Article:

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Towards the end of the celebrated confession scene in *Piers Plowman*, B Passus V there occurs perhaps the most famous passage in the whole of Langland's poem - the most famous, and perhaps the most misunderstood. Glutton, on his way to church to be the sixth of the deadly sins to make his confession, is sidetracked into a tavern; and there, in spite of his sober purpose to confess his "coupe", he is very soon in his cups:

296 Now bigynne Gloton for to go to shrifte
And kairep hym to kirkeward his cope to shewe.
Ac Beton pe Brewestere bad hym good morwe
And heo asked of hym whiderward he wolde.
300 'To holy chirche,' quod he, 'for to here masse,
And sipen I wolde be shryuen and synne na moore.'
'I haue good Ale, gossib,' quod she, 'Gloton, woltow assaye?'
'Hastow,' quod he, 'any hote spices?'
'I haue pepir and pione and a pound of garleek,
305 A ferpyngworb of fenel seed for fastynge dayes.'
Thanne gob Gloton In and grete opes after.
Cesse pe sowestere sat on pe benche,
Watte pe warner and his wif bope,
Tymme pe Tynker and twyne of his knaues,
310 Hikke pe hakeneyman and hugh pe Nedlere,
Clarice of Cokkeslane and pe Clerk of pe chirche,
Sire Piers of Pridie and Pernele of Flaundres,
Dawe pe dykere and a dogeine opere,
A Ribibour, a Ratoner, a Rakiere of Chepe,
315 A Ropere, a Redyngkyng and Rose pe dysshere,
Godefray of Garlekhipe and Griffyn pe walshe,
Of vpholderes an heep, erly by pe morwe,
Geue Gloton wiþ glad chere good ale to hanselle.

336 There was lau3ynge and lourynge and 'lat go þe cuppe!'
Bargaynes and beuerages bigonne to arise,
And seten so til euensong and songen vmwhile
Til Gloton hadde yglubbed a galon and a gille.
340 Hise guttes bigonne to gopelen as two gredy sowes;
He pissed a potel in a paternoster while,
And blew þe rounde ruwet at þe ruggebones ende
That alle þat herde þat horn heide hir nose after
And wisshed it hadde ben waxed wiþ a wispe of firses.
345 He hadde no strengþe to stonde er he his staf hadde,
And þanne gan he to go like a gleamannes bicche
Som tyne aside and som tyne arere,
As whoso leip lynes to lacche wiþ foweleþ.
Ac whan he drouȝe to þe dore þanne dyumen hise eijen;
He þrumbled on þe þresshold and þrew to þe erpe.
Clement þe Cobelere kauȝte hym by þe myddel
For to liften hym o lofte and leyde hym on his knowes.
Ac Gloton was a gret cherl and grym in be liftyng;
And kouȝed vp a cawdel in Clementes lappe.

It has been very widely agreed - by critics, social and literary historians, and readers of the poem generally - that this episode is to be acclaimed as an example of vivid comic realism. Already in 1908 J.M. Manly could remark that it had "often been cited as one of the most remarkable pieces of genre painting in our early literature"; it presented, he thought, "the veritable interior of an English ale-house in the fourteenth century, with all its basenesses and its gross hilarity". T.P. Dunning was reminded of Hubert and Jan van Eyck, and the "new realism" of the Flemish school; David Daiches found "the interior of a medieval tavern . . . described with Hogarthian realism"; and Morris Bishop called the passage an "authentic report" of life in such a tavern, reeking with genuine atmosphere, noisome and unventilated.

