CHAUCER'S USE OF DRESS

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by

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INDEX

ILLUSTRATIONS

Plates are Metropolitan Museum of Art Miniatures from Medieval Vista, Album MM. New York, 1953.

The drawings have been made wherever possible from photographs of manuscripts or paintings or from photographic reductions of brass rubbings. The sources of these reproductions have been varied and numerous.

INTRODUCTION

We may, of course, understand a great deal of Chaucer at first sight; but we shall never comprehend the full Chaucer but by studying those minutiae which are matters of history to us, but which were present everyday commonplaces to the people for whom he wrote.[1]

Few minutiae become "matters of history" more quickly than fashions and caprices in dress. We laugh at the styles of twenty-five years ago, consider our grandmother's clothing quaint and the garments of two generations ago romantically beautiful. Fashions which have special significance in their day are quickly changed and forgotten. Future historians may puzzle and speculate upon the position of "the man in the grey flannel suit" in mid-twentieth-century society much as we wonder about Chaucer's Merchant's "Flaundrysh bever hat" and what it signified to the poet's audience.

While clothes do not make the man, they are often the first indication of his character and his position in the world, and it is not surprising that many writers have used descriptions of dress to delineate character. This method, however, has one drawback: after five hundred years, much of the indirect meaning in such descriptions may no longer be understood. To a considerable extent this is what has happened to Chaucer's writings. His fourteenth-century readers, knowing exactly which fashion was new and which was outdated, grasped the full implication of his words, while the modern reader, already impeded by unfamiliar terminology, undoubtedly misses much of the significance of the passages.

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[1] G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (New York, 1955), p. 278.

Chaucer's descriptions are vivid and amusing even today, but in order to grasp their full import it is essential to understand as completely as possible what they meant to his contemporaries. Therefore the first part of this thesis consists of a survey of the dress of Chaucer's age, with special attention to changes in fashion and the significance of the variations. A brief outline of medieval trade and of the cloth industry explains the supply of fabrics, their relative costs, and certain economic aspects of social organization. An outline of the normal dress of the period describes garments, defines terms, and attempts to indicate what variations prevailed within the different levels of society and among specific occupational groups. The dress of the clergy and the armour and weapons of the warrior are considered in separate chapters. A chapter is also devoted to the sumptuary laws and the social structure of the period.

With this material as a background, the various ways in which Chaucer utilized dress in his writings are examined. Chapters six and seven consider the poet's use of dress as an indication of social position or of occupation. Chapters eight and nine are devoted to dress and fashion as aids to characterization. Chaucer's dependence on colour symbolism is treated separately, and finally the use of dress as a narrative device is investigated.

I

THE MATERIALS OF DRESS

> And wee to martis of Braban charged bene
> With Englyssh clothe, full gode and feyre to seyne.
> Wee bene ageyne charged wyth mercerye,
> Haburdasshere ware and wyth grocerye.
> To whyche martis, that Englissh men call feyres,
> Iche nacion ofte maketh here repayeres.[2]

When Chaucer was born, "somewhat later than 1340," the middle ages were already showing certain characteristics which later became distinguishing features of the Renaissance. The power of feudalism and of the church was weakening although these institutions still controlled the minds and bodies of the majority of the population. The growth of trade had brought wealth to a new class of merchants and strength to the expanding trade guilds.

As life grew easy and hazards decreased, there was more wealth and leisure. The Crusades brought additional contact with the East, and the luxuries and learning of the orient flowed westward through Genoa and Venice. The terrible plagues of the early fourteenth century resulted in the concentration of wealth among the surviving members of families and a consequent increase in demands for a better life.

At the close of the middle ages, art and fashion were still inextricably blended. The fact that dress served to accentuate the strict order of society did not prevent its also expressing the aesthetic taste of the period. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the amazing extravagances of costume and the increasing

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[2] The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye, ed. Sir George Warner (Oxford, 1926), p.27.

luxury of dress were reflections of a general change in the social and economic structure of Western Europe.

Leisure and wealth created demands which the medieval merchants were quick to satisfy; something novel was always available for a price. A growing army of traders developed most of the tools of modern commerce for their own convenience.

Each country had its own coinage. The names of some of the coins remain to this day but the values of all have changed constantly. In Chaucer's England the silver penny was the standard unit. Two hundred and forty pennies constituted a 'pound,' which was literally a pound of silver. As today, twelve pence equalled a shilling, and twenty shillings made a pound. There was also a 'mark' which was equivalent to one hundred and sixty pence. In 1344 Edward III finally issued a satisfactory gold coinage which consisted of a 'noble' valued at half a mark (6s. 8d.), a 'maille noble' worth 40d., and a 'ferlyng noble' of 20d.

There can be no entirely satisfactory index for translating these sums into equivalent modern values, and any such scale is "a metapher rather than a mathematical proposition."[3] By comparing farm wages and livestock prices (as stable criteria of values) attempts have been made to evaluate the purchasing power of fourteenth-century money. Estimates have changed as our own rising cost of living has devalued modern currencies. In 1923 the penny of the fourteenth century was said to be the equivalent of about fifty cents,[4] The estimate had risen to

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[3] G. G. Coulton, The Meaning of Medieval Moneys, Historical Association Leaflet No. 95 (London, 1934), pp. 4-5.

[4] L. F. Salzman, English Industries of the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1923), p. 198.

over eighty cents by 1945.[5] Today $1.50 will pay for about the same amount of labour or produce that a penny purchased in Chaucer's time.[6] Nevertheless, it is difficult to state with certainty what a price of two shillings a yard meant to a buyer of cloth in the late fourteenth century, for by our standards, the price of manufactured goods was extremely high. Imported items were particularly expensive for, although goods and men moved about constantly by land and sea, travel was beset with perils, restrictions and discomforts.

England's most important export was wool. The fine quality of English wool made it indispensable to the manufacturers of cloth in the Low Countries, and its value, both as an economic weapon and as a source of excise duties was recognized by the English Government at an early date. The development of an English cloth industry, however, had been fostered from the thirteenth century onwards, and in the reign of Edward III a policy was formulated to "encourage the settlement within the kingdom of foreign cloth makers, from whom the English weavers and dyers could learn the arts which they had previously been wanting."[7] The special privileges granted to Flemish weavers encouraged a number of them to settle in England and the desired improvement in domestic cloth was forthcoming.

Even coarse woollen cloth cost between 11d. and 2s. the ell (45"), and the texture of the wool was hard, the fibre being full of hairs. Better qualities of cloth were priced as high as 5s. a yard ($90-$120) and if these prices seem high compared to an average daily wage for a

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[5] Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (New York, 1950), p. 16, n. 22; p. 41, n. 13.

[6] See Appendix A for comparative prices.

[7] W. J. Ashley, "The Early History of the English Woollen Industry," AEAP, II (1887), 40.

labourer of 4d. ($6.00), it must be remembered that every stage of cloth manufacture was exactly what the word originally meant, 'made by hand.'

Wool had first to be sorted, and the better qualities separated from the poorer, for the mixing of different grades of wool in one cloth was prohibited by law. Wool might be dyed before or after weaving, but in either case this was a long process requiring skilled workmen and expensive, imported, dye-stuffs. Carding and spinning were usually undertaken by women at home.

The weaving was the most important process, although preparing the warp and threading the loom was a tedious prelude to it. In 1197 the Assizes of Measures had enacted certain legislations, one of which stated: "It is ordained that woollen clothes, wherever they are made, shall be made of the same width, to wit: of two ells within the lists and of the same goodness in the middle and sides." [8] This ordinance was repeated in the Magna Carta, but Edward I was the first ruler to enforce it.

Contemporary illustrations show small looms, operated by one person; yet to weave cloth sometimes as much as ninty inches wide, very broad looms, perhaps with two weavers, must have been required. Striped cloth (ray) was, however, commonly made five quarters of a yard broad (45"), and very coarse 'cogware' or 'Kendal cloth' was only three quarters of a yard wide and must have been woven very quickly.

Raw cloth from the loom still required processing.

> Cloth that cometh from the weaving is not comely to wear
> Till it is fulled under foot or in fulling stocks;
> Washen well with water, and with teasles cratched,
> Towked, and teynted and under tailor's hand.[9]

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[8] Ashley, p. 32.

[9] Wm. Langland, The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, B, XV, 444-447. Modern spelling from Salzman, Industries, p. 205.

Fulling was a process of thickening the cloth by beating it in water, after which it was scoured and cleaned, then stretched out to dry. Loose fibers were combed out with teazles, and the nap thus raised was shorn off to give a smooth finish. The number of opportunities for cheating on the quality or quantity of the cloth was exceeded only by the number of regulations enacted to prevent such practices.

The records of the fourteenth century list a wide variety of fabrics, some familiar, others no longer made. Linen weaving was carried on in England, but most of the domestic cloth was of wool, and a large portion of it was coarse 'burel.' Such cloth seems to have been made in lengths of twenty ells and sold at about 8d. the ell. Sumptuary laws of 1363 decreed that plowmen, carters, and other labourers having less than 40s. in goods and chattels could wear only blanket and russet costing no more than 12d. the ell. These were both common cloths, russet usually of a brown or red colour, and blanket available either dyed or in the natural grey. The dyed cloth cost about twice as much as the natural. 'Bluett' was a slightly superior cloth, costing from 2s. to 4s. the ell. Rays, motleys, freizes, and faldyng were also in this price range.

While much of the more expensive cloth continued to come from Flanders, there were fabrics woven in England of exceptionally fine quality. These were eagerly sought after by European merchants. Scarlet, made of the finest soft-threaded wool and dyed in the yarn with 'gryne' or cochineal, was popular and very costly, half a yard having been bought in 1379 at a cost of 7s. 6d. What it meant to a woman in 1443 may be

gathered from a letter which Margaret Paston wrote to her husband John: "I wolde ye weren at hom, ... now lever dan (than) a goune, zow (though) it wer of scarlette."[10] Scarlet was a particularly elastic fabric and was favoured for making hose. In London in 1380 a pair of scarlet hose cost 6s. 8d.

The usual apparel of wealthy citizens was generally of expensive woollen cloth, while squires and young gentlemen ordered similar goods, even though they did not always pay for them. In 1380 Edmund de Stontor was billed for the following:

First, for 2¼ yards of sanguine m..., price per yard, 4s. 8d.	10s. 6d.
Item, for 2½ yards of ... tawny medley, price per yard, 4s. 8d.	11s. 6d.
Item, for 3½ yards of ray, brown ground, price per yard, 2s. 6d.	8s. 9d.
Item, for 3 yards of tawney parted with ray, price per yard, 3s. 4d.	10s.
Item, for 1½ yards of ray for a groom, price per yard, 22d.[11]	2s. 9d.

