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THE SACRAMENTAL AND SATIRICAL USE OF FORMULAS OF LUXURY IN MIDDLE ENGLISH ALLITERATIVE POETRY

by

ANNE HOWLAND SCHOTTER

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The poetry of the Alliterative Revival of the fourteenth century is remarkable for its long descriptive passages. Of these the descriptions of luxury -- feasts, clothing, and buildings -- are of particular significance because, as works of man rather than God, they are subject to moral judgment. Although they have received less critical attention than descriptions of storms, landscapes, and battles,[1] the poets use them in more complex literary ways.

Vivid descriptions of luxury reflect the importance of the sense of sight in the late Middle Ages, evident not only in literature, but also in the plastic arts.[2] The emphasis on concrete detail was encouraged by the rhetorical handbooks, which stressed amplification at the expense of abbreviation. Since this emphasis was characteristic of Middle English and continental rhymed poetry as well, alliterative poems are not unusual in having extended descriptions of luxury. They are, however, unusual in having a characteristic body of formulas with which to compose them. Consequently, despite varying contexts, the descriptions have a marked similarity to each other.

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[1] Nicolas Jacobs, "Alliterative Storms: A Topos in Middle English," Speculum, 47(1972), 695-719; R. W. V. Elliott, "Landscape and Rhetoric in Middle English Alliterative Poetry," Melbourne Critical Review, 4(1961), 65-76; John Finlayson, "Rhetorical 'Descriptio' of Place in the Alliterative Morte Arthure," MP, 61(1963), 1-11; and "Formulaic Technique in Morte Arthure," Anglia, 81(1963), 372-93.

[2] Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1924; rpt. New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 284.

Critical response to the descriptions of luxury has ranged from dismissing them as irrelevant catalogues, to praising them for their vividness. I will show that far from being meaningless set-pieces, they have the distinct rhetorical function of conveying the poet's moral judgment -- either praise or blame[3]-- often through the reaction of the perceiver. By manipulating these conventional descriptions within the contexts of the poems, the poets give them a meaning which they lack in isolation, and so achieve distinctive stylistic effects.

Each of the chapters on feasts, clothing, and buildings will examine the three uses of formulas of luxury in alliterative poems: romance, sacramental, and satirical. These uses often correspond to generic distinctions among poems, difficult as these are to make.[4] Romances[5] tend to use even the most conventional descriptions to confer praise on the aristocratic way of life. A small group of religious poems, which I shall call "sacramental,"[6] conveys an attitude of praise implicitly, by using descriptions of luxury to embody the invisibilia of Christianity. Satires, and the satirical passages of Piers Plowman,[7] in contrast, express blame by describing the luxury of both laity and clergy. Finally, in certain allegories,[8] praise of luxury is balanced by otherworldly condemnation. I am concerned with the way that the use of descriptions of luxury varies among poems of these genres -- differences of date and provenance are much less significant.[9]

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[3] Matthew of Vendôme discusses the use of beautiful or ugly descriptions of persons to confer praise or blame in his "Ars Versificatoria," Edmond Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XII et du XIII siècle (Paris: Champion, 1924), p. 132, I.59, and p. 136, I.76. Rhetorical precept, particularly Matthew's, is intelligently applied to an alliterative poem by Derek A. Pearsall, "Rhetorical 'Descriptio' in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'," MLR, 50(1955), 129-34.

[4] More so for alliterative than for other poems. See Geoffrey Shepherd, "The Nature of Alliterative Poetry in Late Medieval England," PBA, 56(1970), 64. The classification of J. P. Oakden must be modified to some extent to fit the use of descriptions of luxury (Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: A Survey of the Traditions [1935; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1968], II, vii).

[5] Morte Arthure, Wars of Alexander, Destruction of Troy, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Awntyrs off Arthure, Siege of Jerusalem, Golagros and Gawane, Rauf Coil3ear, William of Palerne, and Scotish Ffeilde. See the bibliography for editions and abbreviations for these and the following poems.

Emphasis on the role of the perceiver is an important technique with which alliterative poets express their moral judgments of luxury. This is especially true of the many alliterative dream visions.[10] These are of course influenced by the tradition of literary visions -- including those of Boethius, Cicero, Jean de Meun, and St. John in Apocalypse -- in which a naive dreamer is gradually led to comprehend the things he sees. But as Larry D. Benson has pointed out, in alliterative dream visions the narration from a limited point of view is often combined with a technique characteristic of alliterative poetry as a whole -- that of showing actions and things from the point of view of a character within the narrative.[11] The third person hero or antagonist in a romance, then, is structurally like a first person dreamer in a vision.[12] Following Benson, I shall call the emphasis on the response of the perceiver the "eyewitness convention."[13]

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[6] Pearl, Purity, and St. Erkenwald. The first two surely, and the third possibly are by the author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. I shall draw occasionally on Patience, also by the same author, and on the more conventional religious poem Susannah for examples of formulas, although neither contains significant luxury descriptions.

[7] Although Oakden classified the poem as a satire, recent criticism has stressed its mystical aspects. Nevertheless, its treatment of luxury justifies considering it with Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, Jack Upland, etc., Mum and the Sothsegger, and Quatrefoil of Love.

[8] Wynnere and Wastoure, Parlement of the Thre Ages, Buke of the Howlat, Death and Liffe, "Crowned King," and "Summer Sunday."

[9] The poems under consideration were written for the most part from 1350 to 1400 in the West Midlands, and from 1450 to 1500 in Scotland. For precise dating and location, see J. P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English: The Dialectal and Metrical Survey (1930; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1968), I, 45-102, and, for more recent findings, A Manual of Writings in Middle English, ed. J. Burke Severs (New Haven, Conn.: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences), I(1967), 13-16, II(1970), 11, and III (ed. Albert J. Hartung, 1972), 707.

This convention is expressed by a group of phrases for seeing such as *I wat3 war*, *I waited*,[14] and *I sy3e with si3t* (*with ene*), which, although not limited to alliterative poetry,[15] often receive emphasis there through redundancy. In *Pearl* the dreamer was suddenly "war" of the procession of virgins,[16] and in *Piers Plowman*, Will was "war" of the splendidly clothed Lady Mede.[17] Similarly, in *Wynnere and Wastoure*, the dreamer "waytted with-inn and was warre"[18] of a king magnificently dressed.[19] These recurrent phrases, especially when emphasized by pleonasm, as when the *Pearl* dreamer says of the New Jerusalem, "as John þe apostel hit sy3 wyth sy3t/ I sy3e þat city of gret renoun" (985-86),[20] contribute to the reader's sense of seeing the long descriptions that follow. The phrases become

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[10] *Pearl*, *Piers Plowman*, *Wynnere and Wastoure*, the *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, "Summer Sunday," and the "Crowned King."

[11] *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 173-80. This technique was encouraged by the rhetoricians as well (Pearsall, p. 132). Marie Borroff discusses its use in *GGK* (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1962], pp. 126-28).

[12] Benson points out the similarity of the position of the dreamer in *Pearl* and Gawain in *GGK*, as they marvel at the maiden and the Green Knight, respectively (pp. 181-83).

[13] Benson, p. 181.

[14] *OED*, *Wait*, v, I.5.c, "To observe carefully." It is often paired with *war* in such formulas.

[15] Chaucer uses them in his romances. In the *SqT*, the mem-

---

bers of the court "wayten" at the knight who has suddenly ridden into the hall (IV[E] 87), and in the *KnT*, Theseus' temple is described with repeated references to "seeing" (I[A] 1918, 1955, 1960, 1995, 2011, 2028). Chaucer's dreamers, too, frequently tell us that they "saw," their vision, as well as that they "aspied" (*HF* 1128, 1320) and were "war" (*HF* 100, *PF* 218) of it (*The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson. 2nd ed. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961]).

[16] *Pearl*, ed. E. V. Gordon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), l.1096.

[17] William Langland, *The Vision of William Concerning Piers Plowman*, ed. W. W. Skeat (1886; rpt. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), B II.8.

[18] In *Pur.*, Abraham is "war on the waye of wlonk wy3ez þrynne," (606). The frequency of the formula (he was, etc.) *war of þe* in alliterative poetry (R. A. Waldron, "Oral-Formulaic Technique in Middle English Alliterative Poetry," *Speculum*, 32[1957], 794-95) is a sign of the importance of perception in the tradition.

[19] Ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (1930; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1975), l.85.

[20] Cf. the dream visions *CK* and *SS*, with their introductory phrases, "Ther I sawe in sight a selcouthe peple" (*CK* 33) and "Sey I neuere wiþ sy3th" (*SS* 64). Borroff's analysis of how in *GGK* this pleonasm puts the emphasis on stupefaction is applicable to other alliterative poems (p. 71).

almost iconographic details for "seeing," like the image, common in the popular English illuminated Apocalypses,[21] of St. John peering through a small door into heaven, as if "the accompanying vision was dependent on his being there to see it."[22]

Distinct literary and religious traditions account for the variety of moral judgments which the eyewitness convention conveys in alliterative poems. Such judgments can range from simple praise to simple condemnation, but the poets often use the convention to convey two opposing judgments at the same time. The attitude of praise is most clearly seen in romance,[23] where the hero or antagonist is in the same position as the dreamer in a vision.[24] We are shown through similar formulas his feelings of fear or respect towards his enemy as he surveys his splendor. Descriptions of feasts, clothing, or buildings are often ornamented with jewels, either in isolation or in catalogues,[25] a popular alliterative technique. In the _Wars_

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[21] See Montague Rhodes James, _The Apocalypse in Art_ (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1931), p. 44, and Robert Freyhan, "Joachism and the English Apocalypse," _JWCI_, 18 (1955), 214, ff.

[22] George Henderson, _Gothic_ (1967; rpt. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 149.

[23] These generalizations will be substantiated with citations of formulas and descriptions in the following chapters.

[24] This similarity can be seen in pictorial form in the illuminated Apocalypses which portrayed St. John as a romance hero seeing marvels (Freyhan, p. 225).

[25] See Robert J. Menner for examples of catalogues (ed. _Purity_ [1920; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970], n. to ll.1464, ff). A taste for jewels was promoted by Richard II in the exquisite decorations of the minor arts (Gervase Mathew, _The Court of Richard II_ [New York: Norton, 1968], pp. 38-39).

of Alexander, for instance, the hero is persuaded to spare the Jews by the jewelled robes with which they array themselves to greet him,[26] and is further impressed by the lapidary splendor of his opponents when beholding the drinking vessel at Darius' feast (2936) and the palace of Porrus (3667-79). Whether or not they use formulas for seeing, alliterative descriptions of luxury generally indicate in some way their psychological effect on a character.

While romances tend to praise luxury and satirical poems to condemn it outright, many allegorical dream visions and romances maintain a balance between asceticism and love of luxury. When the dream vision takes the form of a debate, the poet is able to contrast the two moral attitudes explicitly. In *Wynnere and Wastoure*, the personification "Winner," for instance, debates the merits of self-denial with self-indulgent "Waster." More subtle is the *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, which balances Old Age's warning of mortality to both Youth and Middle Age with the vitality of the hunting scene and the lives of the nine worthies.[27] In both these poems, alliterative descriptions of luxury implicitly balance penitential descriptions and statements.

[26] Ed. W. W. Skeat (London: EETS, 1886), ll.1534-44. Alexander's reaction is driven home by formulaic phrases for "seeing": he "saugh suche a multitude of men • in mylke-white wedes,/ And ilke sege in a sote • þat selly hym þynkez" ([Dublin] 1579-80) and "als he wates in a wray • þen was he war" ([Dublin] 1585).

[27] Anne Kernan, "Theme and Structure in the *Parlement of the Thre Ages*," *NM*, 75(1974), 253-78.

In some romances, the poet expresses this conflict between worldliness and asceticism through a confrontation between two characters, without splitting it into personifications. The theme of the fall from fortune, extremely popular in alliterative poems,[28] structures this balance by showing youth and luxury as attractive, but transitory. This theme is most important in alliterative romances set against the tragedy of the downfall of Arthurian civilization. Here the very delicacy of the balance between worldliness and asceticism raises questions as to whether Arthur's court is being blamed for luxury or praised for nobility. To play on this ambiguity, alliterative poets manipulate the word "pride," which can mean either "nobility and elegance," or the first of the Seven Deadly Sins. Readers tend to take either Arthur or the penitential character who condemns his "surquidré"[29] as the poet's spokesman, when in fact the poet is simultaneously praising the court for its noble pride and condemning it for its overweening pride -- its "surquidré" -- in trusting that strength and beauty will last forever.[30]

[28] Fortune is personified in Morte Arthure, Golagros and Gawane, Awntyrs off Arthure, Wars of Alexander and "Summer Sunday," and the pattern of reversal of fortune informs many others. See K. J. Höltgen, "König Arthur und Fortuna," Anglia, 75(1957), 35-54.

[29] GGK 311,2457; MA 3399; Gol. 278; WA 3295, 4254, 4293, 4561. In AA, the ghost calls Arthur too "couetous" (265). See William Matthews, The Tragedy of Arthur: A Study of the Alliterative Morte Arthure (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960).

[30] Such poets are using the dialectical pattern of thinking that Peter Elbow traces to Boethius (Oppositions in Chaucer [Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1975]). See

Contrasting descriptions, beautiful and ugly, are the visual means for conveying this balance of moral judgment.[31] Although such contrasts are occasionally made with feasts and buildings, they are most commonly made with clothing, where they are part of the traditional contrast between the beautiful and ugly *effictio*[32] (outward appearance). As the luxuriously clothed youthful figure looks with wonder on the ragged penitential one, he is reminded of what he soon will be. When Arthur sees Craddock in the *Morte Arthure*, or Gaynor the ghost of her mother in the *Awntyrs*, there is a twist on the usual agreement between the *effictio* and *notatio* (inner qualities), for the penitential characters are not evil, and the proud ones not blameless. The resulting mood is elegiac regret for the beauty that must pass.[33]

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also Donald R. Howard, *The Three Temptations* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 75.

[31] Dorothy Everett discusses the importance of such contrasts to medieval literature in general ("Some Reflections on Chaucer's Art Poetical," *Essays in Middle English Literature*, ed. Patricia Kean [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955], p. 164). Benson considers contrast an important alliterative technique, and cites the rhetorical handbooks as models (p. 151).

[32] Walter Clyde Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty* (1916; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1972), pp. 6-7, and Faral, p. 77.

[33] In this respect, the Middle English alliterative poems are like the Old English ones, in which elegiac and tragic emotions are generally expressed by poetic contrast. (See Arthur Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1959], p. 229), and Stanley B. Greenfield, *A Critical History of Old English Poetry* [1965, rpt. New York: New York Univ. Press, 1968], p. 214). Helaine Newstead points out a similar elegiac tone in Malory's treatment of the tragic fall of Arthurian civilization ("Malory and Romance," *Four Essays on Romance*, ed. Herschel Baker [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971], p. 14).

The different treatment which two groups of religious poems gives to feasts, clothing, and buildings results from their allegiance to two conflicting Christian attitudes toward luxury, the sacramental and the ascetic. The sacramental attitude, consistent with the rhetorical view that beauty and goodness are in harmony, is that "in reaching out to the immaterial through the material, man may have a fleeting image of God."[34] Sacramentalism as a mode of thought was expressed by Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, John the Scot, and especially Hugh of St. Victor,[35] who defined a sacrament as a material thing which represents by similitude "some invisible and spiritual grace."[36] Writers like Hugh and Durandus of Mende used sacramentalism to justify church luxury, by relating the eucharist, the sacerdotal robes, and the decorations of the church itself to their Old Testament prefigurations (the Paschal meal, Aaron's priestly robes, and Solomon's Temple) and to their New Testament fulfillments (the heavenly feast, the fine linen of the Bride, and the New Jerusalem). The _Gawain_-poet's sacramental vision may actually have been influenced by Victorine thought.[37] In Pearl and Purity he portrays heaven as a court reminiscent of those in alliterative romance,[38] using details of the heavenly feast, the white robes, and the New Jerusalem derived primarily from Apocalypse, the most detailed description of heaven in the Bible. His choice of images might have been influenced by a group of beautifully illuminated Apocalypses, made for the aristocracy, which stressed the splendor of heaven.[39]

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[34] Emile Mâle, _The Gothic Image_, trans. Dora Nussey (1913; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 20.

[35] Etienne Gilson, _History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages_ (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 120, and Otto von Simson, _The Gothic Cathedral_ (1956; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1956), pp. 52-55.

[36] _Hugh of St. Victor on the Sacraments of the Christian Faith_ (_De Sacramentis_), trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951), p. 155.

Despite the fact that he regards sacramental symbols of heaven as real, the Gawain-poet is concerned that men may miss the reality behind them. In Pearl, the naive dreamer is his technique for using these symbols, and at the same time making us aware that they are inadequate.[40] As he describes the maiden's shining robes and the twelve jewels of the New Jerusalem, the dreamer is like Alexander, marvelling at earthly splendor. He must be shown that the costume and building that he can "se3 wyth y3e" (302) are sacramental symbols. The poet's concern with this double meaning of luxury accounts for the frequency of formulas for seeing in the poem.[41] In Purity, the poet uses the same formulas to denote the ultimate sacramental sight: the Beatific Vision.[42] The poem's exempla, which illustrate the beatitude, "blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), recount the failure of "filthy" characters to achieve this vision. In the parable of the marriage feast, the sight of God will be withheld from the man in dirty clothes, who will never "see hym wyth sy3t " (192).[43] The poet's use of these pleonasms for "seeing," often meaningless tags in other alliterative poems, underscores his concern with the limitations of perception in arriving at ultimate truth.[44]

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[37] He has affinities with the fourteenth century English mystics, one of whom, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing, translated the work of Richard of St. Victor. See Dorothee M. Finkelstein, "The Pearl-Poet as Bezalel," MS, 35(1973), 417, and Edward Wilson, "The 'Gostly Drem' in Pearl," NM, 69 (1968), 90-101; and A. C. Spearing, The Gawain-Poet (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 14.

[38] Conversely, he sees the earthly court as an image of heaven in GGK, a fact overlooked by critics who argue that the luxury in the poem serves only to point out "devotion to false temporal good against the values of eternity" (Derek W. Hughes, "The Problem of Reality in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," UTQ, 40(1971), 231.

[39] James, pp. 63-64, and Freyhan, pp. 225-28. Elizabeth Salter has suggested that Pearl was influenced by illuminated Apocalypses ("The Alliterative Revival: I," MP, 64[1966-67], 149).

[40] Spearing, p. 156.

The other group of religious poems, the anti-fraternal satires, express the ascetic strain of Christianity. They cite especially those parts of the gospels where Christ contrasts the poverty of the apostles with the luxury of the Pharisees, for the Pharisees, like the friars to whom they were compared, had allowed sacramental symbols to harden into materialism. The satirists do not amplify sacramental images, in the manner of the *Gawain*-poet, but hold them implicitly as ideals. They amplify instead the friars' worldly feasts, clothing, and buildings, which parody these images. In this respect, *Piers Plowman* is satirical, describing the feast of the gluttonous friar in alliterative feast formulas, but not the eucharist and the heavenly feast to which it is to be compared. Such implicit connections between the literal and spiritual meaning of symbols are important to the coherence of the poem, as has been widely recognized.[45] Similarly, the dreamer describes in detail with luxury formulas the jewelled clothing of Lady Mede, patroness of friars, but dismisses the sacramental linen of Lady Holy Church, with whom she is contrasted, in half a line. In this Langland differs from the *Gawain*-poet, who uses luxury formulas to amplify the robes of the Pearl maiden, which are based, like the linen of Holy Church, on the fine linen of the Bride of Apocalypse.

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[41] The pearls on the maiden's robes are the fairest that the dreamer "se3 3et with myn ene" (200).

[42] A consistent concern with the poet. See Menner, ed. Purity, n. to ll.25, ff.

[43] Nor will the filthy man see his savior "wyth sy3t of his y3en" (576). Cf. the paraphrase of the same beatitude in Patience: the clean of heart "her sauyour in sete schal se with her y3en" (24).

[44] Elbow sees in Chaucer's similar concern a Boethian belief in the relativity of knowledge (p. 145). See also Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 107-10, 202-03.

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[45] D. W. Robertson, Jr., and B. F. Huppé, *Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1951), p. 245; Morton W. Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1962), p. 105; Elizabeth D. Kirk, *The Dream Thought of Piers Plowman* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), p. 197; and Elizabeth Salter, "Medieval Poetry and the Figural View of Reality," *PBA*, 54(1968), 89.

Although Langland and the Gawain-poet use descriptions of luxury for strikingly different purposes, they both achieve a double level of meaning by means of alliterative formulas. For this purpose they both use the structural device of the naive dreamer, whose attitude of praise, whether directed toward heavenly splendor or toward earthly glitter, they undercut. A similar use of two levels of meaning, with either a narrator[46] or simply a hero of limited perception, is one of the most important ways in which alliterative poets achieve sophisticated effects with a poetic diction which, in its simplest contexts, tends to be naively eulogistic.[47]

The elements of this conventional language have been dismissed as "tags," "fillers," and "clichés."[48] Certainly such phrases as on erde and on molde add little to the meaning, and serve primarily to fill out the line in a poetry which, although not orally composed, was intended to be read aloud publicly.[49] The formula sy3e with si3t, however, contributes to the impression of limited close-up perception. The formulas for luxury with which I am concerned are meaningful, consisting of nouns for details of aristocratic life paired with adjectives which confer praise.

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[46] D.S. Brewer points out that fourteenth century European poets in general were fond of using the first person narrator to achieve "duality in unity" ("Courtesy and the Gawain-Poet," Patterns of Love and Courtesy, ed. John Lawlor, 1966; rpt. in Chaucer and his Contemporaries, ed. Helaine Newstead [Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1968], p. 321, n. 9). For Langland's use of the dreamer, see John Lawlor, Piers Plowman: An Essay in Criticism (London: Edward Arnold, 1962), pp. 281-306.

[47] J.A. Burrow gives an excellent analysis of the techniques used by Chaucer, Langland, and the Gawain-poet for manipulating their relatively naive poetic language (Ricardian Poetry [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971], pp. 32-42).

[48] Oakden, II, 381-402. Burrow contrasts the "excessive tolerance extended by Middle English alliterative poets to pleonasm and sometimes to sheer vacuity of expression" to the restrained poetic manner of the Old English poets (p. 26). See also Benson, pp. 110-66, for a general treatment of alliterative style.

Since formulaic theory[50] has not been very extensively applied to Middle English alliterative poetry, I shall look briefly at the controversy over the Old English formula[51] in order to arrive at my own working definition. Many writers agree that the definition which Milman Parry applied to Homeric Greek, "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea,"[52] cannot be accurately transferred to Old

[49] Although Borroff argues that such pleonasms serve the poetic function of retarding narrative (pp. 70-73), critics such as Burrow take a much harsher view (p. 27).

[50] The classic account is Albert Bates Lord, The Singer of Tales (1960; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1965), which incorporates the findings of Milman Parry. See R. F. Lawrence, "The Formulaic Theory and its Applications to English Alliterative Poetry," Essays on Style and Language: Linguistic and Critical Approaches to Literary Style, ed. Roger Fowler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 166-83.

[51] See Anne Chalmers Watts, The Lyre and the Harp: A Comparative Reconsideration of Oral Tradition in Homer and Old English Epic Poetry (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 46-94. The seminal application of the Parry-Lord approach to OE was by F. P. Magoun, "The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," Speculum, 28(1953), 446-67. Robert D. Stevick, among others, has warned of its limitations ("The Oral-Formulaic Analysess of Old English Verse," Speculum, 37[1962], 382-89).

English, because of the metrical differences between the two languages.[53] Several of those dissatisfied with a syntactical definition have adopted Randolph Quirk's more lexical definition of the Old English formula, a "habitual collocation" of words,[54] and have come to use "collocation "[55] synonymously with "formula."[56] R. A. Waldron's definition of a formula in Middle English alliterative poetry[57] has been similarly criticized by John Finlayson and A. C. Spearing for stressing syntactic framework at the expense of semantic content,[58] the only aspect which allows us to speak of formulas as the expression of ideas. Therefore, following Finlayson and Spearing, I shall use "formula" to mean a recurring collocation of alliterating words, in a single line, which express the same idea.[59] When possible, I shall substantiate the fact that a collocation of words is a formula by citing examples of the same collocation used elsewhere. Otherwise, I shall give several examples of the words comprising it, in collocation with other words for the same subject, which alliterate on the same letter.

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[53] Watts, pp. 63-125. See also H. L. Rogers, "The Crypto-Psychological Character of the Oral-Formula," ES, 47(1966), 98.

[54] "Poetic Language and Old English Metre," Early English and Norse Studies Presented to Hugh Smith," ed. A. Brown and P. Foote (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 150. Rogers, p. 99, and Watts, p. 79, both accept this definition.

[55] See M. A. K. Halliday and Angus McIntosh, Patterns of Language: Papers in General, Descriptive, and Applied Linguistics (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), p. 19, and Donald C. Freeman, Linguistics and Literary Style (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1970), p. 9.

[56] E.g., Stanley Greenfield, The Interpretation of Old English Poems (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 51, and "The Canons of Old English Criticism," ELH, 34(1967), 151.

[57] Waldron, p. 79.

[58] Finlayson, "Formulaic Technique," p. 375. Spearing defines the formula as "a lexical and semantic nexus: an associative tendency among certain words to express a certain idea" (p. 21).

In traditional poetry, a group of formulaic lines combines to form a "theme," a "recurrent element of narration or description."[60] Middle English alliterative poetry contains many of the themes characteristic of Old English and other traditional poetry, such as battles, feasts, and armings of the hero.[61] Two of these are similar to courtly topics considered appropriate for _descriptio_ in the _artes poeticae_: Geoffrey of Vinsauf quotes descriptions of both clothing and feasts as examples of amplification.[62] As Benson points out, the "variation" of the archaic alliterative tradition paradoxically corresponded to the

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[59] My "formula" will thus correspond to Oakden's "alliterative phrase" (II, 263-67).

[60] Albert Bates Lord, "Composition by Theme in Homer and South Slavic Epos," _TAPhA_, 82(1951), 73. See ch. 4, "The Theme" in his _Singer of Tales_ (pp. 68-98).

[61] Lord, _Singer of Tales_, p. 68. Earlier, C. M. Bowra mentioned, among others, dressing and entertainment (including feasts) as recurring narrative elements (_Heroic Poetry_ [London: Macmillan, 1952], pp. 179-214.

[62] "Poetria Nova," Faral, pp. 215-17, ll.601-21, 624-65.

expolitio of the latest rhetorical fashion.[63] The body of formulas that make up the "themes" or descriptions of luxury include some of the distinctively alliterative vocabulary long recognized,[64] such as the vague and synonymous adjectives imputing "moral excellence and material splendor" to the thing described.[65] Luxury formulas often consist of such praising adjectives as *best*, *bright*, *clene*, *cler*, *coynt*, *dere*, *fair*, *gai*, *mery*, *proud*, *rych*, *semly*, *schene*, and *schyre*[66] paired with nouns for aspects of feasts, clothing, and buildings.[67]

We have seen that descriptions of luxury can be used in complex ways. Formulas of praise can be used with similar complexity for contrastive, satirical, or sacramental purposes. The poet's art in this case lies in "a degree of tension between the inherited body of meanings in which a particular formula participates and the specific meaning of that formula in its individual context," as Stanley Greenfield wrote of Old English poetry.[68] The luxury formula is very like the iconographic detail in visual art, which has certain associations in isolation, but whose moral meaning can be determined only from its context. In the *Morte Arthure*, for instance, as Arthur catches sight of the cannibalistic giant, he sees "how vn-semly that sott satt sowpande hym one."[69] The negation of the feast formula *semely/ sit/sup* underscores the antithesis between the giant's solitary, evil feast and Arthur's splendid one which opened the poem, a symbol of the bonds which hold civilization together. Such descriptions of evil subjects which parody luxury descriptions partake, rhetorically, of the contrast between the beautiful and ugly description important in alliterative poetry. Satires, in contrast, use beautiful rather than ugly descriptions to confer blame, since they stress the discrepancy between appearance and reality. In *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, a Dominican convent is described with formulas like "queynteli i-coruen • wiþ curiouse knottes,"[70]

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[63] Benson, p. 124.

[64] August Brink, *Stab und Wort im Gawain* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1920); Oakden, II, 175-95; and Borroff, pp. 52-90. This vocabulary consists of survivals of OE poetic diction enriched by other poetic words available to ME poets in general (Oakden, II, 110).

[65] Borroff, p. 82. These are the "stock adjectives of compliment" which Oakden calls "much more frequent in alliterative than in rhymed verse" (II, 185).

[66] Borroff, p. 82, and Brink, pp. 35-52. *Bright*, *clene*, *schene*, and *schyr* are all common in the formulas for "shining" which the poets often include in their descriptions of luxury. These formulas are their means of expressing medieval "light aesthetics" (see Simson, pp. 50-51).

[67] Some of these nouns are listed by Brink (pp. 22-24) and Oakden (II, 188-89).

[68] "The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of 'Exile' in Anglo-Saxon Poetry," *Speculum*, 30(1955), 205. Finalyson applies this insight to ME alliterative poetry ("Formulaic Technique," p. 393). Similar statements about OE Formulas have been made by Pamela Gradon, *Form and Style in Early English Literature* (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 174, and Quirk, p. 171.

[69] Ed. Edmund Brock (1871; rpt. London: EETS, 1967), 1.1044.

[70] Ed. W. W. Skeat (1867; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969), 1.161.

which, by recalling romance castles like Hautdesert in Sir Gawain, suggest that the friars are aping the aristocracy. The Gawain-poet uses luxury formulas sacramentally, describing a beatified spirit in Purity as clothed in a "schene schrowde" (170). Nevertheless, he can, like the satirists, use them on two levels, as when he makes the dreamer in Pearl mistake the Maiden's heavenly "aray ryalle" (191) for earthly splendor.

Such slanted uses of formulas are much more interesting than the straightforward ones, and help to provide an answer to the recurrent question, "what kinds of excellence are possible in an art built on formulas?"[71] This question is an aspect of the larger problem of conventionality in literature, for formulas are simply one type of conventional diction, whose meaning must be analyzed sensitively according to context. Burrow has written that the work of the great "Ricardian" poets, Chaucer and Gower as well as Langland and the Gawain-poet, is distinguished from that of later poets by the fact that "the simplicity of the individual utterance is a measure of its dependence on a complex and interesting context."[72] Although students of formulas and rhetoric intent upon isolating similar structural elements, whether "themes" or *topoi*,[73] often ignore context, perceptive critics using either approach have shown that alliterative poets can use the literary echoes of conventional descriptions to advantage.[74] This dissertation, then will study in detail the sophisticated effects which the poets achieve with an inherited body of conventional materials.

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[71] Lawrence, p. 166, a paraphrase of R. P. Creed, who is skeptical on this point ("On the Possibility of Criticizing Old English Poetry," TSLL, 3[1961-62], 98).

[72] Burrow, p. 35. As examples of "contexts," he cites the naive narrators of Piers Plowman, Pearl, and the Canterbury Tales. E. Talbot Donaldson discusses Chaucer's use, in ironic contexts, of conventional diction which he avoids elsewhere ("The Idiom of Popular Poetry in the Miller's Tale," English Institute Essays, ed. A. S. Downer [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951], pp. 116-40).

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[73] *Topoi* are treated by Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trssk (1953; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1963). Their similarity to "themes" has been noted, especially by critics concerned with the manipulation of literary conventions (e.g., Gradon, pp. 152-211, and Peter Dronke, *Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970], p. 11).

[74] E.g., Finlayson, "Formulaic Technique," p. 393, and "Rhetorical 'Descriptio'," p. 10; Pearsall, p. 132; Greenfield, "Canons," p. 155; Lawrence, p. 183, and A. C. Spearing, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), p. 24.

Chapter II

FEASTS

Feasts have great symbolic significance in alliterative poetry. For this reason their descriptions are greatly amplified. Although their form tends to be the same, their meaning varies from genre to genre. In romances, their hierarchical seating arrangement and their ritual make them "a kind of social sacrament, a symbol of the vital bonds by which society is held together."[1] In sacramental contexts they are often symbols of the eucharistic or the heavenly feast, while in satirical contexts they symbolize pride and gluttony. The contrast between feasts, good and bad, heavenly and earthly, is conveyed through the use of similar alliterative formulas,[2] whose context is crucial in determining the moral meaning. The Morte Arthure provides an example of the simplest use of feast formulas in a romance, in two contrasted feasts which illustrate the pattern of Arthur's fall from fortune. Feasts in Piers Plowman are amplified only in the satirical sections, where they contrast with the implicit sacramental feasts against which they are judged. Finally, the Gawain-poet, in Sir Gawain, Purity, and Pearl, gives detailed descriptions of feasts in romance, satirical and sacramental contexts, using many of the devices of antithesis and contrast examined in the other poems.

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[1] Spearing, Gawain-Poet, p. 8.

[2] These include the distinctively alliterative adjectives bright, dere, mery, and semly (Brink, pp. 35-46) paired with words associated with food (brede, dayntes, drynk, mete, sewes), eating (dyne, supp), degree (dese, degre) and setting (sitt [sete], sale). Spearing has noted briefly the use of formulas in "D" and "M" to associate these ideas (Gawain-Poet, pp. 21-22).

In alliterative romances, the praise with which feasts are generally described may be tinged with an elegiac or a tragic tone. The Old English poems similarly use feasting as a symbol of the prosperity which is followed by adversity. In *Beowulf*, for instance, feasts serve as a setting for rejoicing which is disturbed, as by Unferth's challenge, or by the monsters' depredations.[3] In the "Wanderer," feasting is one of the fleeting joys lamented in an *ubi sunt* pasage.[4] In each case, feasts are central symbols of the contrast always present in the reversal of fortune.[5] In the *Morte Arthure*, a tragedy of fortune,[6] the opening feast assembles the major characters and sets a tone of harmony.[7] After the Roman ambassadors break in, demanding tribute, Arthur tries to impress them by mounting an even more spectacular feast:

[3] Beowulf, ed. Fr. Klaeber, 3rd ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1950), ll.491-641, 1008, ff.

[4] *The Wanderer*, ed. T. P. Dunning and A. J. Bliss (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), l.93: "Hwaer cwom symbla gesetu? Hwaer sindon seledreamas?"

[5] Brodeur points out the tragic contrast between the two parts of *Beowulf* (pp. 230-34).

[6] Matthews, pp. 94-105. Larry D. Benson sees Arthur as less to fault than Matthews ("The Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Medieval Tragedy," *TSL*, 11[1966], 75-87).

[7] A function common in heroic poetry. See Bowra, p. 281. Lord calls such a scene an "assembly theme" (*Singer of Tales*, pp. 68-98).

