robertson 25). None of these interpretations can be proven wrong, because the poet deliberately presents, by constant repetition, pearl as a gem, as a maiden, as a teacher, as a symbol of various kinds.

Some examples from the poem will make clear how such a multiplicity of meanings is possible -- and how there can be no doubt that such multiplicity is intentional. "A precios pyece in perle3 py3t" (192): here the pearls are the maiden's adornments. "Bot a wonder perle wythouten wemme" (221): this pearl is later explained by the Pearl-maiden to be the famous pearl without price and subsequently appears, in the vision of the celestial city, in the same position on each virgin's breast. "'O perle', quod I, 'in perle3 py3t,/Art þou my perle þat I haf pleyned'" (241-42): now the image of pearl as maiden is in the

forefront, but dressed as she is in pearls, we are aware of a continuing multiplicity of meanings. Some later lines bring all these images together: "'O maskele3 perle in perle3 pure,/þat bere3'," quod I, 'þe perle of prys'" (745-46). Even here, the poet does not rest content; the image keeps growing with every repetition, until in the very last two lines of the poem, the dreamer states the truest connection between himself and pearls: "He gef vus to be his homly hyne/Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay" (1211-12). In these few lines alone, by tracing the imagery and changes in meaning of just one word (albeit what is perhaps the central word in the poem), we get some idea of the importance of punning wordplay in carrying the themes of Pearl. It will become evident that pun is also an integral part of the construction of the poem, that disposition, which ultimately arranges the entire work, depends on single words as well.

By using the pearl as the controlling, continuing and framing image of the poem, the poet sets up in our minds a willingness to believe in the fact of multiple meanings. Even when the repetition is much more subtle, when it is of sense rather than of sound, we are ready to accept the repetition as meaningful and the ambiguity as justified. According to W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., the "kind of metaphoric logic" which puns possess "contributes

nothing to the truth or propriety of the metaphor involved, but it does concentrate the symbols upon whatever propriety there may be" (11). The poet does not make an equation, pearl = innocence (or whatever interpretation one favors). Rather, he presents the word in all its meanings and leaves it to his audience to perceive the connections. This is punning of a very high seriousness indeed.

The simplest form of pun is the verbal repetition of traductio, but as we have seen with "pearl," the intention and effect of homonymic repetition may not be simple at all. And of course, not all homonyms are puns. By my count, there are at least 140 cases of homonymic pairs in Pearl.[6] Some are merely linguistic coincidences, such as: "araye" (191 - n.'array, attire')/"aray" (491 - n. 'arrangement; position, rank'); "bete" (93 - pa. t. 'beat')/"bete" 757 - v. 'amend'); "euen" (740 - adv. 'exactly')/"euen" (1073 - v. 'compare, vie'); "fere3" (98 - pres. t. 'conveys')/"fere3" (1150 - n. pl. 'companions'); "lef" (77 - n. collect. 'leaves, foliage')/"lef" (266 - adj.'dear, beloved')/"lef" (418 - as n. 'dear one'); "mete" (329 - v. trans. 'find')/ "mete" (380 - v. intr. 'meet')/"mete" (641 - n. 'food')/ "mete" (833 - adj. 'fitting')/"mete" (1063 - adj. 'noble, excellent'); "steuen" (188 - n. 'meeting')/"steuen" (1125 - n. 'sound [of singing]'); "swange" (586 - pa. t. 'toiled')/ "swange" (1059 - pa. t. 'rushed'); "tor" (966 - n. 'tower, stronghold, castle')/"tor" (1109 - adj. 'difficult').

Some of the homonymic pairs, in context, are significant indeed. "Blyþe" (352, 735 - adj. 'glad, merry, serene')/ "blyþe (354 - n. 'mercy'), for instance, is significant by way of contiguity. Only two lines apart, it is impossible to miss the ambiguity-causing repetition:

> þy mende3 mounte3 not a myte,
> þa3 þou for sor3e be neuer blyþe.
> Stynt of þy strot and fyne to flyte,
> And sech hys blyþe ful swefte and swyþe. (351-54)

There is also the juxtaposition of "date" (516 - n. 'end')/ "date" (517 - n. 'beginning'): "Ne knawe 3e of þis day no date?/Er date of daye hider arn we wonne" (516-17). Of course, since "date" is one of the stanza-link words, we can expect even more meanings to it than these two, but this example shows what the poet can do and how easily he can do it.

With many of the homonyms it is the sound even more than the sense that connects the pair and moves the poem along. One example is "note" (155 - n. 'matter')/"note" (879, 883 - n. '[musical] note, song'). We first read "þenne nwe note me com on honde" (155). Even an audience accustomed to and ready for alliterative echoes would probably not remember this phrase when it appears after 700 lines: "A note full nwe I herde hem warpe" (879). But there it is. This second meaning is immediately emphasized -- but in two different ways: "þat nwe songe þay songen full clere,/In sounande note3 a gentyl carpe"

(882-83). It is echoed first by a synonym (which, as we shall see, is an extremely important technique in this poem) and second by a homonym with the addition of the plural suffix. This latter is thus one of the two instances of adnominatio in these lines, the other being "song"/ "songen."

Another example of a pun dependent on sound is one we still have today, though as a homophone only and not as here a homograph as well. In his glossary, E.V. Gordon defines "holy" in the first instance as "completely": "I am holy hysse" (418). But when every other instance of the word has the modern meaning of the spelling -- "Holy Wryt" (592), "Euer so holy in hys prayere" (618), and "þy holy place" (679), it seems as if we are meant to make the connection, especially as the context suggests it. Belonging to Christ, the maiden does indeed partake of his holiness.