There is much, indeed, to be said for this view of the episode. Syntactically the passage is marked by co-ordinate constructions heaping up the concrete details of the scene (one critic calls it an "onslaught of physical detail"); it begins with a swift roll-call of lowlife names and occupations as Glutton enters the tavern and takes in its crowded interior and the faces which turn to greet him (306-18); thereafter the verse becomes equally crowded with tactile objects ("cloke", "hood", "cuppe"), with the sounds of song, laughter, oaths and argument, and with a welter of precise spatial adjuncts (e.g. "on þe þresshold . . . to þe erpe . . . by þe myddel . . . on his knowes . . . in Clementes lappe", 350-4), as the brief scene reaches its hectic climax. In this climax Langland exploits scatology, animal imagery, and above all the potential of alliterative verse for portraying gross physicality, brilliantly to depict the sight, sounds and stink of a staggering drunkard voiding bodily products by the bucketful through every orifice. The whole passage, culminating in the superbly echoic "kouȝed vp a cawdel" (354) and the sickened squeamishness of "þat leynges, so vn louely it smauȝte" (356), is as effective an evocation of gluttony, drunkenness and its consequences as one could find anywhere in English literature, and it comes as no surprise to find that later poets who described the glutton and the drunkard were apparently indebted to it.

If this were all, however - if the passage were no more than a full-colour-plate of gross realism - then it would surely be open to a charge often levelled at other parts of Langland's poem, that of digressiveness. The tavern episode interrupts a scene set in church which is just as much concerned with repentance as it is with sin - perhaps more so: after all, of the eight "sinners" who come forward
in the scene, the first (Pernele Proud-Heart) tells us hardly any­thing about her sins, and the next (Lecher) and the last (Robert the Robber) tell us nothing at all. Instead, the lines devoted to them (62-74, 461-76) are taken up with their cries of penitence, pleas for mercy and vows of penance and amendment. Thus the scene begins and ends with a clear dominant emphasis on repentance; and in between, all those who come forward, including (eventually) Glutton, evince the same emotion, promise works of penance, and so forth. In addition to this, the confessor Repentance is made to deliver several speeches of advice and exhortation on the subjects of contrition, restitution and penance, and to conduct the confessional as the confessor's manuals required, with a mixture of threats, blandishments, and interrogation; and wherever in all this the material of the sacrament of penance, sin, is described, it is not (Glutton's apart) portrayed directly, but reported in the context of dramatised confessions which themselves are modelled on the requirements for actual confessions laid down in the manuals. The whole scene is a detailed and often highly technical account of the sacrament of penance and its various parts, through which sin (and the sinners' own sense of sin) is portrayed, as John Lawlor has noted, with a subtle and pene­trating irony. But from all this the tavern episode seems to present a great danger of diversion. Lawlor, aware of the danger, warns that "the outright comedy of situation and act . . . in the never-to-be-forgotten progress of a repentant Gluttony not to the church but homewards by way of the ale-house . . . should not divert us", but this - to the present writer at least - looks like a warn­ing that comes too late: like all those admonitions against change in linguistic usage, it is the kind of warning which serves only to confirm that the course we are warned against is already being generally taken. Many readers, it seems, feel (with D.J. Williams) the "incongruous irony" of a situation where "in the midst of what appears to be a basically abstract allegorical framework, the reader is overwhelmed by an unwelcome onslaught of physical detail". Read literally, the tavern episode is incongruous, is a diversion; if "outright comedy" and "physical detail" is all the episode contains, then - no matter how vivid and amusing it may be - it is most certainly a gross digression.

But this is not all; the realistic physical detail is not the whole picture, and the tavern episode - as I hope to demonstrate - is not just a marginal grotesque.

Consider, for instance, the temporal adjuncts. Whereas the spatial adjuncts, as we have seen, serve to fill out the physical detail of the tavern and the bodies populating it, depicting a resolutely secular space quite different from the church to which Glutton had been heading, two of the adjuncts of time (in contrast) put tavern and church in parallel:

[They] seten so til euensong and songen v(n)while . . . .
[Gloton] pissed a potel in a paternoster while . . . .

These phrases refer us back to the church observances from which the delights of the tavern have enticed Glutton away; and they indicate that the tavern scene is conceived at least partly as the "devil's
chapel" of pulpit tradition, as a travesty of church rites, with
drinking songs for hymns, the sound of urination for prayers, and a
circulating ale-pot ("lat go pe cuppe!", 336) for a chalice. Nor
is this a mere homiletic wash on the surface of a deeply realistic
canvas: for, as we shall see, the climactic moment of the whole
episode, Glutton's sickness, is basically a travesty of church
observance - specifically, it travesties the penitential observances
in which Glutton would have been participating at the very same time
if he had not strayed in space, from church to tavern.

