

**ORDINATIO AND GENRE IN MS CCC 201:
A MEDIAEVAL READING OF THE B-TEXT OF
*PIERS PLOWMAN***

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Scripture's remark to Will in *Piers Plowman.B*, "I nel noght scorne . . . but if scryveynes lye" (B.X.331), acknowledges the possibility of scribal inaccuracy, capturing both the reality of mediaeval manuscript traditions and the frustration of editors who wrestle to distinguish authorial from scribal readings of a text.¹ From the point of view of author or editor, scribal "corruptions" interfere with the important processes of creation and dissemination of a literary work—in the case of *Piers Plowman.B*, surviving manuscripts not only have scribal corruptions, but are themselves copies of an unusually corrupt copy (Kane-Donaldson 96–97, 128–29). As readers, we instinctively side with the editors and poets, but over the gulfs of time in the wake of centuries of the writer's absence, we perhaps should pause, as B.A. Windeatt suggests, to reconsider the "scryveynes lye" and to understand it also as a mediaeval response to a mediaeval text (1979, 122). Although at opposite poles in their own responses to scribal contributions, both Kane and Windeatt narrow "scribal response" to signify textual variation—the glossing and rewriting of the text,² but manuscript layout (*ordinatio* and *compilatio*, for example) also fashions and interprets the text. In Oxford MS Corpus Christi College 201, manuscript arrangement and "corruption" together manipulate the text aggressively in ways that frequently demonstrate intelligent scribal reception of a complicated text;

the "scryveyne's lye" becomes here a contemporary response, a mediaeval guide to our own potential reading of *Piers Plowman*.

Corpus Christi College Oxford MS 201 (F) shows arguably more scribal interference than any other B manuscript. In addition to expanding, reducing, and conflating passus arbitrarily, F's scribe has composed and inserted fifty-one "spurious" lines, the largest number of spurious lines in any B manuscript.³ Because of these and other aberrations, Skeat dismissed F as "an inferior MS." (xxx), but editors now recognize F as part of an important genetic sub-group of B MSS, which Schmidt calls α , consisting of F and R (Oxford Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet.38 and folios 77-80 in BM Lansdowne 398); all other B MSS belong to the sub-group β .⁴ Editions of the B-text invariably rest on a β MS; Skeat and Bennett chose L (Oxford Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 581); Schmidt and Kane-Donaldson chose W (Cambridge Trinity College MS B.15.17). Only the corruptions of R and F compelled Schmidt to choose a β MS; otherwise, he claims, "My analysis shows α to be markedly superior" (xxxvi). The textual or editorial value of F, then, seems to be offset by the highly corrupted state of the manuscript. Some of these very corruptions, however textually inferior or "spurious," are in my view critically significant, contributing to a sophisticated "reading" of *Piers Plowman.B*. In conjunction with ornamentation and illumination, they present a new *ordinatio*, which places an emphasis upon the dream visions and their grouping.

M.B. Parkes observes that "[l]ayout and decoration function like punctuation: they are part of the presentation of a text which facilitates its use by a reader" ("Production" 224). From the thirteenth century on, layout and decoration became more important and more functional in relation to the text: "they not only facilitated use by readers but also interpreted the text transmitted to the scribe" ("Production" 224). Although Skeat finds the writing of F "rather loose and hurried" (xxvii), there is sufficient evidence that the layout of the manuscript was planned in advance and co-ordinated. The red, green, and blue decorated initials, borders, flourishes, and sprays and the single illumination on folio 1r demonstrate careful and considered arrangement of the text. Indentations for various forms of ornamentation and spaces for passus divisions also reflect deliberate planning; on folios 17r and 20r, for example, spaces have been left for the letters, but the scribe or scribes in charge of decoration overlooked the space allotted and left it blank. Similarly, because the Latin quotations are written in a style more formal than the cursive hand of the text, spaces in the manuscript were left to be filled in later, and the blank spaces remaining in the text where

Latin quotations should appear (folios 34v, 76r, and 77r) demonstrate, as in the case of decorated initials, that these features of the manuscript were set out in advance, and that the text of the manuscript was arranged to accommodate or make room for the Latin. Notes in a slender cursive hand appear in the right margin of folios 76r and 77r to remind a scribe to fill in the Latin.⁵ All of this suggests, as one would expect, that MS F was planned in various stages, the text arranged carefully to permit space for decorated initials and Latin quotations; text and decoration, then, were co-ordinated.

This level of adjustment and co-operation among scribes and decorating craftsmen is entirely normal and usual and deserves no further mention, except to caution us perhaps not to side too hastily with Skeat's view that the manuscript is a product of hasty composition and therefore unduly careless.⁶ Less usual, however, is the extended co-operation among scribes, decorating craftsmen, "authoring" scribe, and *compiler* to produce a new *ordinatio* and therefore an interpretation of the text so transmitted.