In 1397 a squire's tailor's bill listed:

1½ yards 1 nail of red cloth for	9s. 4d.
1¼ yards 1 nail of black cloth for	7s. 10d.
2 yards of rayed cloth, blue ground for . . .	4s. 8d.
1¼ yards of red cloth for	3s. 9d.[12]

Although warm and durable, woollen fabrics are prone to collect dirt, are difficult to wash and often irritating to the skin, hence linen appears to have been popular for undergarments among the middle and upper classes. A considerable quantity of linen was imported to suplement domestic production. In 1397 a length of linen in a wardrobe

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[10] The Paston Letters, ed. James Gairdner (London, 1872), I, 49.

[11] Edith Rickert, Chaucer's World (New York, 1948), p. 343.

[12] Rickert, pp. 337-338. For additional information on the price of cloth see Appendix A, Table 3.

inventory was priced at 7d. the ell, slightly above the average cost.

Cotton was imported from Egypt and Asia Minor and, from the twelfth century onwards, was also grown and spun in Italy. It does not appear to have been in common use, although mention of mixed cloth of cotton and linen seems to suggest that the advantages of cotton as a warp thread had been recognized in France and Italy.

Merchants made their greatest profits on the luxury fabrics, the silk, velvet, brocade, and cloth-of-gold, most of which came from Asia Minor. The journey was long and difficult, and the goods were priced accordingly. Silk was popular for lining the rough woollen robes, and the average cost of a silk, or 'sindon,' lining, such as that for the summer robe of the Warden of Merton College, Oxford, was £1 8s. 1½d.[13] Two silk fabrics, 'sendal' and 'samite,' were highly valued throughout the middle ages. 'Sendal' was a light, fragile silk, while 'samite' was heavy, and was frequently inter-woven with gold. It may even have had a double web. In 1300, 'sendal' was bought for Edward I at 16s. a yard, 'samite' at £4 10s. a yard.

Velvet was also costly. It was frequently cut in patterns, embroidered, or woven with gold. Beautifully patterned silks, however, were the most highly prized fabrics of all. Brocaded silks came originally from the East, but their manufacture was quickly established in Italy. Silk weaving began in Sicily in the middle of the twelfth century. Islamic invaders had imparted to the Sicilians the art of weaving multi-coloured brocades in complicated designs. The skill soon spread throughout Italy but, while the Mohammedan designs were geometric, those of the Italian

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[13] J. E. Thorold Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England (Oxford, 1867), I, 580.

weavers were in many instances taken from nature. Delicately designed foliage is seen springing from spiral curves, often interspersed with birds and animals. For example, a pattern in the Victoria and Albert Museum, probably woven in Lucca, has a ground of red with a leaf pattern in a gold colour and small animals and birds in green, white, and purple.

Equally elaborate designs were embroidered on the borders of garments, and in the fourteenth century, English embroidery was considered the most beautiful in Christendom, vestments of English work (opus Anglicanum) being ordered even by the Popes in Rome. Some of the work was still done by nuns, but much of it was executed by professionals whose shops were located in the larger towns, especially London.

Fur was also used for edging and lining garments. Indeed, many of the fur borders depicted on monuments and in illustrations must have been the edge of a fur lining. Warm garments were a necessity in colder climates, and from earliest times visitors to the island have complained of the cold and damp of England. When cassocks lined with lambskin were an accepted part of a monk's habit, we can hardly consider the wearing of fur entirely an extravagance.

Lamb and sheepskin were the cheapest furs, costing about 13s. 6d. a hundred skins. Rabbit was also common. The indulgence of the rich man, however, was the fur of the grey squirrel. It appeared under a number of names and in several varieties. 'Miniver' or menu vair was the near-white fur of the squirrel's belly. It is recorded in Royal accounts in France as early as 1202, and in both England and France its use was restricted by law. In 1342 a miniver hood of twenty skins

cost 12s. 4d. 'Crestigrey' was the thick fur taken from the back of the animal in winter, while 'vair' was the dark back and the white belly made up in a pattern, usually of shield shapes. Otter and marten (foynes) were also popular. The rare and costly ermine was reserved for royalty and the higher nobility, and both ermine and 'vair' became tinctures of heraldry. It is said that fur was sometimes dyed unnatural colours such as red and green. This is not unexpected in an age which not only enjoyed colour but also assigned to it considerable symbolic value.

The commonest and most popular dyes, frequently mentioned in both customs and commercial regulations, were the scarlet 'greyne,' blue woad, yellow weld, and madder, which gave the red and russet colours. Woad, coming as it did from a domestic plant, was the most common dye, and records mention a variety of blue colours. 'Plunket' was a pale blue which took half the quantity of woad required for 'azure,' which in turn was dyed with half the amount needed for 'true blue.' 'Waget' was another shade of blue, similar to 'plunket' but with a purple cast.

Red, sanguine, and murrey (a purple-red or maroon) were all in the warm range of colours, while greens were achieved by mixing woad and weld. Double dyeing produced subtle shades, and scarlet was often overdyed with black. "Brown blewes, pewks, tawnyes, or vyoletts" were the object of statutes enacted to insure that such colours were "fast, perfectly boyled, greyned or maddered upon the woad."[14] Since the available dyes were vegetable and earth colours, none of the hues were garish, and clothing was so costly that it was worn for many years and handed on to grateful heirs, no doubt aquiring an even more muted tone over the years.

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[14] Salzman, Industries, p. 214.

II

THE FORMS OF CIVILIAN DRESS

No epoch ever witnessed such extravagances of fashion as that extending from 1350 to 1480. Here we can observe the unhampered expansion of the aesthetic sense of the time. All the forms and dimensions of dress are ridiculously exaggerated.[1]

With the rise of each generation there tends to be a basic change in the fashionable silhouette. The change, whether a slight alteration in the form of sleeves or the adoption of a radically new garment, will depend upon economic and social conditions, but even when the old things are perfect in their way, men must have something new for novelty's sake. By the fourteenth century Western Europe was wealthy and settled enough to indulge to the full these desires for novelty. Between 1350 and 1480 a revolution was wrought in dress.

KING RICHARD II AND FROISSART, FRENCH, ABOUT 1405

Plate 1

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[1] J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (New York, 1954), p. 249.

The late Roman world had handed down a double tradition in dress: flowing robes of hierarchial dignity for the rich, and simple short tunics for the working class. Long gowns, however, were not practical garments for riding and hunting so that by the thirteenth century there was a differentiation between formal clothing, worn by the upper classes indoors, and convenient short tunics which better suited their favorite outdoor pastimes. The simple but dignified forms of mantle and tunic gave way to doublet and hose, the older styles being relegated to ceremonial pageantry at court and in church.

France led fashion, and by the second half of the fourteenth century French garments had become extravagantly short and tight. England, Germany, and Italy followed, and by 1400 the revolution in men's dress was almost complete. The long flowing 'houppelande' or a shorter but equally full 'goun' was still worn over the new basic garments for formal occasions, and in one form or another this 'overcoat' remained popular for several centuries, for it provided additional warmth as well as dignity of appearance, especially for older men or those who had to remain seated for long hours in cold and draughty courts and halls.

The change in female dress proceeded in the opposite direction. As men became more and more obviously bipeds, women, whose garments had until about 1350 more or less conformed to the figure beneath them, began to adopt every possible device to disguise the shape of the body. The natural waistline vanished first and by 1400 belts had risen almost to the arm pits. Wildly extravagant headdresses dwarfed the wearer, while long and very full sleeves and skirts hampered every movement.

Successive generations added padding and petticoats, corsets and hoops, and it was many centuries before feminine fashion again began to conform to the female body.

When Chaucer was writing, the revolution in masculine dress was well underway. Short doublets and long hose were the latest mode, acccepted by the young and fashionable but disapproved of by the more conservative, who also condemned long gowns and flowing sleeves as needlessly extravagant. Women's dress did not change radically until the time of the poet's death, but change was in the air.

This revolution, and the extremes which it produced, may partially account for the many points of confusion which arise in a study of the costume of the era. To begin with, new garments require new names, and the changes in terminology present many difficulties to the modern student. Certain words retained from previous centuries were applied to new fashions or were used to indicate one particular cut or style.[2] Fashions imported from France often retained French names but aquired English ones as well, the usage often depending upon the social standing of the wearer. In the following discussion of dress an attempt will be made to define and clarify terms used for various garments and to indicate, where possible, any special significance which such words held for Chaucer's contemporaries.

Class distinctions were evident in the quality and quantity of clothing rather than in basic garments. Fashion decreed the length and fullness of gowns, the position of the waistline, and the type of

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[2] This is a problem in the study of the clothing of any foreign civilization. A stranger to our own time might be confused if asked to differentiate between pants, trousers, breeches, slacks, shorts, and jeans. In a discussion of fourteenth-century dress we can estimate but can never be completely sure of the subtle distinctions of which Chaucer's contemporaries were fully cognizant.

accessories, but certain items remained basic. A rich man might dress in velvet while a farmer wore russet, and the noble would have several layers of warm clothing in winter while the poor man had but one 'cote' for all weather, but a list of the articles of clothing worn by a man of wealth would apply to all but the lowest classes. The following instructions to a chamberlain, although written in 1447, a generation later than Chaucer, give an idea of the clothing worn by the upper classes. A poor man would wear as many of these garments as he possessed.