This implicit linking of concepts through verbal repetition and elaboration is, in fact, the point of pun in Pearl. We can see this method in action by examining the word "kynde." "Kynde" is used first to mean simply "nature": "þa3 kynde of Kryst me comfort kenned" (55). It keeps that meaning, with modifications, as a word for the natural order of things in this world:

> For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose
> þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef.
> Now þur3 kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close
> To a perle of prys hit is put in pref. (269-72)

But since the jeweler, in his grief and pride, cannot, will not, understand her lesson that the natural order is the divine order, she naturally enough says to him, "þou art no kynde jueler" (276). Gordon glosses this last use as "gentle, courteous," and so it is; but in the context the poet has set up to be courteous is not to be merely courtly but to partake in the life of the highest sphere. In addition, the poet reinforces the unity expressed in the homonyms of "kynde" when he uses related pairs like "court" (445 - n. 'royal court')/"court" (701 - n. 'judicial court'), "kyng" (448, 468, 480 - n. 'king')/"kyng" (596 - n. 'God'), and "quen(e)" (415, 448, 492, etc. - n. 'queen')/ "quene" (432, 433, 444, 456 - n. 'Mary'). "Cortaysye," the eighth link word, brings together all these meanings; it describes the "virtue of the court, of royalty"; it links images of earthly and divine "nobílity and rank"; it thus refers to the "importance of all the body's parts in the unity of the body (Christ) [which] makes each part noble" (Johnson 39). Or, as the poet says, "Of courtaysye, as sayt3 Saynt Poule,/Al arn we membre3 of Jesu Kryst" (457-58). This sort of punning tends not toward redundancy but rather toward an accretion of meaning.

The previous examples have shown how the ambiguity of two meanings is resolved in harmony. In the case of "doun" (30, 41, etc. - adv. 'down')/"doun" (73, 85, 121 - n.

'hill') resolution lies in recognizing the unresolvable conflict, the necessary opposition implied in the use of this pair. The word is concentrated in the two opening stanzas. We first hear it in "þer hit doun drof in molde3 dunne" (30), which also contains the near-homophonic repetition of "doun"/"dunne." This line is quickly followed by "On huyle þer perle hit trendeled doun" (41). The emphatic downward movement is reinforced by other phrases in this first stanza-group: "þur3 gresse to grounde hit fro me yot" (10), and "I felle upon þat floury fla3t" (57). Then, just as with "date," the poet begins a new stanza (and here a new stanza-group) with a complete contradiction of ideas and action: "Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space" (61). This line echoes yet reverses the downward fall of pearl first encountered in "Syþen in þat spote hit fro me sprange" (13) and sets the tone for the second stanza-group. When the dreamer further says "My goste is gon in Gode3 grace" (63), this can only be a rising movement, for heaven lies above. The actual physical description of the place in which the dreamer finds himself also supports this idea, in lines that return us to our "doun" pun: "Dubbed wern alle þo downe3 syde3/Wyth crystal klyffe3 so cler of kynde" (73-74), and "The adubbemente of þo downe3 dere" (85). These following lines also ensure we keep our eyes upward: "Bot I knewe me keste

þer klyfe3 cleuen" (66); "Fowle3 þer flowen in fryth in fere" (89); "For quen þose brydde3 her wynge3 bete" (93); "As stremande sterne3, quen stroþe-men slepe,/ Staren in welkyn in wynter ny3t" (115-16). Thus, the pun of a falling versus a rising "doun" is one of the poetic "tricks" which underlie the action and description in the poem.

In addition to pun, these lines are related to another rhetorical technique, which Bede labels schesis onamaton and defines as "a series of synonymous phrases; groups of words that differ in sound but are alike in meaning are linked together" (102). More common is the term expolitio used by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, who again follows the classifications of the ad Herennium.[7] The following lines provide a further illustration of expolitio in Pearl: "I stod ful stylle and dorste not calle;/Wyth y3en open and mouth ful clos/I stod as hende as hawk in halle" (182-84). The idea of standing so still as not to make even a sound is first stated, then described physically, then described by means of a simile. And having established this image, the poet can recall it with still more variation later in the poem: "I stod as stylle as dased quayle" (1085). Although we may not consciously remember the first instance 900 lines later, we do subconsciously, and that is enough. Wimsatt says of puns that they "have to be stored up or prepared in the history of the language, before they

can be discharged by the wit of the poet" (17). With the addition that puns also may be stored up or prepared in the poem itself, that the poem in a way creates a history for its own special language, this statement is true for Pearl -- and it is true for its synonyms and synonymous phrases as well.[8]

The poet uses this technique throughout to establish and then to reinforce the identification of analogous images, not only of the pearl-gem, pearl-maiden, and pearl of great price, but also of these with Mary, Jesus, and the celestial city. The poet's method here does not consist merely of an elementary play of sound and sense but of a sophisticated process involving increasingly more complex recognitions of the relationship between words, images, ideas, and arrangement. Long before the ultimate lesson he propounds is stated explicitly, punning wordplay ensures that that truth is repeatedly and variously, although covertly, reiterated. The poet uses a noun, e.g., "perle," "spot," or adjective, e.g., "precious," "makele3," in one context then repeats it in another; the important connections between these words are overtly made only by the reader. This sequence of phrases (labeled by initial of speaker, Dreamer or Pearl) will illustrate:

	lines describing pearl as maiden or gem	lines describing pearl of great price, Jesus, Mary, heavenly host, or heavenly city
4	(D)Ne proued I neuer her precios pere	
8	(D)I sette hyr sengeley in synglere	
12	(D)Of þat pryuy perle wythouten spot	
189	(D)þat gracios gay wythouten galle	
221	(D)Bot a wonder perle wythouten wemme	
228	(D)þat precious perle per hit wat3 py3t	
229	(D)Py3t in perle, þat precious pyece	
435		(P)Makele3 Moder and myryest May
729		(P)þer is þe blys þat con not blynne
733		(P)This makelle3 perle
737		(P)For hit is wemle3, clene, and clere
744		(P)þy perle maskelles
745	(D)O maskele3 perle in perle3 pure	
756	(D)þe perle so maskelle3	
757		(P)My makele3 Lambe
764	(P)For mote ne spot is non in þe	
768	(P)And py3t me in perle3 maskelle3	
780	(D)A makelle3 may and maskelle3	
782	(P)Vnblemyst I am, wythouten blot	
899		(P)þat moteles meyny
900		(P)þat maskele3 mayster
915	(D)As þou art gloryous wythouten galle	
923	(D)As 3e ar maskelle3 under mone	
924		(D)Your wone3 schulde be wythouten mote
945		(P)þe Lombe þer wythouten spotte3 blake