The most obvious example has to do with F's re-arrangement of passus (see Appendix 1). The tradition of the B-text of *Piers Plouman* divides the poem into a prologue and twenty passus. MS F departs from this tradition, and instead distributes the text into 16 passus: Prologue.B becomes Passus 1.F; Passus 1.B becomes Passus 2.F; Passus 2.B becomes Passus 3.F. At this point, however, MS F abandons the method of an alternate numbering scheme of consecutive passus and conflates Passus 3.B and 4.B into a single Passus 4.F; MS F also conflates Passus 5.B, 6.B, and 7.B into a single Passus 5.F. and Passus 8.B and 9.B into a single Passus 6.F and so on, so that the original twenty-one passus divisions of the B text become 16 in F. Although this seems to be an arbitrary conflation in F, it is the grouping that is arbitrary and not the passus divisions themselves, for regardless of F's conflation of B's passus at various points, F otherwise respects passus divisions.⁷ In a conflated section such as Passus 5.F, (B. Passus 5, 6, and 7), for example, the beginning of Passus 5 and the end of Passus 7 remain the same as in the B-text.⁸

Skeat found this unusual segmentation of the manuscript its most outrageous feature:

The most curious point about it is the method of division into Passus, which resembles that of *no* other MS. of any class whatever. It would seem as if the scribe had endeavoured to divide it into Passus how he could, without any guide, and had added a few lines by way of conclusion and introduction to each, for it is just at the points of division that the readings seem to be the wildest. (xxvii)

But the scribe of MS CCC 201 often acts as *compilator*, who adds "no matter of his own," rearranging existing materials into a "new *ordinatio*" (Parkes, "Ordinatio," 59).⁹ Parkes contends that *compilatio* evolved into "a form of writing and . . . a means of making material easily accessible" (58). The process of dividing existing materials into clearer divisions became frequent practice from the thirteenth century onward, influencing not only works designed primarily for scholastic study but also vernacular works (61). "The *ordinatio* of the Ellesmere manuscript," argues Parkes, "interprets the *Canterbury Tales* as a *compilatio* in that it emphasizes the role of the tales as repositories of *auctoritates* — *sententiae* and aphorisms on different topics which are indicated by the marginal headings" ("Production" 228). What we see operating in the Ellesmere manuscript is an adaptation of *compilatio* where the text is no longer bound to the practices of monastic or scholastic *lectio* (Parkes, "Ordinatio," 35) and the *auctoritates* represent discrete literary units. In *Piers Plowman.F* we see a similar adaptation of *compilatio*, where the *auctoritates* are instead passus and dream visions. The proportion of passus to dream visions, moreover, has been reduced; where B has eight dream visions (with two inner visions or dreams-within-dreams) and 21 passus (that is, a prologue and 20 passus), F has 11 visions and 16 passus. Through this process of *compilatio*, the dream visions of MS CCC 201 emerge more clearly as significant units of literary segmentation.

Compilatio also functions in MS F by means of smaller adjustments to the shape of individual dream visions. In this sense, rather than conflating passus, F simply "compiles" or redistributes B-text lines in order to clarify dream vision formal features. One of Langland's characteristic devices of connecting his series of dream visions is to overlap the epilogue of a preceding vision with the prologue of the ensuing vision. Passus 5.B, however, begins with narrative material belonging to the dream vision matter of vision one. The final line of Passus 4 announces the King's agreement to rule reasonably with Reason and Conscience, "Als longe as oure lyf lasteth, lyve we togideres" (B.IV.195). The opening lines of Passus 5.B portray the King acting on his promise as he and his knights attend Holy Church: "The Kyng and hise knyghtes to the kirke wente/ To here matyns of the day and the masse after" (B.V.1-2). Epilogue material follows this narrative, "Thanne waked I of my wynkyng and wo was withalle/ That I ne hadde slept sadder and yseighen moore" (B.V.3-4). Finally, a new prologue introduces the next vision (Dream Vision 2):

Ac er I hadde faren a furlong, feyntise me hente,
That I ne myghte ferther a foot for defaute of slepynge.

I sat softly adoun and seide my bileve,
 And so I bablede on my bedes, thei broughte me aslepe.
 And thanne saugh I much moore than I bfore tolde. . . . (B.V.5-9)

This overlapping and intermingling of formal features and narrative matter dissatisfied the scribe of MS F, however, and to adjust what he perhaps found awkward, confusing, or merely unfamiliar, he shifted the first two lines of B.V back to B.IV so that the narrative material properly belonging to the previous dream vision (Dream Vision 1) does not interfere with the formal dream vision markers (epilogue and prologue) at Passus 5 and the beginning of a new dream vision (Dream Vision 2); here is the *ordinatio* of MS F:

& y graunte quod þe kyng / god for bede þu fayle.
 As longe as oure lyvis laste / leeve we to gydre.
 Thanne þe kyng with hise knyghtis / to þe kyrke wentyn.
 To heryn matyns of þe day / & a messe afere.
 Explicit Passus Quartus.
 Incipit Passus Quintus.
 [O]ff wynkyng y waked þo / & wo was y withall.
 þat y ne hadde slepe saddere / & yseyn moore.
 But er y hadde faren a forlong / a feyntyȝs me hente.
 þat y ne myghte a foote furthere / for defawte of slepe.
 þan sat y softly adoun / & seyde myn beleve.
 & y bablede so on my bedis / þey browhte me on sleepe.
 & þanne y seyȝmychil moore / þan y be fore hond tolde.¹⁰ (fols. 15r-15v)

The separation of narrative material and generic markers clarifies the formal shape of Dream Vision 2.

At times the scribe of F acts as both *compiler* and *auctor*, and his most radical rearrangement of MS F involves the grouping of dreams, the elimination of the category "dream-within-a-dream," and the introduction of "spurious lines" (lines composed by the scribe). There are two dreams-within-a-dream in *Piers Plowman.B*, one occurring in Passus 11 (Dream Vision 3), and the other in Passus 16, Dream Vision 5 (see Appendix 1). Langland's dreams-within-a-dream (DWD's) differ markedly from his outer or principal dreams; where the outer dreams often have elaborate prologues and sometimes elaborate epilogues, inner dream prologues and epilogues are minimally functional and contrast with the outer dream framework in which they are set.¹¹ F's restructuring here consists in making the DWD equivalent formally and visually with the outer dream visions. F's Passus 12 (B.16) adds two spurious lines to the prologue, "[A]geyn y gan to sleepe softe / &

my sy3de y gan to turne. / & a noon y sey3 as y sey3 erst / & spak to hym with mowþe" (folio 68r), and two to the epilogue, "þan y waknede þerwith / & wipyd boþe myn eyzes./ & for y hadde so soore y slept / sory was y þanne./ & on þe dremynge y dremppte / euery doynge y þowthe" (70r). In addition to expanding formal prologue and epilogue material,¹² F marks the dream vision a formal dream vision unit; rubrication and a decorated initial begin F.Passus 13 (fol. 70r),¹³ which includes the rest of Passus 16.B and Passus 17.B. Passus 16.B contains 275 lines; F's Passus 12 contains only 178 lines and consists of an independent textual segment isolated by formal dream vision elements, rubrication, and historiation—the DWD has been metamorphosed into a dream vision equal to the other dream visions formally and visually.

A similar visual and textual metamorphosis affects the DWD at Passus 11, but in a more significant way. Here F's "reading" of *Piers Plowman.B* involves a view of structure wider than the simple passus or isolated dream vision; F highlights the grouping of B's first three visions, a grouping which necessarily impinges on the grouping of the other visions as well.

If we look at the text itself of *Piers Plowman.B*, excluding the rubrication and the critical debate on segmentation based on it,¹⁴ the text appears as a sequence of dream vision poems broken into passus divisions. Moreover, these several dream visions form distinct groups, distinguishable by, as well as other features, differentiating prologues. Dream visions one, two and three (Prologue, Passus 1–4 (1); Passus 5–7 (2); and Passus 8–12 (3) with a DWD at Passus 11) form a structural unit marked by dream vision prologues that stress landscape (the conventional *locus amoenus*), worldliness, and seeking (Weldon 258–70). Attempts to split the B-text into *visio* and *vita* disregard this structural similarity, with the result of straining the text and the dream visions into alternate and endlessly debated structures. F, on the other hand, as we have seen, restructures passus divisions in a way that makes some received schemes of segmentation impossible; in addition, F has no segmentation, whether *visio/vita* or further division of *dowel*, *dobet*, and *dobest*.¹⁵ Schmidt attributes critical theories of segmentation to Skeat's influential edition of the B-text, which imposed the A-text bipartite structure onto the B-text (xix–xx). There is no authority in the B-MSS for such a segmentation, nor in the C-tradition; in neither manuscript traditions does the word "vita" appear,¹⁶ and the application of the term "visio" (as in "de visione") extends well beyond the old A-text demarcation of "visio" as distinct from "vita."¹⁷ In other words, neither the C nor B traditions indicate that *visio* and *vita* in the old A-text sense are very useful terms.