There come in at the fyrste course, be-for the kynge sleuene,
Bareheuedys that ware bryghte, burnyste with syluer,
Alle with taghte mene and towne in togers fulle ryche,
Of saunke realle in suyte, sexty at ones;
fflesch fluriste of fermysone with frumentee noble,
Ther-to wylde to wale, and wynlyche bryddes,
Pacokes and plouers in platers of gold,
Pygges of porke despyne, that pasturede neuer;
Sythene herons in hedoyne, hyled fulle faire;
Grett swannes fulle swythe in silueryne chargeours,
Tartes of Turky, taste whame theme lykys;
Gumbaldes graythely, fulle gracious to taste;
Seyne bowes of wylde bores with the braune lechyde,
Bernakes and botures in baterde dysches,
Thareby braunchers in brede, bettyr was neuer,
With brestez of barowes, that bryghte ware to schewe;
Seyne come ther sewes sere, with solace ther-after,
Ownde of azure alle ouer and ardant them semyde,
Of ilke a leche a lowe launschide fulle hye,
That alle ledes myght lyke that lukyde theme apone;
Thane cranes and curlues craftyly rosted,
Connygez in cretoyne colourede fulle faire,
ffesauntez enflureschit in flammande siluer,
With carielles endordide, and daynteez ynewe;
Thane clarett and Creette, clergyally rennene,
With condethes fulle curious alle of clene siluyre;
Osay and algarde, and other ynewe,
Rynisch wyne and Rochelle, richere was neuere;
Vernage of Venyce vertuouse and Crete. (176-204)[8]

The rhetorical purpose of this extended catalogue of foods is to illustrate Arthur's power at the beginning of the poem.[9] The description is an expanded version of the alliterative superlative:[10] the cumulative detail of the most exquisite food ("bettyr was neuere", "richere was neuere")

[8] Other less detailed feasts in alliterative romance are WA 480-92, 2922-51, GGK 116-29, 998-1019, Gol. 204-17, 1149-60, 1337-49, RC 181-93, 207-15.

[9] Elegant feasts had long been considered a sign of the superiority of Arthurian civilization. See The Historia Regum Brittaniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth, ed. Acton Griscom (London: Longmans, Green, & Co. 1929), X, 147.

[10] Burrow discusses this feature of alliterative poetry (p. 28). Benson sensitively explores the similarity in structure between grammatical details and larger descriptive units in GGK (Art and Tradition, pp. 149-51).

contributes to the portrait of the most magnificent king in the world. This is certainly the effect of the feast on the Romans. Although the feast is not presented from their point of view, it is clear that they are intimidated: they tell Arthur that Rome has no such luxury (227-30), and their emperor Lucius that Arthur

> ...maye be spokene in dyspens, despysere of syluere,
> That no more of golde gyffes thane of grette stones,
> No more of wyne thane of watyre, that of the welle rynnys,
> Ne of welthe of this werlde bot wyrchipe allone.
> Syche contenaunce was neuer knowene in no kythe ryche,
> As was with that connquerour in his courte haldene;
> I countede at this Crystynmesse, of kyngez enoyntede,
> Hole tene at his table, that tyme with hyme selfene.
> (538-45)

Although the eyewitness convention is not used, as it is in some other alliterative poems, the attention directed to the psychological effect on the observer contributes to the picture of Arthur's ascendancy, an important part of which is his conquest of Lucius.

The reversal of Arthur's fortune, which he learns from his dream of Lady Fortune's wheel (3227-391), is presaged by an evil feast which contrasts with the opening one. The description of a giant's consumption of baptized children, like that of his ugliness, establishes him as absolutely evil. The contrast works on several levels, ranging from detailed grammatical contrasts to the boldest opposition of the good and bad feasts.[11] Before Arthur has seen the giant, he is warned by an old woman of his ferocity:

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[11] The rhetoricians distinguish between contentio (antithesis) as a figure of diction and as a figure of thought--a larger structural unit. See Geoffrey of Vinsauf, "Poetria Nova," Faral, p. 231, ll.1102-05 for the former, and p. 238, ll.1345-51 for the latter. For contrast between ugly and beautiful descriptive set-pieces, see Faral, p. 77, and

> He sowppes alle this sesone with seuene knaue chidre,
> Choppid in a chargour of chalke whytt syluer.
> With pekille and powdyre of precious spycez,
> And pyment fulle plenteuous of Portyngale wynes
> (1025-28).

The phrase "Choppid in a chargour of chalke whytt syluer" recalls the "silueryne chargeours" (*MA* 185) and "Chewettes of chopped flesche" (*WW* 336) common in elegant alliterative feasts, while "Portyngale wynes" recalls the catalogue of wines at Arthur's feast (200-04). These formulaic details are clearly not appropriate to the context, but serve to direct our attention to the earlier feast. The giant, when Arthur actually sees him, is eating a man's thigh (1046), which is neither chopped in the elegant medieval manner, nor served on a charger. He is, grotesquely, roasting on a spit food which appears to be part of a typical alliterative catalogue, except that it includes human beings:

> Thare ware rostez fulle ruyde, and rewfulle bredez,
> Beerynes and bestaile broched to-geders;
> Cowlefulle cramede of crysmede childyre,
> Sum as brede broched, and bierdez thame tournede.
> (1049-52)

Brede and *broched*, common in feast formulas,[12] are here collocated with *beerynes* instead of the usual *birdes*.

Matthew of Vendôme, "Ars Versificatoria," Faral, pp. 121-32, I.50-59. The use of two levels of antithesis is another example of the alliterative poets' extending variation in diction to larger narrative sequences (Benson, *Art and Tradition*, pp. 149-51), just as the Old English poets did (Brodeur, p. 221).

[12] *MA* 190: "Thareby braunchers in brede, bettyr was neuer," *RC* 209: "Byrdis bakin in breid, the best that may be," *Gol.* 80: "Small Birdis on broche, be ane bright fyre," *WW* 348: "And 3e will haf birdes bownn one a broche riche."

On a smaller scale, too, the poet exploits feast formulas for the purpose of contrast. Arthur's observation of the giant, "how vn-semly that sott satt sowpande hym own" (1044), negates the alliterative adjective semely,[13] which is frequently collocated with sit or sup in Arthur's feast and feasts in other romances.[14] Like vn-semly, the giants' solitary dining ("sowpande hym own") shows his denial of the social bonds of feasting. Although Arthur is victorious in this encounter and for some time afterward, the giant's feast hints at his final tragedy.

A similar contrast on several levels between good and bad feasts emphasizes the contrast central to the elegiac theme of many alliterative poems, especially romances and allegories which express a balanced attitude toward luxury. In the Awntyrs off Arthure antithesis is used to warn of the fall of Arthurian civilization.[15] The ghost of Gaynor's mother tells Gaynor that she too will be damned for her pride unless she gives alms to the poor:

[13] Brink, p. 46. Note similar negations of alliterative adjectives in calling the giant's cookery "unclene" (1063), meaning both inelegant and immoral, and his appearance "vn-faire" (1045).

[14] E.g., MA 170: "Sone the senatour was sett, as hyme wele semyde," MA 409-10: "Thane they semblede to sale, and sowpped als swythe,/Alle this semly sorte, wyth semblante fulle noble," WA 2915: "3it sall þou sit with my-selfe • & soupe or þou wynde," Gol. 1156: "The maiste seymly in sale ordanit thame sete," Gol. 1149-50: "Ay, quhil the segis war set to the suppere,/The seymly souerane of the sail marschel he wes."

[15] The ghost warns that Arthur will be laid low by "False fortune...that wonderfulle whele-wryghte" (270-71).

> þe praier of þe poer may purchas þe pes:
> Of þat þou yeues at þi yete,
> Whan þou art set in þi sete,
> Withe al merthes at mete,
> And dayntes on des.
> With riche dayntes on des þi diotes are di3te
> And in danger and doel in dongone I dwelle.[16]

The accumulation of feast formulas in the middle lines[17] creates a miniature feast description, which contrasts not only with the need of the poor, but also with the misery of the ghost. The last two lines, which oppose Gaynor's "daintes on des" to the ghost's "danger and doel", forcefully show Gaynor that "thus shal ye be" (169). They thus support the theme of the reversal of fortune expressed by the series of contrasting lines beginning, I was/ now am I.[18] Antithetical construction helps convey the balance of the poet's elegiac attitude, for the ghost's condemnation of luxurious feasts must be weighed against the poet's approving description of Arthur's feast, to which Gawain and Gaynor return:

> The king to souper is set, and serued in sale,
> Vnder a siller of silke dayntly di3te,
> With alle the wirchipe to welde and wyne for to wale,
> Briddes bacun in bred on brent gold bry3te.
> (339-42)

[16] The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Tarne Wathelyne, ed. Robert J. Gates (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), ll.178-84.

[17] For set/sete, see p. 27, n. 14. For merthes/mete, GGK 451: "With all þe mete and þe mirþe þat men souþe avyse," GGK 1007: "þer watz mete, þer watz myrþe, þer watz much ioye." For dayntes on des, DT 385: "With all deintes on des þat were dere holden," RC 189: "Syne enteris thair daynteis dicht dantely."

[18] Ll. 161, 163; also 137, 140; 144, 151.

Like the account of the feast prepared for the challenger Galeron, containing "rich dayntes di3t" in silver, which "in siluer so semely were serued of þe best" (454, 457), this feast, a symbol of civilization, balances the ghost's condemnation by using similar formulas. The poet's elegiac attitude toward feasting, which he recognizes as a valuable ritual of doomed Arthurian civilization, helps lend coherence to a poem considered unskillfully joined by many critics.[19]

A similar, though reversed, balance between the love of luxury and asceticism is expressed in the allegorical debate Wynnere and Wastoure. Winner's description of Waster's feast (similar to the luxurious feast in Morte Arthure, but satirical in this context) here corresponds to Arthur's feast in the Awntyrs. As that feast is balanced by the ghost's condemnation, this one is balanced by Waster's self-justification. In a series of antitheses, he argues that the aristocracy deserves fine food, since the poor, whose claims are urged by Winner, will refuse to work if well fed:

> Late lordes lyfe als þam liste, laddes as þam falles,--
> þay þe bacon & beefe, þay botours & swannes,
> þay þe roughe of þe rye, þay þe rede whete,
> þay þe grewell gray, & þay þe gude sewes.[20]

These oppositions show how well suited the alliterative line is to a debate. The simple food in the first half-line is contrasted with the elegant food of the second half-line, while the alliteration emphasizes the opposed elements.[21] Throughout the alliterative poems, contrasts between the love of luxury and asceticism are conveyed through stylistic devices such as these, ranging from balanced descriptive set-pieces to balanced words.

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[19] E.g., John Speirs, Medieval English Poetry (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), p. 252; J. L. N. O'Loughlin, "The English Alliterative Romances," Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 527; and Ralph Hanna, III, "The Awntyrs off Arthure: an Interpretation," MLQ, 31(1970), 275-97.

[20] Wynnere and Wastoure, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (London: Humphrey Milford, 1930), ll.378-81.

Feasts are part of the food imagery that has long been recognized as important to Piers Plowman.[22] But because Langland holds an ascetic view of luxury, he describes in detail only an earthly feast, in order to satirize it, and mentions only briefly the sacramental images against which he judges it. In the feast of the gluttonous friar, he bases his contrasts between the earthly feast and the heavenly one on Christ's contrast of the feast at which the Pharisees claim first place (Luke 14:7-11) with the eschatological marriage feast of his parable (Luke 14:16-24; also Matt. 22:1-14).[23]

But if the contrast is biblical, the descriptive detail is that of alliterative romance. The structure of the feast carries the abstract meaning; like much of the "typical human activity" which comprises the fiction of the poem's personification allegory,[24] the feast is an alliterative "theme." Langland's satire here depends most heavily on echoes of romance feasts, whereby he suggests that the friar, by aping the aristocracy, makes mockery of his vows to apostolic poverty. In the opening scene Langland plays with a convention characteristic of alliterative romance, the "reception of the guest."[25] The dreamer Will, invited by Conscience to "com to his courte" (B XIII.23),[26] is a naive eyewitness received by his betters, like Rauf Coil3ear at Charlemagne's banquet.[27] He fails to recognize the guest of honor as a friar, perceiving him as a "a maistre • what man he was I nest" (B XIII.25).[28] The limited point of view of the eyewitness is being used for satirical purposes: the reader is meant to recognize the friar by recalling that Christ's criticism of the Pharisees for liking the titles "Rabbi" and "master" (Matt. 23:8-10) was often applied to friars in satire.[29]

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[21] Thomas H. Bestul makes this point in connection with other oppositions in the poem (Satire and Allegory in Wynnere and Wastoure [Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1974], p. 94).

[22] Robertson and Huppé, pp. 245-46, Bloomfield, pp. 107-08, Kirk, pp. 153,197, and A. C. Spearing, "The Development of a Theme in 'Piers Plowman,'" RES, n.s., 11(1960), 241-53.

[23] Alliterative and other anti-fraternal writings frequently compare the friars to the Pharisees, whom Christ criticized for indulging in luxury while pretending to apostolic poverty (especially in Matt. 23). See Arnold Williams, "Chaucer and the Friars," Speculum, 28(1953), 507, JU, p. 70, and PPC, ll.486-500, 554-58, 566-76.

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[24] Other examples are fights and journies (Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall, eds., Piers Plowman [Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1969], p. 9).

[25] Cf. Gawain and Kay entertaining Arthur's guests in AA 439-42 and MA 156-65. Burrow notes Langland's ironic use of this convention in his account of the arrival of Lady Mede at Westminster (p. 34).

[26] Common in romances. E.g., WmP 330: "Whanne þou komest to kourt • among þe kete lordes," WmP 1583: "& komes euen to kourt • as kni3t hol & fere," DT 2106: "He is come up to þis courtte, as ye know wele."

[27] Rauf thinks that though he had "socht sic ane sicht all this seuin 3eir,/ Sa solempnit ane semblie had he not sene" (RC 662-63), and exclaims, "Heir is Ryaltie...aneuch for the nanis" (688).

[28] The C-text clears up the mystery by saying, "a man ylike a frere" (XVI.30). It often clarifies artistically satisfying ambiguities in the B-text, identifying, for instance, the evocative "toure on a toft" (B Prol.14) as the

The echoes of alliterative romance feasts in this scene are satirical, since Langland uses poetic language only for "oblique ironic effects."[30] Such echoes serve primarily to contrast the treatment accorded the friar and Clergy with that accorded Will and Patience, "a pore heremyte" (B XIII.30). As is customary at noble feasts, the poor and insignificant are admitted, but offered humbler seating and food than the rich. Despite the fact that Patience and the friar are both welcomed and encouraged to wash before eating,[31]

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seat of "truthe" (C I.5), and thus losing the effect of an eyewitness viewing a mysterious building. See E. Talbot Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The C-Text and its Poet* (1949; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1966), pp. 49-51.

[29] See Skeat, ed., *PP*, II, 189, n. to C XVI.30.

[30] Burrow, p. 34.

[31] Both receptions are described in romance formulas. Conscience knew the friar and "welcomed hym faire;/Thei wesshen and wypeden • and wenten to the dyner" (B XIII.27-28). But Conscience similarly told Patience, "Welcome, wye, go and washe • thow shalt sitte sone" (32). Cf. Arthur's reception of the Green Knight, "Wy3e, welcome, iwys to þis place" (*GGK* 252), and the reception that Bercilak's household gives to Gawain, "To welcum þis ilk wy3 as worþy hom þo3t" (*GGK* 819). For washing as a traditional feature of romance feasts, see *GGK* 72: "When they had washen worthily they went to their sete," *GGK* 887: "The wy3e wesche at his wille and went to his mete," *RC* 143: "And they had weschin, I wis, the worthiest was thair."

they, with their peers, are seated in very different places, as is neatly conveyed in two antithetical couplets:

> This maister was made to sitte • as for the most worthy,
> And thanne Clergye and Conscience • and Pacience cam after.
> Pacience and I • were put to be macches,
> And seten by owre selue • at a syde-borde. (B XIII.33-36)

The contrast between the formulaic phrases "most worthy,"[32] and "at a syde-borde"[33] emphasizes the difference in status. That the friar takes the place of honor is ironic in view of Christ's criticism of the Pharisees for loving the first place at feasts (Matt. 23:6)--a criticism commonly applied to friars in anti-fraternal satires.[34]

Langland achieves his satire by assuming an attitude of approval characteristic of feasts in romance, where meticulous attention is paid to "degree" in the arrangement of seating. In Sir Gawain, for instance, the worthiest guests are seated on the dais, "þe best burn ay abof, as hit best semed" (73). After Arthur,

> There gode Gawan watz grayþed Gwenore bisyde,
> And Agrauayn a la dure mayn on þat oþer syde sittes,
> Boþ þe kynges sistersunes and ful siker kni3tes;

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[32] As a vague term of honor, see GGK 819, 887, and RC 143, all above, p. 32, n. 31.

[33] GGK shows the distinction between the dais and the sideboard, for the most honored guests are "di3t on þe des and derworþly serued," while the lesser ones are "at þe sidebordez" (114-15). Similarly in Pur., "barounes at þe sidebordes bounet aywhere,/For non watz dressed upon dece bot þe dere selven,/And his clere concubynes" (1398-1400).

[34] The C-text makes the allusion more explicity by adding that the friar was made to sit "furst" (XVI.39). UR satirizes friars for liking to "sitten on hie dece and glosen lordes and ladies" (359), quoting the entire line from Matt. PPC paraphrases the line with a feast formula, "freres ben first yset • at soper & at festes" (554).

> Bischop Bawdewyn abof biginez þe table,
> And Ywayn, Vryn son, ette with hymseluen.[35]

Like Patience and Will, the lesser guests are seated at the sideboards (GGK 115). The description of Patience and Will as "macches," table companions (B XIII.35), implies that they have been "marshaled," or seated according to their rank.[36] Despite this attitude of mock approval, however, Langland explicitly condemns the friar for feasting at the expense of the poor (B XIII.78, 103-04).

The friar's feast is a parody not only of aristocratic feasts, but also of the heavenly feast, an ideal which the poem mentions elsewhere.[37] Langland may have in mind the sacramental alliterative poems, which use hierarchy to describe the heavenly feast, by making hierarchy the metaphor for the gradation of heavenly rewards. In the parable of the marriage feast in Purity, each of the guests is "Ful manerly wyth marchal mad for to sitte,/As he watz dere of degre," (91) and each is seated "þe best byfore and bry3test atyred,/þe derrest at þe hy3e dese þat dubbed were fayrest" (114-15). Langland himself compares rank in heaven to that at a feast.[38] In verbal details, also, the friar's feast ironically echoes descriptions of sacramental feasts. Conscience's invitation to Will to "come to his courte" (B XIII.23), for instance, recalls the arrival of the guests at the wedding feast in Purity (60, 70, 89). The friar's washing before feasting parodies penitential washing before taking the eucharist, as performed, for instance, by Hawkin washing his dirty coat (B XIV.17-21) or Abraham washing the feet of the angels.[39] The friar's washing, however, is not sacramental, but merely an empty ritual identifying him with the Pharisees, who wash the outside of the cup but leave the inside filthy (Matt. 23:25-26).

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[35] Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd ed. rev. Norman Davis (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), ll.109-113. The seating hierarchy at Bercilak's feast is similarly described (GGK 1001-16).

[36] "In halle marschalle alle men shalle sette,/After here degre," "The Boke of Curtasye," Early English Meals and Manners, ed. F. J. Furnivall (London: EETS, 1931), p. 199, ll.403-04. Match (v.) and marschall (v.) are often collocated in feast formulas, e.g., RC 184: "Thus war thay marschellit but mair and matchit that nicht," and Gol. 1159-60: "Quhen thai war machit at mete, the mare and the myn,/ And ay the meryest on mold marschalit at met."

[37] PP B XI. 107 and XIV. 3. Mary Carruthers argues that Patience's meal is figural, in contrast to the friar's (The Search for St. Truth: A Study of Meaning in Piers Plowman [Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973], pp. 110-11).

The function of these echoes of the heavenly feast is ironic contrast. Although at the earthly feast the friar is lulled into complacency by his place on the "heigh dese" (B XIII.61), later details suggest that at the heavenly feast his status will be reversed--he finds his aristocratic food bitter because of *post-mortem*, the mortar in which it was ground (B XIII.44), and he will suffer "penaunce in his paunche" (B XIII.87) for overeating, although he has avoided the penance of fasting. These reversals also echo Langland's earlier allusions to several of the parables directed at the Pharisees, having the moral of the reversal of fortune in afterlife.[40]

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[38] The penitent thief, though saved, does not enjoy the "heigh blisse" of the saints. As Imagynatyf puts it, if

> ...sum man 3eue me mete • and sette me amydde the flore,
> Ich haue mete more than ynough • ac nou3t so moche worship
> As tho that seten atte syde-table • or with souereignes of the halle,
> But sitte as a begger bordeless • bi my-self on the grounde.
> (B XII.198-201)

[39] Formulaic resemblances point up the contrasts between literal and sacrametnal washing. Hawkin has not "wasshen or wyped" his coat (B XIII.460), the friar and his host "wasshen and wypeden" (28), and Abraham "wesche her feet and wyped hem" (B XVI.228). Abraham's feeding the angels is a prefiguration of the eucharist and the heavenly feast (cf. Pur. 612-44), and Hawkin's cleansing of his coat is a preparation for the eucharist (B XIV.46-48) and the heavenly feast of the parable (alluded to in B XIV.3).

Langland's use of the romance catalogue of foods also serves to emphasize the different treatment that the guests receive. His description of the friar's meal, instead of being a long list of luxurious foods (a traditional device in anti-monastic satire[41]), includes allegorical foods in an alliterative catalogue, in order to make a series of contrasts between spiritual and material, sweet and bitter sustenance. The friar is served

> ...sondry metes manye,
> Of Austyn, of Ambrose • of alle the foure euangelistes;
> *Edentes & bibentes que apud eos sunt.*
> Ac this maister ne his man • no manere flesshe eten,
> Ac thei ete mete of more coste • mortrewes and potages;
> Of that men mys-wonne • thei made hem wel at ese.
> Ac her sauce was ouer-soure • & vnsauorely grounde,
> In a morter, *post-mortem* • of many bitter peyne.
> (B XIII.38-43)

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[40] E.g., the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31, paraphrased in *PP* C IX.278-79. See Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: Scribner's, 1972), pp. 184-86.

[41] Bloomfield, pp. 107-08, and Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press 1973), pp. 18-19. Winner uses such a technique in his catalogue of foods at Waster's feast (*WW* 330-56).

Unaware of the spiritual significance of this meal of the Church Fathers, the evangelists, and Christ's instructions to the Apostles to accept what they are offered (Luke 10:7), the friar insists on literal aristocratic food. He finds this, however, not to his taste (*vnsauorely*/*sauce* being a negation of a feast formula[42]). Although the only contrast that he sees is with aristocratic feasts, we see the contrast with the eucharistic and the heavenly ones. The friar is like the Pharisees who understand only the appearance of sacramental symbols.

Patience and Will, in contrast, are served penitential allegorical food, which is also paired with common feast formulas. Conscience commands scripture,

> Bifor Pacience bred to brynge • and me that was his macche.
> He sette a soure lof to-for vs • and seyde, '*agite penitenciam*,'
> And sith he drough vs drynke • *diu perseuerans*.
> . . .
> And thanne he brou3t vs forth a mees of other mete. of *Miserere-mei-deus*;
> And he brou3te vs of *Beati-quorum* • of *Beatus-Virres* makynge,
> *Et-quorum-tecta-sunt-* • *peccata* in a disshe
> Of derne shrifte, *Dixi* • and *confiteor tibi!*
> . . .
> And thanne had Pacience a pitaunce • *pro-hac-orabit-ad-te-omnis-sanctus-in-tempore-oportuno*.
> (B XIII.47-49, 52-55, 57).

Many of the phrases paired with abstractions are common in alliterative menus, such as *brynge*/*bred* (47),[43] and *mees*/

[42] *Howlat* 705: "Many sawouris salss with sewaris he send," *GGK* 892-93: "Summe soþen, summe in sewe sauered with spyces,/ And ay sawes so sle3e þat þe segge lyked."

[43] *Bryng*/*bred* is a common feast formula; e.g., *RC* 185: "Thay brocht breid to the buird, and braun of ane bair," *Pur*.

mete (52).[44] The form of this also echoes alliterative catalogues of food, showing Langland's tendency to insert his allegory into the structure of traditional alliterative "themes."[45] This penitential meal contrasts not only with the friar's easier allegorical one, but also with his literal one, "sondry metes • mortrewes and puddynges,/Wombecloutes and wylde braune • and egges yfryed with grace" (B XIII.62-63). The contrast between foods is analogous to that between the foods appropriate to rich and poor expressed by antithesis in Wynnere and Wastoure.[46]

Langland uses antithesis to point up the contrasting reactions of Patience and Will to this discriminatory treatment:

620: "And brynge a morsel of bred to banne yor hertte," Pur.
636: "And bryngez butter wythal, and by þe bred setez."

[44] Cf. GGK 999: "Boþe at mes and at mele messes ful quaynt," GGK 1004: "Euen inmyddez, as þe messe metely come," WmP 3208: "& manli mad hem at hese wiþ alle metes nobul," Howlat 711: "Syn, at the myddis of the meit, in come the menstralis."

[45] I shall discuss below the adaptation of alliterative descriptions of clothing and buildings for allegorical purposes. See R. W. V. Elliott, "The Langland Country," Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches, ed. S. S. Hussey (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 230-32, for the use of the same technique with the alliterative landscape.

[46] Above, p. 31. Cf. the contrasting foods in the criticism of an upstart bishop, better suited to clean ditches,

> þan ben to sopers y-set first • and serued wiþ siluer!
> A great bolle-fulle of benen • were betere in his wombe,
> and wiþ randes of bakun • his baly for to fillen,
> þan pertriches of plouers • or pekokes y-rosted
> (PPC 761-64).

> Pacience was proude • of that propre seruice,
> And made hym muirth with his mete • ac I morned euer,
> For this doctoure on the heigh dese • drank wyn so faste. (B XIII.59-61)

The first line and a half conveys Patience's sense of having been welcomed to an aristocratic feast, whose descriptions often include the formula *made/muirth/mete*,[47] as well as comments on the "seruice."[48] Will, however, perceives only the social slight: the adversitive *ac* which divides the middle line contrasts his *morned* with Patience's *muirth*, words often collocated to show complexity and variation in human emotions.[49] Will mourns because the friar "on the heigh dese • dranke," as if a guest at an aristocratic feast.[50] Much of the dramatic quality of this scene, what has been called the "Jane Austen eye" for social behavior,[51] can be attributed to formulas recalling the world of alliterative romance. Langland uses such formulas to amplify only satirical feasts, not sacramental ones.

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[47] *GGK* 71: "Alle þis merþe þay maden to þe mete tyme," *GGK* 1952-53: "With merþe and mynstralsye, wyth metez at hor wylle/þay maden mery as any men mo3ten."

[48] Cf. the C-text, where Patience praises the "semeliche seruice" (XVI.59), a phrase common in feast formulas; e.g., *AA* 456: "In siluer so semely were serued of þe best," *Howlat* 694: "Syne seruit semely in saile, forsuth as it semyt," *Gol.* 1337-38: "Quen the semely souerane was set in the saille,/ It was selcouth to se the seir seruice."

[49] See *PP* C XVIII.147. Golagros' men make mixed "murnyng and myrth" at a feast, on learning of his defeat (*Gol.* 1148). Cf. *StE* 350: "Meche mournynge and myrthe was mellyd togeder."

[50] *Heighe dese/dranke* is a feast formula. Cf. *DT* 3399: "With all dainties on dese & drynkes ynow," *WmP* 3209: "& wiþ derworþest deinteis • of drinkes þat were," *WmP* 4312: "& derli on þe hei3e des • þei a-doun seten," *GGK* 114: "þise were di3t on þe des and derworþly served." *Pur.*, also, like *PP*, uses the formula satirically, saying of Belshazzar, "þe dotel on dece drank þat he my3t."

The *Gawain*-poet describes feasts of all kinds in considerably more detail than Langland does. The moral significance of each of these feasts is entirely dependent on its context, whether romance, sacramental or satirical. In *Sir Gawain* Arthur's feast at Camelot, like the feasts in the *Morte Arthure* and the *Awntyrs off Arthure*, symbolizes the initial prosperity of the Arthurian fellowship. Unlike them, however, it is not meant to convey Arthur's power before his fall, since the poem is not a tragedy of fortune.[52] Nor do the formulaic correspondences to Belshazzar's feast in *Purity* prove the poet's condemnation of Arthur, since the context is a romance rather than a religious satire.[53]

Rather than having a moral function, Arthur's feast provides a setting in which we can gauge the varying moods of the court. These variations form a contrast far more subtle than the vicissitudes of fortune, although they use similar narrative and linguistic techniques.[54] Initially, the description of the feast conveys the mood of celebration at a superlative court:[55]

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[51] Kirk, p. 148. See also Salter and Pearsall, eds., *PP*, pp. 10-12.

[52] Gawain's fall, however we judge it morally, is not a fall from fortune, and Arthur's fall is not mentioned in the poem.

[53] Hans Schnyder overlooks this distinction in comparing Arthur to Belshazzar, a stock figure of *de casibus* tragedy, who receives a warning from God (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [Bern: Francke, 1962], p. 41). But the fact that the interruption of the two feasts is structurally similar does not mean that the moral judgment is the same. An ascetic view of Arthur's feast similar to Schnyder's is expressed by Hughes, p. 219.

> Dayntés dryuen þerwyth of ful der metes,
> Foysoun of þe fresche, and on so fele disches
> þat pine to fynde þe place þe peple biforne
> For to sette þe sylueren þat sere sewes halden
> . . .
> Ay two had disches twelue,
> Good ber and bry3t wyn boþe. (121-24, 128-29)

The feast formulas and the intensive language (_ful dere_, _so fele_, etc.) contribute to the faint suggestion that however excellent the ritual of feasting is, it is nevertheless a transitory pleasure. This is not the ironic use of formulas which we observed in _Piers Plowman_, but what Burrow has called a suggestion of "something less than wholehearted enthusiasm."[56]

The poet subtly plays with the formulaic associations of _mirþe_ and _mournyng_ to convey the modulation of emotion. Arthur's feast opens with "rechles merþes" (40) and "all þe mete and mirþe þat men couþe avyse" (45), mete and mirþe being a traditional collocation in feast formulas.[57] Despite the fact that Arthur's insistence upon seeing an adventure before dining is traditional (90-102),[58] this mirth is thoroughly interrupted by the sudden entrance of the Green Knight. For, unlike the conventional challenger,[59] the knight refuses to observe degree. He "haylsed...neuer one," asking, "Wher is.../ þe gouernour of þis gyng" (223-25), although Arthur is clearly visible on the "he3e dece." The feasting which resumes after the Green Knight has ridden off head in hand is subtly contrasted with the earlier mirth. The description "of alle dayntyes double, as derrest my3t falle;/ Wyth alle maner of mete and mynstralcie boþe" (483-84) seems designed to distract us from the absence of the mirth traditionally accompanying meat and minstrelsy.[60] More obviously, the poet uses antithesis to stress the transitoriness of mirth:

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[54] Benson writes that the poem's "complex contrasts provided by chiasmus and antithesis" can operate between words as well as between larger descriptive units (_Art and Tradition_, p. 149).

[55] Clearly expressed in lines 50-55:

> With alle þe wele of þe worlde þay woned þer samen,
> þe most kyd kny3tez vnder Krystes seluen,
> And þe louelokkest ladies þat euer lif haden,
> And he þe comlokest kyng þat þe court haldes;
> For al watz þis fayre folk in her first age.

[56] _Ricardian Poetry_, p. 42. He argues that in such cases the language seems to be "leaning over toward irony of its own accord" (p. 41). See also Borroff, pp. 102-03.

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[57] Similarly, GGK 71: "Alle þis mirþe þay maden to þe mete tyme," AA 181: "Withe al merthes at mete," WmP 4926: "And as þei muriest at þe mete • þat time seten."

[58] The interruptions of Sir Galeron and his lady (AA 343-433) and the Roman ambassadors (MA 78-115) also fit this convention.

[59] E.g., Sir Galeron's lady, who "halsed Sir Arthur hendly one hi3te" (AA 346), and the Roman senator, who

> ...salu3ed the souerayne and the sale aftyr,
> Ilke a kynge aftyre kynge, and mad his enclines;
> Gaynour in hir degré he grette as hym lykyde,
> And syne agayne to the gome he gaffe vp his nedys
> (MA 82-85).

[60] See above, n. 57.

> ...þa3 men ben mery in mynde quen þay han mayn drynk,
> A 3ere 3ernes ful 3erne, and 3eldes neuer lyke,
> þe forme to þe fynisment foldez ful selden.
> (497-99)

Through this device the poet introduces the passage of the seasons which similarly uses contrast to convey the idea of mutability.[61]

In describing the feast which Arthur makes for Gawain before the hero sets out to look for the Green Knight, the poet uses a number of devices to show the contrast between the court's joyful behavior and sorrowful feelings:

> With much reuel and ryche of þe Rounde Table.
> Kny3tez ful cortays and comlych ladies
> Al for luf of þat lede in longynge þay were,
> Bot neuer þe lece ne þe later þay neuened bot merþe:
> Mony ioylez for þat ientyle iapez þer maden.
> (538-42)

Bot neuer þe lece ne þe later (541) underscores the opposition between the felt longing and the expressed mirth, while the alliteration of ioylez and iapez (542) points up their contradiction. When the poet says that Gawain "aftter mete with mournyng" speaks to Arthur (543), mournyng has replaced its formulaic opposite mirþe[62] in collocation with mete.

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[61] See Theodore Silverstein, "The Art of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight," UTQ, 33(1964), 258-78, and J. A. Burrow, A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 33-35.

[62] For the common antithesis murnyng and myrthe, see above, p. 39, n. 49. Adrien Bonjour has shown how the antithesis blysse and blunder (18), which conveys the variation of fortune in the founding of Britain, relates to the Green Knight's interruption of the feast ("Werre and Wrake and Wonder, Sir Gawain, 1.16," ES, 32[1951], 70-72).

The description of the feast at which Gawain is entertained at Bercilak's castle (999-1019) is strikingly similar to Arthur's feast,[63] giving a general picture of the festivities rather than a long catalogue of dainties. The restraint of each description is explained with an _occupatio_ which sounds more genuine than the usual disclaimer.[64] Because the two feasts form parallels rather than contrasts with each other, _Sir Gawain_ differs from many poems which contrast two feasts, good and bad, for moral purposes:[65] instead, it contrasts the two festive court scenes with the cold outdoor scene which intervenes.[66] In reminding him of Arthur's feast, Bercilak's feast puts Gawain off guard for the test that awaits him.[67] The setting is morally ambiguous, for here are none of the grotesque details which usually identify evil in medieval literature.[68] The description "þer watz mete, þer watz myrþe, þer watz much ioye" (1007) seems to return mirth to the company of meat from which it has been missing since the Green Knight's interruption. The later description of the festivities, however, "With merþe and mynstralsye, with metez at hor wylle,/þay maden mery as any men mo3ten" (1952-53), seems ironic, since Gawain has just neglected to hand over the girdle to his host. Finally, when Bercilak, having explained the test to Gawain, invites him to "Make myry in my hous" (2468), the hero refuses, for he has suddenly seen the appearance of festal mirth as a seductive trap.