> Se that youre souerayne haue clene shurt & breche,
> a petycote, a dublett, a long coote, if he were suche,
> his hosyn well brusshed, his sokkes not to seche,
> his shon or slyppers as browne as is the watur-leche.
> . . .
> Than pray youre souereyn with wordus mansuetely
> to com to a good fyre and aray hym ther by,
> . . .
> Furst hold to hym a petycote aboue youre brest and barme,
> his dublet than aftur to put in bothe hys arme,
> . . .
> Then drawe on his sokkis / & hosyn by the fure,
> his shon laced or bokelid, draw them on sure;
> Strike his hosyn vppewarde his legge ye endure,
> then trusse ye them vp strayte / to his plesure.
> Then lace his dublett euery hoole so by & bye;
> . . .
> Than knele a down on youre kne / & thus to your souerayn ye say
> "Syr, what Robe or govn pleseth it yow to were to day?"
> Suche as he axeth fore / loke ye plese hym to pay,
> Than hold it to hym a brode, his body ther-in to array;
> his gurdelle, if he were, be it strayt or lewse;
> Set his garment goodly / aftur as ye know the use;
> take hym hode or hatt / for his hed cloke or cappe de huse;
> So shalle ye plese hym prestly, no nede to make excuse
> Whethur hit be feyre or foule, or mysty alle withe reyn.[3]

The full, long-sleeved, linen shirt was worn by both sexes as an undergarment. On men it came to the thigh, on women it was somewhat

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[3] John Russell, "Boke of Nurture," The Babees Book, ed. F. J. Furnivall (London, 1868), pp. 176-178.

longer. Linen under-breeches were common by the fourteenth century. The "petycote" or 'little cote' mentioned in the above passage must have been some extra garment worn for warmth, for by 1447 the 'cote' or tunic had been replaced by the 'doublet.' In the early fourteenth century the 'gypon' had supplanted the tunic. The 'gypon' was actually a well tailored short tunic worn over the shirt, and until about 1360, it was of knee-length. After this date it became increasingly short until it barely covered the hips. The front was often padded and the sleeves were long and tight. The 'gypon' and the doublet were similar garments, 'doublet' being a word of French origin which did not become current in England until the fifteenth century. Another French name for this garment was pourpoint, since it was to the gypon that the hose were tied, or trussed, with laces or 'pointes' (fig. 1). A writer of 1368 described "another garment of silk, commonly called a paltock, so handsomely adorned as to be suited rather for ecclesiastics than for laymen."[4] He explained further that "they wear tight two-piece hose, which they fasten with latchets to their paltocks." This would appear to bear out C. W. Cunnington's definition that the 'paltock was a form of gypon introduced from Spain during the reign of Edward III.'[5] The idea that it was a cape or outer garment may have been derived because of an association with the French 'paletot,' an ornamental surcote with sleeves, worn over plate armour. Confusion may also have occurred because of the ninteenth-century fancy for applying medieval names to new fashions, the term 'paletot' being assigned to a woman's tight-fitting jacket fashionable about 1870. The gypon, purpoint, paltock, and doublet were basically similar

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[4] Rickert, p. 336.

[5] C. W. and P. Cunnington, Handbook of English Medieval Costume (London, 1952), p. 173.

garments to which the long hose, or chausses, were trussed with 'pointes.'

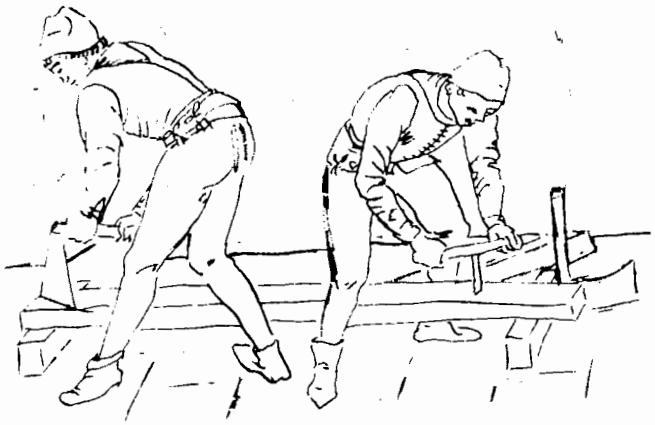

fig. 1.

Masculine hose were usually footed, although sometimes they were made with only a strap under the foot so that stockings were required. In either case sock-like inner shoes of linen were frequently worn under the light fabric shoes. Hose were made of stretchable fabrics such as scarlet, and were cleverly fitted and sewn, the seams being concealed by embroidery (the origin of ornamental clocks). The oriental art of knitting was rediscovered in the twelfth century, when it was used for making ecclesiastical gloves, and there were doubtless some knitted hose. The two stockings, or hose, might be of different colours, and as clothing became short a garter was often added below the knee to keep the hose taut.

. Shoes of cloth or leather, in a variety of styles, were almost always pointed at the toe. During the third quarter of the century shoes were of normal length but were frequently ornamented with tooled patterns or cut-out designs. This fashion of shoe was depicted in a wall painting in St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster. There, the shoes

worn by the young king, or Magi, have a design reminiscent of the rose windows of Gothic Cathedrals.(fig. 2a).

By the end of the century styles had changed, the pointed toes were lengthened and exaggerated until by 1399 the shoe might be more than twice the length of the foot. Sumptuary laws attempted to regulate this extravagance by allowing only an additional length of half a foot to commoners, a foot to gentlemen, and two feet or more to nobles. These long toes were boned or stuffed with wadding and, on occasions, may have been attached by a chain to the garter below the knee in order to facilitate walking. In some pictures the extremely extended toes appear to have been soled hose rather than separate shoes (fig. 2b).

Fig. 2.

The courtiers in fig. 2b wear garments fashionable during the final decade of the century. The picture of the young king was probably painted sometime during the thirteen-fifties.

Such fashions provoked the ire of preachers and reformers, and in such documents as John of Reading's Chronica (c. 1365) the frivolity of the English was condemned.

> [They wore] hose even longer than their thighs fastened to the short jackets with points which they called harlots, gadlings, and lorels, shoes pointed sideways [lateraliter], and long knives hanging between their thighs, and cloth hats turned back and fitted like hose or gloves. The monstrosity and tightness of these garments did not permit them to kneel to God or the saints or to do reverence to their lords.[6]

The writer who described the paltocks also complained of

> tight two-pieced hose, which they fasten with latchets to their paltocks; these are called "harlots," and so one harlot serves another . . . . They wear costly gold and silver girdles . . . though they have not so much as twenty pence saved up.
>
> Their shoes, which they call "crackows," have curved peaks more than a finger in length, resembling the claws of demons rather than ornaments for human beings.[7]

A form of super-tunic, generally called a 'cote-hardie,' was usually worn over the gypon. It varied in length, as did the gypon, but followed the outline of the figure and was tightly fastened down the front. Since it never seemed to wrinkle, it was probably padded or lined. It was made in two sections, a skirt of rather full proportions being joined at the belt to a closely fitting top. The join was hidden by the girdle, and this juncture slowly crept down the body until by 1350 it appeared at the hips (fig. 2a). As the waistline was lowered, the skirt became short and tight. The sleeves, which during the reign of Edward III had been short and tight, with long hanging liripipes (fig. 8b), were later made long and often very full.

Older men continued to favour the long 'super-tunic' or gown in preference to the 'cote-hardie,' and about 1380 the French 'houppeland' was introduced. It was a very full gown, often trailing on

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[6] As translated in Rickert, p. 334.

[7] As translated in Rickert, p. 336.

the floor, and having long open sleeves and a very high collar. This extreme style was fashionable at the court, where it took a variety of forms (Plate I). Citizens and merchants, on the other hand, continued to wear moderate styles of gowns, usually of ankle length, opening down the front, and having sleeves that required only a normal amount of fabric. In such conservative and sensible attire they could side with the critics of the court fashions which were either of "to muche superfluite, or ells in to desordinat scantnesse." A typical complaint about 1362 gives some interesting details of the changing modes.

> In this year and last year Englishmen have gone stark mad over fashions in dress. First came wide surcoats that reached no farther than the hips; then others that came clear down to the heels, not open in front as becomes a man but spread out at the sides to arm's length, so that when their backs are turned you think they are women rather than men. This garment is called "goun" in the mother tongue and rightly so . . . for the name is applied in open derision.[8]

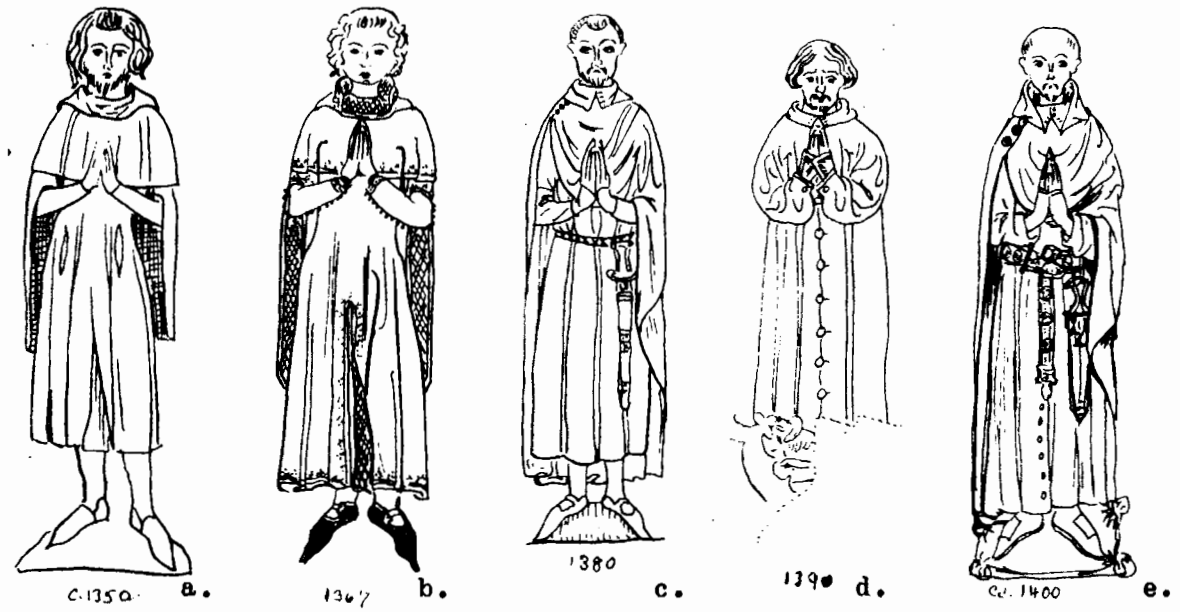

fig. 3.

This illustration shows the changing form of the cote-hardie and the long gown as depicted in various monumental brasses of merchants and gentlemen. The feet of the merchant on the right rest on a wool-sack, the symbol of his trade.

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[8] Rickert, p. 336.

fig. 4.

Men wore hoods or hats both indoors and out. John of Reading disliked the fashions in headwear as well as in shoes:

> they began to wear hoods so small that they barely covered the shoulders [much less the head], laced and buttoned close to the chin, with tippets like cords, over paltocks, some very short and of woollen cloth, others of thin [silk] stuffed and sewed all over.[9]

The hood had been the common head covering since Norman times. It usually extended over the shoulders to form a small cape-like covering, and the point at the back of the cowl developed into a long tail called a tippet or a 'lirepipe.' 'Lirepipe' was a Flemish word originally applied to the leather points of fashionable shoes (leer-pyp) but later to any long appendage in costume. The English equivalent is 'tippet' as used in the above quotation. A similar description of an extreme tippet is found in a satirical poem of 1401.