947-48 (P)And as hys flok is wythouten flake, So/ is hys mote wythouten moote

960 (P)To þe meyny þat is wythouten mote

961 (D)Motele3 may so meke and mylde

972 (D)Bot þou wer clene wythouten mote

1003 (D)þe calsydoyne þenne wythouten wemme

1060 (D)Wythouten fylþe oþer galle oþer glet

1104 (D)þe blysful perle wyth gret delyt

This sequence can certainly be used to support the thesis of D.W. Robertson, Jr., that "the Pearl thus not only typifies innocence ["Vnblemyst I am, wythouten blot"]; she typifies those who dwell in the Celestial City ["þat moteles meyny"), or, since such folk determine the character of eternal life ["And as hys flok is wythouten flake,/So is hys mote wythouten moote"], she typifies that life also ["þer is þe blys þat con not blynne"] (24). Expolitio leads the reader to the perception of the identity of seemingly disparate images, but the dreamer does not follow the argument quite so far. His understanding is more limited, as his own speeches prove. For example, the maiden's words in this sequence connect the "Makele3 Moder," the "makelle3 perle," the "makele3 Lambe,"

the "moteles meyny," and the "maskele3 mayster"; in contrast, the dreamer's words insistently return to his smaller, earthbound, concern: "þou art gloryous," "3e ar maskele3," "þou wer clene." His challenge to her, that the "wone3 schulde be wythouten mote," is answered when he is allowed the vision of the city, and towards the end of the poem, he does begin to see properly. This new understanding is illustrated in the final three lines of the sequence, in which the dreamer's echoing phrases are at last applied to something other than the maiden. But as this sequence also shows, his understanding, temporal and terrestial as it is, remains incomplete.

This sequence is revealing not only of theme but also of a significant repetition of grammatical construction. Many of these lines end in the same structure, the prepositional phrase: "in synglere," "wythouten spot," "wyth gret delyt." In fact, of the 1,212 lines of Pearl, nearly one-third, almost 400 lines, end in this very structure or a close variation of it. In addition, another 100 lines begin with a prepositional phrase. A sampling of the major types seen in the poem follows:

A. Second half-line as prepositional phrase (more than 200 instances):[9] "to prynces paye" (1), "in golde so clere" (2), "of luf-daungere" (11), "agayn þe sunne" (28), "on vch a tynde" (78), "an-vnder shore" (166), "for doc oþer erle" (211), "aboute a raysoun bref" (268),

"by3ounde þise wawe3" (287), "vnto my Lorde" (362), "wythinne þys place" (440), "fro bale of helle" (651).

B. Prepositional phrase + verb/verb phrase (more than 45 instances): "aboute hem byde3" (75), "agayne3 hem glyde3" (79), "in þe worlde my3t wynne" (579), "fro hem reparde" (611), "wyth mensk menteene" (783), "fro þe vrpe aloynte" (893), "to a hil be veued" (976), "in writ con nemme" (997).

C. Verb/verb phrase + prepositional phrase (more than 20 instances): "let to me stele" (20), "lemed of ly3t" (119), "spornande in spelle" (363), "got3 out of welle" (365), "dra3 neuer to dome" (699), "wern sette in seme" (838), "is wryten in wro" (866).

D. Noun/noun phrase/pronoun + prepositional phrase (more than 10 instances): "non of oure gyng" (455), "þe perle of prys" (746), "al in a knot" (788), "his meyny in melle" (1127).

E. Adjective/adverb/comparison + prepositional phrase (more than 15 instances): "to fre of dede" (481), "as water of dyche" (607), "þus in a pace" (677), "ay saf by ry3t" (684), "so grene of scale" (1005).

F. Prepositional phrase + pronoun/adjective/adverb (fewer than 10 instances): "to me fele" (21), "of God awhyle" (692), "to God ful due" (894).

G. Whole line as prepositional phrase (fewer than 10 instances, but see group H, below): "Of half so dere

adubbemente" (72), "Wythouten fylþe oþer galle oþer glet" (1060).

H. Whole line as two or more prepositional phrases (more than 40 instances): "Of þat pryuy perle wythouten spot" (12), "By3onde þe broke, by slente oþer slade" (141), "At honde, at syde3, at ouerture" (218), "To kyng and quene by cortaysye" (468), "Aboute vnder þe lorde to marked tot3" (513), "To Hym þat mat3 in synne rescoghe" (610).

I. First half-line as prepositional phrase (more than 100 instances): "Oute or oryent" (3), "þur3 gresse to grounde" (10), "Wyth fyrce skylle3" (54), "For we in twynne" (251), "Of care and me" (371), "On arme oþer fynger" (466), "For a pene on a day" (510), "By waye3 ful stre3t" (691), "To mo of his mysterys" (1194).

This repetition of half-line structure is a definite pattern, repeated for definite poetic purposes. In Pearl the prepositional phrase, especially in the second half-line position, acts as a "syntactically formulaic phrase." Larry D. Benson defines this structure in Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight as "a metrical unit in which the verbal content varies though the metrical and syntactic pattern remains the same" (121).[10] No lines of Pearl correspond exactly to that of the example he gives, the second half-line as

absolute superlative adjective + prepositional phrase. Even so, the definition fits: the prepositional phrase in the second half-line position in Pearl is both a metrical and a syntactic pattern used throughout the poem for conscious literary purposes.

One purpose is a simple sort of rhythmical reiteration parallel to the many other repetitive patterns seen in the poem. A second purpose lies in the reinforcement of the identity of parts which Robertson notes. The many "spotless" images seen in the sequence above naturally recall each other as the narrative progresses. Thus much of the theme of Pearl -- and the lesson of the Pearl-maiden -- is carried by small sentence structures within large didactic discourses. Every stanza in every stanza-group has at least one instance of some variety of prepositional phrase. Like homonyms, not all are thematically significant, but when an important one occurs, we are (in Wimsatt's phrase) prepared for it.