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[63] Since Schnyder identifies Bercilak with Christ, he must overlook this verbal similarity when arguing that Arthur's feast is equivalent to Belshazzar's (p. 41).

[64] The poet's remark about Bercilak's feast, "to telle þerof hit me tene were,/And to poynte hit 3et pyned me parauenture" (1008-09), recalls what he said of Arthur's feast, "Now wyl I of hor seruise say yow no more,/For vch wy3e may wel wit no wont þat þer were" (130-31). For the modesty of these descriptions, see Borroff, p. 103, and S. S. Hussey, "_Sir Gawain_ and Romance Writing," _SN_, 40(1968), 161-74.

[65] E.g., Arthur's and the giant's feasts in _MA_, and the feasts of the parable and Belshazzar in _Pur_.

[66] See Howard, pp. 249-50.

[67] Burrow, _A Reading_, p. 56.

[68] Such as the ugliness of the giant and his feast in _MA_.

In Purity, the poet explores the conflict between appearance and reality in feasts somewhat differently: he makes a moral point by contrasting the earthly feast of Belshazzar with the heavenly feast of the parable. Although Belshazzar's excessive trust in the prosperity symbolized by his feast is similar to Gawain's trust in the comfort of feasts, it is much more serious in degree.[69] His real sin is sacrilege: blindness to the sacramental value of the vessels.

The poet uses the parable of the marriage feast, one of Christ's parables of the kingdom which describe heaven ana-

The description of the old woman (GGK 957-67) is too subtle to be a clear indication.

[69] This despite Schnyder's attempt to argue that Arthur's pride is morally equivalent to Belshazzar's (pp. 40-41).

logically, to develop the image of heaven as a court.[70] Like Pearl, Purity was probably influenced in its details of heaven by Apocalypse, particularly the image of God's throne, the white robes, and the marriage feast of the Lamb (Apoc. 4:2, 4:4, 19:7,9). Nevertheless, its primary sources are the two gospel versions of the parable (Matt. 22:2-14, Luke 14:16-24). The image of heaven as a court is an amplification of the Beatific Vision -- the sight of God face to face -- promised to the pure of heart in the beatitude on which Purity is based: "þe haþel clene of his herte hapenez ful fayre,/For he schal loke on oure Lorde wyth a bone chere" (27-28; Matt. 5:8). It is a sign of the poet's concern with the relation between earthly and heavenly sight that he repeatedly expresses this vision with perception formulas.[71]

Feast formulas are the most important elements of the Beatific Vision in Purity. They convey, first of all, the generosity of the host. His invitation is extended to all who have the minimum requirement -- a clean wedding garment (baptism):

> For alle arn laþed lufly, þe luþer and þe better,
> þat wern ful3ed in font þat fest to have.
> (163-64)

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[70] For the importance of this image to the poet, see Spearing, Gawain-Poet, pp. 155-56, and Brewer, pp. 315-16.

[71] See Menner, ed., Pur., n. to l. 25ff., for the poet's interest in the Beatific Vision. The pure of heart may "se þy savior and his sete ryche" (176), have a "sad sy3t to see auen face" (595), and "Se þat semly in sete and his swete face" (1055).

The poet uses laþed, 'invited, called,' a word common in invitations to feasts,[72] to translate the vocati in the moral of Matthew's version of the parable, "For many are called and few chosen" (22:14).[73] The fact that purification by water is necessary for salvation accounts for the introductory exhortation not to go to heaven with "handez unwaschen" (34) lest one be "unwelcum" (49). These phrases are negations of formulas for the reception of the guest.[74]

Formulas for food, especially, convey the liberality of heavenly beatitude.[75] There are sacramental overtones to the host's invitation: as a lavish alliterative menu, it prefigures the eucharist and the supper of the Lamb:[76]

> 'For my boles and my borez arn bayted and slayne,
> And my fedde foulez fatted wyth scla3t,
> My polyle þat is penne-fed and partrykez boþe,
> Wyth scheldez of wylde swyn, swanez and cronez --
> Al is roþeled and rosted ry3t to þe sete.
> (55-59)

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[72] Bercilak, in urging Gawain to return to his feast, "laþed hym fast" (GGK 2403). Laþe is used sacrametnally in Pur., where the host in the parable tells his men, "Laþez hem alle lufly to lenge at my fest" (81) and in StE, where the pagan judge fears that his soul will languish in hell, "Longe er ho þat soper see, oþer segge her to lathe" (308).

[73] The vocati of this invitation was associated with that of the marriage of the Lamb, "Beati qui ad coenam nuptiarum vocati sunt" (Apoc. 19:9) by Haimo of Halberstadt (PL XVII, 1169).

[74] See above, p. 32, n. 31.

[75] Food was an important image of spiritual sustenance from Old Testament times. See Bloomfield, p. 107, and Curtius, pp. 134-36.

[76] The eucharist is a sacrifice at which the victim -- Christ -- is consumed (T. D. Kelly and John T. Irwin, "The Meaning of Cleanness: Parable as Effective Sign," MS, 35[1973], 236).

The host expresses his fury at those who refuse the invitation by saying that they "Schul never sitte in my sale, my soper to fele,/ Ne suppe on sope of my seue" (107-08).[77]

Because of its emphasis on degree as well as bounty, a feast is an excellent means of conveying the paradox of the simultaneous equality and hierarchy of blessed souls. For while unlimited food and festal mirth stand for the unstinting generosity of God's grace, rank at the feast stands for the subjective enjoyment of that bliss.[78] Although the guests are welcomed equally ("Wheþer þay weren worþy or wers, wel wern þay stowed" [113]), and the host comes forward to "rehayte rekenly þe riche and þe poveren" (127),[79] the description of the seating arrangement nevertheless indicates a distinction of rank:

> Ay þe best byfore and bry3test atyred,
> þe derrest at þe hy3e dese þat dubbed wer fayrest;
> And syþen on lenþe biloghe ledez inoghe.
> (114-16)

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[77] A romance feast formula. Cf. *GGK* 889: "Wyth sere sewes and sette sesounde of þe best," *MA* 409: "Thane they semblede to sale, and sowpped als swethe," *Gol.* 1156: "The maist seymly in sale ordanit thame sete," *AA* 339: "The king to souper is set, and served in sale." The formula is used sacramentally in *StE*, where the pagan judge says, "Ry3t now to soper my soule is sette at þe table" (332).

[78] See Gordon, ed. *Pearl*, p. xxiv. Menner, in his discussion of the theological significance of seating order in the parable, fails to recognize that both poems express this paradox (ed. *Pur.*, n. to 1.114). Langland uses the same metaphor, "Mete more than ynogh • ac nou3t so much worship (*PP* B XII.199; above, p. 35, n. 38).

[79] *Rehayte* commonly expresses a host's cheering his guests in alliterative romances (*OED* *Rehete* v.1). As Gawain began his meal at Hautdesert, "Ful hendely...alle þe haþeles rehayted hym at onez" (*GGK* 895). At his feast in *MA*, Arthur

Although even the disreputable were welcomed, the details that all were "sty3tled wyth þe stewarde" (90)[80] and seated by the "marchal" (91, 118) make it clear that degree was observed.[81]

The simultaneous equality of reward and inequality of rank in heaven is the central theological paradox of *Pearl*, although it is never properly explained in the poem.[82] The answer might lie in the image of boundless hospitality at a hierarchical feast which is so carefully developed in *Purity*. Although *Pearl* does not appear to use feast imagery to convey the vision of heaven, formulaic allusions to the supper of the Lamb suggest that the poet had a feast in mind as a model of divine liberality:

"Rehetede the Romaynes with realle speche" (221), and at Golagros' feast, "With kynde contenance the renk couth thame rehete" (*Gol*. 1158). See also *MA* 411, 3198.

[80] Formulaic. E.g., *WmP* 1199: "þat oþer was his stiward • þat sti3tled al his meyne," and *MA* 157: "To styghtylle the steryne mene as theire statte askys." Langland plays on the romance and sacramental associations of hierarchy in the formula when describing the Friar's feast: "Reson stod and stihlede • as for stywarde of halle" (*PP* C XVI.40).

[81] Similarly, *Pur*. 92: "As he watz dere of degree dressed his seete." The collocation of *dese* and *dere* frequently conveys degree in feast descriptions: *GGK* 75: "Dressed on þe dere dese, dubbed al aboute," *GGK* 445: "Toward þe derrest on þe dece he dressez þe face" (noted by Spearing, *Gawain-Poet*, p. 22).

[82] Gordon, ed. *Pearl*, p. xxiv: "As the quality of their appreciation of the heavenly state differs, so is their reward greater or less." This is conveyed most clearly in the lines,

> For þer is vch mon payed inlyche,
> Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde;
> For þe gentyl Cheuetayn is no chyche,
> Queþer-so-euer he dele nesch oþer harde:
> He laue3 hys gyfte3 as water of dyche. (603-07)

> Þe Lombe vus glade3, our care is kest;
> He myrþe3 vus alle at vch a mes.
> Uchone3 blysse is breme and best,
> And neuer one3 honour 3et þe les.
> (861-64)

In romances, hosts often "glad" their guests,[83] and encourage their "myrþe,"[84] and in sacramental poems myrþe is used to denote heavenly bliss.[85] The image, therefore, is of the Lamb as genial host, cheering each guest, like the lord of the parable who "bede hym be myry" (Pur. 130).[86]

An image of food, as well as hospitality, is suggested by the collocation of myrthe3 and mes, a feast formula which exploits the pun on mes as "mess," a portion of food, and "mass," the eucharist.[87] The mass in heaven is the supper of the Lamb,[88] referred to later as a "refreshment."[89] That each soul's "blysse is breme and best,/ And neuer one3 honour 3et neuer þe les" (863-64) stresses the subjective equality of the reward, as put forth in the parable of the vineyard (501-72). But the poet does not hold the heretical doctrine of objective equality of rewards, as his distinction between the ranks of Mary, the other queens, and the aldermen indicates.[90] We can only conclude that the missing element of the paradox is rank at the feast, which the poet fails to convey as deftly as he did in Purity in the phrase, "þe symplest in þat sale watz served to þe fulle" (120).

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[83] WA 485: "And gladis gudly his gestis• as his degre wald," AA 458: "And þus Sir Gawayne þe good glades houre gest," Gol. 208: "Gladit his gest."

[84] A word common in feast formulas, as we have shown. Bercilak tells Gawain, "Make we myry" at a meal (GGK 1681), and later urges him to return to his feast to "make myry" (GGK 2468).

[85] In Pur., the Beatific Vison is "þe myrþe þat much is to prayse" (189) and in StE, the soul of the pagan judge is received at the heavenly feast with "unsparid murthe" (335) --boundless bliss.

[86] The host also "talkede ay myrþe" as he moved from table to table (Pur. 132).

[87] Mes, 'portion,' is common in feast formulas in "M" (GGK 999: "Boþe at mes and at mele messes ful quaynt," GGK 1004: "Euen inmyddez, as þe messe metely come"), and mes, 'mass' is collocated with mete in GGK (1097: "To morn quyle þe messe quyle, and to mete wend," 1414: "So þat þe mete and þe masse watz metely delyuered").

[88] C. G. Osgood, ed., Pearl (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1906), n. to 1.1064.

In Purity, the hierarchical harmony of the heavenly feast is disturbed by a man who is thoroughly unacceptable. The host, having unexpectedly "fande wyth his y3e" (133) the man without a wedding garment, scolds him bitterly. The guest, abashed, like Rauf Coil3ear at Charlemagne's feast, merely bows his head so that "þe urþe he biholdez" (150), for he cannot look on the lord face to face. Therefore, the host orders him bound and thrown into the dungeon, a sign that he will forfeit the Beatific Vision forever.[91]

Belshazzar, too, will miss the Beatific Vision because of impure behavior at a feast. In describing him, the poet departs from his usual stance of praise of luxury, and uses a satirical technique similar to Langland's.[92] Belshazzar's blindness recalls that of Langland's friar, who perceives only the visible beauty of sacramental symbols. Although both _Purity_ and _Piers Plowman_ use biblical contrasts between sacramental and worldly feasts to point up this blindness,[93] they use different descriptive techniques to do so, for _Purity_ amplifies the sacramental as well as the satirical feast.

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[89] Pearl 1064: "þe Lombe þe sakerfyse þer to refet."

[90] Gordon, ed., Pearl, p.xxiv.

[91] The loss of this vision is expressed by perception formulas throughout the poem. The man impure of heart will "þe soverayn ne se" (178), nor ever "see hym with sy3t" (192). He will not have "þe sy3te of þe soverayn þat syttez so hy3e" (552), nor "his saveour ne see wyth sy3t of his y3en" (576).

Belshazzar's feast is a parody of the heavenly feast of the parable.[94] Like Langland, the poet depends on the reader's familiarity with the formulas and conventions of romance and sacramental feasts. However, because of his fondness for luxury, he uses the echoes of romance not for outright condemnation, but in order to distinguish between proper and improper pride in a host. Both the romance and sacramental associations point up Belshazzar's idolatry: he sees only the worldly appeal of the feast, not recognizing that the same conventions obtain in heaven. Like a noble

[92] Although D. S. Brewer argues that the poet's humor here is "never satirical" ("The _Gawain_-Poet; A General Appreciation of Four Poems," _EC_, 17[1967], 133), the poet clearly uses feast formulas in the satirical manner of Langland.

[93] See above, pp. 35-36.

[94] Noted by most critics, including Spearing (_Gawain-Poet_, p. 53); he, however, denies that the parody is typological (pp. 62-63), unlike Kelly and Irwin (pp. 247-48) and Charlotte C. Morse ("The Image of the Vessel in _Cleanness_," _UTQ_, 40[1971], 202-03, 215).

host, he orders his guests to "com to his cort to kyþe hym for lege" (1368) in a romance formula,[95] unaware that the formula is equally appropriate to God's court.[96] Similarly, he sees his generosity in offering his concubines drinks from the holy vessels ("þer is no bounte in burne lyk Baltazar þewes" [1436]) as being aristocratic munificence, like Arthur's ordering lavish entertainment for the Romans:

> Spare for no spycerye, bot spende what the lykys,
> That there be largesce one lofte, and no lake foundene. (MA 162-63)

Belshazzar, however, lacks even the mock modesty characteristic of Arthur in such situations,[97] and fails to achieve the unstinting liberality of the lord in the parable.[98]

Belshazzar's pride of place at the feast is another detail which works parodically on two levels. The lines "Non watz dressed upon dece bot þe dere selven,/ And his clere concubines" (1399-1400) suggest that he, while thinking himself a great lord, is actually like the Pharisees, who are too concerned with position at earthly feasts to remember the heavenly one, itself hierarchical.[99] The poet makes an ironic twist on the formulaic expression of degree, saying "þe dotel on dece drank þat he my3t" (1517), just as Langland said of the friar, "this doctoure on the heigh dese • drank wyn so faste."[100]

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[95] See above, p. 31, n. 26.

[96] The lord of the parable orders his guests "Comez cof to corte," before the food grows cold (60), those who refuse say "Excuse me at þe cort, I may not com þere" (70), and when the others "com to þe corte," they are graciously received (89).

[97] In MA, after the exquisite catalogue of goods, Arthur apologizes to the Romans for the "feble" fare, saying that the country lacks "curious metez" (226, 223); in AA, after Arthur tells him that the court, hunting in the forest, can offer only the simplest food, Galeron is led to a sumptuous feast (434-38).

[98] See above, pp. 46-48. The lord wished to "cherisch hem alle alle wyth his chere and chaufen her joye" (128) and he "Solased hym wyth semblaunt" (131).

Although the poet satirizes Belshazzar's pride, he does not condemn his taste for sumptuous feasts, which he generally regards with approval:

> When alle segges were þer set, þen servyse bygynnes,
> Sturnen trumpen strake steven in halle,
> Aywhere by þe wowes wrasten krakkes,
> And brode baneres þerbi blusnande of gold;
> Burnes berande þe bredes upon brode skeles,
> þat were of sylveren sy3t, and served þerwyth,
> Lyfte logges þerover and on lofte corven,
> Pared out of paper and poynted of gold,
> Broþe baboynes abof, besttes anunder,
> Foles in foler flakerande bitwene,
> And al in asure and ynde enaumayld ryche,
> And al on blonkken bak bere hit on honde.
> And ay þe nakeryn noyse, notes of pipes,
> Tymbres and tabornes, tulket among;
> Symbales and sonetez sware þe noyse,
> And bougounz busch batered so þikke.
> (1401-16)

There is genuine enthusiasm in this description absent from Winner's ascetic account of Waster's feast.[101] In aristocratic splendor, it is only slightly more exaggerated than the descriptions of Arthur's and Bercilak's feasts in Sir Gawain, which convey the poet's attitude of praise.[102]

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[99] Recall Pur. 115: "þe derrest at þe hy3e dese þat dubbed wer fayrest," and Pur. 92: "As he watz dere of degre dressed him seete."

[100] Above, p. 39; see n. 50 for examples of the feast formula drink/dece.

[101] Winner complains of the trumpets which traditionally introduce banquets: "Me tenyth at 3our trompers, þay tounen so heghe/ þat iche gome in þe gate goullyng may here" (WW 358-59). The well known condemnation in the Parson's Tale of "diverse metes and drynkes," decorations "peynted

The poet condemns not the luxury of the feast, but rather the sacrilegious use of the holy vessels, which Solomon crafted to the glory of God:

> Wythe alle þe coyntyse þat he cowþe, clene to wyrke,
> Devised he the vesselment, þe vestures clene;
> Wyth sly3t of his ciences, his Soverayn to love.
> (1287-89)

The beauty of the vessels is sacramental, like that of the splendid eucharistic chalices they prefigure,[103] for they have been consecrated with holy blood.[104]

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and castelled with papir," "preciousness of vessel," and "curiositee of mynstralcie" for encouraging pride at table (Chaucer, X [I], 444), was not universal. In pointing out the parallel of this passage with Belshazzar's feast, Robert W. Ackerman wisely avoids this claim ("'Pared out of Paper': Gawain 802 and Purity 1408," JEGP, 56[1957], 414, 417).

[102] In Pur., the "trumpen" (1402), "nakeryn noyse, notes of pipes, tymbres and tobornes," and "symbales and sonetez" (1413-15) need carry no more condemnation than the "trumpes" (116), "nakryn noise" (118), "trumpez and nakerys" (1016), and "pypyng" (1017) in GGK. The poet's stance of praise is misunderstood by Schnyder (pp. 40-41) and Hughes (217-35), who see him as condemning all the details of luxury in the poem.

[103] "Wyth besten blod busily anoynted,/In þe solempne sacrefyce" (Pur. 1446-47).

[104] Abbot Suger, an articulate apologist for sacramental luxury, justified his jewelled and golden chalices by the precedent of the sacrificial vessels of the Old Testament (Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures, ed. and trans. Erwin Panofsky [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1946], p. 65).

Belshazzar, entirely ignorant of the sacramental significance of the vessels, treats them like vessels at an aristocratic feast, crying "Wassayl" (1508) as he drinks from them. He glories in their splendor as they are brought before his guests:

> þe coperounes of þe covacles þat on þe cuppe reres
> Were fetysely formed out in fylyoles longe.
> Pinacles py3t þer apert þat profert bitwene,
> And al bolled abof wyth braunches and leves,
> Pyes and papejayes purtrayed withinne,
> As þay prudly hade piked of pomgarnades;
> For alle þe blomes of þe bo3es were blyknande perles,
> And alle þe fruyt in þo formes of flaumbeande gemmes,
> Ande safyres, and sardiners, and semely topace,
> Alabaundarynes, and amaraunz, and amaffised stones,
> Casydoynes, and crysolytes, and clere rubies,
> Penitotes and pynkardines, ay perles bitwene.
> (1461-76)

Nine of the twelve precious jewels listed here (1469-72) appear on the foundation of the New Jerusalem, paraphrased in *Pearl*, 999-1016.[105] These are probably drawn from the Old Testament catalogues of sacred jewels, those on Aaron's breastplate (Exod. 28:17-20) and in Ezechiel 28:13, which in fact inspired the Apocalyptic jewels.[106] But Belshazzar sees them simply as jewelled drinking cups, like Arthur's, "pyghte with precyous stones" (*MA* 212).[107] He similarly perceives the "grete gobelotes of golde graven about" (1475)[108] and cups "wyth so curious craft corven" (1452)[109] as cups at a romance feast.

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[105] The Apocalyptic allusion is suggested by Kelly and Irwin, p. 253.

[106] For the composite tradition of biblical jewels, see Gordon, ed. *Pearl*, n. to l. 1041, and Finkelstein, pp. 422-23.

[107] See *MA* 212-15, *WA* 2935 (below, n. 108), and *WA* 3702: "Coupis all of Cristall · & oþire clere gemmes." Alliterative catalogues of jewels can have either secular or religious meaning. The fact that the stones on the holy vessels are taken from Mandeville's description of the Great Khan's court does not rule out the possibility of sacramental overtones.

As an idolator who worships images "gilde al with golde and gered with sylver" (1344), Belshazzar not surprisingly is drawn to the splendor of the holy vessel, a "gay coroun of golde gerede on lofte" (1444): beauty alone is worth worshipping.[110] He is in fact parodying the Christian high feasts, in which the treasures of the church were brought out.[111] Belshazzar's idolatrous feasting recalls Winner's criticism of the splendid dishes at Waster's feast, "þe borde ouer-brade with blasande disches,/Als it were a rayled rode, with rynges and stones" (WW 342-43). However, while Belshazzar treats sacramental beauty as if it were secular, Waster treats secular beauty as if it were sacramental--a jewelled cross.

Blindness and fortune are closely linked in Purity. Belshazzar's sacrilege is a problem of limited perception--his focus on the external appearance of the vessels. The same limitation is also expressed in his naive trust in prosperity, which makes a fall from fortune inevitable. Since he could not learn from the example of his father's fall from power,[112] although he "se3 þese sygnes wyth sy3t" (1710), he requires a sacramental vision as a warning from God. A naive eyewitness, he "blusched" (1537)[113] on the handwriting on the wall, but failed to understand even this sign. He depends on Daniel to explain that his power will pass because he has been weighed in the scale and found wanting (1727-40).

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[108] Cf. WA 2935: "In grete gobelettes of gold • grathyd full of gemmys," WA 3701: "Gurde & goblets • of gold althirefinest," and MA 207: "Grete goblettes ouergylte glorious of hewe."

[109] Cf. Arthur's cups "Crafty and curious, coruene fulle faire" (MA 212).

[110] Belshazzar is like the avaricious man, described by John the Scot, who sees in a precious vase simply earthly beauty, while the wise man sees praise of the creator (PL, CXXII, 825-29).

[111] Durandus of Mende, The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officinorum Written by William Durandus, ed. and trans. John M. Neale and Benjamin Webb (1843; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973), p. 78.

Fortune is an important theme in Purity because all its exempla are prefigurations of the Last Judgment,[114] the ultimate reversal of fortune. Belshazzar's reversal is sudden, like that of the man in dirty clothing. At the end of his feast,[115] he is murdered in his bed by the Medes and the Persians, an outcome which the poet conveys neatly in an antithesis.[116] Belshazzar,

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[112] Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, traditional examples of the tragedy of fortune, both appear in the Monk's Tale (Chaucer, VII, 2143-2246).

[113] The poet also uses blusch to describe the reaction of an eyewitness to marvellous buildings -- the New Jerusalem and the Castle Hautdesert (Pearl 980, 1083; GGK 793.). He emphasizes the effect of the vision on the beholder by exaggerating Belshazzar's fear:

> Such a dasande drede dusched his herte,
> þat falewed his face and faylede þe chere;
> þe stronge strok of þe stonde strayned his joyntes,
> His cnes cachches to close and cluchches his hommes.
> (1538-41)

[114] Lucifer, Adam, mankind during the flood, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Morse, p. 202). The fall of Babylon after Belshazzar's feasting looks forward to the fall of Babylon in Apocalypse (18:2-24), the end of the Whore's feasting.

[115] Recall the hints of a similar reversal in afterlife for Langland's friar, another feaster blind to sacramental symbolism (above, p. 36).

> þat watz so do3ty þat day and drank of þe vessayl,
> Now is a dogge also dere þat in a dych lygges.
> (1791-92)

Dere, which once described his place of honor on the high "dece,"[117] is here ironically collocated in a feast formula with drank, to underscore the contrast between his prosperous feasting and his ignominious end.[118] His punishment for spiritual blindness will be to forfeit the Beatific Vision of the heavenly feast.

Alliterative feasts are important as a sign of prosperity. In romances, they often occur in a context of changing fortunes, suggesting the transitoriness of human joy. In sacramental contexts, their plenty and hierarchy are used to convey simultaneously the infiniteness of divine grace and the gradation of heavenly rewards. The satirical feasts in Piers Plowman and Purity use feast formulas to point out the limitation of a character's perception -- his focus on the romance aspect of a feast, and blindness to the heavenly feast of the Beatific Vision.

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[116] Spearing points out that antithesis and chiasmus are used frequently throughout the Belshazzar exemplum to express sudden reversals of fortune: the fall of the Jews to the Babylonians, the fall of Nebuchadnezzar, and the desecration of the holy vessels (Gawain-Poet, pp. 69-70).

[117] Recall Pur. 1399: "For non watz dressed upon dese bot þe dere selven," and cf. WA 479: "This dere kyng on a day • on his dese syttis."

[118] Cf. WmP 3209: "& wiþ þe derworþest deintes • of drinkes þat were," WmP 4925: "Of alle dere deintes • of metes and of • drynkes," and WmP 5311: "Wiþ alle derworþe deinteyes • of drynkes & metes."

Chapter III

CLOTHING

Like descriptions of feasts, descriptions of clothing are prominent in alliterative poetry. That they are greatly amplified suggests that their function is more than simple "realistic" detail. Among descriptions of luxury, they have special significance as a source of information about a character. But this information is rarely unambiguous, for the poet uses the eyewitness convention, often with formulas of perception, to create suspense and to raise questions about the validity of knowledge gained through the senses. The meaning he assigns to these descriptions varies according to context, as it does with alliterative feasts. In romances, the contrast between beautiful and ugly clothing often contributes to the moral of the folly of trust in apparent prosperity. In sacramental contexts, such contrasts have a clearer moral purpose: the *effictio* agrees with the *notatio*, so that clean clothes symbolize a pure soul, and dirty clothes a sinful one. In satirical contexts, however, clothing shows a radical discrepancy between appearance and reality: gaudy clothes are a sign of pride, and shabby ones, often, a sign of Christian humility. Langland is particularly complex in using clothing in both the satirical and the sacramental manner. The *Gawain*-poet uses clothing descriptions sacramentally to embody beatified spirits in *Purity* and *Pearl*, but ambiguously to paint enigmatic moral portraits in *Sir Gawain*. Echoes of formulas used in other contexts often enrich the meaning of his descriptions of clothing.[1]

While in a simple alliterative romance like the *Siege of Jerusalem*, fine clothing is generally used to indicate a good character,[2] in a complex one like the *Morte Arthure*, it is used to influence our changing moral judgment. In a ritual scene of the "arming of the hero"[3] near the beginning of the poem, Arthur girds himself to face the giant of St. Michael's Mount. He

> Wente to hys wardrope, and warpe of hys wedez,
> Armede hym in a actone with orfraeez fulle ryche,
> Abouen one that a jeryne of Acres owte ouer,
> Abouen that a jesseraunt of jentylle maylez,
> A jupone of Ierodyne jaggede in schredez,
> He brayedez one a bacenett burneschte of syluer,
> The beste that was in Basille, wyth bordurs ryche;
> The creste and the coronalle, enclosed so faire
> Wyth clasppis of clere golde, couched wyth stones;
> The vesare, the aventaile, enarmede so faire,
> Voyde with-owttyne vice, with wyndowes of syluer;
> His gloues gaylyche gilte, and grauene at the hemmez,
> With graynez of gobelets, glorious of hewe.
> (901-13)

The alliterative adjectives *ryche*, *beste*, *faire*, and *clere* impute "moral excellence and material splendor"[4] to the equipment, and therefore, by metonymy, to the hero himself. At this point in the poem, the rhetorical contrast between the beautiful king and the ugly giant reflects their moral qualities.

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[1] A clothing formula generally consists of a vaguely synonymous alliterative adjective like *beste*, *clene*, *clere*, *coynt*, *dere*, *fayre*, *gay*, *prowde*, or *rych* (Brink, pp. 35-52, Borroff, pp. 77-78, 82-83) paired with a stock word for clothing such as *cote*, *crown*, *cloþ*, *dyademe*, *fur*, *gere*, *kelle*, *ribayne*, or *robe* (Oakden, II, 188-89, remarks on the alliterative poets' familiarity with technical terms for armor and dress).

[2] E.g., the arming of Vespasian, *SJ* 740-62.

[3] Lord, *Singer of Tales*, p. 91. Other examples in alliterative poems are *MA* 3631-33, *Gol*. 601-08, and *WW* 111-18.

[4] Borroff, p. 82.

The meaning of fine clothing changes, however, when Arthur's fortunes begin to turn. After many successful campaigns, he has a dream of Lady Fortune, splendidly attired:

> A duches dereworthily dyghte in dyaperde wedis,
> In a surcott of sylke fulle selkouthely hewede,
> Alle with loyotour ouer-laide lowe to the hemmes,
> And with ladily lappes the lenghe of a 3erde,
> And alle redily reuersside with rebanes of gold,
> Bruchez and besauntez, and other bryghte stonys,
> With hir bake and hir breste was brochede alle ouer,
> With kelle and with corenalle clenliche arrayede,
> And that so comly of colour one knowene was neuer!
> (3251-59)

Although the finery contains many formulas used elsewhere for praise of clothing, including the corenalle with which Arthur armed himself, the very fact that finery is an attribute of Fortune identifies it as transitory. Formulaic echoes of this clothing occur in the description of the Nine Worthies whom Fortune turns on her wheel. The fallen Hector's "dyademe was droppede downe, dubbyde wyth stonys,/ Endente alle with diamandis, and dighte for the nonis" (3296-97), and Alexander complains, "Nowe is left no lappe my lygham to hele" (3286). Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon, still climbing on the wheel, are described in clothing formulas as well (3332-36). Therefore, when Arthur, having been crowned on the wheel with a "diademe that dighte was ful faire" (3353), it is clear that his fine clothes are a symbol of the transitoriness of his power.

Arthur is slow to understand, though. No sooner have the philosophers interpreted the dream as condemnation of his "cirquytrie" (3399) and an omen of his fall, than he rises and dons gloriously jewelled armor:

> A reede actone of rosse, the richeste of floures,
> A pesane, and a paunsone, and a pris girdille;
> And one he henttis a hode of scharlette fulle riche,
> A pauys pillione hatt, that pighte was fulle faire
> With perry of the Oryent, and precyous stones;
> His gloues gayliche gilte, and grauene by the hemmys,
> With graynes of rubyes fulle gracious to schewe.
> (3457-63)

Setting forth, he meets a shabbily dressed pilgrim, whose contrast with him is striking:

> A renke in a rownde cloke, with righte rowmme clothes,
> With hatte, and with heyghe schone homely and rownde;
> With flatte ferthynges the freke was floreschede alle ouer,
> Manye schredys and schragges at his skyrttes hynnges,
> With scrippe, ande with slawyne, and skalopis i-newe,
> Both pyke and palme, alls pilgram hym scholde.
> (3470-75)

The man turns out to be Arthur's retainer Sir Craddock, who has lost his fine clothes in being exiled by Mordred's treachery. In informing Arthur of this reversal of fortune, Craddock plays the role of the ragged penitential character warning the proud youthful one of his future state. The poem has moved from naive identification of beauty and virtue to a contemptus mundi view which opposes the two qualities.[5] It ends, however, with a more complex vision which balances these two views, for the lamentations at the end (3947-74, 4264-90, 4328-41) emphasize the attitude of regret for the passing of Arthurian civilization.[6]

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[5] Matthews errs in overemphasizing the latter view, and attributing Arthur's tragic fall to the pride of his imperialism (pp. 125, ff). For a summary of the critical dispute over the degree of Arthur's fault, see Benson, "The Alliterative Morte," pp. 75-87.

In the Awntyrs off Arthure, as in the Morte Arthure, beautiful and ugly portraits are contrasted in order to express an elegiac attitude toward changing fortune. To balance his judgment, the poet manipulates the ambiguity of the word pride, which can mean, on the one hand, aristocratic magnificence and excellence, and on the other, the first of the Seven Deadly Sins.[7] At the opening of the poem, Gaynor, hunting with Arthur's men, the "pruddest in palle" (66), embodies in her splendor the pride of life:

> In a gleterand gide þat glemed fulle gay,
> Withe riche ribaynes reuersset -- ho-so righte redes --
> Rayled withe rybees of rialle aray;
> Her hode of a hawe hewe, þat here hede hedes,
> Of pillour, of palwerke, of perre to pay;
> Schurde in a short cloke þat þe rayne shedes,
> Set ouer withe saffres soþely to say --
> Withe saffres and seladynes serclet on þe sides.
> (15-22)

She and Gawain, however, are shocked by an ugly intruder -- the ghost of her mother, naked:

> Bare was þe body and blake to þe bone,
> Al bi-clagged in clay, vncomly cladde;
> Hit waried, hit wayment as a womane,
> But on hide ne on huwe ne heling hit hadde;
> . . .

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[6] Benson attributes the poem's complex moral attitude to "the late Gothic ability to maintain contradicting attitudes and derive aesthetic pleasure from the tension of unresolved conflicts ("The Alliterative Morte," p. 75).

[7] See OED, Pride, sb.[1], B II. 6 & 7, and B I.l. Brink includes prowde among adjectives of high alliterative rank (p. 31).

On þe chef of þe cholle
A pade pikes one hir polle,
Withe eighen holked ful holle,
That gloed as þe gledes.

Al glowed as a glede þe goste þere ho glides,
Vmbeclipped in a cloude of cleþyng vnclere,
Serkeled withe serpentes þat satt by hir sides --
To telle þe todes þer-one my tonge were fulle tere.
(105-08, 114-21)

As a parody of a beautiful description of clothing,[8] this description twists alliterative formulas, such as those applied to Gaynor, in order to underscore the contrast between the women's conditions. For instance, vncomly cladde (106) is a negation of the clothing formula comly cladde,[9] and cleþyng vnclere (119) a negation of clere cloþes.[10] One would expect Vmbeclipped in the context of clothing rather than clouds.[11] That the ghost "gloed as þe gledes" (117) recalls formulas for shining applied to gold and other metals, for instance, in the armor of Sir Galeron: "His gloues, his gamesons glowed as a glede" (*AA* 393).[12] Here a trite simile has been literalized in the diabolically glowing ghost. Finally, the ghost, "serkeled withe serpentes þat sett by hir sides" (120) recalls Gaynor, "set ouer withe saffres.../ Withe saffres and seladynes serclet on þe sides" (21-22).[13] Because the phrases for the settings are similar, emphasis falls on the contrast between the two ornaments, serpents and sapphires. "To telle þe todes þer-one my tonge were full tere" (121) carries a similar irony, since *it is too tore to tell* is a formulaic expression of *occupatio*[14] common in clothing descriptions, and often applied to jewels and embroidery.[15] The ghost is exquisitely adorned with monsters.