> What meenith thi tipet, Jakke,
> as long as a stremer,
> that hangith longe bihinde
> and kepith thee not hoot?[10]

Costume historians have tended to use 'liripipe' rather than the

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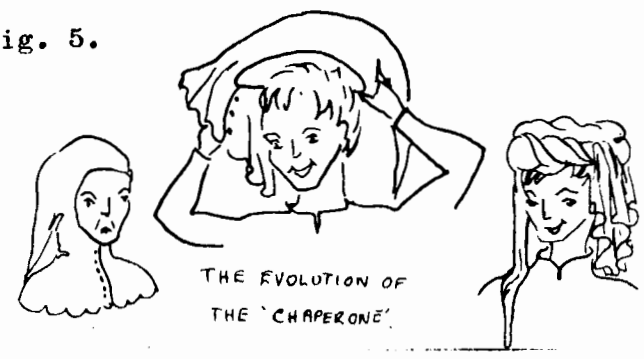
[9] Rickert, p. 334.

[10] "The Reply of Friar Daw Topias, with Jack Upland's Rejoinder," Political Poems and Songs, ed. T. Wright (London, 1861), II, 69.

fourteenth-century English word 'tippet,' for the latter changed its meaning as fashions changed. As a consequence of this change, commentary on the tippet is much confused. Until the fifteenth century, references to 'tippets' clearly denoted the hanging point of the hood. During the fifteenth century, however, when the hood went out of fashion, the term 'tippet' became associated with the small shoulder cape which remained as a part of certain clerical vestments and which developed into a stole-like garment having ends hanging down in front. Ninteenth-century clergymen used the term 'tippet' in this sense, particularly in describing the costumes depicted on medieval brasses. To them a 'tippet' was a small cape. This terminology was accepted by scholars who then, in trying to explain thirteenth and fourteenth-century references to tippets being used to carry small objects, or to tippets of extreme length being "bounded aboute" the head, were forced to make wild conjectures regarding the use and construction of what they persisted in believing were small shoulder capes. Once it is realized that the use of the word changed with the fashion, these early references become clear. In fact, the custom of winding the long tippets about the head in order to get them out of the way was one of the first steps in the evolution of the 'chaperone' hat.

The elaborately draped, turban-like, 'chaperone' developed from the hood. The face opening of the hood was placed on the head with the cape falling in folds over one ear. The tippet was wound about the head to keep the hat in place. The end hung down over the other ear.

fig. 5.



Felt hats were made in a variety of shapes, but most of them had high sugar-loaf crowns. One of the final extravagances in headdress was the wearing of two headcoverings. A felt hat might be worn over a hood (fig.4), or, if a hat was worn alone, a second chaperone hat was sometimes tossed over the shoulder and held by the tippet. The vestige of this custom has persisted in miniature in the badge worn on the left shoulder of French Magistrates and also on the robes of the Knights of the Garter.

Wide brimmed hats of straw or felt were popular with country people and travellers because of the protection they provided.

Some form of mantle or cloak was generally worn both indoors and out. The characteristic style of the mid-century was semi-circular and reached to the ankles. It fastened on the right shoulder with three or more large buttons (fig.5a). It was frequently ornamented around the edge with embroidery, or the lower hem was dagged or scalloped, sometimes eight to ten inches deep. Occasionally the hood was sewn to this large cape, but more often the hood had its own small cape and was worn over the other garments.

A variety of capes and cloaks were worn as protection against the elements. The long circular cope and the short semi-cope were both popular with ecclesiastics, while the short tabard and the courtpie (both similar to Mexican ponchos) were worn by labourers and travellers.

The 'robe,' which so often constituted a part of the fees and salaries in the middle ages, was actually an entire set of clothing which consisted of four or six pieces. It might include a gypon and surcote, hose, a fur-lined gown, a mantle, and a hood.

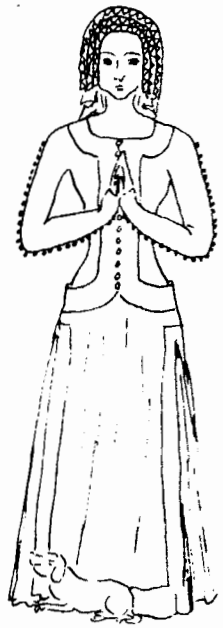
Women as well as men wore several layers of similar garments,

THREE SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS OF EDWARD III
[from his tomb in Westminster Abbey]

fig. 6.

and on occasions the same name was applied to different masculine and feminine garments, thus compounding the confusion in terminology.

Basically, female dress consisted of under-tunics, over-tunics, and some form of cape or mantle. Over a linen shirt or chemise, the medieval lady wore a long, well fitted, under-tunic called a 'kirtle.' The bodice was either laced or buttoned tightly up the front. The skirt was long and full, the neck low and square, the sleeves long and tight. E. R. Suffling, in describing a brass monument of Margaret, Lady Cobham, in Kent (c. 1370), commented on the style of the kirtle which the lady wore under her sideless surcote.



Margaret,
Lady Cobham.
fig. 7.

The tight fitting sleeves of the kirtle or under dress continued to abnormal lengths so as to cover the back of the hands. Thirty-two buttons had to be negotiated to fasten each sleeve; such

a task would necessitate the services of a maid, and this fact proves the lady to be wealthy.[11]

Over the kirtle was worn a cote-hardie or surcote. These terms originated in France and were applied to both masculine and feminine garments over a span of two centuries, hence they have been assigned a variety of definitions. In fourteenth-century England, the cote-hardie was a fitted garment worn short by men, floor length by women. It was a form of over-tunic, and at mid-century it had short sleeves with long hanging liripipes (fig. 6b), by the last quarter of the century, however, the sleeves had become long and open. In either case the long tight sleeves of the kirtle were visible. The sleeves and the hem were often edged with embroidery or fur, and in winter the garments were frequently lined with fur. A tale was told of a damsel who lost a prospective husband because she

> arrayed herself in the best guise that she could, to have a slender and a fair-shapen body, and she clothed her in a coat-hardy unfurred and unlined, which sat right strait upon her, and there was great cold, great frost, and great wind; and because of the simple vesture that she had on, the color of the maid was defaced, and she waxed all pale and black with cold.[12]

The visiting Knight chose her warmly dressed and rosy-cheeked sister for his wife instead of the vain damsel.

Although many modern writers seem to use the terms 'cote-hardie' and 'surcote' interchangeably, the 'surcote' appears to have referred to a loose garment, generally worn by older women and those who had no "slender and fair-shapen body" to reveal. In the latter half of the century, a sideless surcote became very fashionable, and the fitted cote-hardie became passé. The new fashion revealed the figure most

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[11] E. R. Suffling, English Church Brasses (London, 1910), p. 132.

[12] La Tour-Landry, The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry, as translated in Rickert, p. 51.

flatteringly, a fact which doubtless contributed to its extended popularity. This form of sideless surcote (surcot ouvert) had appeared late in the thirteenth century. It was made without sleeves and the sides were slit open down to the hips revealing the outline of the fitted kirtle. During the fourteenth century the arm-holes were cut out and shaped. The style was adopted by rich and poor alike, and the surcote developed into a highly stylized garment that became the official uniform for the great lady. It was worn for state functions until the end of the fifteenth century.

The surcote was cut with a low round neck and with broad shoulder-straps which widened into a stomacher, or plastron, front and back. These were joined just below the hips by curved bands of stuff from which fell a very long and very full skirt. The plastrons were sometimes of fur (fig. 8b) and often ornamented down the middle of the front with brooches or buttons which might be hinged together to form a chain. The hip pieces dipped low enough to show the richly jeweled girdle or belt of the kirtle. The skirt was sometimes slit up the sides from the hem (fig. 6d). The fashion died out at the end of the fourteenth century

fig. 8.

when it was replaced by a high-waisted form of the 'houppeland.'

For state functions a mantle was worn. This was a narrow cloak of rich material, often lined with fur. It was fastened in front by means of a cord which passed through two metal loops placed on either side of the mantle. The loops were covered by studs, termed 'fermails,' which were frequently ornamented with jewels (fig. 8d). There were also a variety of capes and cloaks worn out of doors, as protection from the elements, which were similar in style to the masculine garments.

After 1350 headdresses provided the chief variety in the costumes of women of the upper classes. The simple gorget or wimple worn with a veil gave way to a variety of elaborate forms. The first development was a 'gauffered veil' or 'nebule headdress' (figs. 7, 8c). This probably consisted of several semicircular pieces of fine linen, the straight edges of which were pleated or ruffled together to form a frame for the face. The ends which hung at the back were sometimes also ruffled. Since this headdress is depicted mainly in the two-dimensional memorial brasses, it is difficult to be certain of either its construction or of its fashionableness.[13]

Hair was commonly braided, the plaits of hair being arranged at the sides of the face to form a frame. A wealthy woman might confine her hair in a 'crespinette' or 'caul,' a decorative net which was suspended from a narrow band or fillet worn round the head (figs. 6b, 8b). About 1377 the long oval crespinettes gave way to a circular variety which were set high over the ears, and a padded roll replaced the

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[13] Brasses are instructive for some costume details but their alleged dates can be misleading; sometimes they were made before the death of the subject, sometimes many years later. The figures, however, usually wear the fashions of the time of construction. Although they show the styles popular especially among the merchant class, the dress depicted is usually the most formal and therefore the most conservative dress of the period.

narrow fillet. A short veil, sometimes made of a fine transparent silk was worn with these headdresses.

In the early part of the century, young women had often worn their hair loose and flowing, bound with a thread (sometimes of gold), and perhaps ornamented with garlands of fresh flowers instead of a fillet of silk or metal. This fashion was seldom depicted after the middle of the fourteenth century although it was described in many poems that followed the traditional form.

Although the wimple had been relegated to the lower classes, a variation of this style remained a part of the widow's habit. The 'barbe,' a vertically pleated piece of cloth, hung from the chin and covered the neck. The usual veil which covered the head and shoulders was worn with it, and it would seem to have been essentially a garment of mourning.[14]

Throughout the century the high, broad forehead was fashionable, and although styles never became as extreme in England as they were on the continent, most ladies revealed a forehead from which the front hairs must have been plucked or shaved. Any hair that showed was at the sides of the face. Eyebrows were also plucked to a fine arched line. A thirteenth-century French poem lists among the wares carried by a travelling mercer "all the utensils necessary for a lady's toilette, razors, forceps, looking-glasses, tooth-brushes, and tooth-picks, and bandeaus and crisping irons."[15]

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[14] By the sixteenth-century the barbe had become the distinguishing mark of a widow's rank. Baronesses and upward wore it covering the chin, those of lower rank, under the chin. See Mary Houston, Medieval Costume in England and France (London, 1939), p. 117.

[15] "Du Mercier," translated in Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume, ed. F. W. Fairholt (London, 1849), p. 12.