F not only resists segmentation of this type, but strives to connect the first three dream visions by means of passus structuring, spurious lines, and illumination. The idealized May-morning landscape, characteristic of these initial prologues, need not by itself indicate worldliness, although of such descriptions of place, Matthew of Vendôme remarks, “The beauty of the mentioned place feeds the five senses” (*Ars Versificatoria* 57), where the five senses metaphorically connect landscape and worldliness. In *Piers Plowman.B*, however, prologue landscape and worldliness coincide as the *locus amoenus* becomes firmly identified as the “malverne hillis,” a specific location in this world emphasized by the alliterative link in Pro.B.5, “Ac on a May morwenynge on Malverne hilles.” The location of conventional landscape and this world is repeated in the epilogue to Passus 7 (B.7.142—Dream Vision 2) and again in Passus 8 (Dream Vision 3) where the dreamer meets the worldly friars while roaming through and finally falling asleep in another conventional landscape (B.8.63-70); Will’s wandering in an idealized landscape and wandering in this world of the Malvern Hills constitute the formal prologue features of the first three dreams, which continue the sense of the opening, “Wente wide in this world wondres to here” (Pro.B.4). F furthers this sense of worldliness with the substitution of phrases in the prologues that allude to the world: “in þis world” (Dream 3: F.6.fol. 30v) and “þe worchyng of þe world” (DWD 1.2, Dream 3: F.9.fol. 44v).¹⁸

F’s intentions emerge more clearly in the new arrangement of the DWD in Passus 11.B. In the first place, Dream 4.F and Dream 5.F replace the single DWD of B. As in F’s treatment of the DWD in Passus 16.B, here the category of DWD disappears, replaced by two new dream visions, each an independent passus division, marked off by rubrics, decorated initials, borders, flourishes and sprays, so that the obscured DWD gains prominence and equal textual status with the poem’s dream visions. This means that F renumbers the first group of dream visions; the old B grouping of Dreams 1, 2, and 3 with a DWD in 3 becomes in F simply Dreams 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Further, F’s dream visions 4 and 5 now have prologues expanded beyond the limits set by Langland for DWD prologues. For each of the new dream visions, F has added spurious lines for prologues and epilogues, demarcating clearly the generic boundaries of each textual unit.¹⁹

The spurious lines, moreover, reflect F’s sense of grouping, for they echo the features of prologue grouping that I have outlined above, linking dream visions 4 and 5 to the first three dream visions with allusions in each new prologue to the *locus amoenus* landscape as well as to sleeping, sight, and dreaming. Where the B-text prologue to DWD 1 reads, “Tho wepte I for wo

and wrathe of hir speche/ And in a wynkyng w[o]rth til I [weex] aslepe” (lines 4–5), F’s dreamer first “wakes” at Scripture’s berating, and then turns on his other side “for to take myn eese” (fol. 40r). The elaborated prologue then begins with the new passus:

*[A]nd as y lay & lookede / vpon þe launde grene.
I þouhte on þe metelis / hou merveylos þei were.
Tyl sodynly hevynesse / on slepe brouht me þanne.
a non a merveyulous metelys / me tydde to dreme.
For y was ravissid / & Fortunne me fette.
& in to þe land of longynge / a loone she me brouhte.
& in a myrror þat is midlerd / she made me in beholde.
& afterwards she seide to me / here may þu se wondres.
& knowen þat þu covytist / & come þerto peraunter.*

(fols. 40r–40v; emphasis mine)

Similarly, where B’s DWD continues the Mountain of Middle Earth without division, F adds an epilogue, begins a new passus division, and again expands the prologue: B’s shift occurs with the passage, “Ac muche moore in metynge thus with me gan oon dispute — / And slepyng I seigh al this; and sithen cam Kynde” (lines 319–20), whereas F alters the text with epilogue, passus division, and expanded prologue:

[Ac muche moore in metynge thus with me gan oon dispute — B.11.319 missing in F]

*& þus y fel in þowhtis feele / flappyng in myn herte.²⁰
þat all myn spiritys weryn sore stoned / & perwith y wakned.
& as manye & feele þowhtis / felle flappyng in myn herte.
All myn spiritys weryn stoned / & þerwith y a waked.
& ful sore syzhede / þe syghte was so mervyulous.
& streyhte me / & turned me / & to my selue y seid.
þis ys a mychil merveyle / what menyng it meveþ.
& in þis þowht still y lay / a long tyme aftere.*

Explicit Passus Octauus.

Incipit Passus Nonus.

[A]s y lay & lokede forþ/ lowe vpon þe greene.

I fel in a slumbryng / & sone to me cam Keende. (fol. 44v)

Significant in these revised or spurious prologues and epilogues is the connection of landscape here with colour and the position of the dreamer. Critics who denigrate these spurious lines as aesthetically inferior miss the point; whatever their aesthetic value, they function primarily in a formal and generic sense. Passus 8.F (Passus 11.B, DWD 1.1)²¹ situates the dreamer, “[A]nd as y lay & lookede / vpon þe launde grene,” and Passus 9.F (Passus

11.B, DWD 1.2) similarly, “[A]s y lay & lokede forþ/ lowe vpon þe greene.” Throughout these new prologues are echoes of earlier prologues of dream visions, and the phrases “grene launde” and “greene” perhaps originate with Passus 8.B.66, “under a lynde upon a launde.” The colour “green,” however, also links these new F prologues to the opening scene directly by echoing the landscape but indirectly by connection with the manuscript’s single illumination.