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[8] Most critics have noticed this contrast: Matthews compares the ghost's penitential role to that of Craddock in MA (p. 207, n. 5), and Speirs, to that of Elde in Parl. (p. 252). Other ugly descriptions are of Elde (Parl. 152-59), the giant of St. Michael's Mount (MA 1074-1103), Lady Death (DL 151-70) and Morgan le Fay (GGK 957-67).

[9] Both Lady Life (DL 83) and the king (WW 90) are "comly clad in kirtel and mantle." See also SS 90: "Comly cloþed in a cope crowned as a king," and WmP 506: "In comely cloþes was he clad • for any kinges sone."

[10] DL 62: "Clere clothes, were all of cleare golde," and RC 706: "In claes of clene golde, kythand ȝone clear."

[11] E.g., PPC 227: "His cope þat biclypped him • wel clene was it folden."

The question is, what moral judgment emerges from the juxtaposition of these two dramatically opposed portraits? The ghost's rhetoric makes it clear that the point is elegiac, a lament for the reversal of fortune inherent in her own death and Gaynor's. Several antithetical phrases suggest

[12] Also *SS* 57: "þe gold of her girdle glowed as the glede." The formula is sometimes applied to other types of luxury: "as glowande gledfur ⹎ þat on gold strikeþ" (*SJ* 1252) and "Hit glitered as gled fur ful of gold riche"(*SJ* 415).

[13] See also *SJ* 760: "With saphyres sett ⹎ þe sydes a-bout," *Parl.* 126: "þe semys with sapirs sett were full many," and *RC* 475: "His Sadill circulit and set, richt sa on ilk syde."

[14] *OED* *Tor*, *a*. See *AA* 190, where the ghost complains that "Hit were ful tore any tonge my torment to telle."

[15] E.g., *RC* 475: "The teind of his iewellis to tell war full teir," and *GGK* 165: "þat were to tor to telle of tryfles þe halue." To *tore to telle* is collocated frequently with *attire* in clothing formulas, e.g., *WmP* 1428, 1941, 5024.

that the figure of Fortune, "That wondirfulle whele wryghte" (271) who will overturn the prowess of Arthur's court,[16] is behind the contrast between the two women. The ghost tells Gaynor,

> I was radder of rode þene rose in þe rone,
> My lere as þe lele louched so ly3te,
> Now am I a graceles gost and grisly I gron;
> ...
> For al þi fresshe foroure
> Muse one my mirrour,
> For, king and emperour,
> Thus shul ye be. (161-63, 166-69)

The rhetorical antithesis, "I was...now I am"[17] is a characteristic construction in alliterative poetry for contrasting present misery with past prosperity.[18] In the *Morte Arthure*, this antithesis is applied repeatedly to the Worthies who have fallen off Fortune's wheel. In one case it is in connection with the motif of the loss of finery, as it is here in the reference to Gaynor's "fouroure" (166).[19] Although the ghost's appearance is a *memento mori*, the

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[16] The ghost tells Gawain,

> In riche Arthures halle
> The barne playes at þe balle,
> þat outray shalle you alle
> Fulle derfely þat day (*AA* 309-12).

[17] Similarly, the ghost expresses her reversal, "Quene was I some-wile.../...Now ame I" (144, 151).

[18] Benson discusses the relation between antithesis and larger narrative contrasts in *Sir Gawain* (*Art and Tradition*, pp. 149-51).

[19] "I was lorde.../And Now is lefte me no lappe my lygham to hele" (*MA* 3284, 3286); See also *MA* 3291-93, 3298-99, 3302-04, 3312-14, 3320-22. Loss of fine clothes is used as a sign of the reversal of fortune also in *SS* 111-116 and Howlat, with the accompanying moral, "mark 3our mirour be me" (970): "Think how bair thow was borne, and bair ay will be," for "Thy cude, thy claithis, nor thi cost cummis nocht of the" (976-978).

Although the ghost's appearance is a memento mori, the point is not to avoid fine clothes--the "pride with þe appurtenaunce" (239)[20] which the ghost calls most grievous to God. It is rather to have pity on the poor when remembering one's own mortality.

The conflicting attitudes toward fine clothing exhibited in the Morte Arthure and the Awntyrs are shown balanced in the dream visions the Parlement of the Thre Ages and Wynnere and Wastoure. The poet splits into personifications the attitudes of asceticism and love of luxury, and lets them argue head on in a debate. In the Parlement, 3outhe and Medill Elde debate the merits of prodigality and frugality respectively, while Elde points out the uselessness of their earthly quarrels in the face of approaching death. The poet conveys much of his moral meaning through the visual impact of the characters' "array." He describes 3outhe with an exuberance which belies the ascetic condemnation that follows:

> He hade no hode ne no hatte botte his here one --
> A chaplet one his chefe-lere, chosen for the nones,
> Raylede alle with rede rose, richeste of floures,
> With trayfoyles and trew loues of full triede perles,
> With a chefe charebocle chosen in the myddes.
> He was gerede alle in grene, alle with golde by-weuede,
> Embroddirde alle with besanttes and beralles full riche;
> His colere with calsydoynnes clustrede full thikke,
> With many dyamandes full dere dighte one his sleues.
> þe semys with saphirs sett were full many,

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[20] Pride sometimes took on the concrete meaning of "splendid ornamentation" (OED Pride, sb. , B II.7).

> With emeraudes and amatistes, appon iche syde,
> With full riche rubyes raylede by the hemmes;
> Þe price of that perry were worthe powndes full many.[21]

Such concrete details as the catalogue of jewels, the embroidered trueloves, and the trappings of the horse convey vividly *3outhe's* love of luxury. The poet characterizes *Medill Elde*, on the other hand, more abstractly, by narrating his concern with rents and riches, and mentioning only briefly his tunic of gray russet and his money bags (137-39). *Medill Elde* satirizes *3outhe* by using alliterative clothing formulas ironically: he tells him that he lacks rents because he has spent everything on his "ryalle aray" (186),[22] and that "The pryce of thi perrye wolde purches the londes" (192).[23] The tension between the use of luxury formulas for satire and for praise enables the poet to achieve a complex vision.

Elde, carrying beads and dressed in black, makes a penitential warning to the others, like the ghost in *Awntyrs*: "Makes youre myrrours by me" ([Ware] 290). He too was once dressed as gorgeously as *3outhe*, a contrast he expresses in an antithesis. While he "was yong," he was "als gay yn my gere as any gome else" ([Ware] 270, 273), an echo of a formula in Зouthe's effictio, "gerede alle in grene, alle with golde by-weuede" (122).[24] This sense of fallen glory is appropriate to the ubi sunt theme of the passage on the Nine Worthies with which Elde concludes (295-630). The mood is as elegiac as condemnatory.[25]

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[21] *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ed. M. Y. Offord (London: EETS, 1959), ll.117-29.

[22] Used to confer praise in Gaynor's *effictio* (*AA* 17). The author of *Mum*, like this poet, uses the phrase satirically in moralizing on foppishness at court: "That ho is riall of his ray/That light reede him folwith" (III.123).

[23] A twist on the formula in *3outhe's* description, "Þe price of that perry were worthe powndes full many" (129).

In Wynnere and Wastoure, the contrast between the contestants is not conveyed through clothing, for neither is described visually. The poet does, however, express a love of luxury in his initial description of the king. He shows the dreamer's admiration through his response as an eyewitness: he "waytted" and "was warre" (85) of a

> ...kynge...comliche clade in kirtill and mantill,
> Bery-brown as his berde, brouderde with fewlys,
> Fawkons of fyne golde, flakerande with wynges,
> And ichone bare in ble, blewe als me thoghte,
> A grete gartare of ynde, gerede ful riche.
> Full gayly was that grete lorde girde in the myddis,
> A bright belte of ble, broudirde with fewles,
> With drakes & with dukkes, daderande þam semede,
> For ferdnes of fawcons fete, less fawked þay were.
> (90-98)

The close-up vision shows the minute detail of the clothing down to the activities of the embroidered birds, but leaves the dreamer ignorant of the king's identity. In the debate itself, which the king mediates, clothing occasionally appears as an example of luxury or asceticism. Winner charges that Waster's followers have sold their lands to become "nysottes of þe new gett," with long sleeves (410), in contrast to the Virgin, who wore simple clothes to inspire people to give up pomp and pride. Waster argues that these clothes cost Winner nothing, and that he should not upbraid women for their "bright wedis," since they make their men bold in battle (428-32). Saying, "If my peple ben prode, me payes alle þe better" (433), he plays on the ambiguity of the word prode: for while Waster intends it to confer praise, Winner certainly sees it as damning. Finally, the king consigns each to the land where he is loved, stating that both are interdependent. Despite his seeming approval of the king's splendor, the poet maintains a balanced attitude toward luxury.

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[24] Formulaic; cf. GGK 179: "Wel gaye watz þis gome, gered in grene," RC 482: "He is the gayest in geir that euer on ground glaid," and AA 496: "All in gleterand golde--gay was here gere."

[25] Kernan points out that the critical problem here is similar to that with GGK: "It is important not to ignore or minimize either of the two fundamental elements: celebration of the glories and pleasures of worldly life, which the poet depicts with appreciation and energy, and insistence on the inevitability of death and the penitential moral" (p. 269).

Formulaic descriptions of luxurious clothing, then, are a well established convention in romance and personification allegory. Religious poets, both sacramental and satirical, draw on this convention to convey their contrasting attitudes toward luxury. The sacramental view that clean clothes betoken a soul free from sin, consistent with the rhetorical view that fine clothes betoken a virtuous character, contrasts with the satirical view that fine clothes are a sign of pride and hypocrisy. Both views have biblical precedent. The book of Apocalypse uses fine clothing as a symbol of both purity and worldliness, in the first case white, and in the second, bright and gaudy. The robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14, 22:14) are linked with the fine linen (byssino) of the Lamb's Bride, the New Jerusalem, defined as the "justification of the saints" (19:8). This linen is further associated with the garment in the eschatological parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:1-14), which stands for the pure souls of the blessed.[26] Such symbolism was popular with sacramental writers like Hugh of St. Victor, who wrote that the priests' sacred garments were white so that "by means of what appears externally it may be shown of what nature they should be within."[27] He saw the garments as being based on the sacramental robes of both the Old and New Testaments: Aaron's tunic (Leviticus 8:7) and the eschatological robes of Apocalypse.[28]

At the same time, Apocalypse uses fine clothing as a sign of pride in the description of the Whore of Babylon, clothed in purple and scarlet and bedizened with gold and jewels and pearls (17:4). She symbolizes the city of Babylon, decorated with "bysso et purpura" (18:16), whose loss deprived the merchants of the world of a market for their cargoes of "byssi et purpurae" (18:12). Her finery is contrasted with the shining linen of the Bride, also both woman and city, who takes her place. "Purpura et bysso" is also used to describe the dress of Dives in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19), which, like many of Christ's parables directed at the luxury of the Pharisees, was often applied

[26] See Jeremias, pp. 187-89.

[27] Hugh of St. Victor, p. 273.

[28] Ibid, pp. 273-78.

to the friars by anti-fraternal writers.

The Wyclyfite satire Pierce the Ploughman's Crede uses fine clothing as a sign of the friars' pride. They are "wolves in sheep's clothing"[29] not only because they hypocritically indulge in luxury while feigning apostolic poverty,[30] but also because they wear furred graments underneith their threadbare fraternal robes:

> ...In cotyng of his cope • is more cloþ y-folden
> þan was in Fraunces froc • whan he hem first made.
> And 3et vnder þat cope • a cote haþ he furred,
> Wiþ foyns of wiþ fitchewes • oþer fyn beuer,
> And þat is cutted to þe kne • & queyntly y-botend,
> Lest any spirituall man • aspie þat gile.[31]

Through the use of the naive narrator, the author satirizes the friars by pretending to praise them, a technique used by medieval Latin satirists, orthodox preachers, and Wyclyfite writers before him.[32] Like Langland, the author turns his inherited alliterative language, which, because of its intensive adjectives, is better suited to praising than condemning luxury, into an asset, by using it ironically.[33]

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[29] Matt. 7:15, applied to false prophets. See PPC 458-59.

[30] For an account of resentment against friars on this point, see Williams, p. 507.

[31] Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, ed. W. W. Skeat (1867; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969), ll.292-97.

[32] See Mann, pp. 21-24, 43-44.

[33] J. A. Burrow, "The Audience of Piers Plowman," Anglia, 75(1957), 380-81. Although he argues that such a detached attitude toward alliterative language was rare outside PP, PPC offers some striking examples.

As the author of the Awntyrs played on the ambiguity of prowde, he plays with the alliterative adjective clene, which can mean on the one hand, "elegant," when collocated with clothing words beginning with "C" in romance descriptions,[34] and on the other hand, "morally pure."[35] The clothing formulas in this description of a Dominican friar suggest that he is aping the aristocracy:

> His cope þat biclypped him • wel clene was it folden,[36]
> Of double worstede y-dy3t • doun to þe hele,[37]
> His kyrtel of clene whijt • clenlyche y-sewed,[38]
> Hyt was good y-now of ground • greyn for to beren.
> (227-30)

The poet implies that friars either should be less elegant, or should live up to the sacramental values which their clothing symbolizes. The naive narrator, expressing the alliterative stance of praise, is like Chaucer's pilgrim in his attitude toward the prioress and the monk; however, the poet's condemnation is complete, without Chaucer's balanced attitude toward clerical worldliness.

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[34] E.g., MA 3258: "With kelle and with corenalle clenliche arrayed"; AA 370: "Contrefelet and kelle, coloured fulle clene"; AA 378: "The knighte in his colours was armed ful clene"; SJ 1275: "Clene cloþes of selke many carte-fulle"; RC 706: "In clais of clene gold, kythand 3one cleir."

[35] MED, Clene, adj., 5 & 2(a).

[36] SS 90: "comely cloþed in a cope, crouned as a kyng."

[37] MA 3251: " A duches dereworthily dyghte in dyaperde wedis"; MA 3297: "Endente alle with diamawndis, and dight for the nonis."

[38] WA 4955: "Cled all in clene gold • kirtill & mantill."

Friars were commonly criticized for "glosing" their luxury as being sacramental.[39] Such complaints often included allusions to Christ's criticism of the Pharisees (Matt. 23:1-7),[40] who had similarly allowed sacramental symbols to harden into mere materialsim. For instance, the Wyclyfite "Jack Upland" asks "Friar Daw" what his fraternal garb "bitokeneþ," since cheaper material would be a better token of poverty; he then alludes to St. Gregory's gloss on the parable of Dives and Lazarus, directed at the Pharisees, to the effect that fine clothes are a sign of vainglory.[41] Friar Daw replies that his clothes are sacramental, for his cope stands for the charity figured in the wedding garment of the parable of the marriage feast.[42] In a similar way, Pierce the Ploughman's Crede applies Christ's complaint that the Pharisees wear their symbolic phylacteries only for show (Matt. 23:6) to the friars, who

> ...schapen her chapolories • & streccheþ hem brode,
> And launceþ hei3e her hemmes • wiþ babelyng in stretes,
> þei ben y-sewed wiþ whi3t silk • & semes full queynte,
> Y-stongen with stiches • þat stareþ as siluer.
> (550-53)

The friars' scapulars ("chapolories") have been substituted for the phylacteries.

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[39] For the charge that friars ignore the letter of a text by manipulating its "spiritual" meaning, see PPC 585-86.

[40] The comparison is frequent in anti-fraternal writings. See PPC 486-500, 546-58.

[41] JU, p. 60.

[42] FDR, p. 84.

Through his spokesman Pierce, the poet explicitly criticizes the friars for identifying their clean white robes with the "vestimentis albis" of the angels and elders of Apocalypse (4:4):

> ...þei cloþed in cloþ • þat clennest scheweþ,
> For aungells and Archngells • all þei whijt vseþ,
> And alle Aldermen • þat bene ante tronum.
> þise tokens hauen freres taken • but y trow þat a fewe
> Folwen fully þat cloþ • but falsliche þat vseþ.
> For whijt in trowþe bytokneþ • clennes in soule.
> (689-94)

The formula cloþed/cloþ/clennest (689) suggests not only the friars' imitation of romance values,[43] but their pretensions to sacramental ones as well, since heaven can be portrayed in similar alliterative language.[44] These pretensions are more thoroughly exposed when the narrator reacts to a luxurious convent in a way which parodies St. John's vision of the New Jerusalem, as we shall show in the next chapter.

Contrasted with this fraternal splendor is the simple clothing of Pierce the plowman:

> His cote was of a cloute • þat cary was y-called,
> His hod was full of holes • & his heer out,
> With his knopped shon • clouted full þykke;
> His ton toteden out • as he þe londe treddede,

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[43] MA 217: "In colours of clene golde cleede, with his knyghttys"; MA 3334: "The tother was cledde in a cote alle of clene silver."

[44] By the Gawain-poet in Purity, where God is "clene in his corte," and "with angelez enorled in alle þat is clene" (17, 19), and in Pearl, where the huge pearl on the maiden's breast is "clene and cler and pur" (227).

> His hosen ouerhongen his hokschynes • on eueriche
> a side,
> Al beslombred in fen as þe plow folwede;
> Twey myteynes, as mete • maad all of clôutes;
> þe fyngers weren for-werd • & ful of fen honged.
> (422-29)

This ugly description, like that of Craddock or the ghost of Gaynor's mother, is being used to contrast with beautiful ones to point a moral: the poor embody the values embraced by St. Francis better than the friars. Here, however, the effect of contrasted clothing descriptions is an ascetic condemnation of luxury, not the elegiac regret expressed in the Morte Arthure or the Awntyrs.

Symbolic clothing descriptions illustrate moral contrast in Piers Plowman as well.[45] Here, however, the contrast is used in a much more complex way, for Langland sees clothing as a highly ambiguous symbol.[46] He considers fine clothes a sign of either corruption (if gaudy) or purity (if clean) and poor clothes as a sign of either sin (if dirty) or humility (if merely threadbare). He describes in detail the sinful clothing, whether gaudy or dirty, in order to contrast it with the sacramental clothing which he holds as an ideal. That clothing, however, he does not amplify, any more than he does the heavenly feast or the New Jerusalem, since he regards decorative language as a distrac-

[45] They form part of the important series of clothing images in the poem, mentioned by Robertson and Huppé, p. 245, and Kirk, pp. 21, 154, 192.

[46] Bloomfield discusses the varieties of "moral, metaphysical, and theological implications" of the symbol (p. 108).

tion from the worship of God.

A striking example of Langland's descriptive technique is his contrast between Lady Holy Church and Lady Mede. He describes the former, inspired by the Bride in fine linen,[47] as simply a "loueli ladi of lere • in lynnen yclothed" (B I.3), but describes the latter in lavish detail. Lady Mede is a figure of satire: as a personification, her behavior is strictly mercenary, although a distinction is later made between the bribery she stands for and "just reward."[48] While they state their case too strongly,[49] Robertson and Huppé are probably correct in seeing associations with the Whore of Babylon in Mede, partly on the basis of her jewels.[50] They ignore, however, the texture of the alliterative language with which she is described. Will says that he was

> ...war of a womman • wortheli yclothed,
> Purfiled with pelure • the finest vpon erthe,

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[47] "Byssino splendens et candido" (Apoc. 19:8); Robertson and Huppé suggest this source, pp. 36-37. The Gawain-poet, in contrast to Langland, amplifies this line into a 40 line *effictio* of the Pearl maiden.

[48] Theology contrasts the good and bad senses of "Mede" (*PP* B II.118-40). Although he considers her a character capable of just behavior, she reveals none in the poem.

[49] For a critique of their approach, see Morton W. Bloomfield, rev. of *Piers Plowman and Scriptural Tradition*, by D. W. Robertson, Jr., and B. F. Huppé (*Speculum*), 27 [1952], 245-49).

[50] They point out that the Whore is dressed in "bysso et purpura et cocco" and bedizened with "auro et lapide pretioso, et margaritis" (Apoc. 18:16; Robertson and Huppé, p. 50).

> Y-crounede with a corone • the kyng hat non better.
> Fetislich hir fyngres • were fretted with golde wyre,
> And there-on red rubyes • as red as any glede,
> And diamantz of derrest pris • and double manere safferes,
> Orientales and ewages • enuenymes to destroye.
> Hire robe was ful riche • of red scarlet engreyned,
> With ribanes of red golde • and of riche stones;
> Hire arraye me rauysshed • suche ricchesse saw I neuere.
> (B II.8-17)

This passage shows that despite Elizabeth Salter's remark that Langland did not use words "as if they were jewels" in the manner of the other alliterative poets,[51] he was nevertheless familiar with that style, and able to use it for the purpose of satire. He must have avoided poetic alliterative diction not out of ignorance, but as a conscious rhetorical choice.

The technique of the naive narrator allows the poet to achieve the kind of satire we saw in Pierce the Ploughman's Crede. The phrases for perception which show Will astonished at Mede's beauty make him like an eyewitness hero in a romance or a dream vision,[52] while the formulaic details of Mede's robes make her like a romance heroine or a heavenly mentor. That Will was "war" of a woman whose

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[51] Piers Plowman: An Introduction (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963), p. 21. She contends that he has no interest in the "elaborate forms of alliterative verse" or the "open delight in 'art for art's sake' which must explain the high rhetoric to be found in nearly all alliterative poems."

[52] Benson compares the eyewitness role of dreamers in visions to that of naive heroes in romances (Art and Tradition, pp. 180-84).

"arraye me rauysshed" (8, 17) recalls Paris' reaction to Helen in the *Destruction of Troy*, where a sixty-six line *effictio* is bracketed by the phrases "ffro he þe semly had sene he set so his egh" and "Parys stode in a stody and streght on hir lokit,/Ffaste by þat fre fresshe of araye."[53] Mede's description itself recalls romance heroines, who are conventionally described with jewels.[54] In the alliterative romances, Gaynor is dressed in "pillour," "riche ribaynes" and "saffres" (*AA* 16, 19, 21), Bercilak's lady in "Riche red...rayled" (*GGK* 952), and Candace in "a robe all of rede gold • & þan a riche mantill,/A croune & a corecheff clustred with gemmes" (*WA* 5248-49).[55] The run of alliteration on "R" for three consecutive lines (B II.15-17), a rare technique in *Piers Plowman*, is characteristic of romances, particularly *Morte Arthure*. Finally, the use of the *occupatio*, "For to telle of hure atyre • no tyme haue ich nouth" (C III.15), emphasizes the romance implications.[56]

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[53] *The Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, ed. G. A. Panton and David Donaldson (1869-74; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969), ll.3015, 3085-86.

[54] Geoffrey of Vinsauf includes jewels in his model description of a beautiful woman ("Poetria Nova," Faral, p. 215, ll.607-09).

[55] Further romance echoes are, for B II.9, *GGK* 154: "With pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene," *Gol.* 313: "Of pall and of pillour þat proudly wes picht,"; for B II.13, *Parl*. 125, "With many dyamandes full dere dighte on his sleues," *MA* 3297: "Endente alle with diamawndis, and dighte for the nonis"; and for B II.12, 15-17, Parl., 128: "With full rich rubyes raylede by the hemmes," *GGK* 163: "þat were richely rayled in his aray clene," *SJ* 758: "Rybaunde vmbe þe round helm / ful of riche stones."

[56] The more common alliterative expression of *occupatio*,

Will's vision, however, has sacramental as well as romance overtones. Similarities between the alliterative descriptions of Mede and the Pearl maiden (inspired by the Bride, Apoc. 19:8) suggest that Mede might appear to Will to be a divine instructress, "Y-crounede with a corone" in "richesse" of "araye" (B II.11, 17), like the pure maiden "corounde" as a bride of the Lamb (*Pearl* 415) in "araye rialle" (191).[57] Furthermore, some of Mede's jewels--the "rubyes" and "safferes"--seem as appropriate to the New Jerusalem as to the Whore of Babylon (Apoc. 21: 19-20; cf. *Pearl*, 1002, 1007). Finally, in Apocalypse there is as much emphasis on perception in the vision of the New Jerusalem as in the vision of the Whore, so that Will's response in many ways resembles the *Pearl* dreamer's. He is "war" of of the 144,000 virgins (*Pearl* 1096),[58] and he is "rauysshed" by Mede's finery (B II.17) as the dreamer is "rauyste" by the light of the New Jerusalem (*Pearl* 1088). *Rauysshed* can mean either "delighted, carried away with rapture," an appropriate response to a romance heroine, or "transported in

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it is *too tore to tell* (see above, p. 68, ns. 15-16) is often collocated with *attyre* in clothing descriptions, e.g. *WmP* 1428: "It were tor for to telle·of here atyr riche."

[57] Note that chaste Susannah is "In ryche robys arayede as reed as þe rose" (Sus. 212), and the virtuous pagan judge is "Araide on a riche wise in rialle wedes" (*StE* 77).

[58] Just as John wrote of seeing the Whore, "miratus sum cum videssem illam admiratione magna" (Apoc. 17:6), so he wrote "vidi" of seeing the virgins (5:11) and the New Jerusalem both as city (21:1) and as Bride (21:2). In *Pearl*, the dreamer's perception of the maiden is similarly emphasized: he "loked to hyr" and "frayste hyr face" with "y3en open" (167, 169, 183).

a mystical vision"[59] like St. John's.[60]

In depending on the romance and sacramental associations of the alliterative formulas in Mede's portrait to sharpen his satire, Langland is in the tradition of other ciitics of pride in dress.[61] The author of the alliterative Quatrefoil of Love, for instance, describes fine ladies who will be damned as

> Thire ladyse...arayede in robys ful 3are,
> Revers and rebanes with gownne and with gyde,
> Bendys and botonys, felettis and fare,
> Golde on þaire garlandis, perry and pryde,
> Kelles and corchyfes, at couere þaire hare
> So schaply and schynand to schewe by þair hyde.[62]

He moralizes that, stripped of "oure robes and our riche pane," we shall face Judgment in "a crysom alane" (402-03).[63] The collocation of arayede, robys and rebanes (456-57) appears also in Mede's portrait (B II.15-17). Like Mede, the Whores in Quatrefoil wear "purfelle and peloure" (PP B II.9;

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[59] See OED, Ravish, v. 3,c and b. Wilson points out that the term was common in mysitcal writings (p. 93). Will is "rauisshed" in another dream: "A merueillouse meteles mete me thanne,/That I was rauisshed ri3t there and Fortune me fette" (PP B XI.5-6).

[60] John writes that an angel "abstulit me in spiritu" to see the Whore (Apoc. 17:3) and that he "sustulit me in spiritu" to see the Heavenly City (21:10).

[61] For this conventional complaint, see G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1933), pp. 390-411.

[62] Ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (London: EETS, 1935), ll.456-61.

[63] He stresses the morbid aspect of this reversal of condition: "when our bare body es broghte one a bere" (358), then "es all our pryde gane" (401), and we remain in "sympill atyre" (416).

Q 473). Pelure is often collocated with prowde in the negative sense.[64] Langland's own reference to the "purfil" of Peronelle, a proverbial proud woman (B IV.116, V.26), suggests that the detail had negative associations for him.

Mede's portrait superbly illustrates Langland's technique of applying the special diction of alliterative poetry "as if within marks of quotation, to an unworthy subject."[65] He achieves his detached use of language through the naive narrator, the most important device available to Ricardian poets for achieving irony with their relatively simple traditional poetic diction.[66] The Lady Mede episode, like the friar's feast, has often been praised for effectively combining the visual elements of the allegory with its moral meaning.[67] Much of the power of the visual detail in these two scenes comes from the concreteness of the alliterative language, and its ambiguity in suggesting romance and sacramental, as well as satirical meanings.

Mede's gaudy robes are to be measured not only against the clean linen of Holy Church, but also against the humble clothes of the virtuous poor. The dreamer himself wears the russet associated with the poor (B VIII.1) and dresses in the habit of a hermit, as if he were a shepherd (B Prol. 2-3). Langland idealizes the clothes of Piers Plowman, the peasant as a symbol of Christ, in the same way that the author of the Crede does the clothes of Pierce:

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[64] E.g., DT 435: "Pellure and pall, & mony proude rynges," WA 4036: "Pellour, pirre, ne perle, ne no proude wedis," and CK 69: "Proude pelure, palle with preciouse stones."

[65] Burrow, Ricardian Poetry, p. 34. See also "Audience," p. 381.

[66] Ibid., p. 35.

[67] Salter and Pearsall, pp. 10-12.

> "And I shal apparaille me," quod Perkyn • "in pilgrimes wise,
> ...
> And cast on me my clothes • yclouted and hole,
> My cokeres and my coffes • for colde of my nailles.
> (B VI. 59, 61-62)

The use of the poor clothes of shepherds, hermits, and pilgrims as a sign of Christian humility recalls the figure of Sir Craddock in pilgrim's garb in the Morte Arthure.

Langland, however, sees ugly clothes as a sign of sin as well as of humility. With the exception of Mede, in fact, he uses characters in ugly clothes to illustrate sin more often than those in beautiful clothes. Unlike the author of the Crede, he does not use the diction of romance to satirize the friars, whom he associates with Mede, although he indicates that he regards their luxurious clothing as a sign of their hypocrisy.[68] He also fails to use glittering alliterative language to describe Peronelle Proudeherte, the personification of "Pride" in the confession of the Seven Deadly Sins (B V.63-71, C VII.3-62).

Instead of describing the gaudiness of pride, Langland describes the ugliness of sin. For instance, he paints

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[68] He remarks on their "coueitise of copis" and tendency to "clothen hem at lykyng" (B Prol. 61-62) and be "enblaunched with bele paroles•and with clothes also," though unlovely underneath (B XV. 113-14).

Couetyse, "bytelbrowed and baberlupped" (C VII.198) as utterly grotesque:

> With hus hod on his heued • and hus hatte bothe;
> In a toren tabarde • of twelue wynter age;
> But 3if a lous couthe lepe • I leue hit, as y trowe,
> He scholde not wandre on that welche • so was hit threde-bare.
> (C VII.202-05)

Although Langland holds sacramental clothing as an implicit ideal, he amplifies only the dirty clothes to make his point. The Hawkin episode illustrates this tendency well. The reference to perception, "I toke gode keep...of Haukyn the actyf man • and how he was y-clothed" (B XIII. 272-73) suggests that we are being shown a mysterious figure like Mede, whose character can be deduced only from clothing:

> He had a cote of Crystendome • as holykirke bileueth,
> Ac it was moled in many places • with many sondri plottes,
> Of Pruyde here a plotte, • and there a plotte of vnbuxome speche,
> Of scornyng and scoffyng • and of vnskilful berynge,
> As in aparaille and in porte • proude amonges the peple.
> (B XIII.274-78)

Although this coat is hard to visualize, unlike the robes of Mede or the rags of Couetyse, it is nevertheless amplified in great detail. It is stained with abstractions, the Seven Deadly Sins, in keeping with Langland's method of conveying allegory through conventional topoi like feasts and and landscapes.[69]

[69] Cf. the foods diu-perseuerans and miserere-mei-deus at the friar's feast (B XIII.49, 52) and the topography containing a brook, "Beth-buxom-of-speche" and a hill "Ber-no-falce-witnesse" (B V.575, 589).

Langland describes Hawkin's dirty coat in great detail in order to convey the sacramental image of clean clothes indirectly. He focuses on the process of spiritual washing through the sacraments of baptism (through water) and penance (through tears).[70] His references to biblical examples of spiritual washing here and elsewhere show how powerful the image of clean clothing was for him. Many of the exegetical and liturgical associations of these references apply in Purity and Pearl as well, where clean clothes are amplified with alliterative language. Here, when Hawkin tries to attribute his slovenliness to the necessities of the active life, saying that his wife, servants, and children soil it (B XIV.1-4), Langland implies scepticism by having him quote the excuse of those who stayed away from the heavenly marriage feast: "Vxorem duxy, et ideo non possum venire" (Luke 14:20). The fact that this episode follows upon the friar's feast suggests that this allusion connects Hawkin with the man without a wedding garment in Matthew's version of the parable. In the commentaries, the man was held to be wearing a dirty garment, which St. Bonaventura interprets as the spiritual garment soiled by original sin, but potentially cleansed by baptism and afterwards by penance.[71]

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[70] Hugh of St. Victor, in discussing the sacramental aspect of baptism, writes, "all water has from its natural quality a certain similitude with the grace of the holy ghost, since, just as the one washes away the stains of the bodies, so the other cleanses the iniquities of the souls" (p. 155).

Hawkin identifies the cleaning of his coat explicitly with both baptism (Crystendome) and penance:

> It hath ben laued in lente • and oute of lente bothe,
> With the sope of sykenesse • that seketh wonder depe,
> ...
> And was shryuen of the preste • that gaue me for my synnes
> To penaunce pacyence • and pore men to fede,
> All for coueitise of my Crystendome • in clennesse to kepen it.
> (B XIV.5-6, 9-11)

Despite his attempts to restore his coat to baptismal cleanliness, however, he tends to "flober it foule" (15). Conscience therefore outlines the steps of penance necessary to clean it: it will be scraped free of filth by contrition, washed and wrung through confession, and beaten, boiled, dyed, and sewn together by satisfaction.

Langland further uses the washing of clothes as a symbol of penance[72] in his description of Charity's self-examination and contrition. Charity wraps "pruyde with alle the portinaunce."

> And laueth hem in the lauendrie • laboraui-in-gemitu-meo,
> And bouketh hem at hus brest • and beteth hit ofte,

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[71] Robertson and Huppé, p. 170. The gloss is of Luke's version, which does not mention the garment, but the two versions were often conflated. Siegfried Wenzel quotes Jacques de Vitry's gloss on the parable, which describes the Seven Deadly Sins as stains, rips, and burns on the garment (The Sin of Sloth [Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1960], p. 142, n. 19).

[72] Common in sermons; see Skeat, ed., PP, II, p. 204, n. to B XIV.5.