Women's hose were shorter than those worn by men and were usually gartered at the knee (fig. 9). Their shoes had pointed toes, but because sweeping skirts hid all but the tip of the toe there is little illustrative material to show changing styles. About 1390, however, wooden pattens came into use, raising the wearers, both men and women, above the mud of the streets and protecting the delicate fabrics of which fashionable shoes were made.

fig. 9.

Accessories played an important part in the dress of this period, and in his descriptions Chaucer dwelt on these items to such an extent that it is worthwhile to consider them in some detail. Pedlers and mendicant friars came to the rural homes

> with purses, pynnes, and knyves
> With gyrdles, gloves, for wenches and wyves.[16]

These were welcome gifts and even simple "pynnes" were treasured, for like everything else, they were handmade and consequently were rare and expensive. Pins were an essential item in a woman's dress, being used to fasten garments and to hold the elaborate veils and headdresses in place. Women of all classes saved their 'pin money' to buy these necessary articles. Small pins of latten or brass

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[16] "Song Against The Friars," Political Poems and Songs, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1859), I, 264.

cost about a penny a dozen.

A French mercer's song tells of "beautiful silver pins, as well as brass ones," and also "brooches of brass gilt, and of latten silvered." The pedler confesses "so much I like those of latten that we often substitute them for silver." [17] One such cheat, John William of Wantynge, was imprisoned in 1369 for "having sold to divers persons rings and fermails of latten, made to resemble rings and fermails of coloured gold and silver, as being made of real gold and silver, in deceit."[18]

Brooches differed in size and weight, some were elaborately decorated while others were primarily utilitarian. They were used to fasten the neck openings of tunics and other garments and frequently consisted of a simple ring of metal with a traverse pin.

By the fourteenth century buttons were a common and popular fastening and often they took the form of jewelry, being made of precious metals and sometimes set with stones. Buckles and studs were also made in decorative forms. Among the wealthy, gold and silver chains and collars were worn, indicating in many instances the order to which the wearer belonged (the modern Mayor's chain of office evolved at this time). Neither earrings nor bracelets had much place in medieval costume, but rings, sometimes set with facetted gems, were popular with both sexes. Among the stock of a jeweller's shop in 1398 might be found:

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[17] "Du Mercier," pp. 9-11.

[18] Memorials of London and London Life, ed. H. T. Riley (London, 1868), p. 337.

Twenty-seven dyamandes on three buttons, 100 marks. Forty-six rings and two small nowches (an 'ouche' or brooch) of gold, 14£. One collar of gold, with a fawkone (falcon), 10£. One chaplet of pearls, 40s. Eleven nowches and one hart, in gold, 11£. Ninteen gold rings, 40£.[19]

The jewels that were such popular presents in the age of courtly love generally had ornamental mottos or enigmatic emblems. Nobles and their wives are often depicted with fillets of gold and jewels as a part of their headdresses, and gold hair-nets were also popular with the wealthy. Only royalty and nobles with an income over one thousand marks a year were allowed to wear garments embroidered with precious stones.

Almost every man and woman had at least one "peire of bedes." In London the making of rosaries flourished, and the centre of the industry was naturally called Paternoster Row. Sometimes the beads were turned on a lathe but others were painstakingly ground to shape by hand. An elaborately carved pendant might be added, either in the form of a crucifix or as a small hollow case which opened and contained a number of tiny figures exquisitely carved. Inventories and wills mention rosaries of amber, coral, gold, silver gilt, and jet. They were also made of bone, horn, ivory, mother-of-pearl, and rock-crystal. The glass workers of Murano and Venice developed a clear colourless glass which resembled rock-crystal. They could turn out numerous rosaries while the lapidary was polishing a single bead. Demands for the suppression of this trade were to no avail and glass beads became common.

Rich and poor alike wore a belt or girdle to which was usually

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[19] Memorials of London, p. 550.

attached a purse and probably a knife or dagger. This girdle and the items suspended from it, often elaborately ornamented with gold or silver, jewels, and engraving, might be the most expensive part of a person's dress. Belts and girdles were usually made of leather, coloured silk, or metal plaques linked together, and any material that was rich and precious was used for their embellishment. The guilds enforced strict rules against the mixing of high-grade and low-grade materials in one article, and there was a perpetual dispute between the girdle-makers and the goldsmiths concerning their respective fields of authority in the making of a belt ornamented with precious metals. Wide belts with large and heavy buckles, chapes, and mountings for scabbards, were worn by wealthy merchants (see fig.3, p.20). In the rural districts, however, pedlers sold simpler accessories. In fig. 10 the pedler has displayed his wares on the bar by the door. They include belts, purses, and a round mirror. On the donkey's back is a case of small knives. A pedler who sang of his wares claimed to have "pretty little girdles, good buckles for girdles, . . . all sorts of purses both of silk and leather, . . . knives both blunt and pointed, which the young men are so vain of, . . . very

fig. 10.

fine belts and fallois."[20]

Sometimes so-called 'folly-bells' were hung from the girdle, and a bequest in the will of Alice, wife of John Barbour, brazier, left "to John, my son, . . . my fifth ring of gold and a green girdle apparelled with bells."[21] Bells were also sewn to the shoulder cape and tippet of hoods and in time became the mark of the jester or fool.

The purses which hung from the belts of both men and women were, in their simplest form, a sack-shaped bag tied at the neck with string. Usually the bag was knotted at the base with one or more knots, doubtless to make the bag hang better. These knots and tassels remained as a decorative feature. Metal purse-frames did not come into use until the middle of the fifteenth century. The term 'gypciere,' which has sometimes been wrongly applied to purses with such frames, was actually derived from the French gibbeciere (a game pouch) and referred to a large flat wallet of leather, or of more costly material, that was worn slung from the shoulder or attached to the belt by two loops. Such a wallet might have a small knife thrust through a strap.[22] Like the belts and girdles to which they were attached, purses and wallets were usually richly embroidered and decorated.

fig. 11.

Scribes and notaries are sometimes depicted with inkhorn and pen at their belt, while hunters or bailiffs might hang their

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20 "Du Mercier," pp. 11-12.

21 Rickert, p. 342.

22 London Museum Catalogues; No. 7 (London, 1940), p. 160.

horn from a girdle or baldric. Housewives would have their keys similarly available.

These were the garments of Chaucer's contemporaries. The gentry and the bourgeoisie, both of whom were affected by fashion to a noticeable degree, either set the styles, followed them, or criticized both innovator and imitator. Beneath them were the poor, who wore what they could afford or what they had. The labourer, limited by law to russet and blanket, wore these fabrics made into simple tunics, generally reaching to just below the knee. Depending upon the time of year, he may have worn two or three such garments, one over the other.

fig. 12.

His legs were covered by loose hose tied to some undergarment and possibly cross-gartered. The lower classes wore hoods but often added a hat for protection from the elements.

The poor housewife wore a kirtle of practical ankle-length. Over it she might wear a short loose surcote, while a wimple and veil covered her head. Most women wore aprons while working and these sometimes had ornamental bands below the waist-band. In general, inexpensive materials made into traditional garments were the mark of the labouring class who kept to their alloted place in the world.

There has been some question as to whether there were distinctive costumes worn by members of various trades and professions in Chaucer's England. The confusion is probably a result of the fact that most guilds and companies had special livery which members wore on state occasions. Such robes were frequently of luxurious fabrics in glowing colours, and in certain instances, were the property of the association rather than of the individual. While such livery added to the splendour of civic processions and state functions, it was not worn every day, nor would it necessarily indicate a man's trade, for there were social guilds and religious associations to which men of different occupations belonged.

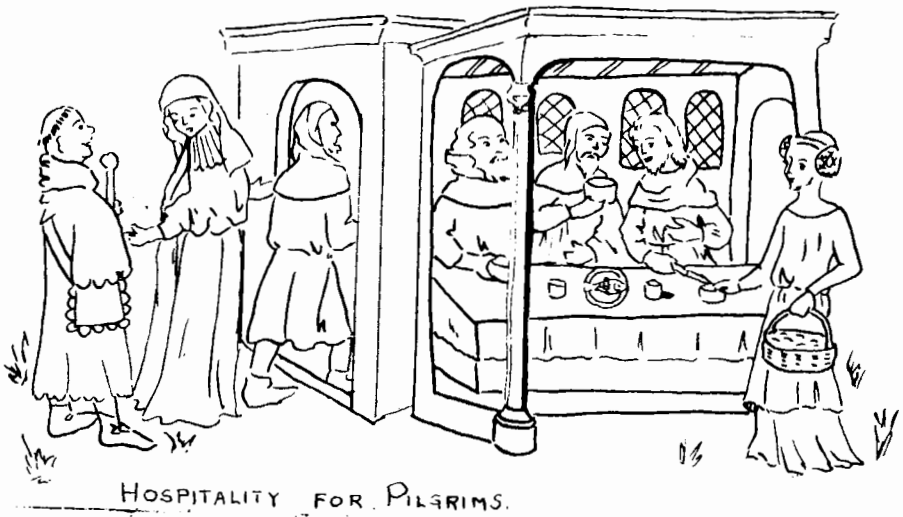
There were, however, certain specific garments which distinguished some occupations. Official robes, worn by legal functionaries and civic officials, and the beautiful vestments of the clergy served to indicate the wearer's status and function. For example, the Sergeants of the Law, when on duty, wore a striped gown and a small white coif or bonnet. This coif they were privileged to wear even in the presence of the King.

Servants frequently wore livery in their lord's colours, and the professional fool wore parti-coloured clothes and a hood with asses ears and bells. Foresters and hunters usually wore green clothing. Leather aprons and other working garments worn by various craftsmen and labourers might serve to identify them during working hours, but can hardly be said to constitute a distinctive costume.

A proclamation of 1351 made an attempt to regulate the dress of one occupational group.

Whereas the common lewd women who dwell in the City of London . . . have now of late assumed the fashion of being clad and attired in the manner and dress of good and noble dames and damsels of the realm, in unreasonable manner; . . . let every such common lewd woman, going about in the said city by day or by night, . . . go openly with a hood of cloth of ray, single, and with vestments neither trimmed with fur nor yet lined with lining, and without any manner of relief; so that all folks, natives and strangers, may have knowledge of what rank they are.[23]

One person easily recognized by his dress was the pilgrim, a familiar figure on every road in Europe, whose identity was proclaimed by his staff and script. The pilgrim might go barefoot, and like most travellers he favoured a broad-brimmed hat, though only the staff and script were mentioned in the religious service with which many pilgrims initiated their journey. The staff was a long walking stick with a knob at the top and sometimes a second knob about a foot below the the first.



HOSPITALITY FOR PILGRIMS.

fig. 13.

It might also have a hook or staple to which a water bottle or small bundle could be attached. The script was a flat bag slung by a cord over the shoulder and contained the food for the journey and a few

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[23] Memorials of London, p. 267.

essentials. Both articles varied in size and shape.