The illustration on folio 1r combines traditional iconography with textual intimacy (see Figure 1). The figure posed with head in hand, according to Kathleen Scott, “indicates the artist’s awareness of iconography used for several previous centuries . . . to designate a dreamer seer” (17). The conventional nature of the illumination signals the predominant genre, dream vision, and its motifs bring together the prologues and passus of the dream visions I have called “group 1.” The dreamer is “yrobed in russet,” for example, a feature of the dreamer’s attire not mentioned until the opening of Dream Vision 3 (B.8.1), a detail that demonstrates the illustrator’s familiarity with the text and that links the Prologue and Dream Vision 1 to Passus 8 and Dream Vision 3 through allusion to the colour. The dreamer is in gentleman’s garb, as opposed to religious dress, as indicated by his hat and gloves,²² and it is perhaps significant that F omits the line, “In habite as an heremite, unholý of werkes.” F’s dreamer is fully secular, a man of the world, without the hint of religious orders.

Perhaps we should remember how deliberate and intimate this illustration actually is. In order to accommodate the illustration in the manuscript, eleven lines of text were indented. Skeat felt that F had introduced an error into the text because of F’s opening line, “Al in somer sesoun whan softe was the sunne” (fol. 1r): “By a mistake, the initial letter is a capital A, inside which is a rude drawing of the poet, dozing and dreaming in an uncomfortable sitting attitude” (Skeat n. 1, xxviii). However, because an “I” or “Y” allowed no space for the illustration, the scribe altered the opening “by the addition of the word ‘Al’ to the front of the first line, giving him a convenient ‘A’ for the picture space” (K. Scott n. 10, 6). Scott’s description of this illustration reports a “dreamer (eyes closed), possibly seated on a hill with his feet on a (?) stool” (18), but closer examination reveals that the “hill” — dark or forest green in colour — is actually a “grene launde” and that the “stool” resembles a “tower.” The illustration closely follows the text, and in turn the text sometimes follows the illustration. F alters the original B line, “Under a brood bank by a bourne syde” (B.Pro.8) to



Figure 1: Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201, *Piers Plowman*, fol. 1r. I am grateful to the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College for their permission to use this reproduction.

its unique reading, "Vpon a brood banke" (fol. 1r), where "upon" corresponds to the dreamer's position in F prologues 3, 4, and 5.²³ Moreover, the illumination with its "grene launde" links the Prologue of Dream 1 to those of Dreams 2 and 3, and to F's restructured Dreams 4 and 5 and the "grene launde" of those "spurious prologues." Colour, dreaming position, and landscape in F's illumination connects and groups the landscape motif of the dream vision prologues of group 1 highlighted by F's spurious lines. Manuscript F introduces spurious lines elsewhere, but reserves prologue and epilogue material with allusions to landscape for this first group of visions. The "grene launde" motif, then, groups a specific set of dream visions, and so offers a reading of dream vision structure in the poem. The conflation of Passus B.13 and B.14 into Passus F.10 reinforces the first grouping, for Passus B.13 now belongs inextricably to the Haukyn section of the poem, and not to the narrative of the first three visions. Groups 1 and 2 are clearly separated in F (see Weldon 258).

George Kane remarks about scribal interference: "To sentimentalize such scribal response or to dignify it by calling it 'criticism' . . . is unrewarding. . . . Scribal variation from the text of such a work cannot have 'intrinsic' value. . . . The scribal variant is a deplorable circumstance of the manual transmission of texts. It has value only as evidence for the authorial reading it supplanted" ("Text" 194). I would be less than honest if I did not recognize much truth in what Kane asserts here, especially with respect to F; as Donaldson and Kane point out, F omits 170 lines (Donaldson 180, Kane-Donaldson 63), and many of F's variants are erroneous and absurd.²⁴ I am not claiming that F organizes dream visions in an unproblematical way, but the fact is that in addition to the usual scribal mismanagement of text, there is also a "scribal response" which co-ordinates a new *ordinatio* and which is itself the result of intimate co-operation of scribe, rubricator, illuminator, decorating artisan, compiler, and *auctor*. And further, this new *ordinatio* represents a sophisticated, intelligent, and consistent mediæval reading of *Piers Plowman.B*. Reader F seeks textually and visually to interpret the poem and to clarify its essential structure, for the "ordinating" passus arrangements together with the spurious lines and illumination do not add meandering digressions or innovative interpolations but heighten existing formal elements in a conventional way. While we may lament his textual distortions, we can also admire Reader F's interpretative guidance for a poem whose only verifiable authorial structure rests on passus division and dream vision sequence.²⁵ Reader F clarifies dream vision form and at the same time "reads" the poem in terms of groupings of dream visions

and in so redefining *ordinatio*, MS F provides by implication a discussion of *Piers Plowman.B* in terms of dream vision genre, a significant implication for a period lacking explicit debate on genre. Perhaps we should be rereading more mss "variants" within the larger context of *ordinatio*. MS CCC 201, at any rate, has scribal features that deserve more than editorial suppression. F brackets structural segmentation of the *vita/visio* and *dowel/dobet/dobest* kind, offering instead a plausible reading of the text in light of its predominant genre—the dream vision.