> And with warm water of hus eyen • woketh hit till
> hit white;
> Lauabis me, et super niuem dealbabor.
> (C XVII.330-32)

The biblical and liturgical contexts of the Latin allusions connect them with penance. They are both "penitential" psalms which occur in the Liturgy for Ash Wednesday, before absolution.[73] The full verse of the first, "Laboravi in gemitu meo, lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum: lacrymis meis stratum meum rigabo" (Ps. 6:6), supports the motif of tears washing away sin, important in the medieval concept of penance.[74]

The exegetical commentaries on these two psalms connect them with baptism as well as penance. The full verse of the second, "Adsperges me hysopo, et mundabor; Lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor" (Ps. 51:7), part of the liturgy for the "exorcism of water" in which holy water was sprinkled for purification,[75] alludes to the purging of lepers with an herb dipped in the blood of a sacrificed animal. It was usually glossed as the cleansing of spots from the sinner's soul by the blood of Christ,[76] and hence sometimes as baptism.[77] Bruno of Asti connects this psalm with the imagery of washing one's clothes clean in the blood of the Lamb,[78] often interpreted as either baptism through the blood of martyrdom, or penance, through tears.[79]

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[73] See The Sarum Missal, ed. J. Wickham Legg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916), p. 48, and Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Sarum, ed. Francis Proctor and Christopher Wordsworth, I (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Academy, 1882), col. dlxxxviii, and II (1879), cols. 242, 245.

[74] Robertson and Huppé quote Peter Lombard on the penitential nature of this verse, but do not note Langland's connection of it with clothing imagery (pp. 181-82).

[75] See The Sarum Missal, p. 10.

[76] Cassiodorus, e.g., writes that the purging signifies

In Purity, the Gawain-poet draws on many of the same associations of spiritual washing, using clothing as one of the several illustrations of the theme of "cleanness." Vessels, also, in the form of the ark, the human body, and Solomon's vessels, show the dangers of defilement in the poem's three main exempla: the Flood, the destruction of Sodom, and Belshazzar's feast.[80] The theme of the washing away of sin is illustrated both by the flood, a symbol of baptism,[81] and by Abraham's and Lot's ritual bathing of the angels' feet (217-18, 802) before serving them food, a symbol of penance as a prerequisite for the eucharist.[82] More signi-

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that "pretioso sanguine Domini salvatoris maculas peccatorum efficaciter esse diluendas" (PL LXX, 364). See also, Bede, PL XCIII, 751.

[77] See Bruno of Chartreux, PL CLII, 864: "Ego in fide baptismatis dealbabor in anima super nivem."

[78] "Laverunt stolas suas, et dealbaverunt eas in sanguine Agni" (Apoc. 7:14; PL CLXV, 644).

[79] See Ambrose, PL XVII, 929. Haimo of Halberstadt, PL CXVII, 1042 and 1031, glosses the clean clothes of Apoc. 6:11 similarly.

[80] See Morse, pp. 202-16.

[81] The rain "schal wasch alle þe worlde of werkez of fylþe" (355). Kelly and Irwin quote 2 Peter 3:20-21, which explicitly connects baptism with the flood (p. 244).

[82] Kelly and Irwin, p. 245-46.

ficantly, in introducing the exemplum of Belshazzar's desecration of the holy vessels, the poet warns the reader that if he has washed a pearl "wyth water of schryfte" (1133), he should take care lest it become dirty again.

In this general context of the washing away of filth the poet uses fine clothing to stand for a pure soul. Althouth he does not give the detailed descriptions of clothing seen in Pearl or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, he amplifies the slight references to clothing in the ultimate biblical sources, often with alliterative formuals for elegant clothes. In this respect he contrasts greatly with Langland.

In portraying the Beatific Vision in Purity, the poet uses perception formulas to stress the eyewitness reaction of God to the souls, as well as the blessed souls' reaction to him. They will "loke on oure Lorde wyth a bone chere" (28)[83] if he sees that they are clean:[84] he must be pleased with their sight before admitting them to his. Because God, who has "stykked uche a stare in uche steppe y3e," could hardly be blind himself, no one can escape his judgment (583). Clothing is a key image for conveying the sacrametnal view that appearance accords with reality. God is "clene in his court" (17) and his angels "enorled in alle þat is clene,/Boþe wythinne and wythouten, in wedez ful bry3t" (19-20), in contrast to earthly priests, who are sometimes "honest utwyth, and inwith alle fylþez" (14).

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[83] Matt. 5:8; the poet paraphrases this beatitude with a more common perception formula in Pat. 24.: the clean of heart are blessed, for they "her sauyour in sete schul se with her y3en." The frequency with which the poet expresses the Beatific Vision with such formulas has been noted above (ch. 3, p. 46, and n. 71).

[84] Note that the lord of the parable "fande wyth his y3e" (133) the man in dirty clothing.

In the parable of the marriage feast, the most detailed portrayal of the Beatific Vision in Purity, the blessedness of the souls is symbolized by clean clothing, and the damnation, by dirty rags. The poet glosses the clean clothes explicitly:

> Wich arn þenne þy wedez þou wrappez þe inne,
> þat schal schewe hem so schene schrowde of þe best?
> Hit arn þy werkez, wyterly, þat þou wro3t havez.
> (169-71)

As "works," they are related to the fine linen of the Bride, the "justification of the saints" (Apoc. 19:8), identified from the beginning with the wedding garment of the parable.[85] Since all who were baptized ("ful3ed in font" [164]) are invited to the feast--even the man in dirty clothes--the clean clothes must refer to penance rather than baptism.

The poet uses an ugly alliterative *effictio* to portray the sinful man (described ismply as "non vestitum veste nuptiali" in Matt. 22:11):

> Hit watz not for a halyday honestly arayed--
> A þral þry3t in þe þrong unþryvandely cloþed,
> Ne no festival frok, bot fyled with werkkez;
> þe gome watz ungarnyst wyth god men to dele.
> (134-37)

[85] Jeremias, p. 187. Haimo of Halberstadt furhter associates the wedding garment with the clothes washed clean in the blood of the Lamb (Apoc. 7:14; 22:14; *PL* CXVII, 1169).

Stark contrast on a narrow linguistic level is achieved by the use of negatives like those in the portrait of the ghost of Gaynor's mother in "cleþyng vnclere" (*AA* 119): *not*, *ne no*, *unþryvandely*, and *ungarnyst*. The last is a negation of a word common in clothing formulas conferring praise.[86] This description, like those of the ghost, Craddock (*MA*), and Pierce (*PPC*), is meant to form a moral contrast with a beautiful one; but since the setting is heaven, where appearance accords with reality, it symbolizes not Christian humility, but sin.

The blessed souls who are contrasted with the man in dirty clothes are not described in a formal alliterative *effictio* in the way, for instance, that the Pearl Maiden is. However, they are portrayed in isolated formulas of alliterative romance, such as "schene schrowde,"[87] which contribute to the image of heaven as an aristocratic court. Clothing also determines the hierarchical seating arrangement, with "Ay þe best byfore and bry3test atyred,/þe derrest at þe hy3e dese þat dubbed wer fayrest" (114-15).[88]

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[86] *WA* 1533: "And þat was garneshed full gay with gold skirtez," *MA* 722: "Garneschit one the grene felde and graythlyche arayede," *DT* 432: "þat gay was in garmentes & of good chere" (*Garnyst* is related etymologically to *garment* [*OED*, sb.]).

[87] Brink lists *schene* as an adjective of high alliterative rank (p. 31). Cf. *WA* 483: "In schene schemerand schroude • alle of schire stanes," *MA* 3628: "Ilke schalke in his schrowde, fulle scheene ware theire wedys," *Gol.* 599: "Schaip the evin to the schalk, in thi schroud schene."

[88] Cf. *GGK* 75: "Dressed on þe dere des, dubbed al aboute," *GGK* 193: "Dubbed wyth ful dere stonez, as þe dok lasted," *GGK* 571: "Dubbed in a dublet of a dere tars."

In order, as part of his sacramental vision, to stress the continuity between clean clothes and a clean soul,[89] the poet exploits the ambiguity of words for clothing which also have an abstract moral significnace.[90] He uses clene, for instance--a word repeated throughout the poem to reinforce the theme of purity--to mean both "morally pure" and "elegantly dressed." He warns the reader that he cannot go to the heavenly feast unless his "wedez ben clene" (165), and his limbs wrapped "ful clene" (175). Unlike the author of *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, he uses clene to underscore the similarities between heavenly and earthly cleanliness.

Another word with which the poet equivocates is coyntyse, which can mean "wisdom, cleverness" or "fine or curious dress."[91] The host in the parable urges his guests to come to his feast in "comly quoyntys" (54), literally, "fine clothes," and orders the man in dirty clothes to be thrown into the dungeon, to learn to be "quoynt" (160)--that is, both well dressed, and wise.

The only place where the poet departs from his stance of aristocratic praise in order to show an ironic attitude toward fine clothing is in his account of Belshazzar. As

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[89] Spearing points out that the poet synthesizes rather than analyzes physical and spiritual filth and cleanliness (*Gawain-Poet*, p. 53).

[90] Gradon has examined this technique in some detail (pp. 119-23).

[91] *OED*, *Quaintise*, sb. 1, 4. The ambiguity is noted by Gradon, p. 123. Brink lists coynt as an adjective of high alliterative rank (p. 36).

Brewer has pointed out, his "touches of sarcastic houmour" here indicate condemnation not of splendor, but simply of its misuse.[92] To point up the fact that Belshazzar's feast is an anti-type of the heavenly feast in the parable, the poet describes it with clothing formulas. The finery of Belshazzar's concubines (which recalls the "fayre wedez" [217] of which Lucifer was proud) is a parody of the sacramental robes of the blessed:

> In þe clernes of his concubines and curious wedez,
> In notyng of nwe metes and of nice gettes,
> Al watz þe mynde of þat man on misschapen þinges.
> (1353-55)

Clere, an alliterative adjective of praise common in romance contexts,[93] is used in Pearl sacramentally to signify purity (227, 737).[94] Curious, which appears occasionally in romances to confer praise,[95] is used sacramentally later in Purity to describe the decoration of Solomon's vessels (1452). However, in Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, as here, it is used satirically, when applied to the fine robes of the mendicant friars.[96] The "nwe metes and nice getes" recall the rancor of Winner's condemnation of Waster's followers for being "nysottes of þe newe gett, so nysely attyred" (*WW* 410).[97] Finally, the use of the alliterative collocation *clere/cloþes* to describe the concubines shows that Belshazzar's feast is an inversion of God's: "For non watz dressed upon dece bot þe dere selven,/And his clere concubynes in cloþes ful bry3t" (1399-1400).

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[92] "Gawain-Poet," p. 135.

[93] See Borroff, pp. 77, 82. AA 271: "With a crowne craftly, al of clere golde," GGK 954: "Kerchofes of þat on, wyth mony cler perlez," DL 62: "Vpon cleare clothes, were all of cleare gold," RC 706: "In clais of clene gold, kythand ȝone cleir."

[94] See MED, clēr adj. 2. (c).

[95] AA 372: "Here kercheues were curiouse, with many proude prene," GGK 855: "And couertorez ful curious with comlych panez."

[96] PPC 608: "Y-cloþed in curious cloþ • & clenliche

Not only the clothing of his guests, but the fine clothing which Belshazzar promises his scholars for interpreting the writing on the wall contrasts with the clothing of the guests in the parable. The description of his dressing Daniel in "porpre cloþe, palle" (1637)[98] ("þenne sone watz Danyel dubbed in ful der porpre" [1743]) recalls the guests at the marriage feast ("þe derrest at þe hy3e dese þat dubbed wer fayrest" [115]). Belshazzar is trying to rival God in conferring honor by gifts of clothing. The poet hints at the senselessness of these gifts in the face of the uncertainty of fortune, by prefacing the accountoof Belshazzar's death with "how so Danyel watz dy3t, þat day over3ede" (1753). Slaughtered in bed, so that "his blod and his brayn blende on þe cloþes" (1788), Belshazzar is the opposite of the martyrs who have washed their clothes clean in the

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arayed." *Curious* is used to satirize pride of dress in *Mum* III.163: "A wondir coriouse crafte/Y-come now of late."

[97] Cf. the formula "nycete of þe newe iette" (*Mum* 311, 375).

[98] In the Vulgate source, it is simply called "purpura" (Dan. 5:7, 16, 29).

blood of the Lamb (Apoc. 7:14): while they were baptized in their own blood in dying for the love of God,[99] Belshazzar is dying for his own vainglory.

Finally, the poet underscores the relation between clothing, as an outer sign of the inner soul, and the Beatific Vision, by saying of God,

> ...clannes is his comfort, and coyntyse he lovyes,
> And þose þat seme arn and swete schyn se his face.
> þat we gon gay in oure gere þat grace he uus sende,
> þat we may serve in his sy3t þer solace never blynnez.
> (1809-12)

The phrase *gay in oure gere*, a common clothing formula,[100] makes it clear that *clannes* and *coyntyse* refer concretely to the wedding garment as well as to purity and wisdom.[101] In order to "se his face" and "serve in his si3t," we must have clean clothing--simultaneously a requirement for and an attribute of the Beatific Vision.

In *Patience*,[102] although the *Gawain*-poet does not describe clothing, he does allude to the filthiness of Jonah's robes after he has been in the Whale's belly. As a type of

[99] See Haimo of Halberstadt, *PL* CXVII, 1031. Hugh of St. Victor concludes that martyr's blood is efficacious as holy water (p. 155). Ian Bishop quotes Langland's reference to "fulyng in blode schedynge" (*PP* B XII.282: *Pearl in its Setting* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1968], pp. 144, n. 22).

[100] E.g., *GGK* 179: "Wel gaye watz þis gome, gered in grene," *RC* 482: "He is the gayest in geir that euer on ground glaid," *AA* 496: "Al in gleterand golde--gay was her here," *WmP* 4186: "Greiþed of alle gere • gaily atte þe best."

[101] See Gradon, p. 122, and Spearing, p. 50.

[102] Ed. J. J. Anderson (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969).

hell,[103] it "sauored as helle" (275), being full of "glette" (269), "mire" (279) and "fylthe" (291), all of which are used to denote moral corruption in Purity (306, 573, 1114, and passim). When the poet says that Jonah, having been cast ashore in "slucched cloþes," needs "his mantyle to wasche" (341-42), he is referring to the need for the penitent to was his dirty coat.[104]

In Pearl, although the dreamer does not achieve the Beatific Vision,[105] the maiden's white robes are an important part of the heavenly vision that he does achieve. However, the fact that she was a real girl,[106] despite the symbolic significance of her dress, encourages him to interpret her in earthly terms. Although there are decided differences, he resembles other naive dreamers in failing to understand the sacramental significance of his vision. The limitation of his focus on outward and visible signs is underscored by pleonastic formulas for perception. The maiden rebukes him for insisting, since he "wyth y3en me se" (296), that she is still alive, and for believeing what he "se3 with y3e" (302). When he says that she is wearing the finest pearls "þat euer I se3e 3et with myn ene" (200), the poet uses a phrase which often merely emphasizes close-up vision in other poems to point up the dreamer's earthly vision.

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[103] See Hartley Bateson, ed., Patience (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1918), n. to l. 342.

[104] Bateson makes this suggestion, comparing the mantle to Hawkin's dirty coat (n. to l.342), and Spearing concurs, mentioning the symbolism of the dirty wedding garment in Pur. (Gawain Poet, p. 83).

[105] Spearing writes that the poet intentionally shows the dreamer as unable to reach the highest mystical experience (Ibid, p. 115).

[106] See Gordon for the evolution of critical opinion on this point (ed. Pearl, pp. xi-xiv).

The ambiguity of the imagery of the maiden's dress allows the poet to have it both ways--to let us share the dreamer's perception and yet make us aware of its inadequacy at the same time.[107] Through this means we follow his progress from secular to religious understanding.[108] The blending of the theological symbolism of the robes with descriptive conventions established by the artes poeticae allows the dreamer to see the maiden as a romance heroine.[109]

Although the poet describes the maiden's robes with the same pleasure in aristocratic luxury that he shows elsewhere, he uses formulas which have sacramental overtones in order to retain the ambiguity of heavenly and earthly implications.[110] For instance, the maiden's "aray ryalle" (191), a common phrase for fine clothes, is later seen to be appropriate to her status as a queen of heaven. More importantly, he avoids those clothing formulas found in other poems which might carry associations of pride or lechery:

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[107] Spearing, Gawain-Poet, p. 156.

[108] Ibid., pp. 161-62, and P. M. Kean, Pearl: An Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), pp. 204-05.

[109] Bishop, p. 102.

[110] Gradon discusses the way that the poet combines the courtly and religious associations of the pearl, in order to reflect the dreamer's gradual comprehension (p. 207). See Kean for the theme of contrasted heavenly and earthly treasure (pp. 10, 38).

> Al blysnande whyt wat3 hir beau biys,
> Vpon at syde3, and bounden bene
> Wyth þe myreste margarys, at my deuyse,
> þat euer I se3 3et with myn ene;
> Wyth lappe3 large, I wot and I wene,
> Dubbed with double perle and dy3te;
> Her cortel of self sute schene,
> Wyth precios perle3 al vmbepy3te.
> (197-204)

Blysnande (197), which is often used in formulas to describe color,[111] is strikingly applied to white here. It transcends the implications of aristocratic glitter in expressing divine light, just as it does in the description of the New Jerusalem, illumined by the "lamp light" of the Lamb ("þur3 hym blysned þe bor3 al bry3t" [1048]).

Biys (197) includes the whole range of secular and religious meanings. It is used in the conventional formula of praise for a lady, brihtest vnder bis, in the alliterative Harley lyrics,[112] and in the clothing formula purpure and bis in romance.[113] If Gordon's emendation[114] is correct, however, it refers here to the white linen (byssino) of the Bride of Apocalypse. "Al blysnande whyt wat3 hir beau biys" (197) would thus translate quite closely the "byssino splendens, candido" (Apoc. 19:8) of the Bride.[115] The poet has transferred this detail from the dress of the Bride to the maiden herself, as one of the 144,000 brides of the Lamb.[116] The maiden's white robes descend directly from the tradition of clean clothes which symbolize purity in Apocalypse. This line, like the next one, which continues the "B" alliteration with the formulaic phrase *bounden bene* (198),[117] significantly lacks the words for luxurious clothing such as *bright*, *blew*, *browden*, *beten*, *bokeled*, *burneshed*, *besants*, and *blee*, which recur in formulas in romances, including *Sir Gawain*.

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[111] E.g., WA (Dublin) 1524: "Of bright blysnand blew • browden with sternes," and StE 78: "Als bry3t of hor blee in blysnande hewes."

[112] G. L. Brook, ed., The Harley Lyrics, 4th ed. (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1968), p. 32, "Annot and John," l. 17, and p. 34, "The Lover's Complaint," l.38.

[113] See MED, Bis, n. 1.

[114] Gordon, n. to l. 197, emends the MS uiys to biys on the basis of Apoc. 19:8.

Because the poet uses meaningless tags much less than other alliterative poets, it is striking that he turns to them rather than to clothing formulas to fill out his lines in this passage. He follows *myryest margarys* with *at my deuyse* (199), rather than a phrase including an item such as *mantile*, which he three times collocates with *mery* in *Sir Gawain*.[118] The next line, "þat euer I se3 3et with myn ene" (200), adds no details to the description, but simply stresses the role of the perceiver. Further, the poet writes *I wot and I wene* after *lappe3 large* (201), instead of any of the possible clothing words beginning with "L", such as the "ladily lappes, the lenghe of a 3erde" of Lady Fortune (*MA* 3254).

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[115] Idem. Finkelstein connects the robes also with the sacramental priestly garments of Exod. 28:4, the source of the symbolism of the linen of the Bride (p. 426).

[116] Gordon, p. xxx.

[117] Cf. *GGK* 192: "And bounden boþe wyth a bande of a bry3t grene," *GGK* 609 "Enbrawden and bounden wyth þe best gemmez," *GGK* 2028: "Aboute beten and bounden, enbrauded semez," *AA* 368: "Botonede with besantes and bokeled ful bene," 380: "His brene and his basnet, burneshed ful bene.

[118] *GGK* 153: "A meré mantile abof, mensked withinne," *GGK* 878: "And þenne a mery mantyle watz on þat mon cast," *GGK*

The line "dubbed with double perle and dy3te" (202) is formulaic in its adjectives only,[119] and rigorously excludes all of the conventional words for luxurious clothing usually associated with these adjectives, such as *dyaperde* and *dyamandes*.[120] Nothing distracts from the pearls. Although the poet in *Sir Gawain* uses dubbed in a purely secular sense to convey praise of fine clothing (75, 193, 571),[121] he has establihsed otherworldly associations for it here by using it in the refrain (usually in the form of *addubemente*) for stanza group II, to refer to the adornment of the Earthly

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1736: "In a mery mantyle, mete to þe erþe." *Mery* is of high alliterative rank (Brink, p. 31).

[119] In *PPC*, the formula satirizes a Dominican Friar, in clothes "of double worstede y-dy3t • doun to þe hele" (228), and in *MA*, it conveys the vanished wealth of one fallen from fortune: "His dyademe was droppede downe, dubbyde with stonys,/Endente alle with diamawndis, dighte for the nonis" (3296-97).

[120] As in *MA* 3251: "A duches dereworthily dyghte in dyaperde wedis," and *Parl*. 125: "With many dyamandes full dere dighte one his sleues." These formulas can easily be used satirically, as in the portrait of Lady Mede, in rings of "diamantz of derrest pris • and double manere saffres" (*PP* B II.13).

[121] See above, p. 92, n. 85.

Paradise.[122] We recall also the poet's use of dubbed in Purity, where it portrays metaphorically the fine clothes of the blessed in heaven: "þe derrest at þe hy3e dese þat dubbed were fayrest" (115).

Although the line "Wyth precios perle3 al vmbepy3te" (204), which forms the refrain for stanza group IV, carries some suggestion of aristocratic splendor,[123] it is more sacramental than secular in its implications.[124] The entire formula recurs in St. Erkenwald, where, as in Pearl,[125] pearls are both a symbol of and a reward for virtue: the pagan judge, in honor of his uprightness, has been clothed in fine robes, "with mony a precious perle picchit þeron."[126] In Pearl the poet minimizes the secular associations of perle by refusing to alliterate it with words for luxury other than precios or py3te. Instead, he either places it in the non-alliterating position, or else combines it with neutral words or words conveying the pain of loss, like playned (53, 242), pyne (330), and partle3 (335).

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[122] Lines 72, 85, 97, 108, 109, 120, 121. For the identification of the Earthly Paradise, see Kean, pp. 89-91.

[123] E.g., DT 1674: "With perciose stones of price & perles ynogh," SJ 759: "Py3t prudly with perles • in-to þe pur corners."

[124] Pearls are less common in descriptions of clothing in alliterative than in non-alliterative poetry (for examples, see Gordon, ed. p. xxxiv).

[125] Kean, p. 158.

[126] Ed. Henry L. Savage (1926; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1972), 1.79.

The poet plays on the ambiguity of the phrase of *prys*, related to precios, which frequently conveys the value of pearls in secular formulas.[127] The dreamer sees the "royal worth" of the maiden's robes, with "perle3 py3te of ryal prys" (193), as secular. She, however, in telling him that his lost rose has been made "a perle of prys" (272), suggests a more enduring value for pearls. Finally, when the dreamer refers to the "perle of prys" (746) which she wears on her breast, he recognizes that it stands for the kingdom of heaven, for she has just explained to him the parable of the pearl of great price (729-40).

Although the poet has ample opportunity to alliterate *prowde* with *precios*, *py3t*, and above all *perle*, in the conventional manner,[128] he uses the word and its various forms only twice in the poem. It occurs in a non-alliterating position in the negative sense when the dreamer's "maysterful mod and hy3e pryde" (401) are censured. Its positive sense is applied to the only appropriate figure in the description of the heavenly procession: "þe Lombe byfore con proudly passe" (110). The poet must have chosen not to use

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[127] *DT* 1674: "With preciose stones of price & perles ynogh." The *Gawain*-poet uses this secular formula to make a spiritual comparison in *Pur*. 1117 ("Perle praysed is prys þer perre is schewed") and *GGK* 2364: ("As perle bi þe quite pese is of prise more"). These verbal links have often been noted (e.g., by Sir Israel Gollancz, ed. *GGK* [1940; rpt. London: EETS, 1966], n. to l. 2364, Kean, p. 153, and Bishop, p. 143, n. 51), and used as evidence of common authorship of the poems (Spearing, pp. 33-36).

[128] E.g., *SJ* 759: "py3t prudely with perles ; in-to þe pur corners." *DT* 1670: "Pight full of perrieris & of proude gemys," *WA* 4891: "A palais, ane of þe precioussestе • & proudest in erth."

prowde to describe the maiden's robes, for we know that he is accustomed to use it elsewhere to convey aristocratic praise in clothing formulas.[129]

In his references to pearls, the poet avoids not only *prowde*, but also the specific words for fine cloth, such as *pall*, *pane*, *pellure*, and *purpure*, often collocated by him and other romance writers with *precios* and *py3te* to confer praise,[130] and by moralists with *prowde* to confer blame.[131] He thus avoids the satirical overtones present in the descriptions of such worldly figures as Lady Mede and the ladies in the *Quatrefoil of Love*. Had he used *purpure*, as he did to convey luxury in *Purity*,[132] he would have run the risk of suggesting the Whore of Babylon, dressed in "purpura" (Apoc. 17:4).[133]

The next stanza of the maiden's portrait is even more remarkable for the absence of phrases of luxury:

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[129] E.g., *GGK* 168: "þe pendauntes of his payttrure, þe proude cropure," 601: "þe apparayl of þe payttrure and of þe proude skyrtez."

[130] In *GGK* 154: "With pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene," and also in *AA* 353: "In pal pured with pane, prodly pight," *Gol*. 1127: "The king precious in pane," *Gol*. 313: "Of pall and of pillour þat proudly wes picht," *MA* 1287-88: "Palaisez proudliche pyght, that palyd ware ryche,/Of palle and of purpure, wyth precyous stones."

[131] See above, p. 82, n. 61.

[132] Where, significantly, Babylonian Belshazzar promises Daniel that he will "apyke [him] in porpre cloþe, palle alþerfynest" (1637).

[133] Note also that the "purpura et bysso" in which Dives was clothed was translated as "purpure and bis" in ME.

> A py3t coroune 3et wer þat gyrle
> Of mariorys and non oþer ston,
> Hi3e pynakled of cler quyt perle,
> Wyth flurted flowre3 perfet vpon.
> To hed hade ho non oþer werle;
> Her here leke, al hyr vmbegon,
> Her semblaunt sade for doc oþer erle,
> Her ble more bla3t þen whalle3 bon.
> As schorne golde schyr her fax þenne schon,
> On schyldere3 þat leghe vnlapped ly3te.
> Her depe colour 3et wonted non
> Of precios perle in porfyl py3te.
> (205-16)

Ian Bishop has pointed out that the maiden's portrait, although it follows rhetorical prescription in such phrases as "her ble more bla3t þen whalle3 bon," omits the usual detail of red roses in her cheeks. He argues that the poet was trying to make the maiden "look as much as possible like a pearl" and to connect her appearance with the symbolism of the white robes.[134] To this end in lines 215-16, the poet defeats the reader's expectation in two ways. Not only does he surprisingly apply colour to whiteness, but he also makes the porfyl 'embroidery' white when we would expect it to be brightly colored, so as to set off the pearls. He consequently avoids the association with pride of dress that porfyl generally carries.[135] A similar paradoxical use of white on white is the description of the 144,000 virgins as "depaynt in perle3 and wede3 qwyte" (1102).

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[134] Bishop, p. 113. For the poet's avoidance of color in his description of the maiden, see also Kean, p. 162.

[135] Recall that the whores in Q wear "purfelle and peloure" (473) and Lady Mede's robes are "purfild with pelour" (PP B II.9). For further examples, see above, pp. 82-83.

Although *depaynt* usually means "colored" or "painted" when collocated with the words for luxury which we have discussed,[136] here it must be translated "adorned," in order to preserve the sense of whiteness.

As Kean points out, the dreamer as naive "jueler" is like the merchants who mourned the loss of pearls and precious stones after the fall of Babylon (Apoc. 18:12).[137] The poet, however, excludes colored jewels, whose implications might be satirical, from the maiden's portrait, including only the sacramental pearls. The repetition of *perle*, part of the refrain of stanza group IV (192, 193, 202, 204, 207, 216, 219, 221, 228, 229) gives the effect of a "catalogue of pearls" which contrasts with the catalogue of jewels conventional in alliterative descriptions of clothing.[138] There is therefore no chance that the maiden might look like the fine ladies bedizened in "perry and pryde" (*Q* 459) or Lady Mede in her "red rubyes," "diamantz," "safferes," and "orientales and ewages" (*PP* B II.12-14), associated with the Whore of Babylon in "lapide pretioso et margaritis" (Apoc. 17:3).

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[136] *MED* depeinten, v. 362. See *Howlat* 670: "Pantit and apparalit proudly in pane," *Gol.* 65: "And payntit with pride," *DT* 1655: "Painted full prudly with pure gold ouer," *WA* 3692: "And þa ware proudly depaynt • þe pennes & þe wingis."

[137] Kean, p. 20.

[138] E.g., the descriptions of Gaynor (*AA* 17-22) and *ʒouthe* (*Parl.* 120-29), above, pp. 64, 68-69.

The impression that color has been withheld in this description is intensified by the poet's stressing what the maiden is *not* wearing, with phrases like *and non oþer* ston (206) and *non oþer werle* (209). She, like the pearl on her breast "wythouten wemme" (221), is without further adornment. The poet effectively avoids associations of gaudiness by using the language of alliterative praise sparingly, a task which can not have been easy for one who lavished so much detail on the Earthly Paradise and the New Jerusalem in *Pearl*, and on the descriptions in *Sir Gawain*.

What, however, is the exact meaning of the robes? The fact that the poet gives only an *effictio* without a *notatio* has inspired much discussion on this score. Kean argues that aside from the fact that the white stands for purity and the pearl on the maiden's breast for the pearl of great price, the robes are not symbolical, since they do not stand for philosophical abstractions, like those of Boethius' Lady Philosophy.[139] Gordon sees the robes simply as the white linen of the Bride of the Lamb, described in terms of contemporary fashion, although, unlike the Bride, she cannot stand for the New Jerusalem, since she is merely one of the 144,000 virgins.[140] The pearls on her robes

[139] Kean, p. 115.

[140] Gordon, pp. xxix-xxx.

signify innocence, and her crown, perhaps, virginity.[141]

Bishop makes the most detailed and convincing analysis of the robes, concluding on the basis of commentaries on the liturgy for Innocents' Day and Holy Saturday, that the robes stand for post-baptismal innocence.[142] The procession of the 144,000 virgins was often associated with the Holy Innocents, who were baptized in their own blood when slain by Herod (Matt. 2:16).[143] Bishop argues that the maiden, dying like the Innocents at the age of two, is like them, for although she was not martyred, her baptism through holy water was made effective through Crhist's bloodshed. She stresses this washing power of baptism as the source of her own innocence:

> Innoghe þer wax out of þat welle,
> Blod and water of brode wounde.
> þe blod vus bo3t fro bale of helle
> And delyuered vus of þe deth secounde;
> þe water is baptem, þe soþe to telle,
> þat fol3ed þe glayue so grymly grounde,
> þat wasche3 away þe gylte3 felle
> þat Adam wyth inne deth vus drounde.
> (649-56)

The poet later connects this theme with the maiden's robes. Bishop argues that aside from its fashionable details, the maiden's costume is one that an adult catechumen would wear to be baptized on Holy Saturday. Although infant baptism was the rule in the later Middle Ages, on Holy Saturday, in order to recall the practices of the primitive Church, both priests and the few adults being baptized wore white robes and mitres.[144] In keeping with the form in which she appears to the dreamer, the maiden is wearing the clothing of an adult, although as a child she would actually have been baptized in a chrisom.[145]

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[141] Gordon, pp. xxviii, xxx.

[142] Bishop, pp. 101-21. Wendell Stacy Johnson suggested earlier that the white garments were to be associated with the rite of baptism, an aspect of the poem which had not previously been emphasized ("The Imagery and Diction of the *Pearl*," *ELH*, 20[1953], 179).

[143] Bishop, p. 104, confirms the liturgical connection between the virgins and the innocents, made by Elizabeth Hart, in "The Heaven of the Virgins," *MLN*, 42(1927), 113-16. See summary by Gordon, p. xxv.

While Bishop agrees with Gordon that the fine linen of the Bride of the Lamb is the source of the detail of the maiden's "biys" (197), he shows that this detail was associated with baptism in the liturgical commentaries.[146] Baptism is certainly a better interpretation than that which Apocalypse gives to the linen of the Bride. The translation of "byssinum enim justificationes sunt sanctorum" (19:8) as "justifications" (Douay) or "righteousness" (RSV) would refer not to "innocence," but to "works," the very basis of the dreamer's own claim to go to heaven. The maiden's reply that the salvation of those who "repente" (662) and show "contryssyoun" (669) does not prejudice the salvation of the innocent comprises stanza group XII. In the refrain line, "innocens" and "ry3te" are contrasted until it is

[144] Bishop, pp. 114-16.

[145] Bishop, p. 115.

[146] Bishop, pp. 118-19.

paradoxically affirmed that "þe innosent is ay saf by ry3t" (684, etc.). It accords with the text that the maiden's robes should signify her innocence restored by baptism, rather than the justification of the saints. In this, the robes differ from the "wedez" of the parable of the marriage feast in Purity, which signified the "werkez" of adults, and implied the cleansing power of penance as well as of baptism.

A second allusion to the symbolism of white clothing in Apocalypse strongly supports the interpretation of the robes as baptism. The maiden attributes her elegance as a bride of the Lamb to his sacrifice:

> In hys blod he wesch my wede on dese,
> And coronde clene in vergynté
> And py3t me in perle3 maskelle3.
> (766-68)

Although the washing of clothes in the blood of the Lamb (Apoc. 7:14) was glossed by various commentators as baptism baptism of martyrs through bloodshed, and penance, the present context rules out all but the first. The poet's allusion to the blood and water from Christ's wound as baptism washing away original sin (649-56) confirms this view.

Finally, the maiden's robes are probably influenced by the wedding garment in the parable of the marriage feast, associated with the linen of the Bride. The imagery which makes the maiden a guest at the feast of the Lamb has been described in the previous chapter. With her robes cleansed by baptism, she illustrates the salvation of infants, while the guests in the parable, with their robes cleansed by penance as well as baptism, illustrate that of adults. The ambiguous use of aristocratic formulas for her costume, coronde, clene, and py3t...in perle3 (767-68) recalls the use of quoynt, schene schrowde, and wedez...clene to convey the blessedness of the wedding guests in Purity.

The maiden's clothes, then, in the tradition of the New Testament symbolism of wedding garments, identify her as one of the brides of the Lamb, and simultaneously, as a guest at the celebration of his marriage to the New Jerusalem. There she partakes of his sacrifice, which has washed away her original sin and allowed her to be "called" to the feast. Her robes are both a sign of her purity, and its reward.

In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, descriptions of luxurious clothing contribute to our sense of uncertainty, of knowing only what we can see. Like descriptions of feasts, they are used to show subtle variations and contrasts rather than bold oppositions. Since the two courts, Arthur's and Bercilak's, are virtually identical in aristocratic luxury, we have no indication of the moral significance of either from its appearance.