On shorter journeys pilgrims often dispensed with these items, but the returning pilgrim was easily identified by his souvenirs. Every shrine had its own sign or symbol, small replicas of which were cast in lead or pewter and sold at the shrines as talismans and visible indications of the pilgrimage. The Canterbury pilgrims, so the author of the Tale of Beryn reported,

> as manere & custom is, signes þere þey bouȝte,—
> Ffor men of contre shuld(e) know whom þey had(de) ouȝte,—
> Ech man set his sylvir in such thing as þey likid:
> . . .
> They set hir signes uppon hir hedis, & som oppon hir cappe.[24]

The signs were sometimes worn around the neck but more often they were pinned to the hat. A pilgrim visiting a distant shrine in Jerusalem or Rome would visit others along the way and return home thicky covered with such souvenirs. Erasmus described a returning pilgrim:

> But what means this? you are covered with scallop shells, stuck all over with figures of lead and tin, decorated with straw necklaces, and bracelets of serpent's eggs.[25]

The cockles or scallop shells were the sign of the Compostella pilgrimage, while the 'vernicle' or kerchief of Saint Veronica was sold at her shrine in Rome. The Summoner of the Canterbury Tales claimed to have come from Rome, and in token of this "a vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe."[26]

The most popular pilgrimage in England was to the shrine of Saint

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[24] The Tale of Beryn, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS, Ex. Ser. 105 (London, 1909), ll. 171-191.

[25] Desiderus Erasmus, Pilgrimage to Saint Mary of Walsingham and Saint Thomas of Canterbury, ed. and trans. J. G. Nichols (London, 1875), pp. 1-2.

[26] Gen Prol I. 685. Citations from Chaucer in my text are to The Complete Works of Chaucer, ed. Fred N. Robinson (Cambridge, Mass., 1933).

Thomas at Canterbury, and the signs sold here usually took the form of a mitered head of the Saint, sometimes within a canopied shrine. There were also small 'Canterbury bells' and pewter reproductions of them. A very special souvenir of Canterbury was an ampulla or small flask with a portrait of the saint. These flasks contained either a very dilout solution of the martyr's blood or water from a miraculous well.

The 'palmer' was a pilgrim who had been to Jerusalem and was therefore privileged to wear palm leaves, usually in the form of two sprigs sewn crosswise upon the hat or script.

The different garments and accoutrements which served to distinguish various members of medieval society were frequently depicted in the art of the period, even though most of the subject matter was of a religious nature. Artists of the middle ages had little concept of historical dress, and Chaucer's contemporaries accepted as perfectly natural this factor which today we find quaint and amusing.

Conservative elements within the Church had established the convention that the Holy Family and the Apostles should be attired in the traditional long flowing robes of Byzantine origin. This convention, however, did not extend to Saints and Martyrs who might well be shown going to their death dressed in 'houppelands' or sideless-surcotes. Medieval man would appear to have had little or no knowledge of the dress of his predecessors and in almost all cases he visualized pagan hero and Christian Saint dressed alike, in contemporary clothing which resembled that worn by the King and his knights.

The Heroes Tapestries (now in the Cloisters in New York City)

were made in France during the last quarter of the fourteenth century. They depict, among others, Julius Caesar wearing the latest plate armour, while in the gothic framework which surrounds each hero are musicians and servants dressed in doublets and hose, pointed shoes, and 'sugar-loaf' hats.

In the middle ages, Pilate wore a lawyer's white coif, Saint Anne, a reticulated headdress; Adam delved, wearing a labourer's tunic, while Eve span, dressed in a flowing kirtle. The Greeks attacking Troy, Charlemagne baptizing the Saxons, and the battle of Hastings were all pictured as taking place in front of walled medieval towns or turreted castles while fashionable courtiers and knights in plate armour looked on.

This view extended to allegorical subjects. The personifications of virtues and vices wore kirtles and cote-hardies, and in one early fifteenth-century drawing, Faith and Prudence wear the habits of nuns. The popular Miracle and Morality plays may have contributed to this custom for they were produced in almost every city and town and, although the plots were stories from the Bible or the lives of Saints, the costumes were either contemporary or entirely fanciful.

Thus, in the middle ages, Englishmen thought of historical and legendary characters as contemporaries and depicted them as such in formal settings and stylized poses. In tapestries and murals, in illuminated manuscripts and glowing stained glass, and even embroidered on the vestments of the priests, they left for succeeding generations a record of their own time even as they depicted historical events.

III

THE FORMS OF MILITARY DRESS

Item:- Come par l'Eststut de Wyncestre, & autres Eststutz soit ordernez chescun Homme soit armez & arraies selonc lours estates en defense du Roialme.[1]

AN ARTHURIAN TOURNAMENT. FRENCH, EARLY 14TH CENTURY

Plate II

The Statute of Winchester (1285) bound every free man between sixteen and sixty to provide himself with suitable weapons, according to the value of his lands and chattels, to serve to 'keep the peace' and to defend the realm. Those living on the sea coast and near the Scottish and Welsh marches were expected to be particularly well armed, and special provisions were made in such districts. Although a knife and a club might be the minimum requirements, swords and axes were common additions, while in forest districts every man would have a long-bow.

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[1] Rotuli Parliamentorum (3 Rich. II), III, 82.

Various proclamations prohibited the carrying of arms within the cities of London and Westminster, although knights and peers were usually exempted, but these were local regulations. It was perfectly in order for the Canterbury pilgrims to be armed when on a journey through a country which might present dangers.

It is doubtful whether the London ordinances applied to knives and daggers, for some type of knife was a part of every man's personal equipment, even that of monks, as may be seen from regulations forbidding them to take their knives into the dormitories at night. Knives were made in two forms, the military dagger and the civilian knife-dagger. The latter was small and usually single-edged, while the military weapons were large and double-edged. There were several large civilian weapons, among which was a single-edged kidney-dagger and a double-edged 'baselard,' both of which had hilts rather than simple handles. The 'anlace' was a form similar to the 'baselard,' and both were generally worn more for ornament than for use. The hilts and sheaths were elaborately ornamented and hung from the centre of the girdle. A satiric song of the period tells of a fop who boasted of his fine baselard with its "shethe of red, . . . wrethen haft," and "silver schape." In spite of his proud cry, "prenegard, prenegard, thus bere I myn baselard,"[2] his head was broken by a rough carter.

Military daggers were modeled on swords, and the various names indicate the size and shape of the hilt. The most popular were 'quillion' daggers and 'rondel-daggers.' Military weapons usually had

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[2] "The Baselard," Satirical Songs, p. 50.

simple sheaths of plain leather reinforced with metal mountings.

Military swords were long and broad, pointed, and double-edged. They had cross hilts and were hung from a loose belt, low enough to enable the fighter to draw with ease. The large two-handed swords with blades as long as fifty inches were obviously the weapons of mounted warriors. A small, light sword, apparently more of a cutting and thrusting weapon, came into use about 1360. It was worn hanging straight down at the left side, while on the right side a 'misericorde' or dagger was suspended from either the sword belt or a baldric. In most cases the scabbards of these weapons were simply decorated.

The fourteenth century was the period of the great national wars with Scotland and France, and the arts of battle advanced apace. It was a century of transition in the development of armour, as it was in so many fields. As in all such periods there was much overlapping of styles, much confusion and change in nomenclature and subtle distinctions in terms which we cannot entirely grasp today. There were, however, four major stages in the change from chain mail to plate armour, and it is important to distinguish the various styles and to establish tentative dates for each period, for Chaucer and his audience were well aware of the changing fashions in armour and would have quickly grasped the implications of a reference to either an obsolete item or to a recent innovation.

The coat-of-mail or hauberk, fashioned entirely of linked iron rings (earlier the rings had been sewn to a fabric or leather tunic) was the chief form of armour from about 1180 until 1325. With it the knight wore footed hose of chain-mail and a hood or <u>coif de mailles</u>

that covered the head except for the face. Mitts of chain-mail were attached to the long sleeves and protected the hands. In addition, a plate-metal helm, shaped like a tall pointed dome, covered the head and rested on the shoulders. It had slits for the eyes. During the latter years of the period the hauberk was often suplemented by a breastplate of iron and by elbow and knee-guards of metal or cuir bouilli. A long linen surcote or bliau, often with the knightly arms worked or painted on it, was worn over the armour. It was sleeveless, confined at the waist with a cord or belt, and opened up the front from hem to waist for ease in riding.

This early form of armour is shown in Plate II. The scene, a reproduction of an illustration from the French prose romance of Lancelot, depicts a tournament between knights of Gorre and Northern Wales (c. 1310-20). The shields of this period were made of leather stretched over a wooden frame shaped like a flat-iron. Three of the shields depicted in Plate II bear the arms of knights, but two are plain.

Foot soldiers and civilians carried the round buckler as a shield, the form of which had remained unchanged since Anglo-Saxon times. The 'targe' was a large shield, at this date oblong in shape. During the fourteenth century several types of the 'targe' developed, one of which was shaped like a kite.

A coat-of-mail weighed between twenty-five and thirty pounds, and the weight hung entirely from the shoulders. To protect the body from chafing and to distribute the weight, a heavy padded under-tunic was necessary as well as thick hose and usually a leather cap. As the

armourer's skill developed, attempts were made to lighten the weight of the equipment. Similar changes took place in France and England, and Joan Evans has traced the variations in French armour.

> The hauberk had been shortened to the haubergeon, which was of finer mail and only reached to mid-thigh, . . . the haubergeon was worn over a padded hoqueton, as the hauberk has been over the gambeson.[3]

In England this change took place between 1325 and 1335, when a kind of composite armour was worn. It consisted of the thick padded haqueton, or 'aketoun,' the chain-mail haubergeon, and a padded or quilted surcote termed the 'gambeson.'[4] A loose outer robe, the 'cyclas,' was worn as well. A transitional form of the cote-armure, it was opened at the sides and was considerably shorter in front than at the back. Sir John Daubernon (fig. 14) is depicted wearing this form of armour, and all four layers are visible, one beneath the other. The 'gambeson' had an ornamental hem while that of the habergeon usually dipped at the front.

fig. 14.

These loose layers of fabric reinforced with the haubergeon of chain-mail must have constituted an efficient

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[3] Joan Evans, Dress in Medieval France (Oxford, 1952), p. 28. Since French was the language of the English court, terminology tended to be the same in both countries.