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Appendix 1

B-text Tradition		MS F			
<i>Passus</i>	<i>Dream Vision</i>	<i>Passus</i>	<i>Dream Vision</i>		
Prologue	1	Passus 1	1		
Passus 1		Passus 2			
Passus 2		Passus 3			
Passus 3		Passus 4			
Passus 4					
Passus 5	2	Passus 5	2		
Passus 6					
Passus 7					
Passus 8	3	Passus 6	3		
Passus 9					
Passus 10		Passus 7			
Passus 11: 1-318		DWD (1.1)		Passus 8	4
Passus 11: 319-439		DWD (1.2)		Passus 9	5
Passus 12					
Passus 13	4	Passus 10	6		
Passus 14					
Passus 15	5	Passus 11	7		
Passus 16: 1-167		DWD (2)		Passus 12	8
Passus 16: 168-275				Passus 13	
Passus 17					
Passus 18	6	Passus 14	9		
Passus 19	7	Passus 15	10		
Passus 20	8	Passus 16	11		

NOTES

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all references are to Schmidt's edition of the B-text.

² Both Kane-Donaldson, Kane, and Windeatt restrict the idea of "scribal response" to textual substitution and variation; phrases such as "scribal rewriting," "scribes' substitutions" (Windeatt 1979, 121, 129), "glossing and substituting" (Windeatt 1984, 28), "Scribal variation from the text" (Kane 1988, 194), and "mechanical variation" (Kane-Donaldson 217) express these critics' exclusive concerns with text.

³ See Kane-Donaldson 221-24 for a list of spurious lines in the B MSS.

⁴ Schmidt refers to the two sub-groups as α and β (xxxv-vi), Kane-Donaldson, as RF (61). MSS R and F present 175 lines appearing in no other B MS, but which are confirmed or have equivalents in the C MSS (Donaldson 179-80 and Kane-Donaldson 63).

⁵ On fol. 76r, a note in the right margin indicates that "a fili david" should be inserted in the formal style (see B.18.15). On fol. 77r, marginal notes on the right indicate "to descendit" to remind the scribe to fill in "to descendit ad inferna" (see B.18.111); similarly "secundum scripturas" (see B.18.112). No note cautions the scribe about B.18.109a on the same folio, and he has missed a half line of Latin; where the B-text reads "Cum veniat sanctus sanctorum cessabit unio vestra," F has only "Cum veniat sanctus sanctorum."

⁶ MS CCC 201 has its share of errors, omissions, and inconsistencies, as any other mediaeval manuscript. Like all manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, F represents an "economical" text rather than a display text, and while there are several folios rendered almost illegible at times by erasure and overcopying (for example 22r, 22v, 29r, 29v), most of the manuscript reflects a desire to be pleasing as well as effective visually. The elaborate ornamentation and the single illumination suggest a manuscript prepared for private reading (Uhart 39).

⁷ Passus 11.B and 16.B are exceptions and will be discussed below.

⁸ So, too, Passus F.4 (Passus B.3 and 4), Passus F.6 (Passus B.8 and 9), and Passus F.10 (Passus B.13 and 14).

⁹ Bonaventure in his *In primum librum sententiarum* describes the role of the *compilator*: "scribit aliena addendo, sed non de suo; et iste compilator dicitur" (cited in Parkes, "Ordinatio" 58).

¹⁰ Scribal abbreviations are used throughout the manuscript, which I note by means of italics.

¹¹ See my "Structure of Dream Visions," especially p. 268.

¹² For Langland, these characteristically become references to sleeping and sleeping posture and references to waking and reflection on the previous vision.