In a recent study Myra Stokes has tentatively suggested that
Glutton's regurgitation of his excesses (354) may be taken to repre­
sent, in the manner of a "grotesque parody", the restitution of ill-
gotten gains which sinners were required to make as part of the
sacrament of penance. She notes that "vomiting as restitution is
actually an image used quite seriously on occasion", and quotes John
of Salisbury:

> a government which is corrupted by luxury . . . will
> vomit forth under the pressure of God's judgment what­
> ever it has drunk down with immoderate luxury.

The metaphor of vomiting is, however, used more than occasionally, in
works which Langland may well have known, with a different tenor: it
is used as a metaphor for confession, for the voiding of sins by their
oral recreation before the priest. It is used thus in another comic
"Glutton's confession", the famous twelfth-century Latin Goliardic
poem *Estuans intrinsecus* of the Archpoet:

> Sum locutus contra me quicquid de me novi
> et virus evomui quod tam diu fovi
> [I have uttered openly all I knew that shamed me,
> And have spued the poison forth that so long defamed me.]

The metaphor also occurs in three penitential texts - texts of a kind
I have argued elsewhere for Langland having known. The earliest,
a twelfth-century Cistercian tract, urges the sinner not to delay "in
vomiting out completely, by the vomit of pure confession, whatever
oppresses the stomach of conscience". The other texts were written
early in the thirteenth century by two disciples of Peter the Chanter
of Paris; Robert Courson, who taught that the sinner should dwell on
his sins in confession so that they might "be vomited forth after the
most diligent and meticulous examination"; and Thomas of Chobham,
who likened mortal sin to a poison "which one must, as it were, vomit
out through confession". And finally, the figure occurs in one of
the sermons of MS Royal 18 B xxiii, which likens sinners to drunkards
and prescribes for their cure "bis womyte of be sacrament of con­
fession".

The same metaphor is also found in embryonic form in the stan­
dard exegesis of a biblical text - i.e. Proverbs xxvi 11, where the
dog is said to return to his vomit; this was commonly glossed as
repented sin to which the penitent goes back. It would not, I
think, be unreasonable to argue that Langland meant to recall this
text and this interpretation of it when he compared Glutton to a dog
then wrote that his vomit was too foul for even the hungriest hound to lap up (355-6), and added in the C text that he vomited "as an hound bat eet gras" (C VI 431); but the case for a figurative reading of Glutton's sickness rests for the most part on very much clearer cues than this. Not least among them is the fact that Glutton is sick in a kneeling position ("on his knowes", 352); the detail is gratuitous if the sickness is merely literal, but if it is a metaphor for confession, then the posture meaningfully mirrors that which the penitent was required to adopt before the confessor. Furthermore, Clement the Cobbler - to whom falls the quasi-confessorial office of raising up the fallen Glutton ("to liften hym o lofte", just as the confessor was required to raise up the sinner) and of receiving his outpouring - cuts a curiously apposite figure as a mock-confessor. The name Clement, for one thing, aptly suggests the merciful and benevolent disposition which it was proper for the confessor to have (and which has been exemplified shortly before by Langland's confessor Repentance [280-95]); and his attire, too - specifically the hood for which he has earlier exchanged his cloak (319-33) - may be meant to recall the garb of an earlier confessor of dubious credentials, Mede's "Confessour coped as a frere" (B III 35). Then again, it is Clement who, according to the drinkers' "couenaunt", fills the "cuppe", the chalice of this "devil's chapel" - of which clearly he is the minister.