[4] 'Gambeson,' originally the longitudinally quilted (or gamboised) under-tunic, came to refer to the similar over-tunic, once the original form was obsolete. In the same way the heavy hauberk gave its name to the protective cuirass of plate-armour, which developed half a century after the light haubergeon replaced the hauberk. Haubergeon, in the original French, is actually a diminutive of Hauberk.

defence, though such armour would have been clumsy and uncomfortable, especially in warm weather. Soon an attempt was made to strengthen the haubergeon directly by means of narrow plates or splints of steel. This 'studded' or 'splinted' armour was used from about 1335 to 1360,[5] but the edges of the metal caught weapons rather than deflecting their blows, and the style was never very popular. Plate-armour, formed of steel plates bent to conform to the body and fixed together with flexible joints, proved to be the most effective defence, and it was augmented piece by piece, until by 1360 many English knights were completely armed with plate-mail. Greaves to protect the shins had first been worn with chain-mail about 1300, but they were of ancient origin. Similar protection was added for thighs and arms. At the same time knee-guards and elbow-guards (genouillières and coudières) were improved, and plates were added to shield the arm-pits and exposed joints. Some of these early pieces were made of the heavy leather called 'cuir bouilli,' which gave some protection, was light in weight, and took stamped ornamentation and gilding. It was used more for ceremonial wear than for fighting. Sollerets covered the feet with overlapping plates like the shell of a lobster, and gauntlets of a similar construction were made for the hands. These additions are shown in fig. 14 together with the new form of helmet, the bascinet, which replaced the heavy helm. Of a similar shape, it covered only the head, the neck and shoulders being protected by a 'camail' of chain-mail laced to the bottom edge of the bascinet. A removable visor protected the face in battle.

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[5] C. H. Ashdown, Armour and Weapons in the Middle Ages (New York, 1925), pp. 78-82.

With the advent of 'splinted' armour, the loose surcote was abandoned and the padded 'gambeson' became the outermost garment. As such it was soon richly ornamented, frequently having the knight's arms embroidered or painted on it. It was tightly laced at the sides or back, and as this close-fitting sleeveless garment corresponded to the civilian 'pourpoint' or 'gypon,' it was often called by these names. Chaucer, in describing the Knight of the Canterbury pilgrimage, used the term 'gypon.' Authorities differ, however, as to whether he considered it to be a form of 'gambeson,' worn over the armour,[6] or used the term in the older sense to describe the protective garment worn under the armour.[7]

In the memorial brasses of the era, chain-mail worn under a leather 'gambeson' closely resembles a waisted cuirass covered by a light gypon. Because of this it is almost impossible to state exactly when the breastplate and back-plate supplanted the reinforced haubergeon. It is known that in many cases some combination of chain-mail and plate-armour was used, but it is unlikely that once a knight possessed a full torso-length cuirass of plate-armour he would also wear the entire haubergeon. The slim figures and attenuated waists, so fashionable during the last quarter of the century, could only be achieved by carefully fitted armour with all excess bulk eliminated.

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[6] Ashdown, p. 100; S. J. Herben, "Arms and Armour in Chaucer," Speculum, XII (1937), 475-87; Bowden, p. 51; Millia Davenport, The Book of Costume (New York, 1948), I, 192.

[7] NED, "Gypon;" N. C. Ffoulks, Armour and Weapons (Oxford, 1909), p. 61; The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. W. W. Skeat (Oxford, 1900), V, 9, n.76; J. R. Planche, History of British Costume (London, 1913), p. 176.

The chain-mail which protected the arm-pits and exposed joints was attached to the padded haqueton which had to be worn under all armour. The 'camail' of chain-mail continued to be worn until the end of the century. It was said, however, that the French lost the battle of Agincourt in 1415 because the French knights wore the 'old-fashioned' haubergeon under their plate armour and were so weighted down with steel that they could not move.[8]

EFFIGY OF THE BLACK PRINCE, CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL, 1376

fig. 15.

The armour worn by the Black Prince in fig. 15 is typical of the last quarter of the fourteenth century. The embroidered gypon is cut in the style fashionable at the time of his death.

The transition from chain-mail to plate-armour took almost a century to effect. All armour was expensive; each small ring in a coat-of-mail had to be riveted individually, while the shaping and fitting of plate-armour was a highly skilled trade. Consequently, the expense of arming a knight was very great, and armour was handed down from generation to generation. The heirs might add a new piece of plate or change the helm for a bascinet, but the cost of a full suit of plate-armour would have been prohibitive for many.

While the fourteenth century with its many transitions in style presents difficulties for the student of armour, these same changes in the type of armour make it possible to hazard certain opinions as to a knight's age, wealth, and attitude towards progress.

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[8] Evans, p. 45.

IV

THE FORMS AND RULES OF CLERICAL DRESS

Preste, ne monke, ne zit chanoun,
No no man of religioun
Giffen hem so to devocioun
    As don thes holy frers.
For summe gyven ham to chyvalry
Somme to riote and ribaudery;
Bot ffrers gyven ham to grete study,
    And to grete prayers.[1]

SAINT FRANCIS, FRANCO-FLEMISH, ABOUT 1265

Plate III

The church of the middle ages penetrated every level of society and was probably the largest and best organized of all medieval institutions. At its head was the Pope, and from him authority was delegated, from Cardinal to Archbishop, from Archbishop to Bishop,

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[1] "Song Against the Friars," Political Poems, I, 263.

down to the lowest parish clerk. Church dicipline applied, at least in theory, to every member of the regular and secular clergy and rules of dress were a part of this dicipline.

G. G. Coulton has estimated that in the fourteenth century, including the regular (cloistered) clergy, "there was probably at least one cleric per hundred population, that is, about one among every thirty adult males."[2] This segment of the population was subject to Canon Law, as administered in ecclesiastical courts by the Archbishops, Bishops, and Archdeacons. These courts were also responsible for the morals of the diocese, but it was the parish priest or rector who cared for the daily spiritual needs of the people and who came closest to them in their every walk of life. If the Bishop ranked with the Baron, holding large estates and beset with political responsibilities, the parish priest might be the brother of a plowman and as poor as any of his parishioners.

The vestments worn by priests and prelates while carrying out their public functions were among the most beautiful and luxurious garments of the age. Made of the richest materials and often elaborately embroidered, some have been treasured for centuries and are still to be seen behind glass cases in museums and cathedrals. They were not usually the property of the clergy but were presented to the churches, to which they belonged in perpetuity.

No uniform dress, such as distinguished the regular orders, was prescribed for the secular clergy, but rather, sombre colours and simple styles. Sumptuary laws would indicate that priests wore the same

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[2] Coulton, Medieval Panorama, p. 124.

clothing as laymen and indulged in many of the same extravagances. A petition to Parliament in 1402 complained of clerical dress and included a list of expensive furs which were to be forbidden to all churchmen with the exception of a few officials. Bishops and Archbishops complained again and again, and an increasing earnestness in their injunctions would seem to indicate a general laxity. The following diatribe from the second Constitutio of the second Council of John de Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury, dated 1342, is typical.

fig. 16.

The external costume often shows the internal character and condition of persons; and though the behaviour of clerks ought to be an example and pattern of the laity, yet the abuse of clerks, which has gained ground more than usually in these days in tonsures, in garments, in horse trappings, and in other things, has now generated an abominable scandal among the people, while persons holding ecclesiastical dignities, rectories, honourable prebends, and benefices with cure of souls, even when ordained to holy orders, scorn to wear the crown (which is the token of the heavenly kingdom and of perfection), and, using the distinction of hair extended almost to the shoulders like effeminate persons, walk about clothed in a military rather than a clerical outer habit, viz., short or notably scant, and with excessive wide sleeves, which do not cover the elbows, but hang down, lined, or as they say, turned up with fur or silk, and hoods with tippets of wonderful length, and with long beards; and rashly dare, contrary to the canonical sanctions, to use rings indifferently on their fingers; and to be girt with zones, studded with precious stones of wonderful size, with purses engraved with various figures, enamelled and gilt, and attached to them (i.e. to the girdle), with knives, hanging after the fashion of swords, also with buskins red and even checked, green shoes and peaked and cut in many ways, with cruppers (croperiis) to their saddles, and horns hanging to their necks, capes and cloaks furred openly at the edges to such an extent, that little or no distinction appears of clerks from laymen, whereby they render themselves, through their demerits, unworthy of the privilege of their order and profession.[3]

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[3] As translated in E. L. Cutts, Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages (London, 1872), pp. 242-243.

This is followed by specific prohibitions and punishments. The authorities tried to enforce these canons but the secular clergy appear to have resisted any attempt to impose upon them a regular habit. A fourteenth-century Instructions for Parish Priests states:

> Thow moste forgo for any thynge;
> Cuttede clothes and pykede schon,
> . . .
> In honeste clothes thow moste gon,
> Baselarde ny baudryke were þow non.
> Berde & crowne thow moste be schaue.[4]

Such instructions were apparently wasted on the priests who followed Anti-Christ in the dream of Piers Plowman, where

> Proud prestes come with hym . moo than a thousand,
> In Paltokes & pyked shoes. & pisseres longe knyues.[5]

In the book in which the grateful monks of Saint Alban recorded the names and sometimes the portraits of certain of their benefactors (Cotton, Nero, D. vii), several members of the secular clergy are depicted wearing the clothing of ordinary citizens and in colours equally bright. This mode of dress is also documented in wills such as that of William, son of John de Escrik, an ordained priest who left among other bequests:

> To the monastery of Selby, one cap of cloth of gold "de Lukes." To . . . to Beatrice, my sister, . . . and one gown of scarlet, furred with byse. To Agnes, who was the wife of my father, 40s. and one gown of mustre-vilers [a mixed grey cloth] furred with byse. . . . To his wife, a gown of scarlet lined with muslin . . . To Lord Reginald, my uncle, 20s. and one gown of worsted. . . . To Alicia, their daughter, one silver cup . . . and one pair of coral beads with a gold ring appended. . . . to Isabella . . . one head-band with silver ornaments, value 3s. 4d.[6]

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[4] Instructions for Parish Priests, ed. E. Peacock, EETS, O.S. 31 (London, 1902), p. 2.

[5] William Langland, The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, ed. Walter W. Skeat (London, 1869), Text B, Passus XX, 214-218.

[6] Rickert, pp. 382-383.

The fact that such luxuries were once in the possession of this very wealthy priest, would seem to bear out the complaints of the Archbishop.

After the priest, the most important of the minor clerics was the parish clerk. Youths were taught, either at school or by serving a priest, the basic requirements which enabled them to receive minor orders. Once so ordained, they were qualified to act as parish clerks. It was decreed in Canon Law that the priest should have a deacon, clerk, or 'scholar' to assist at his daily services, rendering the responses or even reading the Matins and Evensong, and this formed a natural apprenticeship towards the priesthood.