¹³ MS F normally distinguishes decorated initials according to function. Undecorated initials larger in size than the text hand occasionally punctuate the manuscript (fol. 10v and fol. 16r, for example); such initials are usually plain red without flourishing and typically have no ascenders or descenders. Their presence in the manuscript causes indentation of no more than 4 lines of text. I suspect that such initials emphasize morally important passages or familiar passages — passages already familiar to mediaeval readers of earlier versions of the poem; in the B and C MSS they cluster within the old A-tradition "visio" passus, especially to introduce the seven deadly sins (B.5). Two orders

of decorated initials appear; the more elaborately decorated and larger initials divide the poem into segments (passus and dream visions) whereas the smaller and comparatively less decorated initials function as the plain initials to emphasize passages. A decorated **A** highlights the line introducing Covetise: [A]fftere hym cam Coueytse/ y can not hym discrue" (F.4.fol. 17v); it occupies a space indenting 3 lines of text. The larger, more elaborate structural type of decorated initial ranges in size from 5 to 11 lines of text and are accompanied by rubrication (except for the initial **A** of the prologue); examples include structuring initials at F.Passus.8 and F.Passus 9 (see Appendix 1). The single exception to this practice occurs at fol. 29v, where a smaller 4-line decorated initial marks the beginning of F.Passus 6, but that folio is heavily damaged and marred by erasure and blurred text; the scribe seems to have bunched together the lines and reduced the size of the structuring initial.

¹⁴ Modern critical editions wisely omit the notoriously unreliable rubrication of the B MSS (see the Kane-Donaldson and Schmidt editions and Adams). For another current view, see Clopper and Harwood 29–30.

¹⁵ The one exception occurs at the end of B.10 or F.7 (fol. 40r), where the rubrics read, "Explicit Passus Septimus de Dowel./ Incipit Passus Octauus." Elsewhere the rubrics of F do not indicate segmentation, whether visio/vita or dowel/dobet/dobest. A similar anomaly occurs at the end of R, and Adams may be right that such eccentricities may be owing to incidental contamination unconsciously entered by a scribe exposed to more than one B MSS (n. 11, 214).

¹⁶ "Vita" does not appear in any B or C MS, with the single exception of the B MS C² (discussed in note 17 below). See Adams for a convenient list of the B MSS rubrics (216–29). Marie-Claire Uhart presents the rubrics for all MSS of *Piers Plowman* in "Appendix C" in her unpublished dissertation, whereas the rubrics of the A MSS appear in Kane's edition (1–18). Of the AC MSS, five incorporate the term "vita" (Ch, H², K, T, and Z) and two do not (N, W). The function of Z's "vita," however, differs in that it marks the "visio" section of that manuscript: Z's rubrication at the end of Passus 8 reads, "explicit vita et visio petri plowman" (Uhart 289). N and W, although lacking "vita," section the poem at Passus 9: W has "Sequitur prologus de dowel dobett & dobest," and N uses the term "inquisicio" (Uhart 285, 287). Because no C MS includes "vita" in its rubrication and because only some AC MSS do, it seems logical to assume that the AC texts have received contamination from the A tradition.

¹⁷ The bipartition visio/vita represents an A-text feature which occurs at A.9 in four of the A MSS A, D, J, and R; no form of the word "visio" appears after Passus 9. Four of the A MSS are incomplete (E, H, H³, and L), terminating at some point in Passus 8, and the remaining three (M, U, and V), while they do not include the term "vita," indicate that a section determined in some form by reference to "dowel, dobet, and/or dobest," which Chambers calls simply *Dowel* (306). In contrast, subsegmentation (dowel, dobet, dobest) in some B and C MSS occurs at B.8 and C.10, but under the rubric "visio" or "visione," never "vita." The one exception is Cambridge University Library MS Ll.4.14 (C²), where the break between Passus 7 and 8 reads "Explicit visio Willelmi de petro plowman Et sequitur vita de dowell Dobett et Do-beste, secundum wytt et reson"; however, the rubrication here is written in a later hand and recalls A-text rubrication so strongly that Chambers considers it obvious contamination (n.1, 313). The visio/vita bipartition in the A tradition has frequently been understood as a major structural division in *Piers Plowman*. But the A-text is, after all, incomplete, and the apparent structural rigidity of bipartition may be an exaggerated function of the state of the text. Among other things, Passus A.12 offers a repetition of "antecedent plot developments in A" (Middleton 257) in a way that stresses the unity of the A-text, not

its bipartition. Reference to “ferlys” (A.12.58) echoes A.Prologue.6 “ferly”; “fentesye” and “fentyse” (A.12.67,68) — “feyntise” in Knott and Fowler (Appendix I 67,68) — echoes the prologue to Dream Vision 2, “Er I hadde faren a furlong feyntise me h[ent]e” (A.5.5), and Will’s meeting with Hunger in part alludes to events in Passus A.7. Similarly, the Winchester manuscript’s concluding scribal commentary brings that AC text to a close, and in doing so emphasizes the overall unity of *Piers Plowman* through allusion to the prologue: “And when I was wytterly awakyd I wrote all thys dreame/ And theys mervellys þat I met on mawlverne hyllys/ In a seyson of sommer as I softe nappyd” (cited in Kane, “The Text” 182). Bipartition here yields to unity. Further, bipartition does not carry over into the B and C traditions. Although B and C frequently indicate subsegmentation (dowel, dobet, and dobest), it varies considerably. Moreover, B and C rubrication extend the term “visione” well into those subsegmental sections so that the sections variously marked dowel, dobet, and dobest seem more like marginal glosses than the basis of structural division. W (Cambridge Trinity College MS B.15.17), the basis of both the Kane-Donaldson and Schmidt editions of the B-text, reads at Passus 8, “Passus viij^{us} de visione et primus de dowel” and introduces Passus 20 as “Passus xx^{us} de visione et primus de dobest.” Similarly X (MS HM 143), the basis of Pearsall’s edition of the C-text and Russell’s projected edition, acknowledges at Passus 10, “Et hic incipit visio eiusdem de dowel” (44r) and then continues to use “visione” at Passus 11, “Passus primus de visione de dowel” (48v). In both cases, “visio” or “de visione” extends into the subsegmentation dowel, dobet, and dobest (so also in B MSS Bm, Bo, C, Cot, Hm, L, M, R, S, and W and in the C MSS D, E, F, G, I, K, M, N, P, R, St, U, V, X, and Y).