Most suggestive of all, however, is Clement's trade. For cobblers were, it seems, notorious in fable and proverb for pretending to stations above their own - for failing to "stick to their lasts" - consistently type-cast (all the way from Pliny's famous anecdote about the cobbler who found fault with Apelles' painting, through Chaucer's Host's exclamation that "The devel made a reve for to preche, /Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche", right up to relatively recent folklore) as dabblers and meddlers in matters way beyond them. For Clement's pretensions to the office of confessor, to the exercise of the "art of arts", the cure of souls, there are, it is true, no clear literary antecedents; not until Shakespeare will a cobbler call himself "a mender of bad soules". It is possible, however, that Langland may have had a model in real life. For among the charlatans to whom Hawkyn resorts, scorning the church's ministry, to get a cure for the effects of his sin in B Passus XIII, is "he Soutere of Southwerk", one (as Skeat suggests) "probably famous in [his] own day", and perhaps even one and the same as Clement, who after all consorts in the tavern with several notables of districts close to Southwark, "Clarice of Cokkeslane", "Godefray of Garlekhipe", and "a Rakiere of Chepe".

Read metaphorically, then, the episode of Glutton's sickness can be seen as a fitting climax to the whole scene in the "devil's chapel"; it emerges as a figurative mock-confession, made to a characteristically irregular cobbler. Moreover, in the light of this reading of the climax, the earlier lines describing Glutton's drunkenness are thrown into sharper relief, and their figurative substructure revealed, as I hope now to show.

Now of course it is perfectly possible, and on one level perfectly satisfactory, to explain all the details in this portrait of
the drunken Glutton — his physical incapacitation, his staggering and stumbling, the impairment of his eyesight (and indeed his nausea itself) — as the actual, literal effects of inebriation. But it is striking that these same details can also be found in the general currency of figurative language in the Middle Ages, and indeed in Langland's own usage, as metaphors for sinfulness. In Piers Plowman B Passus IX, for instance, Langland's personified Wit takes gluttons and "glubberes" to be exempla of sinful man:

Muche wo worp man þat mysrulep his Inwit,  
And þat ben glotons, glubberes; hir god is hire wombe:  
Quorum deus venter est. 
For þei seruen Sathan hir soules shal he haue; 
That lyuen synful lif here hir soule is lich þe deuel. 
And alle þat lyuen good lif are lik to god almyȝty: 
Qui manet in caritate in deo manet &c. 
Alias þat drynke shal fordo þat god deere bouȝte, 
And dooþ god forsaken hem þat he shoop to his liknesse. 
(B IX 61-7)

Like Wit's "glubberes", and like also the people addressed in the MS Royal sermon already quoted, Glutton in B Passus V is "drunk on sin". He is the archetypal sinner, the negation of caritas (wasting what "myȝte be spared and spended on som hungry", 373), erring from the straight way "som tyme aside and som tyme arere" (347); his sight is dim, like that of the blind sinners blindly led by ignorant priests until they fall into the ditch — and of course Glutton, too, is "fallen": specifically he stumbles and falls and needs help to stand (345-52), just like the later exemplum of sinful man in B Passus VIII, the man "in a boot amydde a brood water", who stumbles and falls "þoruȝ þe fende and þe flessh and þe false worlde" but whom charity "strengþep . . . to stonde" (B VIII 29, 42-6). And lastly Glutton's indigestion — that internal turmoil which issues in flatulence and farts before it finally makes him vomit (340-4) — emerges as only a less explicit echo of the indigestibility of sin suffered by Envy:

. . . enuye and yuel wil is yuel to defie. 
May no sugre ne swete byng aswage my swellyng, 
Ne no Diapenidion dryue it fro myn herte, 
Ne neiber shrifte ne shame, but whoso shrape my mawe?

The whole portrait of Glutton under the influence, finally, is usefully compared with a fifteenth-century confessional lyric which renders feelingly the physical ill-effects of the sinful state:

My fete, sume tyme more 
and lesse, they do swete; 
my hert ys very pore, 
and besyly doth bete; 
my hed ys all macy, 
and meruelosely dothe werke; 
myn yene dyme and dasy, 
my neke ys full sterke;
Thys haue I full surely
for that I was vniust
to god, the sune off mary,
and leuyd after my lust. Now mercy, Ihesu.