A third purpose can be seen in the repetition of the particular prepositional phrase "wythouten _____," which corresponds to what Benson terms a "formulaic phrase": "a fixed verbal pattern that appears under the same metrical and semantic conditions with one principal word invariable and the other words varied to suit the context" (121). Pearl may not share its exact line or

this very form with any other of the Middle English alliterative poems, but within the context of this poem, this structure is special enough to be labeled formulaic. Seen also in the sequence above (and in addition to the lines already cited), this structure occurs in the second half-line as: "wythouten debate" (390), "wythoute respyt" (644), "wythoute peryle" (695), "wythouten reste" (858), "wythouten doute" (928), "wythouten reles" (956), "wythouten drede" (1047), and "wythouten summoun" (1098). The consequence of repeating these syntactically like phrases is to link them and thus imply a semantic connection as well. And indeed, this process works, for one in heaven without spot would likewise be without peril, rest, release, dread, and even (in absolute opposition to the dreamer) without debate or doubt. And Pearl, one of the 144,000 virgins, has already received the summons which for the narrator is yet to come.

This type of repetitive structure also increases the probability of pun. For example, "wythouten spot" presents the preposition/adverb pun "without" and "outside of." These lines from Stanza-group XVI, part of the maiden's lesson to the dreamer, illustrate:

> þou may not enter wythinne hys tor
> ...
> Vtwyth to se þat clene cloystor
> þou may, bot inwyth not a fote;
> ...
> Bot þou wer clene wythouten mote. (966, 969-70, 972)

Synonyms (tor, cloyster, mote), antonyms (clene, mote), and traditional puns (wythinne, utwyth, inwyth, wythouten) become inextricably, humorously, and seriously intermixed when to "enter wythinne hys tor" or the "clene cloystor" the dreamer himself must first, outside of the city, be without spot: "clene wythouten mote."

Thus we come to the fourth and most important purpose, the conjunction of sound and sense which is the essence of pun. In the sample just given and in the sequence above we see repetition of two sorts, not only of words which have two meanings but also of a series of parallel phrases. When a repeated grammatical structure is joined to a repeated thematic idea the effectiveness of the idea is not merely strengthened but augmented by the reiteration of the phrase. Even when words of the phrase are not the same, a certain echoing occurs. When the words are similar enough in meaning, a definite connection is made. When, as in this sequence, the two come together, an unexpected conjunction of sound and sense is set up which resonates throughout the whole poem.

Puns, as we know, depend on identical wording; formulaic phrases do not, although the effect is enhanced if they do. The basis of a pun is the identity of sound; the basis of a formula is the analogy of construction. We know that the poet repeats homonyms with interesting

effects. If we look again at the sequence of thematically similar phrases, we see that the poet also uses a series of synonyms, only some of which are part of the formulaic phrases or part of expolitio. Although the use of synonyms has not traditionally been included as part of pun, the poet uses synonyms in Pearl as he does homonyms: to establish a relationship between seemingly disparate elements, which may be things, people, ideas, words, or other constituents of the universe. Synonyms appear to be the opposite of puns, but as the poet employs them they are really analogous. With homonyms, the syntactic connection reinforces the semantic one (if any); with synonyms, the semantic connection reinforces the syntactic one (if any). Formulaic phrases work in both directions. In each case, the underlying principle is the same, for "when a thematic connection or opposition is to some degree reinforced by syntactic correspondence and formal repetition, the linguistic structure so formed appears particularly stable and authoritative" (Smith 168). That is, the structure formed by the poet's play on words can be said to demonstrate the poet's truth. Though I think it is impossible for us ever to be sure what the truth is, we can say that his technique for binding this poem together depends as much upon his particular view of the way words work as his belief in the way the world works. Both views are present

and inseparable in Pearl.

The best way for us to understand the poet's method is to trace one important word, in all its variations, through the whole poem. That word, "spot," the link word of Stanza-group I, has certainly received its share of critical attention, and I do not intend to duplicate the efforts of others in discussing the imagery the word presents. I do, however, wish to look at "spot" as the best example of the poet's use of the rhetorical techniques I have been discussing, for each of these types of play can be illustrated by this word. Critics are generally agreed on the important duality contained in this word; it means both "place" and "blemish." The changes rung on these two meanings, by use of traductio, adnominatio, and expolitio, are what I will consider now.

"Spot" appears first in line 12 of Stanza-group I, where the meaning is "blemish": "Of þat pryuy perle wythouten spot." At least, it appears to be "blemish" on first reading, yet, in the context of the rest of the stanza which precedes it, the other meaning of "place" is present as well (Johnson 33). The "pearl's decay in the earth" is expressed by: "hir color so clad in clot" (22), "O moul, þou marre3 a myry iuele" (23), "ryche3 to rot" (26), "in molde3 dunne" (30). The second sense, "of its being without worldly location," is contradictorily

implied by the many synonyms which do give location: "erbere" (9, 38), "grounde" (10), "clot" (22), "moul" (23), "spot of spyse3" (25), "molde" (30), "huyle" (41), "floury fla3t" (57). The choice of words defines the contrast between the narrator and his pearl. He is anchored in the blemished earth to which she does not belong, being "wythouten spot." Thus, as John McGalliard points out,

> the change in the sense of the word belongs to the category of the serious pun.... The contrast in meaning sets up a tension between the two images, the pearl of the end-refrain, and the mound in the "erbere" of the opening lines. And the tension derives maximum strength from the steady juxtaposition of the two images in a series of adjacent lines." (283)

The words of Stanza-group II concentrate on the new location in which the dreamer finds himself: "crystal klyffe3" (74), "foreste" (67), "rych rokke3" (68), "downe3 syde3" (73), "holtewode3 bry3t" (75), "grauayl...on ground" (81), "fryth" (89), "bond" (102), "water by schore" (107), "depe" (109), "founce" (113), "staren in welkyn" (116),"lo3e" (119). The imagery here changes from the mundane earth underfoot in Stanza-group I to the otherworldly, unknown place all around in Stanza-group II. His senses, which earlier told him of loss, death and decay, here are awakened to all the beauties of this new world. There is, of course, no touch of imperfection, no

"spot" in all of this. On the contrary, we are presented with the perfection of gems and precious metals: "syluer" (77), "perle3 of oryente" (82), "beryl bry3t" (110), "emerad, saffer, oþer gemme gente" (118).