¹⁸ B.8.70 reads “That ever dremed [dr]ight in [doute], as I wene”; B.11.322 has “wondres of the world.”

¹⁹ This is certainly true visually and formally, but F still has not completed the formal modificatons in Passus 9 (Passus B.12) which were initiated in Passus 8. In the B-text, Dream Vision 3 extends from Passus 8–12, and the DWD occurs at Passus 11: the formal generic structure appears as Prologue 3/ Vision 3/DWD prologue/DWD Vision/DWD epilogue/Vision 3/Epilogue 3. While F eliminates the formal DWD categories in the ways I have described by marking visually and formally the new prologues and epilogues of the old DWD, F allows the continuation of Dream Vision 3 from Passus 11.B.408 to Passus 12.B (Passus 9.F fol. 45v to fol. 50r) to stand. Dream Vision 3, in other words, does not end until Passus 12.B/Passus 9.F so that the newly constructed Dream Visions of Passus F.4 and 5 appear independent formally and visually but remain embedded as inner dreams textually. In this sense F continues to be problematic. Perhaps the best we can say is that F gestures towards a complete interpretation of the B-text, but does so in the manner of the C-reviser’s text — the outline of modification is at times clear but the details are often imprecise.

²⁰ Critics and editors dismiss these “spurious” lines on subjective grounds; Skeat notes, “These lines are thus repeated. I do not admire the ‘flappyng in myn herte.’ It is surely spurious” (n.1, xxix).

²¹ Because F divides the single dream-within-a-dream into two, one encompassing Will’s experiences with Fortune and the other his vision of the operation of Kynde, I have referred to corresponding portions of the DWD of B.11 as DWD1.1 and DWD1.2.

²² The dreamer’s hat seems comparable to that worn by secular figures in fifteenth-century illuminations. Houston describes a Nativity scene in British Library MS Additional 18192 in which Joseph appears in a similar hat and russet gown (171). A similarly clothed figure without a hood appears in a “muddy orange gown, a hat with high crown and rolled brim, and gloves with long cuffs” in Bodleian MS Douce 104, whom Kathleen Scott identifies as Reason (28). Although Reason delivers a sermon in Passus 5, in Passus

4 (the illustration occurs just before C.4.43 at a point in the text equivalent to B.4.45) where Reason participates in the secular justice system, sitting on a bench between the King and his son (see K. Scott 28). She also suggests that the gloves seem to indicate part of a riding-habit, and notes that only the secular figures of the Knight and Squire wear gloves in the Ellesmere Chaucer (n. 50, 28). Gloves frequently appear on courtiers and commoners, and their inclusion as part of the dress of the dreamer in MS CCC 201 may signify that the dreamer is a secular man (see, for example, the peasant labourer figured in gloves in Margaret Scott 26). Fairholt mentions the figure of John Gower in Sloan MS 5141 in a hat and hood also reminiscent of the figure in MS F (164).

23 Dream Vision F.3 "& vnder a lyznde on a lawnde / lay y a stounde" (fol. 30v); F.4 "[A]nd as I lay & lookede / vpon þe launde grene" (fol. 40r); F.5 "[A]s y lay & lokede forþ/ lowe vpon þe grene" (fol. 44v). Interestingly, C agrees with F and removes the sense of "under": "And in a launde as y lay, lened y and slepte" (C.Pro.8).

24 Where B.11.176 reads, for example, "Whoso loveth noght, leve me, he lyveth in deeth deyinge," F registers "Who loveþ not to love me / he lyveþ in deþis drede" (42v), which is absurd, since Trajan is the speaker here.

25 Charlotte Brewer voices the possibility that "F may represent a separate, authorial strand of the B tradition" (75), which would makes its "reading" all the more interesting. Further, the sub-group α differs from β not only because of omissions and additional lines; the rubrics of MSS R and F segment the poem least, falling into Adams's types 4 and 5 (215).

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