My hondys do me no good
ne-dys must I ly so
and take no erthly fode

now helpe me, goode lorde,
my stomake ys full faynt;
I make to the acorde
Vppon payne off a-taynt;
I wyll no more suerly
to the be so vnjust
butt kepe thy lawes truly
   And put a-way false lust. Now mercy Ihesu.

Unlike the lyricist, however, Glutton in his wretched state is
not able to make his confession - only, for the time being, to parody
it. Then for the next two days he sleeps (another possible metaphor
for sinfulness!) before finally his wife and Repentance together
drive him to confess (359-66). His confession, when at last he makes
it, is as fully realised in terms of actual sacramental practice as
any in the series in B Passus V:

'I, Gloton,' quod þe gome, 'gilty me yelde
That I haue trespased with my tonge, I kan no3t telle
how ofte;
Sworen goddes soule and his sydes and "so me god helpe"
There no nede was nyne hundred tymes;
And ouerseyen me at my soper and som tyme at Nones
That I, Gloton, girte it vp er I hadde gon a myle,
And yspilt þat myyte be spared and spended on som hungry:
Ouer delicatly on feeste dayes drones and eten bobe,
And sat som tyme so longe þere þat I sleep and eet at ones.
For loue of tales in Tauernes to drynke pe moore I hyed;
Fedde me bofire noon when fastyng dayes were.'

(B V 367-77)

Here Glutton confesses to the very sins about which, according to the
penitential manuals, the confessor was to interrogate the penitent:

Gluttony is committed principally in time, that is,
when one eats very early in the morning . . . Secondly
it is committed in quality, that is, when one seeks
over-delicate foods . . . Thirdly it is committed in
quantity, that is, when one eats or drinks too much,
for this may lead to vomiting; and this is the vilest
kind of gluttony . . . Buffoonery, loquacity and many
other evils arise from it . . . [The confessor asks:] Have you ever eaten more than you ought, or more than
was naturally expedient, especially to the point of
vomiting? Have you ever broken a fast, whether a
customary fast or one imposed on you, or prescribed on account of your gluttony, by drinking wine, beer or water before mealtime without just and necessary cause, as these inn-keepers and boozers do in Lent? . . . Have you eaten too early, that is, before noon [ante horam nonam], at a time when you should have been fasting?³⁸

Glutton's confession is also particularly rich in references to the "circumstances" of sin, such as where, when and how often a sin was committed, which the same manuals also required the confessor to ask about:

The confessor should consider the time at which a sin is committed, that is, whether on a feast day or another day, or in Lent, or at a time of prayer or fast, or at some other time; and whether by day or by night . . . You should inquire where it was committed, that is, whether in a sacred place or a profane one . . . and how often the sin was committed, because you ought to inquire not only about the sins themselves, but about how they were committed time and again; and the sinner ought to confess this, if he can recall, so that for instance he should confess how often he was drunk.³⁹

The response of Repentance, the confessor, to this long-delayed but technically correct confession, is suitably encouraging: "This shewynge shrift", he says, "shal be meryt to pe" (378, my emphasis). But Glutton's demeritorious mock-confession in the tavern does not only serve as a stark contrast to the "proper" one which follows (in the manner perhaps of Mak's mock-nativity which precedes the real thing in the Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play);³⁶ it also reminds us that in B Passus V Langland is not merely depicting sins, in the hallowed tradition of personification allegory: he is depicting sins confessing, sinners in the act of repentance, in the act of ceasing to be sinners. And so, even at the very moment when one of the sins seems to have escaped the confessional context to be picturesquely elaborated - in a way which is, on one level, so redolent of genre painting, the Van Eycks, and "Hogarthian realism" - even at such a moment Langland returns us, however obliquely, to the idea of confession. At one moment, as in Avarice's confession immediately before, a sin creates itself on the page by virtue of repentance; sin materialises only within the dramatic confession. At the next moment a sin turns aside from confession to realise itself dramatically by actually sinning, only for a curious parodic confession to materialise as part of the sin. Langland, in short, presents sin and confession as mirror-images of one another; whichever one we look at, we see in it the inverted image of the other. The whole episode of Glutton's tavern visit, I believe, should not charm us as an example of Langland's vivid but digressive and ingenuous imagination, as it seems to have charmed the critics, but should rather impress us with evidence of his ingenuity, even his wit. It is an integral part of his peculiarly brilliant achievement in B
Passus V - the bringing together, into dynamic contact, of the ideas of sin and repentance, a conjunction which, far from being forgotten or laid aside in the tavern scene, is there subjected to a kaleidoscopic variation. Perhaps, in the end, the tavern scene - with its grotesques, its parody and its central mirror-image - should remind us less of Van Eyck than of Dali; perhaps it should be acclaimed not for its realism, but for its anticipation of the surreal.
NOTES