The water imagery in Stanza-group III continues the concentration on perfection. "Doun and dale3,/...wod and water and wlonk playne3" (121-122) is followed by the punning phrase "bylde in me blys," for "bylde" is also a noun (meaning "dwelling") used later in reference to the celestial city, that "blysful bor" (963-64). Other "spots" he sees are: "floty vale3" (127), "Paradyse" (137), "bonke3" (138), "water" (139), "mere3" (140), "by3ounde þe broke, by slente oþer slade" (141), "londe" (148), "stronde" (152), "myry mere" (158, a near-homonym), "crystal clyffe" (159), "shore" (166) and "place" (175). The poet also uses the word "mote" (142), which is interesting because he rarely uses a link word before the stanza-group to which it is the key. In every other instance that "mote" is used before Stanza-group XVI, its meaning is not "walled city," as here, but "spot, stain" (726, 764, 843). Thus again we see how the poet, by subtly using puns, persuades us of the rightness of his thematic connections. Expolitio is also present in this stanza-group in two instances: "Bylde in my blys, abated my bale3,/Forbidden my stresse, dystryed my payne3" (123-24); and "I knewe hyr wel, I hade sen hyr

ere" (164).

Stanza-group III ends in a transition from place to person with the words "faunt" (161), "mayden" (162), "bleaunt" (163), "face" (169), "fygure" (170), "frount" (177), "vysayge" (178). This concentration on the person of the maiden is continued in Stanza-group IV: "So smoþe, so smal, so seme sly3t" (190, which recalls 5-6), "hyr araye ryalle" (191), "a precios pyece in perle3 py3t" (192). In this last line we hear for the first time of the third member of the trio, gem, girl and pearl without price; this line also introduces the link word "py3t," which here means "adorned," but which was used only once earlier to mean "set, placed, fixed" (117). Thus again we are led by homonyms to a doubleness of meaning.

In Stanza-group V, the poet uses two kinds of synonyms for "spot" as "place." "Gresse" (245, echoing 10, 31) and "forser" (263) recall the earthbound imagery of Stanza-group I, the "worlde" (293) of the dreamer. "Paradys erde" (248), "cofer" (259), "gardyn gracios gaye" (260, echoing 189), "wod-schawe3" (284), "wawe3" (287), "countré" (297), and "water" (299) point to the otherworld, which the dreamer can see but cannot understand. This antithesis between mundane and spiritual realms is what the dreamer spends the rest of the poem discovering.

This stanza-group also serves as a transition to the upcoming debate. It contains the first words of direct address as well as many words about speech and speaking. Each of the jeweler's speeches in stanzas one and four is followed by the Pearl-maiden's re-interpretation and correction. When he tells her he wishes to stay with her "by3ounde þise wawe3," she answers him quite strongly and, in doing so, actually presents an outline of the rest of the poem:

> 'Jueler', sayde þat gemme clene,
> 'Wy borde 3e men? So madde 3e be!
> þre worde3 hat3 þou spoken at ene:
> Unavysed, for soþe, wern elle þre.
> þou ne wyste in worlde quat on dot3 mene;
> þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle.
> þou says þou trawe3 me in þis dene,
> Bycawse þou may wyth y3en me se;
> Another þou says, in þys countre
> þyself schal won syth me ry3t here;
> þe þrydde, to passe þys water fre --
> þat may no ioyfol jueler'. (289-300)

Contrary to Charles Moorman's claim that their ensuing conversation has four parts (111), it is evident in these lines that the poet intends only three. Lines 295 ("þou says ..."), 297 ("Another þou says ..."), and 299 ("þe prydde ...") each marks a separate point of argument which the rest of the poem will present by words, in a vision and through action. Lines 292-94 are also another instance of expolitio; all say the same thing, that the jeweler speaks but does not know.

Stanza-group VI continues the talk about talk, beginning with another reference to the untrustworthiness of sight, that sense which the dreamer persists in relaying upon. The maiden again rebukes him, using another example of expolitio: "3e setten hys worde3 ful westernays/þat leue3 noþynk bot 3e hit sy3e" (307-08) and "To leue no tale be true to try3e/Bot þat hys one skyl may dem" (311-12). Stanza two, in which the maiden turns to "God worde3" (314) to refute the dreamer's second point (that he intends to dwell with her), contains the only synonyms for "spot" as "place" in this group: "bayly"(315), "water" (318), "clot" (320), "Paradyse" (321). Only the third refers to the dreamer's world, and in a most unpleasant way -- "þy corse in clot mot calder keue" (320). He argues yet again with her, so she continues with her explanations through the end of this stanza-group and into the next. In fact, her refutation of his second point constitutes the bulk of the rest of the poem until Stanza-group XX, when he attempts to act upon his third and final point.

Stanza-group VII contains a number of puns which refer back to the beginning of the poem as well as look forward to the end. The synonyms for "spot" as "place" include "water ... out of welle" (365) and "grounde of alle my blysse" (372). The former, part of a simile showing how

full his heart is of "mysse" (364), recalls the water he cannot pass over, and the latter, while echoing the previous uses of "grounde" as "earth" (10, 81), now plays a pun on a second meaning, "foundation," and is seen in this stanza-group in lines 384, 396, 408, and 420. This use brings us a synonym which also further emphasizes the doubleness of the two realms, "rote and ground" (420). The two speakers' differing uses of the word "grounde" illustrate their different understandings of bliss: his is grounded in her presence, while hers is rooted in "Crystes mersy and Mary and Jon" (383). In their own words, he is "a man al mornyf mate" (386) while she is a "quene in blysse" (415), an irreconcilable opposition that causes their differing points of view.

In Stanza-group VIII the dreamer continues to question the maiden's words. As noted before, the synonyms here center on the concept of "cortaysye" and the "kyng" and "quene" thereof. "Arraby" (430), "þys worlde" (424), and "heuen" (473) are his words; "grounde" (434), "space" (483), "þys place" (440), "heuen3 .../And urþe and helle, in her bayly" (441-42), "þe court of þe kyngdom of God" (445), "þe reme" (448), and "empyre" (454) are hers. As in Stanza-group III, place once again gives way to person when she explains that "oure gyng" (455) are "membre3 of Jesu Kryst" (458) just as "heued and arme and legg and naule/Temen to hys body" (459-60).