The one instance in which bold contrast is used, the description of the old and young ladies at Bercilak's court, is too subtle for Gawain to recognize: he has no way of knowing that the old one is Morgan le Fay, or that the young one, his host's wife, will try to seduce him at her instigation. The same contrast between youth and age is used to convey mutability in the paired portraits of Arthur and

Craddock, Gaynor and the ghost, and Life and Death (DL). The two ladies similarly signify the variation of Gawain's fortunes, and have in fact been interpreted as the two faces of Fortune.[147] Here, as elsewhere, the poet follows the rhetorical precept that description should impress,[148] by emphasizing Gawain's perception. The young lady is described as more beautiful than Guenevere, "as þe wy3e þo3t" (945) and the two ladies are described as "unlike to loke on" (950):

> For if þe 3onge watz 3ep, 3ol3e watz þat oþer;
> Riche red on þat on rayled ayquere,
> Rugh ronkled chekez þat oþer on rolled;
> Kerchofes of þat on, wyth mony cler perlez,
> Hir brest and hir bry3t þrote bare displayed,
> Schon schyrer þen snawe þat schedez on hillez;
> þat oþer wyth a gorger watz gered ouer þe swyre,
> Chymbled ouer hir blake chyn with chalkquyte vayles,
> Hir frount folden in sylk, enfoubled ayquere,
> Toreted and treleted with tryflez aboute.
> þat no3t watz bare of þat burde bot þe blake bro3es,
> þe tweyne y3en and þe nase, þe naked lyppez,
> And þose were soure to se and sellyly blered;
> A mensk lady on molde mon may hir calle,
>   for Gode!
>   Hir body watz schort and þik,
>   Hir buttokez bal3 and brode,
>   More lykkerwyse on to lyk
>   Watz þat scho hade on lode.
>   (951-69)

The poet concludes the contrasting portraits by saying that Gawain "gly3t to þat gay þat graciously loked" (970),[149] with the result that perception formulas bracket the entire description.

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[147] Schnyder, p. 59. He argues that the split of the contrast into two characters is original, failing to mention the other alliterative examples.

[148] See Pearsall, p. 131, who cites Matthew of Vendôme (Faral, p. 119).

[149] For gliffen, 'glance' as a word to introduce or conclude an effictio, see GGK 842, where Gawain "gly3t"

As many critics have pointed out,[150] the most vivid picture of the young lady is painted when Gawain is most susceptible to her, during the third temptation scene. She enters his chamber dressed

> In a mery mantyle, mete to þe erþe,
> þat watz furred ful fyne with fellez wel pured,
> No hwez goud on hir hede bot þe ha3er stones
> Trased aboute hir tressour be twenty in clusteres;
> Hir þryuen face and hir þrote þrowen al naked,
> Hir brest bare bifore, and behinde eke.
> (1736-41)

Although the effictio is not introduced with a reference to Gawain's perception (he is asleep at the time), his first response to her upon waking is described in some detail:

> He se3 her so glorious and gaily atyred,
> So fautles of her fetures and of so fyne hewes,
> Wi3t wallande joye warmede his hert.
> (1760-62)

Sharing Gawain's consciousness, we do not know whether the lady is benevolent or not. The hero was in fact so disarmed that he might have succumbed, had not the Virgin protected him (1768-69).

The problem of appearance and reality, so crucial to the poem,[151] is nowhere more prominent than in the appear-

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on Bercilak; AA 356, where Arthur "gliffed vp his eighen" on Sir Galeron's lady, and MA 2525, where Gawain "glyftes" on Sir Priamus.

[150] Pearsall, p. 131, Burrow, A Reading, p. 97, and Spearing, Gawain-Poet, pp. 193-94.

[151] Benson, Art and Tradition, p. 197.

ance of the Green Knight. Despite the fact that the poet takes eighty-four lines to describe him, he gives "no equivalent to Gawain's pentangle--no explicit indication of the values to which he is committed."[152] Benson points out that the poet is here using the mixed narrative order of the rhetoricians, "artificial" with respect to the Green Knight, who enters *in medias res* (his own history unknown) and "natural" with respect to the court (whose history we have followed all along).[153] The close-up technique of description is essential to the artificial order, in which the only source of information is what can be seen.[154] It is the same technique that is used for dream visions, where we are similarly ignorant of the identity of the mysterious figure. This accounts for the striking resemblances between the poet's portrayals of the Pearl maiden and the Green Knight.[155]

The poet's silence on the identity of the Green Knight has caused a great deal of critical controversy. The question is whether he is good or evil--giving Gawain a helpful warning against "surquidrê" (311, 2457), or trying to destroy him.[156] The former view contains more truth, for in the end he proves to be a "penitential" figure,[157] like Sir Craddock, the interpreters of the dream in the Morte Arthure, and the ghost in the Awntyrs, who, though essentially sympathetic to courtly values, warn of their tendency to excess.[158] Unlike such characters, however, he judges Gawain leniently, while Gawain judges himself harshly.[159] No clue whatever is to be found in the Green Knight's splendid clothing, which, more magnificent even than Gawain's, is the antithesis of the rags of the usual penitential figures:

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[152] Spearing, *Gawain-Poet*, p. 179. Benson makes a similar point: "The description itself is all *efficio*... with no *notatio*, for the dramatic point of view allows the poet to report only the visual facts" (*Art and Tradition*, p. 186).

[153] Ibid., pp. 169-73.

[154] As Benson puts it, "we need a guide, Dante's Beatrice or the *Gawain*-Poet's Pearl," to help us see matters in the proper perspective (Ibid., p. 193).

[155] Ibid., pp. 181-83.

> Ande al grayþed in grene þis gome and his wedes:
> A strayte cote ful stre3t, þat stek on his sides,
> A merê mantile abof, mensked withinne
> With pelure pured apert, þe pane ful clene
> With blyþe blaunner ful bry3t, and his hod boþe,
> þat watz la3t fro his lokkez and layde on his
> schuldres;
> Heme wel-haled hose of þat same,
> þat spenet on his sparlyr, and clene spures vnder
> Of bry3t golde, vpon silk bordes barred ful ryche,
> And scholes vnder schankes þere þe schalk rides;

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[156] Ibid., pp. 90-95, and Spearing, Gawain-Poet, pp. 179-80, both give good summaries of these conflicting interpretations, many of which have been extreme and far-fetched. As an evil figure, the Green Knight has been associated with the devil and death, and as a good one, with Christ and Life.

[157] That is, his actions lead Gawain to repentance. Burrow discusses the Green Knight's role of "confessor" and the theme of penance in the poem (A Reading, pp. 127-33).

[158] Essentially Benson's view. He makes the comparison with the moralistic criticism of chivalry in other northern Arthurian romances, such as MA, AA, and Gol. (Art and Tradition, pp. 246-47).

[159] Benson,points out this ironic reversal of expectation (ibid., p. 247).

> And alle his vesture uerayly watz clene verdure,
> Boþe þe barres of his belt and oþer blyþe stones,
> þat were richely rayled in his aray clene
> Aboutte hymself and his sadel, vpon silk werkez.
> þat were to tor for to telle of tryfles þe halue
> þat were enbrauded abof, wyth bryddes and fly3es,
> With gay gaudi of grene, þe golde ay inmyddes.
> (151-67)

The justification of this extended description is its rhetorical effect--the response it arouses in the perceiver. From the beginning ("for wonder of his hwe men hade" [147]),[160] to the end, it is punctuated by references to the court's astonishment at the knight's color:

> Such a fole vpon folde, ne freke þat hym rydes,
> Watz neuer sene in þat sale wyth sy3t er þat tyme,
> with y3e.
> He loked as layt so ly3t,
> So sayd al þat hym sy3e.
> (196-200)

Here, if anywhere, pleonasms in perception formulas are justified, for as Marie Borroff says, they put an "emphasis upon 'seeing'" and enhance the sense of "suspended activity, the virtual stupefaction" produced by the sight of the knight and horse.[161]

This tendency to describe things from the point of view of the observer has often been praised as one of the excellences of Sir Gawain.[162] Although the tendency has a rhetorical precedent,[163] it is also characteristic of alliterative poetry in general.[164] The eyewitness convention is often used to introduce the *effictio* of a mysterious figure, whether felon knight or dreamer mentor.[165] Here, however, although the Green Knight fits the convention of the armed challenger, the poet is at pains to stress his difference. His portrait contrasts, for instance, with that of Sir Roland, whom Rauf Coil3ear suddenly "beheld" in awe:[166]

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[160] Similarly, "vch mon had meruayle quat hit mene my3t/...wyth al þe wonder of þe worlde" (232, 238).

[161] Borroff, p. 71. Cf. the court's further reaction, "ther watz lokyng on lenþe þe lude to beholde" (232). Even Burrow, who considers Borroff too sympathetic to pleonasms, admits that the ones quoted above are appropriate (Ricardian Poetry, p. 27).

[162] Alain Renoir, "Progressive Magnification: An Instance of Psychological Description in Sir Gawain and the

> His plaitis properlie picht attour with precious stanis,
> And his Pulanis full prest of that ilk peir;
> Greit Graipis of Gold his Greis for the nanis,
> And his Cussanis cumlie schynand full cleir;
> Bricht braissaris of steill about his arme banis,
> Blandist with Beriallis and Cristallis cleir;
> Ticht ouir with Topas, and trew lufe atanis;
> The teind of iewellis to tell war full teir.[167]

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[163] Pearsall, p. 132.

[164] Benson, *Art and Tradition*, pp. 173-80.

[165] See above, pp. 3-6.

[166] Rauf's reaction is as explicitly described as the court's in *GGK*. He "rusit in his hart" (481), and thought

> 'He is the gayest in geir that euer on ground glaid,
> Haue he grace to the gre in ilk Iornaying;
> War he ane manly man, as he is wel maid,
> He wair full michtie, with magre durst abyde his meting'
> (482-85)

[167] *Rauf Coil3ear, Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. F. J. Amours (1892; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966), ll.467-74. Similar descriptions of challenging knights are that of Sir Galeron (*AA* 378-96), and Sir Priamus (bracketed by the phrases, "Thane was he warre of a wye, wondyre wele armyde," And "Sir Gawayne glyftes on the gome with a glade wille" (*MA* 2515, 2525).

Expecting the armor of the conventional challenger, the court is confused by the Green Knight's peaceful clothes. Even though he is unarmed, it seems as if "no mon my3t/... vnder his dynttez dry3e" (201-02):

> ...hade he no helme ne hawbergh nauþer,
> Ne no pysan ne no plate þat pented to armes,
> Ne no schafte ne no schelde to schwue ne to smytt.
> (203-05)

This negative catalogue of armor invites comparison with more warlike challengers. *Plate* appears in Sir Roland's portrait (*RC* 467),[168] *helme* in the arming of both Gawain (*GGK*) and Vespasian (*SJ*),[169] and *schafte* and *schelde* in descriptions of battles, often collocated with such violent verbs as *schend* and *schindre*.[170] The Green Knight uses the same formulas to humiliate the court when he explains that although he has a "hauberghe at home and a helme boþe,/A schelde and a scharp spere, schinande bry3t" (268-69),[171] since he is not seeking battle, his "wedez are softer" (271).

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[168] See the Black Prince's arming (*WW* 112): "With pysayne & with pawnce polischede full clene." *Pysan* and *plate* are used in violent battle scenes in *Gol.* 708: "Throw platis of polist steill thair poyntis can pase," and *Gol.* 927: "Pertly put with his pith at his pesane," and *MA* 2075: "Thurghe pawnce and platez he percede the maylez."

[169] *GGK* 605: "þenne hentes he þe helme, and hastily hit kysses," and *SJ* 755: "þe gold hewen helme! haspeþ he blyue;" used also in battle formulas in *MA* 3858: "Thorowe the helme and the hede, on heyghe one the brayne," and *Gol.* 702: "Helmys of hard steill thai hotterit and heuch," and in *WA* 2640 and *AA* 586.

[170] E.g., *Gol.* 619: "On scheldis schonkit and schent," *Gol.* 689: "Throu thair schene scheildis thair schuldiris var schent," *AA* 501: "Schaftes in shide wode þei schindre in shedes," *AA* 503: "Schaftes þei schindre in sheldes so schene."

[171] Cf. the armings of Golagros, "Ane schene scheild and

While the Green Knight, because of his magical powers, has no need of armor, Gawain is in a very different position, for, as he puts it, "þa3 my hede fall on þe stonez,/I con not hit restore" (2282-83). Therefore he must be armed in the conventional manner before setting out to meet the Green Knight:

> þenne set þay þe sabatounz vpon þe segge fotez
> His legez lapped in stel with luflych greuez,
> With polaynez piched þerto, policed ful clene,
> Aboute his knez knaged wyth knotez of golde;
> Queme quyssewes þen, þat coyntlych closed
> His thik þrawen þy3ez, with þwongez to tachched;
> And syþen þe brawden bryné of bry3t stel ryngez
> Vmbeweued þat wy3 vpon wlonk stuffe,
> And wel bornyst brace vpon his boþe armes,
> With gode cowters and gay, and glouez of plate,
> And alle þe godlych gere þat hym gayn schulde
> þat tyde;
> Wyth ryche cote-armure,
> His gold sporez spend with pryde,
> Gurde wyth a bront ful sure
> With silk sayn vmbe his syde.
> (574-89)

Many symbolic interpretations have been proposed for the armor. Some writers have seen spiritual significance based on religious writings which allegorize St. Paul's "armor of God" and books of chivalry which compare the symbolism of knightly equipment to that of priestly vestments.[172] Others have seen suggestions of superficiality in the poet's limit-

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ane schaft, that scharply was sched" (*Gol.* 604) and Vespasian," A brod schynande scheld ⁊ on scholdir he hongiþ" (*SJ* 751)

[172] Burrow, *A Reading*, p. 39 and Richard Hamilton Green, "Gawain's Shield and the Quest for Perfection," *ELH*, 29 (1962), 126-27.

ing his description of Gawain to details of clothing.[173] The most important meaning of the armor, however, is literal, arising from the hero's need for physical protection.[174] The arming process itself confers praise on Gawain as a champion of his people, like the armings of Arthur (_MA_), Vespasian (_SJ_), and the Black Prince (_WW_).[175]

In contrast to Gawain's literal equipment is the symbolic pentangle on his shield.[176] The poet digresses for forty-three lines to tell why it is appropriate to the hero, "þof tary hyt me schulde" (624). Such descriptions of shields are common in alliterative poems, and this is by no means the longest: the poet of the _Howlat_ pauses for almost 300 of his 1001 lines to explain the significance of several historical coats of arms.[177] More often, however, the heraldic devices are self-explanatory, and when not referring to real families such as the Stanleys (SF 230-34) or the Plantagenets (WW 70-82), they are usually fierce beasts signifying the bearer's martial prowess. For instance, Sir Roland's shield has a tiger, "in thakin of tene" (RC 457), Sir Ranald's (Gol. 605) and Sir Galeron's (AA 385) boars' heads, and Troilus' lions (DT 6145). In two romances, griffins are ascribed to Gawain (AA 509, MA 3869). Gawain's pentangle is a much more spiritual device than these, in that it signifies moral rather than military virtues.[178] Since "fraunchyse," "fela3schyp," "clannes," "cortaysye," and "pité" are harder to embody than fierceness, they require an abstract symbol. Having chosen an unfamiliar one,[179] the poet is obliged to take time to explain it.

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[173] E.g., Hughes, p. 219. He fails to recognize this as the conventional alliterative technique of description.

[174] Howard, p. 225.

[175] See above, p. 61. Burrow has pointed out the union of oral-formulaic and rhetorical traditions in this description (_A Reading_, pp. 37-39).

[176] Howard, p. 226. Critics have elucidated it thoroughly. See Green, pp. 121-39, and Robert W. Ackerman, "Gawain's Shield: Penitential Doctrine in _Sir Gawain and the Green Knight_," _Anglia_, 76(1958), 254-65.

[177] Richard Holland, _The Buke of the Howlat_, _Scottish Alliterative Poems_, ed. F. J. Amours, ll.334-631. Although he apologizes that "it war tyrefull to tell" (421; cf. 578), and directs the reader to heralds for more information, he devotes 136 lines to the origin of the heart on Douglas' escutcheon. The disproportion is increased by the fact that this account of human heraldry occurs in a bird allegory.

Throughout the poem, clothing is used to reflect Gawain's changing moral state, just as feasts are used to reflect his changing emotional state. While the first arming scene serves to praise him, the second introduces qualified blame. By this time he has accepted the lady's girdle, and dressed in the blue which, ironically, signifies "faithfulness,"[180] has neglected to fulfill his contract with Bercilak by handing it over. Here the girdle is given the prominence accorded the pentangle in the first arming, as if Gawain had changed his armorial bearings:[181]

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[178] It is in keeping with the image of the Virgin on the inside of his shield, a charge attributed to Arthur in the chronicle tradition (including MA 3648-49), and mentioned frequently in sermons. (See Tolkien-Gordon, ed., GGK, n. to 1.649).

[179] Ibid., n. to 1.620.

[180] Pointed out by Burrow, A Reading, p. 111.

> Whyle þe wlonkest wedes he warp on hymseluen--
> His cote wyth þe conysaunce of þe clere werkez
> Ennurned vpon veluet, vertuus stonez
> Aboute beten and bounden, enbrauded semez,
> And fayre furred withinne wyth fayre pelures--
> ȝet laft he not þe lace, þe ladiez gifte,
> Þat forgat not Gawayn for gode of hymseluen.
> Bi he hade belted þe bronde vpon his balȝe haunchez,
> Þenn dressed he his drurye double hym aboute,
> Swyþe sweþled vmbe his swange swetely þat knyȝt
> Þe gordel of þe grene silke, þat gay wel bisemed,
> Vpon þat ryol red cloþe þat ryche watz to schewe.
> (2025-36)

Luxurious clothing here plays a very different part from that in more moralistic Arthurian romances, such as the Morte Arthure or the Awntyrs, for it is not in itself a sign of pride. Although the girdle's beauty recalls the garb of both the Green Knight and Gawain,[182] the poet concludes the arming by explicitly absolving Gawain of pride of dress:

> Bot wered not þis ilk wyȝe for wele þis gordel,
> For pryde of þe pendauntez, þaȝ polyst þay were,
> And þaȝ þe glyterande golde glent vpon endez,
> Bot for to sauen hymself, when suffer hym byhoued,
> To byde bale withoute abate of bronde hyme to were,
> oþer knyffe.
> (2037-42)

Gawain's motivation is again given as self-preservation rather than pride when, after confessing to the Green Kinght, he agrees to wear the girdle not for its "wlonk werkez" (2432), but as a sign of excess, "quen pryde schal me pryk for prowes of armes" (2437).[183] While he, however, sees it as a "bende of...blame", a "token of vntrawþe" (2506, 2509), Arthur sees it as a sign of the honor which Gawain has conferred on the court, and so orders the entire court to adopt it. The poem leaves us with two conflicting interpretations of Gawain's guilt, so that although it uses clothing sacramentally, as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual state, the nature of that state remains ambiguous.

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[181] Ibid., p. 116.

[182] The girdle is "gered...with grene sylke and with golde schaped,/Noȝt bot arounde brayden, beten with fyngrez" (1832-33). The Green Knight calls it "as grene as my goune" (2396), because he is "gered in grene" (179) and greener than "grene aumayl on golde" (236). The lace on his axe is "on botonz of þe bryȝt grene brayden ful ryche" (220) and the precious stones on Gawain's coat armor "aboute beten and bounden, enbrauded semez" (2028).

In alliterative poetry generally, clothing is a crucial indication of moral judgment, because it directly reflects individual character. The poets tend to give an _effictio_ without a _notatio_, and limit that _effictio_ to clothing. In showing clothing and character as either consistent or discrepant with each other, they manipulate bold contrasts. Fine clothing in romances generally signifies a fine character (possibly tainted by trust in prosperity), while shabby clothing signifies a character made wise by ill fortune. In satirical contexts, fine clothes are always a sign of vainglory, and the contrasting shabby ones a sign of Christian humility: appearance is at odds with reality. The direct opposite, however, holds true in sacramental contexts, where clean clothes are a sign of purity or beatitude, and dirty clothes a sign of sin.

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[183] See also 2367-68, and Burrow's discussion of these lines (_A Reading_, pp. 102-03, 136).

The *Gawain*-poet shows great sophistication in adapting the devices used by other alliterative poets--descriptions of clothing and their effects upon the observer--for the purpose of exploring his concern with appearance and reality. He portrays in *Pearl* a sacrametnal vision which is nevertheless deceptive, for the dreamer takes only its earthly meaning. In *Purity*, he reveals God as being as concerned with the perception (judgment) of souls as they are with the perception (vision) of him. Finally, in *Sir Gawain*, he shows a world of aristocratic excellence challenged by a figure who seems to embody that excellence--but whose nature cannot be ascertained from his appearance.

Chapter IV

BUILDINGS

Descriptions of luxurious buildings, important in medieval poetry in general,[1] are striking in alliterative poetry. The remarkable similarity between them, arising from their shared body of formulas,[2] requires that their moral meaning like that of feasts and clothing, be ascertained from their context. Castles in romances are powerful symbols of civilization, however transitory, in a world of chaos.[3] In sacramental contexts, the typological relation between various ecclesiastical buildings--Solomon's Temple, the New Jerusalem, and earthly churches--is exploited to show visual beauty as a route to divine knowledge. Satirical poets deny this function of ecclesiastical beauty, dismissing it as a costly distraction. In this respect Langland is a satirist, since he describes his sacramental buildings--those that stand allegorically for the church--with very plain building formulas, in order to avoid worldly associations. The _Gawain_-poet, in contrast, believes in the validity of sacramental symbols, but his attitude is complex, for he recognizes the danger that worldlings like the Pearl dreamer and Belshazzar will grasp only their material meaning. Like other alliterative poets, he uses the eyewitness convention to suggest the discrepancy between appearance and reality.

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[1] As Roberta D. Cornelius writes, "No story of romance of the Middle Ages could possibly be written without its castles; no more could allegory, mirroring life in abstraction, dispense with the most important social institution of the time" (*The Figurative Castle* [Bryn Mawr, 1930], p. 13).

[2] Praising adjectives such as *best*, *brente*, *bry3t*, *clene*, *clere*, *coynt*, *fayr*, *gay*, *he3*, *precios*, *prowde*, and *py3te* (see Brink, pp. 35-39, 49-52) combine with architectural nouns such as *burghe*, *bylde*, *carnel*, *castel*, *crystal*, *glas*, *golde*, *hall*, *hous*, *pylere*, *tabernacle*, *towre*, *wall*, *wo3e*, *won*, and *wyndow* to make building formulas.

[3] See Jonathan Saville, *The Medieval Erotic Alba; Structure as Meaning* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 28-30.

Beautiful buildings, a popular motif in alliterative romances,[4] usually serve to confer praise on their owners.[5] In the _Destruction of Troy_, for instance, the description of the palace of Ilion underscores the poet's sympathies with Priam and Troy. It is built

> Of crafty colours to know, all in course set,
> Made all of marbyll with mason deuyse,
> With ymagry full honest openly wroght.
> In cornols by course clustred o lofte.
> The windowes, worthely wroght in a mesure,
> Shapyn full shene all of shyre stones,
> Caruen in Cristall by crafte of Entaile,
> Pight into pilers prudly to shewe
> The bases & bourdurs all of bright perle.
> Within this palis of prise was a proude halle,
> þat large was of lenght & louely to shewe,
> Painted full prudly with pure gold ouer,
> Drapred by dene with a dese riall.
> (1644-56)

The fall of Troy was a well known example of the tragedy of fortune, and although the chronicle form of this 14,044 line poem obscures the pattern of tragic reversal which so clearly informs the _Morte Arthure_, there is dramatic irony in this splendor. The poet's announcement in the prologue, "Now of Troy for to telle, is myn entent euyn,/Of the stoure & þe strife when it distroyet was" (27-28), and the description of the final fall of the city,provide a broader perspective on the transience of worldly things.

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[4] E.g., _DT_ 1527-79, 1629-88, 4952-74, 5360-72, 8380-96, 8731-66, 8807-18; _WA_ 3339-48, 3665-3703, 4890-4903, 5259-82, 5627-54; _Gol_. 237-53; _GGK_ 764-72, 786-802; and _SJ_ 1249-54.

[5] Pearsall attributes this descriptive technique to the _laus urbis_ tradition of classical rhetoric (p. 133).

In the Wars of Alexander, another medieval tragedy,[6] a similar irony qualifies the description of an exquisite building which the hero expropriates from the vanquished Darius. Through emphasis on the fallacies of perception, the poet points out the impermanence of material things. After Alexander "hogely...wondirs" (WA [Ashmole] 3228) at his opponent's glorious palace, the dying Darius moralizes on his own fall from fortune. He says that "prosperite and pride • so purely me blynded" that he was unable to see what was "fast at myn e3en" (WA [Ashmole] 3283-85), and that the man at the pinnacle of fortune "se3es no3t his dri3ten" (3291). Despite Darius' warning against "surquitery" (3295), however, Alexander, like Gaynor and Gawain in the Awntyrs, learns nothing, and proudly mounts the king's throne as soon as he is dead (3323-35). The description of the throne's splendor, like that of the palace itself (3217-28), contributes to the irony of Alexander's ascendancy.

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[6] R. M. Lumiansky, "Legends of Alexander the Great," A Manual of Writings in Middle English, ed. J. Burke Severs, I (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967), p. 108. A strong interest in the fall from fortune is indicated by the popularity of the legends of Arthur, Alexander, and Troy in late medieval England. Scholars have suggested mutual influence on the tragic morals of these legends (See Matthews, p. 50, and Derek Pearsall, John Lydgate [Charlottesville Univ. of Virginia Press, 1970], p. 127).

The motif of the destruction of buildings is as popular in the Middle English alliterative poems as the motif of the buildings themselves.[7] Although not so clearly developed as in Old English, where the contrast between the past glory and the present desolation of the ruined city illustrates the *ubi sunt* theme,[8] it is sometimes used to show the fall from fortune. In the *Destruction of Troy*, the Greeks are glad,

> Ilion to ouerturne angardly sone,
> And the bildynges bete doun to the bare erthe.
> All the cité vnsakrely þai set vppon fyre,
> With gret launchaund lowes into the light ayre,
> Wroght vnder walles, walt hom to ground,
> Grete palis of prise put into askys,
> With flammes of fyre fuerse to behold;
> And all the Cité vp soght to þe sad walles.
> (12,003-10)

The contrast between this description and that of the palace of Ilion in its splendor graphically illustrates the reversal of fortune. The author of the *Siege of Jerusalem* describes the destruction of the city by the Romans in similar formulas,[9] to show Gods punishment of the Jews for failing to achknowledge Christ. The Gawain-poet alludes to the destruction of buildings, as well as to beautiful buildings, in order to contrast the heavenly with earthly cities, and prosperity with the fall from fortune.

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[7] E.g., the sieges of Metz (*MA* 3032-42) and Tyre (*WA* 1413-44), both performed by the heroes during their rise, rather than suffered by them during their fall. See also *SJ* 1260-88 and *Pur*. 1178-92.

[8] The deserted city is the subject of the "ruin" (R.F. Leslie, ed., *Three Old English Elegies* [Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1961]), and an important part of the lament for passed joys in the *Wanderer* (75-107). See Greenfield, *Critical History*, p. 214.

[9] Titus' commanding the Romans, "Doun bete þe bilde ʃ brenne hit in-to grounde" (*SJ* 1260) so that it is "doun betyn & brent ʃ into blake erþe" (1288) recalls *DT* 12,004. Similarly, the phrase, "Whan þe temple was ouertourned" (*SJ* 1289) echoes *DT* 1381, "The temple ouer-tournyt, token þe folke," and *DT* 7184, "ouertyrnet with tene, temple and oþer."

The New Jerusalem, along with its earthly embodiment, the Church, served as a reassuring ideal for men unnerved by the instability of worldly buildings. The architecture of churches was modelled on the description of the New Jerusalem (Apoc. 21:11-23) and Solomon's Temple (2 Paralipomenon 3-4).[10] Writers like Abbot Suger who wished to justify church decoration cited this typological relation, arguing that visual beauty served the sacramental, or anagogical function of leading the soul to God.[11] His architectural aesthetics, like Augustine's rhetoric, justified beauty which makes truth palatable.[12]

Although the orthodox view in fourteenth century England was the sacramental one,[13] the Wyclyfites countered it with an ascetic view consistent with Augustine's fear that eloquence would prove a distraction to truth.[14] Citing Moses' commandment against graven images (Exod. 20:4), they condemned visual imagery in church for leading to idolatry.[15] As St. Bernard had compared the monks, they compared the friars to the Pharisees and other members of the Jewish religious establishment who enjoyed the beauty of sacramental symbols for its own sake.[16] They used Christ's cricitism of the corruption of the Temple (Mark 11:17)[17] and prophecy of its destruction (Matt. 24:2) to support the disendowment of the Church.[18]

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[10] Simson, p. 11: "The church itself was conceived as an image of the Celestial Jerusalem, but...the Celestial Jerusalem was in turn thought to have been prefigured in the Solomonic Temple."

[11] Simson, pp. 11, 96, and Panofsky, pp. 95, 103. Suger's work is a justification to ascetic critics of his magnificent reconstruction of the abbey.

[12] St. Augustine on Christian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 4:11.26.

[13] John Phillips, The Reformation of Images: Destruction of Art in England, 1535-1650 (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1973), pp. 11, 18.

The debate carried on in "Jack Upland," "Friar Daw's Reply," and "Upland's Rejoinder"[19] testifies to the intense interest which the controversy over church luxury held for alliterative poets. The first and last are Wyclyfite works which criticize the costly buildings of Friar Daw for being contrary to the example of Christ and exploitive of the poor.[20] The refutation "Friar Daw's Reply" justifies such luxury by stressing the sacramental function of churches. They are not "castles of Caym," but houses of God:

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[14] Augustine, 4:14.30.

[15] Owst, p. 145.

[16] See the Lanterne of Li3t, ed. Lilian M. Swinburn (London: EETS, 1917), pp. 38, 40, 41.

[17] Owst, p. 145, and Lanterne, p. 37.

[18] See F. D. Matthew, ed., The English Works of Wycliffe hitherto Unpublished (London: EETS, 1880), p. 321.

[19] Jack Upland, Friar Daw's Reply, and Upland's Rejoinder, ed. P.L. Heyworth (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968).

> Clerkes seien þat Salomon made a solempne temple,
> And ȝit was it bot figure of oure new Chirche,
> þat ech holi hous Crist himself indwelliþ.
> (FDR, 11.109-11)

In rejecting Daw's citation of Solomon, Upland cites Christ's condemnation of the Temple as a "den of thieves" (Mark 11: 17).[21] He adds that Jerome considered anyone who should "allege the temple for the glorie of our chirche" a Jew (UR, p. 104), that is, a Pharisee devoted to empty symbols.

The Wyclyfite Pierce the Ploughman's Crede, even more striking in its satire of the luxury of fraternal buildings, plays on both romance and sacramental associations of alliterative descriptions. On the most obvious level, it describes the friars as living like aristocrats, despite their vows to follow the poverty of St. Francis and the apostles. More subtly, however, it portrays the Dominican convent so as to suggest the New Jerusalem. The friars would doubtless gloss it as prefiguring the heavenly city, just as they glossed their white robes as reflecting those of the elders in Apocalypse (689-94).

The dual parody is achieved through the eyewitness convention, the luxurious details of the buildings, and references to light. The narrator is presented as a typical naive hero of romance or dream vision, marvelling at the splendor of an exquisite building:

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[20] JU, p. 61. See Owst, p. 145, for this common Wyclyfite complaint.

[21] See also Lanterne, p. 37.

> An whan y cam to þat court • y gaped aboute.
> Swich a bild bold, y-buld • opon erþe hei3te
> Say i nou3t certeine • siþþe a longe tyme.
> Y 3emede vpon þat house • & 3erne þeron loked. (156-59)

The description of a mysterious building from the beholder's viewpoint[22] is a convention with both romance and sacramental associations.[23] The narrator who "a-waytede a woon • wonderlie well y-beld" (172)[24] recalls romance heroes like Gawain, who became "war of a won in a mote"--castle Hautdesert (GGK 764).[25] He also recalls St. John gazing on the New Jerusalem as the angel "ostendit mihi civitatem sanctam Jerusalem" (Apoc. 21:10).[26] This passage, influential on many literary visions of buildings,[27] is paraphrased with alliterative language in *Pearl*, whose dreamer "aspyed/ And blusched on þe burghe" (779-80) and repeatedly prefaces his description with "As John þe apostel hit sy3 wyth sy3t,/ I sy3e þat cyty of gret renoun" (985-86).[28]

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[22] He similarly "gaped abouten" the cloister (191) and "sei3 halles full hey3" (208).

[23] Robert W. Ackerman cites both the Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes and the allegorical Pèlerinage de Vie Humanine of Guillaume de Deguilville as examples ("Castle Hautdesert in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'," Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier...[Genève: Droz, 1970], I, pp. 4-7).

[24] Wait, 'obesrve carefully,' is used to introduce a building description in SJ, where the Romans "wayten" on Solomon's splendid temple (1257). It introduces other visions in WW, where the dreamer "waytted" and was "warre" of the king (85), in WA, where Alexander "waytis" and becomes "ware" of the procession of Jews ([Ashmole] 1585), and in DL, where the dreamer "wayted...about, wonders to know" (48).

[25] Similarly, Arthur's men become "war of ane wane, wro3t with ane wal" (Gol. 237).

[26] John repeatedly conveys his vision with "vidi" (e.g., Apoc. 21:1,2).

[27] Ackerman, "Castle," pp. 6-7.

The luxurious formulas which describe the convent itself also suggest the splendor of romance:

> ...þe pileres weren y-peynt • and pulched ful clene,
> And queynteli i-coruen • wiþ curiouse knottes,
> Wiþ wyndowes well y-wrou3t • wide vp o-lofte.
> ...
> And all was walled þat wone • þou3 it wid were,
> Wiþ posternes in pryuytie • to pasen when hem liste;
> Orche3ardes and erberes • euesed well clene,
> And a curious cros • craftly entayled,
> With tabernacles y-ti3t • to toten all abouten.
> (160-62, 164-68)

In the *Wars of Alexander*, Candace's palace has "pilars...of purfire • polischt & hewen" (5275),[29] while in the *Destruction of Troy*, Priam's palace is "caruen in cristall by crafte of Entaile" (1650).[30] The convent further recalls Priam's "windowes worthely wroght in a mesure" (*DT* 1648) and Golagros' "wane wrocht with ane wal."[31] The remainder of the fifty-nine line description consists of formulaic details like the "Tombes opon tabernacles • tyld opon lofte" (181),[32] the "halles full hy3e • & houses full noble" (208),[33] the "chambers wiþ chimneyes • & Chapelle gaie" (209),[34] and the "gaie garites & grete" (214).[35]

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[28] Also, ll.1021, 1032. See l.1035, "I con asspie," and the emphasis on the dreamer's psychological reaction in ll.1083-92.