1 B V 296-318, 336-56 (omitting the lines in which Clement the Cobbler exchanges his cloak for Hikke the Ostler's hood). All references to the B text are to Piers Plowman: The B Version, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London, 1975). For the A text I cite Piers Plowman: The A Version, ed. George Kane (London, 1960); and for the C text, Piers Plowman by William Langland: An Edition of the C text, ed. Derek Pearsall (London, 1978). The C version of the passage quoted (C VI 350-414) is a slight expansion of B (C VI 352, 368 and 370 are additions). The A text (A V 146-98) corresponds quite closely with B up to B V 350, but lacks the climactic (and for the present purpose crucial) episode where Glutton vomits in Clement's lap (B V 351-6), except through memorial contamination from either B or C, in five MSS (Kane, pp.31, 292, 443). There is no trace at all of the tavern episode in the version of MS Bodley 851, which its editors claim to be an authorial version predating A (Piers Plowman: The Z Version, ed. A.G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts, 59 [Toronto, 1983] p.82).


5 For indications that B V 10-509 should be regarded as taking place in church see B V 1-2 ("The kynge and his knyghtes to be kirke wente / To here matynys and masse"); 297-301 ("kairep hym to kirkeward his couple to schewe. / Ac Beton . . . asked of hym whiderward he wolde. / 'To holy chirche,' quod he, 'for to here masse, / And sijen I wole be shryuen'"); and 505-6, where the confession scene concludes with a reference to the three modes of sin (thought, word and deed) and with the versicle "Deus tu conuersus" - just like the conclusion of the general confession in the mass: see The Lay Folk's Mass Book, B 71-2 (ed. T.F. Simmons, EETS OS 71 [London, 1879] p.8); Sarum Missal, ed. J. Wickham Legg (Oxford, 1916) pp.216-17; and Pearsall's note to C VII 152.
This is true not only of the B text but also of A (V 45-57, 233-50) and Z (V 78-90, 131-50); in Z, indeed, the scene consists entirely of penitent outcries, pleas for grace and promises of penance and amendment. In C, on the other hand, further material on sin is introduced (from B Passus XIII), so that Pride and Lechery now describe their sins (C VI 14-60, 175-95); nor is Robert the last to come forward in C (VI 316-30).


Lawlor, p.50.

See, e.g., C.S. Lewis, Studies in Words (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1967) p.18: "Statements that honour, or freedom, or humour, or wealth, 'does not mean' this or that are proof that it was beginning to mean, or even had long meant, precisely this or that. We tell our pupils that deprecate does not mean depreciate or that immorality does not mean simply lechery because these words are beginning to mean just those things... We do not warn our pupils that coalbox does not mean a hippopotamus".


B V 338, 341 (my emphases). With reference to the latter line, Spearing and Spearing (p.161) comment: "The whole of this highly secular episode is timed in religious terms".


Tractatus de Interiori Domo : "quidquid conscientiae stomachum gravat, totum
vomitu purae confessionis evomere non differas" (PL 184: 539; cit. Cairns, p.102). Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.


Sermon 40: "it is taugth in fisike pat a vomyte is a profitabull medecyn to suche dronkon men. And pis vomyte to oure porpose is be sacrament of confession . . . For Thesu Cristes love, remembur invardy on pis peynes [of hell], and I trust to God pat be shal store pe to a vomyte of all bi dronkenlew lyvyng. And iff pou haue pis womyte of pe sacrament of confession, Godes Sonne with-owten question dwellib ban with pe . . ." (ed. Woodburn O. Ross, *Middle English Sermons*, EETS OS 209 [London, 1940] pp.240-1).