The dreamer's misunderstanding of the maiden's position in heaven leads naturally to Stanza-group IX and another place, the vineyard of the parable. "Spot" synonyms are "heuen" (490, 500), "regne" (501), "vyne" (502, 504, etc.) and "worlde" (537). These are words of this world; until the Pearl-maiden provides the meaning of the parable, that is, "lykne3 hit to heuen ly3te" (500), it remains the world of growing things like that of Stanza-group I. The mutability and death implied in the imagery of the vineyard are seen also in the link word "date" and other words, like the near-homonym "day" (510, 516, 517, etc.) However, in heaven, as the maiden well knows and as the dreamer will learn, there is no time nor sun nor moon.

Stanza-group X continues the parable, as the maiden justifies to the dreamer her having been chosen as one of the queens of heaven. The only places mentioned are "worlde" (579) and "vyne" (582). The lesson she gives depends not on place but on the understanding of time which she began to develop in the previous stanza-group. "Date" and "day" are not what the dreamer understands them to be; time is not the continuous round from sun-up to sun-down and around again as the vineyard workers believe. In this otherworld, "þe laste schal be þe fyrst .../And þe fyrste þe laste" (570-71), a concept the dreamer cannot grasp.

Stanza-group XI presents the maiden's answer to the dreamer's continuing doubts, which "spot" words make clear: "vyne" (628), "helle" (643), "grounde" (654, a pun here meaning the pp. of "grind"), "worlde" (657), and the interesting sequence of synonyms, "water of dyche," (607), "water of babtem" (627), "ryche blod" (646), "water" (647), "welle" (649), "blod and water" (650), "blod" (651), and "water is baptem" (653). By equating water and blood, the poet thereby continues the identification of place (heaven) with person (Christ) that began in Stanza-group VIII. There is a real melding of meaning here, for how can there be a blemish in the blood of Christ?

In Stanza-group XII, the maiden continues her explanation of how and why she has been chosen. The "spot" words, "þy hy3 hylle" (678), "þy holy place" (679), "yle" (693) and "corte" (701) are all synonyms of "heuenryche" (719). The use here of "hylle," a near-homonym of the earlier "huyle" (41), nicely points up the contrast between the two realms. Adnominatio occurs in the transition from "ry3t(e)" (665, 672, etc.) to "ry3twys" (675, 685, etc.) to "ry3twysly" (709) and back again (720).

The synonyms continue in Stanza-group XIII. "Ryche" (722) and "bylde" (727) contrast with "worlde wode" (743) and "worlde wete" (761). "Mote," which has meant

"place" before, is used for the first time as "blemish," the second meaning of "spot," but now the emphasis is on lack of blemish. "Wythouten mote oþer mascle of sulpande synne" (726) and "For mote ne spot is non in þe" (764) are supported by a new group of synonyms. "Harmle3, trwe, and vndefylde" (725) describes the "chylde" (723) that "Iesus con calle to hym" (721); "makelle3" (733), "wemle3, clene, and clere" (737) and "maskelle3" (744, 745, 756) describe the pearl of great price which is "commune to alle þat ry3twys were" (739); "makelle3" refers to the "Lambe" (757); and "maskelle3 bryd" (769) to the maiden. Thus, by use of these carefully chosen and repeated nouns and adjectives, the innocent child, the pearl, and the maiden are equated and are seen to partake of the nature of Christ.

The dreamer's mistaken impression that the maiden is both "a makele3 may and maskelle3" (780) leads to the next stanza-group, XIV, where the maiden once again tries to correct his misunderstandings. "Blot" (782), a new synonym for the second sense of spot, is followed by "gyltle3" (799), "wythouten any sake of felonye" (800), and "schep" (801), all of which describe the "Lombe" (795). The other sense of "spot" is seen in "hyl of Syon, þat semly clot" (789, which reverses the earlier connotation of "clot"), "hyl-coppe" (791), "þe nwe cyte o Jerusalem"

(792, 793, etc.). Thus both senses of "spot" act simultaneously in two contrasting sequences of synonyms. The pun fuses the imagery of a spotless person with a blemishless place, a conjunction of ideas which continues to recur.

Stanza-group XV extends the description of Jerusalem, especially the company therein. As Jerusalem has no "mot ne masklle" (843), neither have those who "beren þys perle upon our bereste,/For þay of mote couþe neuer mynge/Of spotle3 perle3" (854-56). Knowing the dreamer's propensity toward doubt, the maiden reassures him by citing Scripture: "Lest les þou leue my tale farande,/In Appocalyppece is wryten in wro" (865-66). The near-homonyms "lest" and "les" play on the sound of the link word "lesse" (852, 864, etc.). The possibility of a punning "les" ("lies" as well as "less") is strengthened when we read "For neuer lesyng ne tale vntrwe" (897), where "a lie" is clearly meant. Other "spot" synonyms in this stanza-group continue the fusion of the city and its inhabitants: "þe mount of Syon" (868), "heuen" (873), "moteles meyny" (899), "maskele3 mayster" (900), and "blysful bonc" (907). It is interesting that the dreamer still insists on seeing the maiden as a "rose" (906); he has not yet understood that she is now past dying.[11] A further repetition of earlier imagery comes in lines 873-76 which recall the sections of Stanza-groups I and II that

rely on the sense of hearing; they also link the heavenly sound the dreamer hears with the river he stands near. The fourth stanza reinforces the connection between the lessons of heaven and the music he hears, but even now that truth is not yet clear to him.

Stanza-group XVI has as its link word "mote," the two meanings of which are by this time hardly separable. The alternating doubleness of "spot," seen in just the first stanza, is unmistakable: "galle" (915), "wone3" (917), "maner" (918), "Jerusalem þe ryche ryalle" (919), "Judee ... þat noble note" (922), and "maskele3" (923). In stanza two the dreamer's continuing doubts are emphasized by the repetition of synonyms within a series of synonymous phrases:

> þys moteles meyny þou cone3 of mele,
> Of þousande3 pry3t so gret a route,
> A gret cetē, for 3e arn fele
> ...
> So cumly a pakke of joly juele. (925-27, 929)

He has understood so little that he is back to demanding satisfaction through his sense of sight, yet by his request we know that he has not learned, nor is he likely to learn, even by direct vision. When he calls the maiden "motele3 may so meke and mylde" (961), the phrase serves to point up his own contrastive position as one who must meanwhile remain "motele3" himself.