[29] *Pileres* and *(y-)peynt* (*PPC* 160) appear in the description of Ilion and are extremely common in other building descriptions (*WA* 3666; *SJ* 329, 1262; *Gol.* 651). *WW* uses the collocation satirically to criticize friars who "paynten with thaire pelers" (301).

[30] *Queynteli*, *i-coruen*, and *craft*(ly) (*PPC* 161, 167) are common in building formulas, e.g. *WA* 3665: "With crafti coronals & clene • coruen of þe same," *GGK* 797: "With coruon coprounes craftyly sle3e," *SJ* 331: "Of quaynte colour to know kerneld a-loft."

[31] *Golagros and Gawane*, *Scottish Alliterative Poems*,

Some of the formulas in this description, however, can be sacramental as well as aristocratic. The cloister with "pileres...y-peynt • and pulched" (160) which is "pilered and peynt • & portred well clene" (192) recalls the architectural detail of Solomon's vessels in Purity, "pure pyleres of bras portrayed in golde" (1270). Again, the convent "queynteli i-coruen • wiþ curiouse knottes" (PPC 161) with a "curious cros • craftly entayled" (167) recalls the vessel that "wyth so curious a crafte corven watz wyly" (Pur. 1452).

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ed. F. J. Amours (1892; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp. 1966), 1.237. For similar collocations of wyndowes, (y-) wrou3t, wall(ed), and wone (PPC 162, 164), see WA 3224 (Dublin): "3itt wer þe wallez of þe wane • wroght, as I rede," and DT 1542, 1552, 4955, and Gol. 64.

[32] WA 3688: "And ilk a tulke a tabernacle • tildid was ouire," WA 5593: "A tombe as a tabernacle • & tildis vp a cite," WA 5645: "A tabernacle ouir þe trone • tildid vp on lofte."

[33] MA 1284: "The howsynge fulle hye of hathene kynges," GGK 794: "And innermore he behelde þat halle ful hy3e."

[34] GGK 1402: "And syþen by þe chymné in chamber þay seten", AA 445-46: "a chapelle, a chamboure, a halle,/A chymne." Langland condemns the aristocracy for retiring to a "chambre with a chymneye" and so abandoning the poor in the main hall (PP B X.98).

[35] GGK 791: "And syþen garyte3 ful gaye gered bitwene," WA 5601: "þar fand he garettis al of gold • & gilden chaumbres."

Finally, the Crede uses images of light to evoke both secular and religious associations.[36] A Minorite friar, having just explained his order's devotion to apostolic poverty and penance (103-17), begs the narrator to give money to build his new church,

> Wiþ wide windowes y-wroug3t • & walles well heye,
> þat mote be purtreid and paynt • & pulched ful clene,
> Wiþ gaie glittering glas • glowing as the sonne.
> (120-22)

Comparisons of splendid buildings to the sun are conventional not only in romances,[37] but also in sacramental contexts, where they suggest the effulgence of divine light. The Castle of Truth in Piers Plowman, for instance, is a "courte • as clere as the sonne" (B V.594), and the New Jerusalem in Pearl "schyrer • þen sunne wyth schafte3 schon" (982). The phrase "glittering glas glowing" (PPC 122) also recalls Pearl's description of the New Jerusalem with "glemande glas" (990) and jasper which "as glas...glysnande schon" (1018). These references are allusions to the description of the light of God in the New Jerusalem[38] which church architects from Romanesque times tried to embody in their windows.[39] The Crede, however, stresses the secular significance of the windows. The Minorite, for instance, promises to engrave the narrator in the "wide windowe westward" if he should donate money (125); and the "windowes y-wrou3t" with decorations shine with "schapen scheldes" of noble families (175-76), rather than with Christian imagery.[40] It is clear that the friars take a purely sensuous delight in the glittering windows, instead of using them as a source of divine illumination.

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[36] Spearing points out that it is characteristic of both secular and religious dream visions (Gawain-Poet, pp. 108-09).

[37] The jewels in Alexander's throne in Babylon glow "as bri3t as þe son" (WA 5648), the gems on Darius' palace glow "as bemes of þe son" (WA 3225), and the cristal in Ilion shines "as clere as þe son" (DT 8386).

[38] Apoc. 21:11: "lumen ejus simile lapidi pretioso tamquam lapidi jaspidis, sicut crystallum," 21:18: "civitas aurum mundum simile vitro mundo," and 21:21: "platea civitatis aurum mundum, tamquam vitrum perlucidem."

The poet's explicit criticism of the friars is based partly on the hypocrisy of their apparent sacramentalism. He sees church decoration not as a ladder to God, but as a "lym-3erde to drawen men to hell,/And to worchipe of þe fend" (564-65). It is a temptation to idolatry, because

> ...þou3 a man in her mynster • a masse wolde heren,
> His si3t schal so be set • on sundrye werkes,
> þe penounes & þe pomels • poyntes of scheldes
> Wiþ-drawen his deuocion • & dusken his herte.
> (560-63)

As an eyewitness, the worshiper's "si3t schal so be set" on the material beauty that he will fail to grasp the sacramental meaning. More trenchant criticism of the friars' luxury, however, is based on its wasting the money of the poor.[41] At first the poet's hyperbolic reference to the cost of the decorations in the convent, "þe prise of a plou3-lond • of penyes so rounde,/To aparaile þat pyler were pure lytel" (169-70),[42] seems to be conventional romance praise,[43] but his condemnation soon becomes unambiguous. The friars' convent, he points out, has been built with money begged from men who can scarcely pay their rent (217-18). These remarks look forward to the poignant description of the destitute plowman and his family (433-42).

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[39] Simson, pp. 50-55; Durandus, pp. 28-29.

[40] See also the refectory with "windowes of glas • wrou3t as a Chirche" (206) and the "gaie garites" with "iche hole y-glased" (214).

[41] A common complaint of the Wyclyfites (Owst, p. 145).

Langland, though not a Wyclyfite, is also critical of luxurious imagery in churches, stating that money should be used to relieve the poor rather than to support wealthy monks and friars (PP B XV.320-39). He is just as hostile to the use of the luxurious imagery of alliterative poetry: his visual and verbal aesthetic is the same. He describes the friar's convent with luxurious building formulas to satirize corruption, in the manner of the Crede, knowing that its splendor carries as many associations of Babylon as of the New Jerusalem. The friar offers to sell absolution to Lady Mede in return for money to glaze his windows

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[42] Similarly, PPC 189-90: "þou3 þe tax of ten 3er • were trewly y-gadered,/Nolde it nou3t maken þat hous • half as y trow," and 197-98: "I trowe þe gaynage of þe grounde • in a gret schire/nolde aparaile þat place • oo poynt til other ende."

[43] Cf. Guenevere's robes, decorated with "þe best gemmes/þat my3t be preued of prys wyth penyes to bye" (GGK 79-80). The similar detail that "þe price of that perry were worthe powndes full many" contributes to the praise of 3outhe's dress (Parl. 129).

> 'We han a wyndowe a wirchyng • wil sitten vs ful heigh:
> Woldestow glase that gable • and graue there-there-inne thi name
> Siker sholde thi soule be • heuene to have.'
> (B III.48-50).

By recalling description of fine castles and the New Jerusalem, the phrases "wyndow...wirchyng"[44] and "glase... graue"[45] point up the aristocratic and spiritual pretensions of the friars which we observed in the *Crede*. Lady Mede replies in similar language that if the friar will tolerate the lechery of lords and ladies,

> '...I shal keure 3owre kirke • 3owre cloystre do maken,
> Wowes do whiten • and wyndowes glasen,
> Do peynten and purtraye • and pay for the makyng,[46]
> That eury segge shal seyn • I am suster of 3owre hous.' (B III.60-63)

Langland alludes to Moses' commandment against images in pointing out that God forbade such "grauynge" (B III.64), and adds that alms should be given anonymously (73-75). In arguing that when good deeds are emblazoned on windows, "pruyde" is "peynted there • and pompe of the worlde" (66) he makes a satiric twist on the formula peynt/pruyde common in descriptions of buildings in romances.[47] Although these passages are not nearly so detailed or luxurious as the descriptions in the Crede, they nevertheless show Langland able to use the formulas of luxury for satirical purposes. With them he amplifies the worldly parodies of sacramental symbols, like the friar's feast or Mede's robes, rather than the symbols themselves.

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[44] Recall the convent in *PPC*, "wiþ wyndowes well y-wrou3t • wide vp o-lofte" (162) and "wiþ windowes of glas • wrou3t as a Chirche" (206). The formula is used for praise in *DT* 1648: "The windowes worthely wroght in a mesure." For *wyndowe*, see *DT* 552, 4955; *WA* 3222, and for *wrocht* (pp. *worch*) see *Gol*. 64, 237.

[45] Cf. Hector's tomb, "all grauen of golde, a gret and a longe" (*DT* 8757), and the New Jerusalem in *Pearl* with "glemande glas" (990) and jasper which "as glas...glysnande schon" (1018).

[46] The Minorite in *PPC* similarly says that his convent must be "portreid and paynt" (121). For peynten in romance building descriptions, see Bercilak's castle on which "so mony pynakle payntet watz poudred ayquere" (*GGK* 800).

Langland seems to feel that luxurious imagery was as much a temptation to idolatry in poetry as it was in architecture. When he describes buildings which stand for the ideal Church, he avoids the vivid sacramental symbolism of the Gawain-poet, inducing delight, and uses instead "diagrammatic" allegory aimed at intellectual clarity.[48] In this he follows St. Bernard, who condoned visual imagery, whether in church ornaments or in sermons, only so far as it clarified abstract concepts for the illiterate laity.[49] Although the description of the Castle of Truth as a "courte •

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[47] Gol. 65: "And payntit with pride," WA 3692: "And þa ware proudly depaynt • þe pennes & þe wingis."

[48] Salter and Pearsall, eds., PP, pp. 13-14. They suggest the parallel with visual art, calling the allegory "diagrammatic" because of its similarity to schematized drawings in moral treatises. These they contrast with fully developed paintings--which would correspond more closely to the sacramental descriptions of the Gawain-poet.

[49] Simson, p. 43, and Owst, pp. 137-43. For Bernard's influence in popularizing building allegories, see Ford Lewis Battles, "Bernard of Clairvaux and the Moral Allegorical Tradition,""Innovation in Medieval Literature: Essays to the Memory of Alan Markman, ed. Douglas Radcliff-Umstead [Pittsburgh: Medieval Studies Committee of the University of Pittsburgh, 1971], pp. 1-19).

as clere as the sonne" (PP B V.594) associates it with the splendid New Jerusalem, the remaining alliterative formulas convey no luxury. Instead, Langland assigns moral properties to the architectural terms common in alliterative descriptions of buildings:

> The mote is of Mercy • the manere aboute,
> And alle the wallis ben of Witte • to holden Wille oute;
> And kerneled with Crystendome • man-kynde to saue,
> Boterased with Bileue-so • or-throw-beest-nou3te-ysaued.
> And alle the houses ben hiled • halles and chambres,
> With no lede, but with Loue • and Lowe-speche-as-bretheren.
> The brugge is of Bidde-wel • the-bette-may-thow-spede;
> Eche piler of of Penaunce • of preyeres to seyntes,
> Of Almes-dedes ar the hokes • that the gates hangen on.
> (B V.595-603)

This castle is not meant to be visualized any more than the dirty clothes of Hawkin are--it is a mnemonic device for abstract theological concepts. In substituting "Witte," "Crystendome," and "Penaunce" for the luxurious details usually paired with Wallis,[50] kerneled,[51] and piler,[52] Langland is playing with our expectation of a vivid building description.

The description of Holy Church as the Barn of Unity is equally plain, in keeping with it use as an argicultural metaphor. The theological doctrines that comprise it are symbolized by homely materials, its "morter," called "mercy," consisting of Christ's baptism and blood (B XIX.319-20), and its "foundament" being walled and wattled with Christ's pain and passion (322-23). Even when the metaphor shifts from agricultural to military, the barn becoming a castle to protect Christians from the onslaughts of Pride, the architectural language is functional rather than decorative. The Christians "deluen a dyche" to make a "mote" around Unity, as if it were a 'pyle,' "fortress" (B XIX.359-61). It is noteworthy that although during the siege Piers stands for St. Peter as founder of the Church, Langland avoids the lapidary symbolism of the liturgy in which Peter as the rock ("petra") on which the Church is founded is associated with the gems of the New Jerusalem.[53]

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[50] DT 1542: "The walles vp wroght, wonder to se," DT 4955: "Of the walles þat wroght were wondurly faire."

[51] GGK 801: "Among þe castel carnelez clambred so þik," DT 1647: "In cornols by course clustret o lofte."

[52] WA 3666: "Be-twene þe pelers was pi3t • with precious leuys," DT 1578: "Pight vp with pilers all of playne marbill," DT 8389: "Ffair pillers were þere proude, all of pure coper."

The Gawain-poet's use of alliterative building formulas is much more lavish than Langland's, whether in sacramental, satirical, or praising contexts, since he regards beauty in art as essential in winning spiritual response. In Pearl, the imagery of exquisite buildings, like that of feasts and clothing, contributes to the picture of heaven as an ideal court. These details are both sacramental--serving as outward and visible signs of the invisible kingdom of heaven[54]--

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[53] "Bene fundata est domus Domini supra firman petram... Lapidis preciosi omnes muri tui: et turres hierusalem gemmis edificabuntur," Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesie Eboracensis, I (London: Surtees Society, 1882), cols. 662-63.

[54] Bishop, p. 68, calls such symbolism "apocalyptic," in the etymological sense of "revealing," in order to dis-

and anagogical--leading the Christian to divine contemplation.

The dreamer requires these earthly symbols because of the limitations of his earthly perception: in his "sorquydry3e" (309), he refuses to believe anything "bot [he] hit sy3e" (308). Although these symbols help to lead him gradually from earthly to heavenly understanding,[55] his tendency to believe everything that he "se3 wyth y3e" (303) causes him to mistake them as literal reality. The poet is then able to show us simultaneously symbols for the divine which he accepts as valid, and the inadequacy of the dreamer's understanding of them.[56] This complex attitude is inherent in the nature of Christian symbolism whose beauty was regarded since Augustine as a possible snare to the senses and a cause of idolatry. The _Gawain_-poet differs from the Wyclyfite author of _Pierce the Ploughman's Crede_ in seeing sacramental symbols as valid, while recognizing their dangers. The dreamer progresses further in spiritual enlightenment than the friars and Belshazzar, who grasp only the material meaning of these symbols, but the difference is one of degree.

Although the poet is rather sparing with alliterative architectural details in the description of the Heavenly City

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tinguish it from the "enigmatic" symbolism which is designed to mystify (e.g., the pearl itself).

[55] Kean, pp. 204-07, Spearing, _Gawain_-Poet, pp. 161-62.

[56] Spearing, _Gawain-Poet_, p. 156.

itself,[57] he uses them to emphasize the dreamer's misconceptions. The formulaic nature of the question, "Haf 3e no wone3 in castel walle" (917),[58] points up the dreamer's naiveté in accepting as literal the traditional earthly images of heaven.[59] As he continues to complain, "I se no bygyng" (932), and to demand that the maiden "Bryng me to þat bygly bylde/And let me se þe blysful bor" (963-64), he shows that he is thinking of the transitory worldly buildings, subject to siege and destruction, which *bygyng*,[60] *bylde*, and *bor*[61] usually describe. He similarly confuses the Old and New Jerusalem, obliging the maiden to explain with great patience (919-60). She tells him that she has arranged with the Lamb to "vnhyde" (973) the Heavenly Jerusalem in order to show him a "sy3t þerof þur3 gret fauor" (968), but he may only look at its outward appearance ("Vtwyth"), since only the spotless may enter inside ("in-wyth," 969-70).

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[57] These are limited to such general synonyms for "city" or "building" as *burghe* (980, 989, 1048), *cyty* (986, 1023) *wone3* (1027) and *manayre* (1029).

[58] *WA* (Dublin) 3324: "3itt wer þe wallez of þe wane wroght as I rede," *Gol*. 237: "Syne war thai war of ane wane, wrocht with ane wal."

[59] See Spearing, *Gawain-Poet*, p. 165.

[60] *DT* 1379: "Brent vp the byggynges & full bare maden," *DT* 13,452: "betwene the biggyng on þe burne & burgh rych."

[61] *GGK* 2: "þe bor3 brittened and brent to brondez and askez," *SJ* 1260: "Doun bete þe bilde ʃ brenne hit in-to grounde," *DT* 12,004: "And the bildynges bete doun to the bare erthe," *DT* 12,011: "In þe burgh þai forbere byldynges mony," *WA* (Ashmole) 1161: "Quen he þis baistell had bild vp to þe bur3e wallis," *WA* (Ashmole) 1338: "He blishches to þe bur3e • & sees his bild voided."

To illustrate the dreamer's flawed perception, the poet exploits the ambiguity of the romance and sacramental associations of several details common in descriptions of buildings: the eyewitness convention, the catalogue of jewels, and light formulas. As an eyewitness, the dreamer recalls a romance hero like Alexander, who, gazing on the glittering palace which he is about to seize from Darius, "hedes vpon hight • & hugely...wounderez,/þat euer suld Emperour in erth • suche a place welde" (WA [Dublin] 3226-27).[62] Like Alexander, the dreamer naively accepts the splendid building as his right, to enjoy forever. Both, taken in by appearances, will be disappointed.

The dreamer's perception of the Heavenly City is not only structurally similar to a romance hero's vision of a castle, but conveyed by similar formulas as well. As one who "asspyed/And blushed on þe burghe" (979-80), he recalls Gawain[63] who a "better barbican" than Hautdesert "blusched... on neuer" (GGK 793).[64] Recounting that as St. John "sy3 wyth sy3t,/[he] sy3e" the Heavenly City, he echoes Arthur describing Golagros' castle as "the seymliest sicht that euer couth I see" (*Gol.* 255).

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[62] Ackerman has pointed out that the motif of a character gazing at a marvellous building occurs in both romance and dream vision (above, p. 133, n. 23). Other examples in alliterative romances are WA 3662-3703, GGK 764-805, MA 1284-98, and Gol. 41-45, 237-47.

[63] Kean notes the similarity of the dreamer's and Gawain's perception of the two buildings (p. 214), just as Benson notes the similarity of their perception of the maiden and the Green Kinght (Art and Tradition, pp. 181-83).

[64] The dreamer also "blusched vpon þat bayle" (1083). OED Blusch, v.^{1} a (MED blishen 3 a), 'to glance with the eye,' is cited as characteristic of alliterative poetry. It

But although the dreamer portrays himself as a romance hero, the poet is actually modelling his vision on St. John's mystical vision. He must, as Kean says, maintain a "delicate balance" between convincing the reader of the truth of the Saint's vision, and ensuring that the dreamer's vision will not lead to an "emotional climax" inconsistent with the ending of the poem.[65] While Kean, however, argues that the poet achieves this balance through the dullness of the description of the city,[66] he actually does it more through the ambiguity of the romance and sacramental aspects of the description, which shows the dreamer's interpretation of the vision in earthly terms.

In order to convey two levels of meaning, the poet puts more emphasis on St. John's perception--which he regards as accurate--than on the dreamer's. In the refrain of stanza group XVII, the dreamer says "I sy3e" (986, 1021, 1033) only when citing the authority of St. John, who "deuyse3" ('observes' as well as 'describes'[67]) the vision. The redundancy

often describes the perception of buildings; e.g., *WA* (Ashmole) 1338: "He blisches to þe bur3e • & sees his bīld voided," and *Pur.* 982: "ho bluschet to þe bur3e."

[65] Kean, p. 211.

[66] Ibid.

[67] *MED* dēvīsen, v. 1 & 7.

of the detail that John "sy3 wyth sy3t" (985) puts the emphasis on his role as mystical seer, just as it puts emphasis on the stupefaction of Arthur's court as they gazed at the Green Knight.[68] Like the illuminators of the exquisite Apocalypse books popular in thirteenth and fourteenth century England,[69] the poet uses the figure of St. John to increase the reader's participation in the vision. His emphasis on St. John's role as perceiver recalls the visual image of him peering through a small door into heaven, which was extremely common in these manuscripts.[70]

The poet also imitates church craftsmen who devote their art to the glory of God in his description of the twelve jewels in the foundation of the heavenly city. He does not exploit any specific symbolism,[71] but rather shows their anagogical function. He intends the reader, in contemplating the jewels, to be led upward, past the dreamer's delight in aristocratic glitter:

> Jasper hy3t fyrst gemme
> þat I on þe fyrst basse con wale:
> He glente grene in þe lowest hemme;

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[68] See above, p. 116, and n. 161.

[69] James, p. 44. Salter suggests that the Pearl was influenced by these Apocalypse books, one of which has been found in a West Midland library ("Alliterative Revival: I," p. 149).

[70] Henderson, p. 149. Freyhan considers the motif a development of Apoc. 4:1: "Vidi: et ecce ostium apertum in coelo" (p. 232).

[71] Such as the virtues assigned to the stones in the lapidaries (Gordon, ed., Pearl, p. xxxi).

Saffer helde þe secounde stale;
þe Calsydoyne þenne wythouten wemme
In þe þryd table con purly pale;
þe emerade þe furþe so grene of scale;
þe sardonyse þe fifþe ston;
þe sext þe rybé he con hit wale
In þe Apocalyppce, þe apostel John.

3et joyned John þe crysolyt
þe seuenþe gemme in fundament;
þe a3tþe þe beryl cler and quyt;
þe topasye twynne-hew þe nente endent;
þe crysopase þe tenþe is ty3t;
þe jacynght þe enleuenþe gent;
þe twelfþe, þe gentyleste in vch a plyt,
þe amatyst purpre wyth ynde blente.
(999-1016)

With his "lapidary" art, the poet is not only paraphrasing Apocalypse (21:19-20), but also imitating Bezalel, who cut the stones on Aaron's breastplate (Exod. 28:17-20) on which, along with the jewels of Ezechiel 28:13, the Apocalyptic jewels are based.[72] Bezalel, as architect also of the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant, was considered important by the Victorines as a craftsman whose art celebrated the glory of God.[73]

The biblical jewels were copied by church craftsmen for an anagogical purpose. Abbot Suger's famous passage on emotional effect of church beauty was inspired by his acquisition of eleven of the twelve gems of Ezechiel to decorate the cross of St. Eloy:

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[72] All three groups of jewels were associated with each other in the lapidaries (Gordon, ed. Pearl, n. to l. 1041).

[73] Finkelstein makes this important point (p. 419), and argues that the poet might have been influenced by the sacramental thinking of the Victorines (p. 417).

> Thus, when--out of my delight in the house of God--the loveliness of the many-colored gems has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.[74]

The jewels were to remind the Christian of the New Jerusalem, as well as its Old Testament models. Suger writes that during the dedication of St. Denis, patrons deposited their rings in the foundation walls while singing in an antiphon of the gems of the New Jerusalem.[75]

The dreamer, however, is taken in by the aristocratic splendor of the jewels, and fails to comprehend their anagogical significance. The Heavenly City glitters like cities of alliterative romance,which were similarly described wtih catalogues of jewels.[76] Although many of these cities include some of the apocalyptic jewels, they do not carry any religious significance. Candace's hall, for instance, is

Pi3t full of pentests • & oþire proude stanes,
Of Onycles & orfrays • & orient perles,
And with þire precious piers • of paradise stremes,
Bathe þe benkis & þe bordis • bett of þe noble,

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[74] Panofsky, pp. 63, 65.

[75] Panofsky, p. 102. Suger also writes of his response to the "multifarious wealth of precious gems, hyacinths, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and topazes" (all in Apocalypse) which he put into his altar panel (Panofsky, p. 55).

[76] Salter characterizes alliterative poets in general as tending to use words "as if they were jewels" (*Piers Plowman*, p. 21).

> Smeten full of smaragdins • & oþir small gemmes,
> Of Actas & of Amatistis • & adamants fyn,
> Calcidoynes & crisopaces • & oþir clere bees.
> (WA 5268-74)[77]

The smaragdine (emerald), amethyst, chalcedony, and chrysoprase are present not as an allusion to Apoclaypse, but because they were available in the lapidaries, which were often based on the Apocalyptic jewels.[78] The dreamer would not be surprised to see a jewelled city on earth.

Many critics have drawn parallels between the *Gawain*-poet's artistry and that of cathedrals,[79] but he is most like church architects when he is exploiting his medium to portray the splendor of divine light.[80] Just as they used the Gothic window to express the comparison of the golden walls of the New Jerusalem to "clear pure glass" (Apoc. 21:18),[81] he uses alliterative language to express the detail that "the city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine upon it. For the glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Apoc. 21:23):

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[77] Similarly, Darius' throne includes the amethyst, topaz, and smaragdine (emerald) of Apoc. (*WA* 3341-47).

[78] Léopold Pannier writes that this is generally true of secular authors (*Les Lapidaires français du moyen âge des XII^{e}, XIII^{e}, et XIV^{e} siècles* [Paris: Vieweg, 1882], p. 221).

[79] E.g., Spearing, *Gawain-Poet*, p. 98, and Speirs, p. 381.

[80] For the philosophical origins of the emphasis on light in the Gothic Church, see Simson, pp. 50-55. Suger considered the improved lighting in St. Denis to be the major accomplishment of his reconstruction of the abbey (Panofsky, p. 21).

[81] Simson, p. 11.

> Þur3 wo3e and won my likyng 3ede,
> For sotyle cler no3t lete no ly3t.
> (1049-50)

The dreamer, of course, sees the Heavenly City as a romance castle. The ambiguity is encouraged by the fact that light was as important to secular as to religious aesthetics. Otto von Simson has shown that the same fascination with light that was expressed by Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite, John the Scot, Hugh of St. Victor, and Suger--the fascination ultimately embodied in the Gothic window--was expressed in a taste for glittering objects of luxury in secular life as well.[82] Alliterative poets were fond of describing the luminous quality of such objects, especially those decorated with gold and jewels. For this purpose, they had a large number of formulaic expressions for "shining."[83] Originally established because of accidents of alliteration, these formulas came to be a convention that could be manipulated for artistic purposes. The _Gawain_-poet exploits their ambiguity, religious and secular,[84] when expressing divine light,[85] so as to show the dreamer not spiritually illuminated, but dazzled by what he takes to be aristocratic splendor.

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[82] The stars, gold, and precious stones are all called beautiful because of this property. In the philosophical literature of the time, as in the courtly epic, no attributes are used more frequently to describe physical beauty than 'lucid,' 'luminous,' 'clear.' This aesthetic preference is vividly reflected in the decorative arts of the time, with their obvious delight in glittering objects, shiny materials, and polished surfaces" (Simson, p. 50).

[83] Spearing writes that "not even in the feverish jargon of washing powder advertisements does modern English have enough words meaning glittering, radiant, and so on to translate the poet's way of expressing the effusion of light" (_Gawain-Poet_, p. 57). He does not, however, mention the formulaic nature of these expressions.

The detail that the Heavenly City "schyrrer þen sunne wyth schafte3 schon" (982), although appropriate to the city brighter than sun or moon, sounds like the conventional description of buildings as bright as the sun.[86] It is also part of a group of light formulas in "Sch," consisting of *schymer*, *schyne*, *schaft*, *sun*, and the alliterative adjectives *schene* and *schyr*,[87] often applied to buildings in romance. Arthur's men, for instance, "throu the schynyng of the son an ciete...se" (*Gol*. 41), and Gawain, coming upon Hautdesert, saw that it "schemered and schon þur3 þe schyr okez" (*GGK* 772). The poet himself uses the formula sacramentally elsewhere, to anticipate the splendor of the

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[84] In a similar way Suger plays with the ambiguity of the literal and spiritual meanings of *clarere*, *clarus*, *clarificare*, and *lux nova*, using the last to refer to both the new use of light in the abbey, and the light of the New Testament which replaced the blindness of the Old (Panofsky, p. 21).

[85] The spiritual significance of this light is discussed by Spearing (*Gawain-Poet*, p. 103), Kean (pp. 161-67, 207-09) and Louis Blenkner ("The Pattern of Traditional Images in *Pearl*," *SP*, 68 [1971], pp. 28-36). Kean compares it to Dante's light imagery (pp. 208-09).

[86] Cf. Candace's hall, decorated with "stoute starand stanes • þat stremed as þe son" (*WA* 5286), the palace of Ilion, "Rowchett all with cristall, clere as the sonne" (*DT* 8386), and the carbuncle on Alexander's throne that "brynt in bely-blind ni3t • as bri3t as þe son" (*WA* 5648). See also *WA* 3225 and 5262.

[87] Brink, p. 47.

Heavenly City[88] in describing the flowers of the Earthly Paradise which "schyne3 ful schyr agayn þe sunne" (Pearl 28), and to symbolize the pure soul with a pearl which "schynes so schyr" (Pur. 1121).

The formula ly3t/ leme/ lamp, which translates the idea that the light of God made the sun and moon unnecessary,[89] also has both romance and sacramental connotations:

> Such ly3t þer lemed in alle þe strate3
> Hem nedde nawþer sunne ne mone.
> . . .
> þe self God wat3 her lombe-ly3t
> þe Lombe her lantyrne withouten drede;
> þur3 hym blysned þe bor3 al bry3t.
> (1043-44; 1046-48)

The same formula is used to describe Hector's tomb with "lampis full light" (DT 8808) and the stones in Darius' crown which shone so brightly that the palace "for þe li3t lemed as of heven" (WA 3335).[90] Often, however, it is used with the suggestion of sacramental light symbolism, for instance, to describe the image of Jupiter on the altar of Ilion which "with lemys of light as a lamp shone" (DT 1684), and the jewels of Solomon's Temple which with "lemaunde ly3t/ ...as a lampe schonen" (SJ 1256). Pearl itself uses the formula sacramentally to describe the stream in the Earthly Paradise whose pebbles "lemed of ly3t" (119).

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[88] Kean points out that the same "epithets" (i.e., formulas) are used in the Earthly Paradise to foreshadow the New Jerusalem (p. 204).

[89] Apoc. 21:23: "et civitas non eget sole neque luna, ut luceat in ea: nam claritas Dei illuminavit eam, et lucerna ejus est Agnus."

[90] For the common collocation of leme with ly3t, se DT 699, 1129; MA 2463; WA 553, 4174, 5398.

The line "þur3 hym blysned þe bor3 al bry3t" (1048) participates in a group of formulas in "B", including *blysne*, *brent*, *burnesched*, and the alliterative adjective *bry3t*,[91] often used to convey splendor in alliterative romance. Darius' palace, for instance, is decorated with "bri3t blasynand bees • as bemes of þe son" (*WA* 5262).[92] The detail that "þe bor3 wat3 al of brent golde bry3t/As glemande glas burnist broun" (989-90) combines the *brent golde* common in building formulas[93] with *bry3t*, often collocated with this formula[94] and *burnist*.[95]

Finally, the words for light that the poet uses most often to show the dreamer's enchantment with the city alliterate in "G" and commonly convey the magnificence of aristocratic life in romance.[96] In writing "þe bor3 wat3

[91] Brink, p. 35.

[92] *Bry3t* and *blysnand* are collocated in *WA* 1524 and *StE* 78 also.

[93] *WA* (Ashmole) 2926: "þat bild was all of brynt gold • as þe buke tellis," *WA* 5267: "þe bild was all of brent gold • þe beddis of þe same."

[94] Solomon's holy vessels are described in *Pur.* as "bassynes ful bry3t of brend golde clere" (1456) and in *SJ* as "Bassynes of brend gold ! and oþer bry3t gere" (1264).

[95] A sword (*SJ* 749) and the Green Knight's axe (*GGK* 212) are both described as "bry3t burnesched."

[96] E.g., *golde*, *glas*, *gleme*, *glysne*, and *glent*.

al of brend golde bry3t,/As glemande glas burnist broun" (989-90), he uses alliterative formulas to amplify "civitas aurum mundum simile vitro mundo" (Apoc. 21:18), just as the cathedral builders used glass.[97] Later he paraphrases the same passage by describing the walls of jasper that "as glas...glysnande schon" (1018) and "glent as glayre" (1026). A further embellishment on the source are the "golden gate3 þat glent as glasse" (1016),[98] which recall the rocks of the Earthly Paradise, whose "glemande glory...of hem glent" (*Pearl* 70) and the fountain which "as glent þur3 glas...glowed and gly3t" (*Pearl* 114).

As a Christian, the *Pearl* dreamer's perception of sacramental beauty is flawed, but corrigible--he is gradually led toward heavenly understanding through the progress of the poem. Although Belshazzar, as a pagan, is incorrigible, in *Purity*, the poet points up the discrepancy between his earthly vision and heavenly truth in the same way by using formulas for architectural luxury with dual associations. In describing the holy vessels, the poet uses his verbal art for divine praise, just as Solomon and church architects used their craftsmanship. Calling the

The skin of a beautiful woman is "glissonand as the glemes þat glenttes of þe snaw" *DT* 3067; also 10,971). The shields in *WA* "of gai glitirand gold • glesenyd." The poet himself describes the girdle on which "glyterande golde glent" (2039) and the saddle which "glemed ful gayly with mony golde frenges" (598).

[97] Simson, p. 11.

[98] Apoc. 21:21, "et platea civitatis aurum mundum, tamquam vitrum perlucidum," contains no verb.

Temple a "Kyrke" (1270) with "dekenes" and "clerkkes" (1266), he clearly sees the vessels, which he calls "relykes" (1269), as prefigurations of church ornaments.[99] He attaches special importance to Solomon's divine craftsmanship, which was cited frequently by church architects as a model.[100] For many years, Solomon

> Wyth alle þe coyntyse þat he cowþe, clene to wyrke,
> Devised...þe vesselment, þe vestures clene
> Wyth sly3t of his ciences, his Soverayn to love.
> (1287-89)

To describe Solomon's art, the poet uses language associated with both romance and sacramental buildings, to make Belshazzar's misunderstanding plausible. Seeing the "clene" vessels as "elegant" rather than "morally pure," and Solomon's "coyntyse" as craftsman's skill rather than wisdom,[101] Belshazzar responds to the vessels as to splendid buildings in romance.[102] To him the cup which "wyth so curious a crafte corven watz wyly" (1452) suggests aristocratic buildings like Hautdesert, "with coruon coprounes craftyly sle3e" (GGK 797).[103]

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[99] Kelly and Irwin suggest that they stand for the chalice and ciborium (p. 248). The same typological relationship was underscored by the use, in the Latin play of Daniel, of the contents of the sacristry and church treasury to enact Belshazzar's feast (Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933], II, 289.

[100] Simson, pp. 95-96; he notes Suger's frequent reference to Solomon.

[101] The poet exploited the same ambiguity in these words in describing the clean clothes of the blessed in the parable of the marriage feast (above, p. 93).