See B III 43 ("Mede for hire mysdedes to pat man kneled"); V 386-7 (where Sloth recognises the requirement but is unable to comply: "I moste sitte to be shryuen or ells sholde I nappe; / I may no3t stonde ne stoupe ne wipoute stool knele"); Chaucer, *Parson's Tale*, 991 ("sholde nat the synnere sitte as heighe as his confessour, but knele biforn hym"); John Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, 699-700 ("when any mon I-schryue wole be, / Teche hym to knele downe on hys kne") (ed. G. Kristensson, Lund Studies in English, 49 [Lund, 1974] p.109); and see Tentler, pp.82-3.
See, e.g., Gratian, *Decretum, de pen.* Dist. VI, c. 1(3), where the confessor is required to be benevolent ("beniuolus") towards the sinner, and to be ready to raise him up and share his burden ("paratus erigere et secum onus portare") (Friedberg, I, col. 1243). This canon is very frequently quoted or paraphrased in penitential texts; see my dissertation, p.129.

See, e.g. *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch* (Munich, 1967-) s.vv. *clemens* I A 2, *clementia* II; and on the proper disposition of the confessor see the preceding note; my dissertation, pp.128-35, 198; and Tentler, pp.84-5, 95-6. John de Burgo, in his penitential manual *Pupilla Oculi* (c.1385; see Pantin, pp.213-14), Pars V, cap. xii(H), permits the confessor to make a dispensation in a certain case "out of the clemency of mercy" ("ex clementia misericordie") (print of A.A. Haius, Paris, 1510, f.44r). Moreover, if B V 351-6 are new in the B text (as Kane maintains; note 1 above), then the elaboration of the cobbler's mock-ecclesiastical role may also be meant to recall his namesake, the newly elected antipope Clement VII. (On the dating and other possible references to the Schism in B, see J.A.W. Bennett, "The Date of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*, Medium Aevum 12 [1943] pp.55-64, esp. pp.56, 60-1, 62-3.)

B V 332. Langland tells us that the cup is filled as part of the bargain struck between Clement and Hikke over the exchange of cloak and hood. In the light of 324, however ("Whoso hadde pe hood sholde han amendes of pe cloke"), it appears that Hikke ought to be standing Clement a drink, not vice versa. Stokes (p.171) explains this in realistic terms, as "the result of drunken fuddledness"; but perhaps Langland has here deliberately violated the literal logic of the scene in order to bring out all the more clearly a figurative meaning.


Julius Caesar, I, i, 14 (Folio spelling). The cobbler goes on to claim innocence of his trade's proverbial meddlesomeness: "I meddle with no tradesman's matters, nor women's matters" (21-2).

B XIII 336-9; Skeat, parallel text ed., II, p.76.

Perhaps this hardly needs to be exemplified; but see, e.g., Robert of Flamborough, Liber Poenitentialis, Lib. IV, cap. vii: "Gula . . . introducit . . . nauseam, vomitum; aufert usum pedum . . . et obtundit ingenium et visum" ("Gluttony leads to nausea, vomiting; takes away the use of the feet; and dulls the wits and the sight") (Firth, p.195).

Note 21 above; e.g. "muche peple of his world . . . ben dronenlewe and vnclenly . . . See, man, what myscheff spirituall drokennes drawep mannes in . . . The first drynke is pe drynke of pryde" [i.e. the first of the seven deadly sins] (Ross, pp.230-1). Cf. also Is xix 14, xxiv 20.

B V 349, and compare B X 272-81a, XII 170-85; and on Langland's citation of Matthew's blind-leading-the-blind metaphor, see Gray, "Langland's Quotations" (see above, n.17).

B V 122-5; compare the "crampe" and the "Cardiacle" from which the envious Hawkyn suffers in B XIII 334, and which drive him to consult the "Soutere of Southwerk".