Because it contains the description of the new

Jerusalem, Stanza-group XVII not surprisingly includes many "spot" synonyms. The first stanza serves as a transition to the vision of the city, and familiar terms are used to describe the dreamer's movements up a "hil" (976, 979) to get into position to see "þe burghe.../ by3ounde þe brok" (980-81). The other stanzas begin the physical description that continues into the next stanza-group. A new cluster of synonyms, those for the levels of the city, are introduced (993, 994, 1000, 1004, 1022). Each is described in terms of gems (999-1028), recalling the gem imagery of stanza-group II. Nowhere in this stanza-group does the poet explicitly say that this place and its parts are without spot nor does he need to, for by now we know that it could not be otherwise. The two meanings of "spot" have been so joined that saying one automatically brings the other to mind. And the poet has achieved this union of meanings by the constant repetition of homonyms and synonyms, analogous forms of pun. Baum argues that only in metaphor can two meanings be absorbed into each other (227); on the contrary, I think it is clear that the whole force of the punning effects in this poem is toward fusion.

Stanza-group XVIII continues the description, and we meet pearl in yet another manifestation: "And vch 3ate of a margyrye,/A parfyt perle þat neuer fate3" (1037-38),

which echoes lines 199 and 206 where "margarys" (itself a pun word) were part of the maiden's adornment. This stanza-group also recalls the earlier discussion of "date," in which the maiden tried to make the dreamer understand the difference between God's infinity and his limited conception of time. The link word "mone" is used in connection with "date" to underscore the concept of divine timelessness and timeless divinity. Neither the maiden nor any aspect of the celestial city is any longer "an-vnder mone" (1068), for "hit was ly3t fro þe heuen adoun" (988). Therefore, "hem nedde nawþer sunne ne mone" (1044). The "reuer of þe trone" (1055) outshines all mundane lights, making these spheres superfluous here (1056, 1075-76). Neither are they welcome whose proper place remains under these satellites: "þer entre3 non to take reset/þat bere3 any spot an-vnder mone" (1067-68). The dreamer cannot understand that he also is excluded. Although he comes to recognize that "The mone may þerof acroche no my3te;/To spotty ho is, of body to grym" (1069-70), he refuses to acknowledge that he too is spotted like the moon. The <u>adnominatio</u> "spot"/"spotty" recalls for us that most bespotted spot, the earthly hill of Stanza-group I where the dreamer will shortly return himself. Originally he began there in

sorrow for the loss of his gem; he had lost his "blysse" (373) and gained only "mon" (374). "Mon" under "mone" -- even if this is only an accidental instance of pun on the poet's part, it most certainly works.

The one pun in Pearl that almost everyone has noticed occurs in the second stanza of this group (Baum 233). The words "lombe-ly3t,/þe Lombe her lantyrne" (1046-47) present the reason for the lack of need of any earthly orb. Other synonyms of "spot" as "place" are also revealed in the same light: "þe bor3 al bry3t" (1048), and "schon so swete/ ... þat foysoun flode" (1057-58). The repetition of water-words recalls the previously established connection between blood and water, a connection reinforced by the image of "þe Lombe þe sakerfyse þer to refet" (1064). This leads to another, related synonym cluster: "Kyrk þerinne wat3 non 3ete,/Chapel ne temple þat euer wat3 set;/þe Almy3ty wat3 her mynster mete" (1061-63). The lesson here is that the Church, too, however much needed on earth, is also of the earth, limited, temporal, and with a concomitant "spot an-vnder mone."

Stanza-group XIX describes those who dwell in the city. The dreamer begins his description with a telling simile by which we understand that he is still bound to earthly conceptions: "Ry3t as þe maynful mone con rys/ Er þenne þe day-glem dryue al doun" (1093-94). In this

first stanza he sees the 144,000 virgins "in þe same gyse/þat wat3 my blysful" (1099-1100); in the last stanza, "among his meyny schene/ ... þen sa3 I þer my lyttel quene" (1145, 1147). Crowned, adorned in pearls, and dressed in white, "In vchone3 breste wat3 bounded boun/ þe blysful perle wyth gret delyt" (1103-04). The "þrosessyoun" (1096) comes before Christ (as the "Lombe" adorned with pearls): "Towarde þe throne þay trone a tras" (1113). If the poet could stop for a pun in a line like this, in the middle of a solemn exposition, and not think that such wordplay would disturb the tone or the audience, it must surely be that he believed in the techniques of pun as being much more than mere play. In discussing the wordplay in Piers Plowman, Bernard F. Huppé says:

> The medieval homilist or biblical scholar was concerned with "sentence," with penetrating behind the sense to the spiritual meaning. For him alliteration, consonance, rhyme were not simply adornments; they were principles of unity and order solemnly binding the parts of the textual division with its development. To play with the etymology or the sound of a word until it revealed an image, a symbol, or a moral was to move on the high road to Truth. (163).

It is entirely fitting then that puns accompany the Pearl-dreamer on his journey.

The narrator has difficulty describing all the wonders of the city and its company, so he relies, as before, on

his senses of hearing and smell (1122, 1124-25). His word choice reinforces the impression of an earthbound and necessarily limited being. His contemplation of the paradoxical delight resulting from the bloody wound of Christ (1135, 1137, 1138, 1142) leads to his attempt in the following stanza-group to join the host. Yet he should have realized, by everything he had seen, that he could not dwell there. The vision of the city was but the most vivid portion of the maiden's answer to him.