[102] E.g., *DT* 8396: "Crafte þat was coynt, knawyne of tymes," *SJ* 331: "Of quaynte coloure to know, & kerneld alofte," *DT* 1634: "Closit with a clene wall crustrit with towres," *WA* 4896: "And þai ware coruen full clene • & clustrid with gemmes."

Although the reader recognizes the sacramental significance of the vessels, Belshazzar is blind to it. His true idolatry lies in flaunting them as if they served to glorify himself--like his table decorations and his city itself. As in Pearl, the poet conveys the ambiguity of sacramental and material meaning through formulas for buildings, jewels, and light. He makes the vessels a metonymy for the Temple by casting them in the shape of castles, like many church ornaments:[104]

> covered cowpes foul clene, as casteles arayed,
> Enbaned under batelment wyth bantelles quoynt,
> And fyled out of fygures of ferlyche schappes.
> þe coperounes of þe covacles þat on þe cuppe reres
> Were fetysely formed out in fylyoles longe,
> Pinacles py3t þer apert þat profert bitwene.
> (1458-63)

The ambiguity of the formulas allows Belshazzar to respond to the cup as he would to a secular building like Babylon. Hautdesert in Sir Gawain, for instance, has "fylyoles," "coperounes," and "pinacles,"[105] and romance buildings are frequently described as "py3t."[106] Although the poet intends the reader to see the sacramental meaning of the "clene" cups shaped like "casteles,"[107] whose "batelment" is "enbaned" with "bantelles,"[108] Belshazzar sees only the splendor of romance castles.[109] Since he himself adorns his feast with decorations shaped like castles,[110] he sees the holy vessels as an appropriate addition.

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[103] In addition to the lines in n. 111, DT 1650: "Caruen in Cristall by Crafte of Entaile," and WA 3665: "With crafti cornoals & clene • coruen of þe same."

[104] E.g., the great chandelier at Aix-la-Chapelle, which represented the New Jerusalem (Male, p. 20). Both the Temple and the New Jerusalem awere portrayed as cathedrals in visual art (Simson, pp. 9, 11).

[105] GGK 796: "Fayre fylyolez þat fy3ed, and ferlyly long," GGK 797: "With coruon coprounes craftyly sle3e," GGK 800: "So mony pynakle payntet watz poudred ayquere."

The poet also adds jewels to the sacred cup in order to portray beauty ambiguously:

> ...safyres, and sardiners and semely topace,
> Alabaundarynes, and amaraunz, and amaffised stones,
> Casydoynes, and crysolytes, and clere rubies,
> Penitotes, and pynkardines, ay perles bitwene.
> (1469-72)

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[106] *MA* 1287: "Palaisez proudliche pyghte, that palyd ware ryche," *DT* 1670: "Pight full of perrieris & of proude gemys", *DT* 8470: "Of four pillers up pight all of pure gold."

[107] He uses *clene* repeatedly to denote spiritual purity in the poem.

[108] *Bantelles* is a detail of the New Jerusalem in *Pearl*: 992: "Wyth bantele3 twelue on basyng boun," and 1017; "þe wal abof þe bantels bent."

[109] Cf. *Gol*. 43-44: "Bigly batollit about with wallis sa he./The yettis ware clenely kepit with an castell," *DT* 1634: "Closit with a clene wall crustrit with toures," *GGK* 790: "Enbaned vnder þe abataylment in þe best lawe."

[110]
> Lyfte logges þerover and on lofte corven,
> Pared out of paper and poynted of golde,
> Broþe baboynes abof, besttes anunder,
> Foles in foler flakerande bitwene
> And al in asure and ynde enaumayled ryche.
> (1407-11)

Ackerman discusses the architectural nature of the description ("Pared out of Paper," pp. 410-17).

The close correspondence between this list and that in *Pearl*,[111] the poet's only other use of an alliterative catalogue of jewels,[112] suggests that he intends the jewels to be anagogical. Although biblical accounts of the Temple and the vessels do not include jewels, the author of the *Siege of Jerusalem* adds them to the Temple:

> þat was rayled þe roof ʃ with rebies grete,
> With perles a peritotes, alle þe place ferde
> As glowande gledfur ʃ þat on gold strikeþ,
> þe dores ful of dyemauntes ʃ dryuen wer þicke
> & made merueylous-lye ʃ with margeri-perles.
> (1250-54)

The *Gawain*-poet, too, probably thought of the Temple, as well as the holy vessels, as jewelled, extrapolating from the anagogical jewels of Aaron's breast-plate, Ezechiel's Vision, the New Jerusalem, and earthly churches. The fact, however, that the jewels in *Purity* are immediately modelled on those of the Great Khan's court in *Mandeville's Travels*[113] encourages Belshazzar to interpret the cup as an ornament appropriate to a pagan king.[114] The very ambiguity of the jewels leads him to worship their beauty for its own sake, as the Pearl dreamer tends to do with the stones of the New Jerusalem.

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[111] Menner points out that of all the catalogues of jewels in alliterative poetry, this one is the closest to the one in *Pearl*. Only the *alabaundarynes*, *penitotes*, *pynkardynes*, and *perles* are substituted for the jacinth, jasper, beryl, and chrysoprase (ed. *Pur*., n. to l.1464, ff.).

[112] In *GGK*, for instance, he refers merely to the "gemmes" (78) and "stones" (162, 172, 193) on the clothing, unlike the author of *AA*, who lists "rybees," "saffres," and "seladynes" (17, 22).

[113] Menner, ed. *Pur*., n. to l. 1464, ff.

[114] Recall its similarity to a jewelled drinking vessel of romance (above, pp. 56-57).

Light is the third element of the vessels whose ambiguity the poet exploits. Belshazzar sees in the "bassynes ful bry3t of brende golde clere" (1456)[115] an expression of the medieval taste for light in secular objects. The poet, however, intends to inspire spiritual illumination with the adjectives bry3t and clere, just as he did in his description of the New Jerusalem (Pearl 989, 1011, 1048, 1050). Solomon's candlestick, the "chef chandeler charged with þe ly3t,/þat ber þe lamp upon loft þat lemed evermore" (1272-73), is similarly ambiguous. Although it is anagogical, being traditionally glossed in the same manner as church windows,[116] and recalling the "lomb-ly3t" which "lemed" in the Heavenly City (Pearl 1046, 1043),[117] Belshazzar sees it as strictly secular, like the light from Darius' crown or Hector's tomb.[118]

Belshazzar regards the vessels as simply an ornament to his city of Babylon, which he believes to be eternal, rivalling Solomon's Temple and the Heavenly City. The reader, however, knows that its fall to the Persians is imminent. The poet's detailed description of the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians looks forward to his briefer formulaic allusion to the fall of Babylon, and shows his tendency to see the destruction of earthly cities against the permanence of the heavenly one.[119]

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[115] The vessels are similarly called "bry3t" and "clere" in 11.1439, 1471, 1481.

[116] See Durandus, p. 33, Mâle, p. 16, and Panofsky, p. 21.

[117] Similarly, in SJ, the jewels of Solomon's Temple glowed with "Lemaunde ly3t • & as a lampe schonen" (1256).

[118] Described in similar formulas: WA 3335: "þat as þe loge for þe li3t • lemed as of heuen," DT 8808: "ffovre lampis full light, ledis to behold."

Having no description of Babylon in his source,[120] the poet is able to construct it himself, with details having both sacramental and romance associations. Its dimensions invite comparison with the precise measurements of Solomon's Temple (2 Paralipomenon 3-4) and the New Jerusalem (Apoc. 21:16-17), both considered symbols of divine harmony and imitated in medieval churches.[121] The description,

> Þe place þat plyed the pursaunt withinne,
> Watz long and ful large and ever ylych sware,
> And uch a syde upon soyle helde seven myle.
> (1385-87)

recalls the poet's own account of the New Jerusalem, twelve furlongs in length:

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[119] Kelly and Irwin point out that Babylon is an antitype not only of the Old Jerusalem, which it destroyed, but also of the New Jerusalem, by which, in Apocalypse, it will be destroyed (p. 253).

[120] 2 Paralipomenon 36: 11-20, Jer. 52: 1-26, and Dan. 5; included by Menner, ed. Pur., pp. 226-29.

[121] Simson, pp. 37-38. Often churches included statues of the apostles on twelve pillars, in imitation of the New Jerusalem (Mâle, p. 21).

> þise twelue degres wern brode and stayre
> þe cyte stod abof ful sware,
> As longe as brode and as hy3e ful fayre.
> (Pearl 1022-24)

The poet may be suggesting that Belshazzar makes claims for Babylon which are approrpiate only to sacred buildings. Since, however, number symbolism was also characteristic of secular buildings, such as Alexander's throne, twelve cubits high and decorated with images of the twelve princes of Macedon (WA 5635-42),[122] the possibility remains that Belshazzar is simply a boastful pagan monarch, like the "bold kyng in Babiloun" who "bildes vp a trone" (WA 5627).

The building formulas which describe Babylon similarly work on two levels, characterizing Belshazzar both as a proud king and as a blasphemer who holds his city the equal of anagogical buildings. The satire resembles that of the Crede not only in technique, but also in specific formulas:

> For þe bor3 watz so brod and so bigge alce,
> Stalled in þe fayrest stud þe sterrez anunder
> Prudly on a plat playn, plek alþerfayrest,
> Umbesweyed on uch a syde wth seven grete wateres,
> Wyth a wonder wro3t walle wruxeled ful hy3e,
> Wyth koynt carneles above, corven ful clene,
> Troched toures bitwene, twenty spere lenþe,
> ...
> þat watz a palayce of pryde passande alle oþer,
> Boþe of werk and of wunder and walle al aboute,
> He3e houses wythinne þe halle to hit mad,
> So brod bilde in a bay þat blonkkes my3t renne.
> (1377-83, 1389-92)

Since the poet applies bor3 (1377) and bild (1392), both collocated with brod (1377, 1392) in romances,[123] sacramentally to the New Jerusalem in *Pearl* (963, 980, 1048), his technique of criticism resembles that of the *Crede*, whose Minorite friar boasts, "we buldeþ a burw3 • a brod and a large" (118). Babylon, which with its "wonder wro3t walle" (1381; also 1390) recalls Priam's palace with "walles... wroght wonderly faire" (*DT* 4955), and Hautdesert whose "walle" stood in the water "wonderly depe" (*GGK* 787),[124] is like the proposed convent with "wide windows y-wrou3t walles well heye" (*PPC* 120).

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[122] Similarly, Darius' throne is seven cubits high with seven steps (WA 3338-39).

[123] E.g., DT 815: "Brightis all the burghe and the

Further, the city's "koynt carneles above, corven ful clene" (1382) not only suggest romance castles like Hautdesert,[125] but also Solomon's vessels, "corven" (*Pur.* 1452) quite "clene" with "coyntyse" (1287). The *Crede* uses the same formulas to satirize the convent pillars "queynteli y-corven • wiþ coriouse knottes" (161) and the chapter house "coruen and couered•and queyntliche entayled" (200). The fact that the poet uses "tor" to describe the New Jerusalem (*Pearl* 966) makes Belshazzar's pretension more serious than the mere aping, with his "troched toures" (1383), of the splendor of earthly castles such as Hautdesert.[126] Finally,

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brode valis," *WA* (Ashmole) 1297: "He bekirs out at þe bild • within þe bur3e-wallis," *WA* 4892: "A bild, as þe buke sais • with twa brade 3atis."

[124] Other occurences in romance are *DT* 1542: "The walles vp wroght, wonder to se," *DT* 1552: "Wroght vp with the walle as þe werke rose."

[125] *GGK* 797: "With coruon coprounes craftyly sle3e," *GGK* 801: "Among þe castel carnelez clambred so þik," *WA* 3665: "With crafti coronals & clene • coruen of þe same," *SJ* 331: "Of quaynt colour to know kerneld a-lofte."

[126] *GGK* 795: "Towres telded bytwene, trochet ful þik

the "he3e houses" in the "halle" of Babylon (1391) recall the magnificence of Emperor Lucius' "howsynge fulle hye" (*MA* 1284) and Hautdesert's "halle ful hy3e" (*GGK* 794),[127] like the description of the convent, with "halles ful hy3 • & houses ful noble" (*PPC* 208).[128]

The poet also describes Babylon ironically with the intensive language of alliterative poetry.[129] Belshazzar thinks that his "bur3 of Babiloyne" is the "biggest," having an equal "nauþer in heven ne on erþe" (1335-36). Although this detail seems to be simply conventional hyperbole, like the description of the palace of the Sun as having "na place it a pere bot paradyse selfe" (*WA* 4905),[130] it actually contains a hint of sacramental parody: Belshazzar believes his palace superior to both Solomon's Temple ("on erþe") and the New Jerusalem ("in heven"). Similarly, the superlative *fayrest* (1378, 1379), and the hyberbole *passande alle oþer* (1389), typical of alliterative building

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Toure is common in romance building formulas, e.g., *DT* 1557: "Mony toures uptild þe toun to defende," *WA* 1151: "Tildid full of turestis • & toures of defence."

[127] Similarly, *DT* 1672: "At the tother hede of þe halle was hegh vppolofte," *DT* 4953: "Hit into the hall of the high king."

[128] The convent refectory also has "an halle for an hey3 kinge • an household to holden" (*PPC* 204).

[129] See Benson, *Art and Tradition*, p. 121, and Burrow, *Ricardian Poetry*, p. 28, on these.

[130] Similarly, Alexander thought that Darius' palace "a paradyce semed" (*WA* 3217) and that Candace's "palais was full precious • þof it a parades ware" (*WA* 5259).

descriptions,[131] underscore his pretensions. The poet also plays on the ambiguity of *pryde*, describing Babylon as a "Palayce of pryde" (1389), which in romance contexts would confer praise,[132] in order to remind the reader of Belshazzar's traditional sin of "pryde and...olipraunce" (1349).

In his pride, Belshazzar, like Alexander, thinks Babylon is eternal, immune to the vicissitudes which beset other cities. This blindness resembles that which led him to his idolatry, for he has seen the example of his father's fall. Since Nebuchadnezzar's boast that in building Babylon he rivalled God[133] instantly evoked God's warning of his fall from fortune, Belshazzar should not be surprised when Daniel prophesies his own downfall at the hands of the Medes and the Persians (1738-40). The description of this fall, brief as it is, suggests the conventional destruction of cities. Like other victims, Belshazzar "in his bed was beten to deþe" (1787)[134] after Darius' army had "scaled þe walles"[135] and "lyfte laddres ful longe and upon lofte wonen" (1776-77).[136]

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[131] Cf. *WA* 4891: "A palais, ane of the precioussest • & proudest in erthe," *DT* 1564: "Bost out of þe best þe byg toures vmbe."

[132] E.g., *DT* 1378: "Prowde pales of prise puttyn to grounde," *MA* 1287: "Palaisez proudliche pyghte, that palyd ware ryche," *WA* 4891: "A palais, ane of the precioussest • & proudest in erthe," *Parl.* (Thornton) 319: "þe prowde paleys dide he pulle doun to þe erthe."

[133] "I haf bigged Babiloyne, bur3 alþerrychest,
Stabled þerinne uch a ston in strenkþe of myn armes,
Mo3t never my3t bot myn make such anoþer." (1666-68)

[134] Cf. how the Greeks, as they destroyed Troy, "Buernes in hor bed britnet all naked" (*DT* 11,933).

[135] During the siege of Metz, Arthur "Skyftis his skoti-

The reader knows that such destructions are likely to occur, not only from earlier biblical examples of God's destruction in the poem,[137] but also from the account of Babylon's own rise to power. The poet describes in detail the siege of Jerusalem, in which the Babylonians were merely God's tools to punish the "idolatrye" of the Jews (1173): "he fylsened þe faythfyl in þe falce lawe/To forfare þe falce in þe faythe trwe" (1167-68).[138] The formulaic nature of the description, which recalls the brutality of Titus' siege of Jerusalem (SJ 1277-89), as well as the sieges of Arthur (MA 3032-42), Alexander (WA 1414-44) and the Greeks (DT 1370-81, 11,933-45, 12,003-11), shows the poet's familiarity with the convention of the destruction of cities. Nebuchadnezzar

feris, and skayles the wallis" (MA 3034).

[136] During the siege of Tyre, those with no "ledders" grasped the wall with their hands to "on-loft clyme" (WA [Ashmole] 1439-40).

[137] Noah's flood destroyed "wonez" (375) and forced people from their "byggyng" (378), just as the Greeks "brent vp the byggynges" in DT (1379). The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah resembles "bry3t brenande brondez" (1012) burning the city to "askez" (1010, 1048), recalling how Troy was "brittened and brent to brondez and askez" (GGK 2).

[138] This antithesis resembles the ones quoted by Spearing to illustrate the important theme of the reversal of fortune in this section (Gawain-Poet, pp. 69-70).

...wast wyth were þe wones of þorpes.[139]
He her3ed up alle Israel, and hent of þe beste,
And þe gentylest of Judee in Jerusalem biseged
Umbewalt alle þe walles wyth wy3es stronge[140]
At uche a dor a do3ty duk, and dutte hem wythinne;
For þe bor3 watz so bygge batayled alofte,[141]
And stoffed wythinne wyth stout men to stalle hem
peroute.
þenne watz þe sege sette þe cete aboute,
Skete skarmoch skelt, much skaþe lached;
At uch brugge a berfray on basteles wyse,[142]
þat seven syþe uch a day asayled þe 3ates;
Trwe tulkkes in toures teveled wythinne,
In bigge brutage of borde, bulde on þe walles.[143]
(1178-90)

From the brief formulaic reference to Belshazzar's death, the reader understands that such a destruction befell Babylon, and sees the magnificent description of the city in a more serious light.

The Gawain-poet's tendency to describe contrasting buildings, heavenly and earthly, permanent and impermanent, throws light on the art of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. He opens and closes the poem with a formulaic reference to the fall of Troy, "Siþen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troy,/þe bor3 brittened and brent to brondez and askez"

[139] SJ 1283: "Maden wast at a wappe • þer þe walle stode."

[140] DT 12,007: "Wroght vnder walles, walt hom to grounde."

[141] WA (Ashmole) 1152: "Bataillit & bretagid • about as a castell," Gol. 43: "Bigly batolit about with wallis sa he."

[142] WA (Ashmole) 1422: "Be þat þe baistell & þe bur3e • war bathe elike hi3e."

[143] WA (Ashmole) 1416: "þat þe bretage about • brast in soundire."

(1-2),[144] which, unlike the conventional allusions to the founding of Britain in alliterative poems,[145] stresses the destruction of the old city over the building of the new. The context of the fall of cities provides parallels and contrasts to both Gawain's fall[146] and the reversal of mirth at Camelot caused by the entrance of the Green Knight.[147]

To explore the relation of appearance to reality, the poet contrasts Gawain's psychological response to the two contrasting buildings at which he receives "tests": Hautdesert and the Green Chapel. Although it is the chapel which Gawain is seeking all along, so as to submit himself to the agreed beheading, he first comes upon Hautdesert instead. Almost in answer to his prayer to the Virgin for lodging, he becomes suddenly "war in þe wod of a won in a mote" (764):

> ...þe depe double dich...drof to þe place;
> þe walle wod in þe water wonderly depe,
> And eft a ful huge he3t hit haled vpon lofte

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[144] Echoed by the ending, "After þe segge and þe asaute watz sesed at Troye" (2525). L.2 recalls the poet's description of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Babylonians "Bet doun þe bur3 and brend in-to askes" (*Pur*. 1292), and *SJ*'s account of Jerusalem "doun beten and brent in-to blake erþe" (1288).

[145] *WW* 1-2: "Sythen that Bretayne was biggede, and Bruyttus it aughte,/Thurgh the takynge of Troye with tresone with-inn," *MA* 4342-43: "Thus endis kyng Arthure, as auctors alleges,/That was of Ectores blude, the kynge sone of Troy."

[146] See Theodore Silverstein, "*Sir Gawain*, Dear Brutus and Britain's Fortunate Founding," *MP* 62(1964-64), 192.

[147] Bonjour relates the vicissitudes of British and Trojan history conveyed by the phrases "werre and wrake and wonder" and "blysse and blunder" (16, 18) to this reversal of mood (pp. 70-72).

> Of harde hewen ston vp to þe tablez,
> Enbaned vnder þe abataylment in þe best lawe;
> And syþen garytez ful gaye gered bitwene,
> Wyth mony luflych loupe þat louked ful clene:
> A better barbican þat burne blusched vpon neuer.
> And innermore he behelde þat halle ful hy3e,
> Towres telded bytwene, trochet ful þik,
> Fayre fylyolez þat fy3ed, and ferlyly long,
> With coruon coprounes craftly sle3e.
> Chalkwhyt chymnees þer ches he inno3e
> Vpon bastel rouez, þat blenked ful quyte;
> So mony pynakle payntet watz poudred ayquere,
> Among þe castel carnelez clambred so þik,
> þat pared out of papure purely hit semed.
> (786-802)[148]

Whether it is real or a mirage, the significance of the castle lies in the psychological effect it has on Gawain, conveyed through the eyewitness convention.[149] As he "blusched" on the castle, he felt a sense of relief at his travels being over, a promise of permanency and comfort. He expects the uncomplicated hospitality conventionally offered to wayfaring heroes of romance, as when, in Golagros, Arthur's men

> Throu the schynyng of the son ane ciete...se,
> With torris and turatis, teirful to tell,
> Bigly batollit about with wallis sa he.
> The yettis war clenely kepit with ane castell;
> Myght none fang it with force, bot foullis to fle.
> (41-45)

The comfort of Hautdesert is deceptive, however, for it is designed to disarm Gawain and make him susceptible to the lady's wiles.[150]

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[148] Although several scholars have written of the difficulty this passage causes translators (Ackerman, "Pared out of Paper," p. 411, and Archibald Hill, "The Green Castle and its Translators," CJL, 17 [1971-72], 140-52), it is actually a very conventional description, conferring praise in the manner of the palace of Ilion in DT. (See Pearsall, p. 133).

[149] Agreed to be one of the poet's fine achievements; see above, p. 116, n. 162, Benson, Art and Tradition, pp. 180-84, and Pearsall, p. 133.

The poet balances the Green Chapel against Hautdesert,[151] using the rhetorical contrast between beautiful and ugly descriptions common in alliterative poetry.[152] Instead of the building he expects, Gawain finds a humble mound by a stream. His emotional response to it is exactly the opposite of the one he had to Hautdesert: the chapel promises death, as the castle seemed to promise life. Gawain walks around the "ber3e."

> Debatande with hymself quat hit be my3t,
> Hit hade a hole on þe ende and on ayþer syde,
> And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere,
> And al watz hol3 inwith, nobot an olde caue,
> Or a creuisse of an olde cragge, he couþe hit no3t
> deme with spelle.
> (2179-84)

Believing the grotesqueness a sign of evil, as it often is in romances,[153] Gawain calls the "oritore...vgly" (2190) a "chapel of meschaunce" (2195), and concludes that it must be the devil's church. In judging it the "corsedest kyrk þat euer [he] com inne " (2196), he contrasts it implicitly with Hautdesert, the "castel þe comlokest þat euer kny3t a3te" (767), as well as with conventional churches.

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[150] Burrow, A Reading, p. 56.

[151] Howard, p. 246.

[152] E.g., the descriptions of Morgan le Fay and Bercilak's lady (GGK 951-69, above, pp. 111-12), the clothes of Gaynor and her mother's ghost (AA 15-22, 105-21, above, pp. 64-67), and the feasts of Arthur and the giant (MA 176-204, 1025-52, above, pp. 23-27).

[153] As is the case with the ugly giant and his cannibalistic feast (MA 1044-52, 1074-1103).

When the Green Knight spares his life, however, Gawain's expectations are reversed: ugliness becomes associated not with evil, but with friendly warning. The Green knight proves to be a penitential figure who, although sympathetic to courtly values, points out the danger of the "surquydré" (2457) inherent in them.[154] In this he resembles characters in moralistic romances, such as Sir Craddock or the ghost of Gaynor's mother,[155] so that the ugliness of his Green Chapel, like that of their clothes, is a reminder of the transience of courtly luxury. However, his own clothes and castle, being luxurious , contribute to the confusion between appearance and reality: Gawain finds that, paradoxically, he is seriously threatened at the beautiful building, where he feels most safe, and generously spared at the ugly one, where he feels in danger. Since he is not "britned" as the court expects him to be (680), his fall is a minor reversal of fortune compared to the one suffered by Troy, "brittened and brent to brondez and askez" (2). The poet uses contrasting descriptions to embody that delicate balance of philosophical perspectives which is one of his acknowledged excellences.[156]

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[154] See above, p. 115, and Benson, Art and Tradition, pp. 239-40.

[155] Ibid., p. 247.

[156] See, e.g., Spearing, Gawain-Poet, pp. 231-36, Benson, Art and Tradition, pp. 246-48, and Donald R. Howard, "Structure and Symmetry in Sir Gawain," Speculum, 39(1964), 433.

The *Gawain*-poet, implicitly measuring earthly buildings against the ideal of the heavenly city, cleverly manipulates the sacramental, satirical, and romance associations of buildings developed by other alliterative poets. Unlike Langland, who fears that beauty in poetry, as in churches, will distract the senses, he uses the luxurious formulas of alliterative romance, as the visual artists use jewels and paint, to render the anagogical imagery of Apocalypse and the Old Testament. Like Augustine, however, he recognizes that the same eloquence which is essential to conveying Christian truth can be seductive to the senses. Therefore, he shows his onlookers, Belshazzar and the Pearl dreamer, as perceiving only the earthly meaning of the holy vessels and the New Jerusalem. In this they resemble not only the friars of the *Crede*, glorying in the luxury of their convent, but also Alexander trusting in the permanence of his Babylon. The poet portrays Gawain's inadequate perception of Hautdesert and the Green Chapel, similar to the blindness of these characters, against the background of the motif of the destruction of cities, which he, like other alliterative poets, uses as a reminder of the instability of human fortunes.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The exuberant descriptions of luxury composed of recurrent formulas in alliterative poetry are far from gratuitous. They tend to be symbolic, if only of power and prosperity, and are used to convey complex moral judgments. The emphasis on the role of the perceiver--a naive narrator or eyewitness--is a rhetorical device which allows a poet to express two contrasting judgments simultaneously. The judgment of the perceiver corresponds to the attitude of praise implied by the intensive language of alliterative poetry, while that of the poet himself can range from satirical to elegiac, but usually invites the reader's disagreement with the perceiver's judgment. The poets combine the technique of contrasted descriptions, beautiful and ugly, with the eyewitness convention to convey their balanced judgment.

In romance, the description from the point of view of the observer is used to suggest mystery and the illusory nature of reality, as well as to exemplify the popular theme of the fall from fortune. The contrast of the luxury of prosperity with the poverty of adversity serves as a warning to the protagonist, whose "surquidré" leads him to think his good fortune eternal. The moral is not condemnatory, as it would be in a satirical poem, but elegiac.

In sacramental contexts, poets following the rhetorical principle that appearance is consistent with reality portray invisible Christian truths with the luxurious language of alliterative romance. Expressing the philosophy of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite and the Victorines, which held visual beauty as a ladder to the divine, they render the sensuous imagery of Apocalypse and the Old Testament.

Wyclyfite poems and Piers Plowman, however, use descriptions of luxury satirically to confer blame on hypocritical friars who gloss their convents and fraternal garb as prefigurations of the New Jerusalem and the clean clothes of the blessed, while in actuality revelling in their aristocratic splendor. Such writers deny the anagogical function of church luxury, seeing it as merely a snare to the senses. They make frequent allusions to Christ's injunctions to poverty and his criticism of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees for allowing sacramental luxury to harden into materialism.

The study of formulas and descriptive set-pieces enriches our understanding of the two great fourteenth century alliterative poets, the Gawain-poet and Langland. In Sir Gawain, the poet uses descriptions of luxury, more subtly than other alliterative romance writers, to suggest the theme of the fall from fortune. For instance, three parallel feasts illustrate delicate variations in mood, rather than the prosperity that precedes the fall, as in the Morte Arthure. The joy at the opening of the first feast, before the entrance of the Green Knight, contrasts with the gloom afterwards, and the joy feigned by the court at the second one contrasts with its sorrow at the prospect of Gawain's departure. The third, at Bercilak's court, conveys Gawain's illusory sense of prosperity and comfort after his travels. The sumptuous castle Hautdesert, which compounds this illusion, is contrasted with the Green Chapel, but each holds a fate opposite from what Gawain expected. The clothing descriptions similarly fail to provide any definite clues to the moral nature of the Green Knight. They are all luxurious, except for the clothing of Morgan le Fay. The contrast of her ugliness with the beauty of Bercilak's lady provides a hint of mutability too subtle for Gawain to perceive. Furthermore, the luxurious clothing of the Green Knight prevents Gawain from recognizing him as the penitential figure he will prove to be--one who warns against the transience of earthly pride and fame. Gawain's close-up perception of the Green Knight and Hautdesert deprives him of the perspective with which to judge, and makes him a victim of appearances.

The study of formulas is more illuminating in sacramental and satirical contexts, since they are less expected there. In Pearl, the poet uses sacramentally the same formulas and eyewitness convention he used in Sir Gawain, in order to embody the court of heaven. The dreamer requires an anagogical vision because of the limitation of his earthly sight. The same limitation, however, causes him to be distracted by the earthly aspects of the imagery, so that he perceives the maidens' white robes as aristocratic trappings and the splendid New Jerusalem as a castle of romance. Trying to cross the stream to join a fleshly maiden in a real city, the dreamer forfeits his vision.

Although in Pearl the poet does not portray the Beatific Vision--the sight of God face to face--because of the dreamer's disobedience, in Purity he does so. Here he uses the image of heaven as a courtly feast (the bounty of divine grace) enjoyed by guests in elegant clothing (the purity of their souls). He contrasts these robes with the dirty ones of the sinner in order to show why he must lose the Beatific Vision. On a larger structural level, the poet contrasts the heavenly feast of the parable with the feast of Belshazzar to show the typological opposition between the New Jerusalem and Babylon. Belshazzar's luxury parodies the heavenly feast, linen, and city against which it is to be measured. His inability to recognize this sacramental significance, a failure more idolatrous than his worship of graven images, resembles the blindness of naive romance heroes. His punishment is similar, too, for the poet describes his fall from fortune in the conventional romance terms of the destruction of a proud city.

Langland is consistently satirical in his treatment of luxury in a way that the Gawain-poet approaches only in the story of Belshazzar. There are good philosophical reasons for the contrasting descriptive techniques of the two poets. Langland rejects the sacramental approach for fear that beauty in language, as in church, will lead to idolatry. In this he has affinities with the anti-fraternal satirists of the southern alliterative school who avoid the high rhetoric of the northern alliterative poets.[1] But his use of the special diction of alliterative poetry, however briefly, for satirical purposes suggests his familiarity with the northern style.

Although both Langland and the Gawain-poet hold the same sacramental ideals, which they base on the same imagery from Apocalypse, they treat them in strikingly different ways. Where the Gawain-poet describes the New Jerusalem and the Pearl maiden's robes with the same formulaic richness that he applies to Hautdesert and the clothes of the Green Knight and Gawain, Langland dismisses the Heavenly City and Lady Holy Church as "A toure on a toft • trielich ymaked" and "A loueli ladi of lere • in lynnen yclothed." He does place, however, the elevated language of alliterative poetry in the mouth of his naive dreamer to describe the earthly luxury which parodies these ideals--the gaudy robes of Lady Mede, and the friar's proposed convent. Similarly, where the Gawain-poet describes the heavenly feast in Purity with the same formulas he uses in Sir Gawain, Langland refers to it only briefly, and instead describes the feast of the gluttonous friar in much detail.

Although both poets share a body of inherited literary conventions, they put them to very different uses. The different aesthetic stances are highly colored by their contrasting social and political attitudes, aristocratic and popular. Their art illustrates the fact that the meanings of luxury formulas originally developed in romance are by no means fixed. The poets' conventional language, far from being a hindrance, is a tool which they can manipulate, while relying on their audience's recognition of its associations.

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[1] See Salter, Piers Plowman, p. 21, Benson, Art and Tradition, p. 122, and Burrow, Ricardian Poetry, pp. 33-35.

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AA	*The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*. ed. Robert J. Gates. Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1969.
Howlat	*The Buke of the Howlat*. *Scottish Alliterative Poems*. ed. F. J. Amours. 1892; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966.
CK	"The Crowned King: On the Art of Governing." *Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*. ed. Rossell Hope Robbins. New York: Columbia Press, 1959, pp. 227-32.
DL	*Death and Liffe*. ed. J. H. Hanford and J.M. Steadman. *SP*, 15 (1918), 223-94.
DT	*The Geste Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*. ed. G. A. Panton and D. Donaldson. 1869-74; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969.
Gol.	*Golagros and Gawane*. *Scottish Alliterative Poems*. ed. F. J. Amours. 1892; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1966.
PP	Langland, William. *The Vision of William Concerning Piers Plowman*. ed. W. W. Skeat. 1886, rpt. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.
JU	"Jack Upland." *Jack Upland, Friar Daw's Reply, and Upland's Rejoinder*. ed. P. L. Heyworth. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.
MA	*Morte Arthure*. ed. E. Brock. 1871; rpt. London: EETS, 1967.
Mum	*Mum and the Sothsegger*. ed. Mabel Day and Robert Steele. 1936; rpt. New York: Kraus, 1971.
Parl.	*The Parlement of the Thre Ages*. ed. M. Y. Offord. 1959; rpt. London: EETS, 1967.
Pat.	*Patience*. ed. J. J. Anderson. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969.
	________. ed. Hartley Bateson. 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1918.
Pearl	*Pearl*. ed. E. V. Gordon. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.

	______. ed. C. G. Osgood. Boston: D. C. Heath, 1906.
PPC	*Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*. ed. W. W. Skeat. 1867; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969.
Pur.	*Purity*. ed. Robert J. Menner. 1920; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1970.
Q	*The Quatrefoil of Love*. ed. Sir Israel Gollancz. London: EETS, 1935.
RC	*Rauf Coil3ear*. *Scottish Alliterative Poems*. ed. F. J. Amours. 1892; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1966.
StE	*St. Erkenwald*. ed. Henry L. Savage. 1926; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1972.
SF	*Scotish Ffeilde*. ed. J. P. Oakden. Chetham Miscellanies. n.s., vi, Manchester, 1935.
SJ	*Siege of Jerusalem*. ed. E. Kölbing and Mabel Day. 1932; New York: Kraus, 1971.
SS	"Summer Sunday." *Historical Poems*. ed. Robbins, pp. 98-102.
GGK	*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon. 2nd ed. rev. Norman Davis. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.
Sus.	*Susannah*. ed. Alice Miskimin. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969.
WA	*The Wars of Alexander*. ed. W. W. Skeat. London: EETS, 1886.
WmP	*William of Palerne*. ed. W. W. Skeat. London: EETS, 1867.
WW	*Wynnere and Wastoure*. ed. Sir Israel Gollancz. London: Humphrey Milford, 1930.

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