The beginning of Stanza-group XX strengthens the impression (if it needed more reinforcement) of the dreamer as a man tied to this world: "Delyt me drof in y3e and ere,/My mane3 mynde to maddyng malte" (1153-54). These lines remind us not only of his senses but also of his lack of sense, which the maiden pointed out earlier (267, 290), and which is alluded to twice more in this group (1166, 1199). We recall that this third point of her discourse, the nonsense of his wish "to passe þys water fre" (299), even the maiden could not discuss in words. So too the poet presents the attempt and inevitable failure in one quick stanza: "When I schulde start in þe strem astraye,/Out of þat caste I wat3 bycalt" (1162-63). The next line, presenting the reason for his failure, provides another synonym for "þe Lombe" and also gives the first echo of the very first line of the

poem: "Hit wat3 not at my Prynce3 paye" (1164).

Synonyms for "spot" in this group include "water" (1156) and "strem" (1159) before the attempt to cross. After the attempt, we read "meruelous mere3" (1166), "bonc" (1169), "erber wlonk" (1171), "hylle" (1172), "ground" (1173), "regioun" (1178), "doel-dougeon" (1187), "kythe3" (1198) and "hyul" (1205). These words, by echoing those of the opening stanzas place the dreamer solidly back where he began. Yet "þe Prince" (1201), an earthly potentate in line 1 is now identified with Christ: "A God, a Lorde, a frende full fyin" (1204), another instance of the poet's method of using synonyms to turn a homonym around. The dreamer can know Christ, but not in the form of "blod and water" that he saw in the heavenly city; on this earth, he can know him only "in þe forme of bred and wyn" (1209). He had wanted to join the heavenly company. However, the only way any of the earthbound can do so is "to be hys homly hyne/Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay" (1211-12). In these lines, of course, we have come full circle, back to the opening words of the poem.

The circularity and the framework of this poem have been previously and extensively discussed; punning wordplay adds to their accumulative effects. By echoing the words of the first stanza in the last, the Pearl-poet returns us

to the "spot" on which he began. By echoing the words but inexactly, he lets us know that the dreamer has returned in another state from which he began. In such repetition, "the terminal recurrence of sounds used earlier strengthens closure by confirming the reader's experiences, thus reinforcing his sense of the 'rightness' of the lines in question" (Smith 166). This is exactly what the Pearl-poet has done. "Perle3" "precious" and "pay" of line 1212 are the same words as in line 1, yet they are not the same. As homonyms, their meanings have changed, and as I have shown, homonymic repetition, repetition of sound with modification of sense, is a primary type of the poet's wordplay. Formulaic repetition of the prepositional phrase appears in "vnto hys pay," the very last words of the poem. The third important type of wordplay in Pearl is synonymic repetition, repetition of sense with modification of sound. All three are present throughout the poem. All appear in this last stanza-group. The poet has chosen these techniques well, for each compounds the effects of the others. Traductio, adnominatio, and expolitio, homonyms, synonyms, and formulaic phrases -- each echoes, each rebounds, each resonates. Each helps bring together sound and sense, theme and structure, as only pun can do.

Notes

1

Benson first applied to Middle English alliterative poetry the concept of variation which arose in discussions of Old English poetics. I am indebted to his work and accept his conclusion that variation in SGGK is, in fact, "the key ... to the structure and meaning of the narrative" (158). On OE variation, see Brodeur.

I am greatly indebted to Robert O. Payne, whose critical insights, suggestions and encouragement have proved so helpful throughout the writing of this chapter.

2

The Oxford English Dictionary offers this definition (pun, sb. 1): "The use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or the use of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings." The unnecessary qualification the OED editors add, "so as to produce a humorous effect," has been dealt with by Baum (228).

3

Also see Kökeritz, 941-42; [Cicero] ad C. Herennium, IV. xiv. 20-21 (pp. 278-81), xxi. 29-32 (300-09), liii. 67 (400-01).

4

The American Heritage Dictionary, for example, uses paronomasia as a synonym for pun.

5

Frank cites Holst's discussion of the "historical confusion of terms for wordplay" (207). She limits her discussion of OE poetic wordplay to paronomasia and ambiguum. Mendillo's discussion of the distinctions and the confusions among these specific terms is especially clear (15-19). As her title, "Word Play in 'Pearl': Figures of Sound and Figures of Sense," indicates, her method, contrary to my own, is to stress the distinctions. In a later article (Dunlap 173-88), she limits the word "pun" to two sorts of significatio, analogical and witty. Under the entry "trope" in A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, Lanham rightly warns against the literary critic's too easy acceptance of the artificial and inconsistent, although classically hallowed, terminology.

6
Mendillo counts "(roughly) 138 instances of annominatio and 25 of traductio" (21).

7
In the Poetria nova, Geoffrey advises "take up again in other words what has already been said; repeat one clause in many clauses; let one and the same thing be disguised in multiple form; be various and yet the same" (42). Later in this work, he says that expolitio "may be done by a twofold method: either by stating the same thing in various ways, or by saying different things about the same subject" (78). The Pearl-poet appears to use the latter method in his repeated variations on the contrasting ideas of upward and downward movement; the former method seems to appear in the lines which follow (182-84). Also see the ad Herennium, IV. xlii.54. (pp. 365-67). Benson identifies expolitio with variation (124-25).

8
The use of synonyms by the Gawain-poet is discussed by Boroff, who bases her analysis of the poet's style on rankings of alliterative words established by Brink.

9
The numbers of instances in each group are necessarily approximate. With the exception of those in group H, the examples are limited to lines which can be easily separated into half-lines of two stresses each. On the problem of stress, see Pearl 89-91; also Andrew and Waldron 49-50.

10
Benson's example of a syntactically formulaic phrase is "þe trewest on erþe" (SGGK 4). His example of a formulaic phrase is "brittened and brent" (SGGK 2).

11
Some see this line (recalling the rose-images of the Paradiso and the Roman de la Rose) as proof of the dreamer's newly found understanding and as a sign of reconciliation to his loss. However, it seems clear in context that this rose is but incompletely transformed by Stanza-group XV; there are five more groups to come, including the vision of the celestial city, likened to a rose by Dante (Cantos XXX-XXXII). At this point in Pearl the dreamer's perception of the maiden has changed somewhat but is still tied to his earthly conceptions which he is never able to fully overcome. On the rose, see: Andrew and Waldron 31; Kean 71, 169-72; Pilch 170-71; and Wilson 122, 124.

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