When performing clerical functions, such minor clerics would wear a surplice over their ordinary dress. The surplice took many forms and varied with the orders, but in general, by the fourteenth century, it had become "the distinctive vestment of the lower grade of cleric, being used in choir and in procession, in fact everywhere except as a eucharistic vestment."[7] It was usually made of white linen or cotton with sleeves cut long and very full. Although this vestment had originally been almost floor-length, it was shortened in the thirteenth century and by Chaucer's time was of ankle-length.

The parish clerk probably followed his parish priest's mode of dressing, and doubtless the young men were the worst offenders against propriety. Among the youths holding such conspicuous positions in the parish the temptation to cut a fashionable figure must have been great. If the priest dressed in the style of a rich burgher, his clerk would probably feel free to imitate the fashionable young squire.

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[7] Herbert Norris, Church Vestments, Their Origin and Development (London, 1949), p. 169.

Even a conservative and conscientious priest might have had a difficult time controlling such a clerk as Absalon, of the Miller's Tale.

Unlike the secular clergy who held benefices and owned private property, the regular orders (the monks, friars, and nuns who were such a familiar part of the medieval scene), affected asceticism. They took the three vows of absolute poverty, voluntary celibacy, and absolute obedience to the rule by which they lived.

The monks were the aristocratic order. Their houses were wealthy and powerful while their abbots ranked with the nobles of the kingdom. The friars, on the other hand, were the popular order of clergy. Often learned and eloquent, they went about the country preaching repentance and hearing confessions. They had strong Papal support against their secular rivals. Somewhere between the secular and regular churchmen were the Canons, the clergy of the great cathedrals and of the collegiate churches, who lived in a community on the monastic model and followed a modified version of one or another of the monastic rules.

In all these orders there were definite rules of dress and, although they varied as to colour and detail, the spirit behind the laws was that of austerity and mortification of the flesh. With time, the orders fell away from the ideals of the founders, and the habits became more comfortable. In an attempt to maintain the original appearance of poverty, if not the desire for it, a series of regulations came into force, and it is from such secondary rules that we are able to determine the actual customs of dress as opposed to the original ideals.

These rules and observations were set down in Latin and since

monastic life was regarded as a form of military service it is not surprising to find that many garments are described by the Latin words which originally referred to the uniforms of Roman soldiers. This, however, has led to considerable obscurity and confusion in translation. The Book of Observances According to the Rule of St. Augustine, written about 1296, gives a full account of the dress of the Augustinian Canons of the Priory of Saint Andrew and Saint Giles at Barnwell. A list of their garments will serve to define the terms which apply to other orders as well. Since the memorial brasses of canons survived the Reformation in greater numbers than did those of other clerics, it is possible to compare the dress depicted in such brasses with the written lists and to verify possible translations.

Undergarments were simple and their use is confirmed in certain Benedictine documents. They consisted of a shirt (camisa), usually of flannel, and drawers or breeches (femoralia). Over these a cassock or under-tunic was worn; in winter this garment was sometimes lined with fur and hence was called a pellicea or pelisse. Plain, well-dressed sheepskin was considered quite good enough for this purpose and more costly furs were forbidden.

Over the cassock the Canons wore a surplice, (super-pellicum) or a rochet, which was a garment of white linen with long, fairly tight sleeves. It reached to below the knees when belted but was cut longer than this in order that it might be pulled up to conceal the girdle entirely. The main difference between the dress of regular canons and monks was that whereas the former wore linen, the latter wore an over-tunic of wool.

Both monks and friars wore this woollen 'habit' over their cassocks. It was generally a gown of floor-length with a hood or cowl attached. The term 'cowl' sometimes referred to the entire habit.

fig. 17.

The style varied with the different orders, and much of the time the hood was worn thrown back over the shoulders. Since the canon's surplice had no hood this was sewn to the cape or cope instead.

The 'cope' was, therefore, a hooded, bell-shaped or semi-circular cape that was worn, in one form or another, by most of the regular clergy. There were actually two forms of the 'cope,' the first being worn as an outer garment for protection from the weather and sometimes referred to as a <u>pluviale</u> or <u>mantellum</u>, and the second, a choir cope or <u>capa</u> used in church. Originally they had been the same garment, the 'habit' of most canons, for it was required for

warmth in the cold, draughty churches. The cope, when worn in church, soon became a processional vestment and, when used as such, the hood degenerated into a token ornamentation while a small cap or bireta took its place as a head covering. These vestment copes were extremely beautiful, being richly ornamented and embroidered.

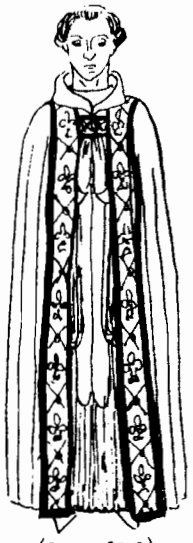

fig. 18.

A cassock, an over-tunic, a hood, and a cape were the garments more or less common to all regular orders, but each order adopted variations according to the role it filled in society.

The first great monastic rule was composed by St. Benedict about 529 A.D. The main divisions within the Benedictine rule were the Cistercians, Clugniacs, Carthusians, and the Benedictines themselves. In England the Benedictines were called the 'Black Monks' because of their black habit. Worn over a white woollen cassock, their ample gowns had wide sleeves and a large hood that spread back over their shoulders almost like a cape. Saint Benedict had never specified a definite colour of habit, and in fact his advice regarding dress was sensibly flexible, quite in keeping with his generally reasonable attitude.

The brothers are to be provided with clothes suited to the locality and the temperature, for those in colder regions require warmer clothing than those in warmer climates. The Abbot shall decide such matters. The following garments should be enough for those who live in moderate climates; a cowl and a robe apiece (the cowl to be

of wool in winter and in summer light or old); a rough garment for work; and shoes and boots for the feet. The monk shall not be fastidious about the colour and texture of these clothes, which are to be made of the stuff commonly used in the region where they dwell, or of the cheapest material.[8]

Soon, however, the colour of the habit became one of the distinguishing characters of the various branches of the order and appears to have been the cause of disputes. In the late twelfth century Joachim, writing to demonstrate the backsliding of certain houses, echoed the words of the original command of Saint Benedict.

If they be true monks, let them live by the labour of their hands; let all abstain from flesh-foods, save only the sick and the infirm; . . . let the monks possess nothing of their own — let them remember that it is not expedient to dispute the colour or texture of their garments . . . and that fur and linen garments lead them astray from the true monastic goal.[9]

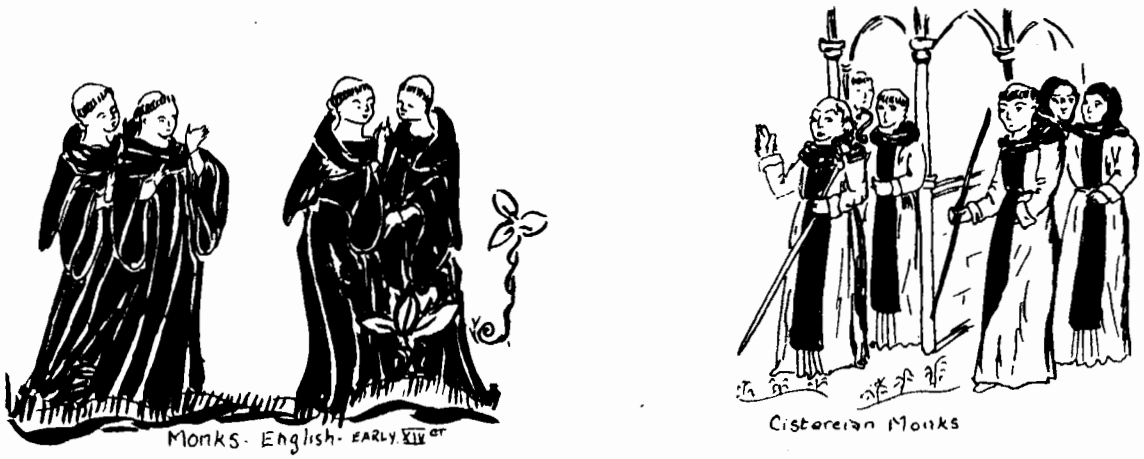

fig. 19.

If the differences in habits were a source of dispute, they nevertheless inspired one twelfth-century writer to somewhat lyrical flights. Otto of Freisingen showed an enthusiasm for monasticism which was often lacking among his contemporaries.

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[8] "The Rule of Saint Benedict," Sec. 55, translated by O. J. Thatcher and E. H. McNeal, A Source Book for Medieval History (New York, 1907), pp. 471-472.

[9] Joachim, Exposition of the Apocalypse, translated by G. G. Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion (Cambridge, 1927), II, 121.

Some, leading an apostolic life and showing the purity of their innocense in their very dress, wear a clean linen cloak; other men of the same order are more roughly clad in woollen tunics for the mortification of the flesh. Others free from all external occupation, showing their angelic life in their very garments typify its sweetness rather in the shape than in the softness of that which they wear. For they lay next to their flesh the roughest tunics; upon which they set broader garments with hoods, divided into six parts, as it were the six wings of the seraphim. With two of these, that is the hood, they cover their head; with two, that is their sleeves, they soar to the sky, directing all their action as they stretch their hands to God; with the others they veil the rest of their body before and behind; thus with God's grace preventing and following, they show themselves fortified against all the wild darts of the tempter. Yet they differ in this that some wear that garment black to express their contempt of the world, while others caring not for colour or texture, wear white or grey or any other rough or humble cloth.[10]

G. G. Coulton notes that this passage seems to allude mainly to the black Benedictines and Clugniacs, the grey Cistercians and the Premonstratensians (who were followers of Saint Augustine).

The Clugniacs had retained the Benedictine habit, but the Cistercians changed the colour of the gown and hood to white, adding a black scapulary, a long piece of cloth hanging down before and behind and sometimes joined at the sides with a band of the same cloth. They wore a black hood and cloak when going beyond the walls of the monastery.

Certainly many of their regulations seem severe, and more particularly these; they wear nothing made with furs or linen, not even that finely spun linen garment, which we call staminium; neither breeches, unless when sent on a journey, which at their return they wash and restore. They have two tunics with cowls, but no additional garments in winter, though if they think fit, in summer they may lighten their garb. They sleep clad and girded, and never after Matins return to their bed.[11]

The Carthusian habit was also a white tunic and hood over which was worn a white scapulary.

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[10] Otto of Freisingen, Chronicle, Book 7, ch. 34, as translated by Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, II, 90-91.

[11] William of Malmesbury, Chronicle, translated by J. A. Giles, reprinted in The Portable Medieval Reader , ed. J. B. Ross and M. M. McLaughlin (New York, 1955), p. 57.

It was not long before luxuries found their way into the monasteries. The eating of meat and the love of hunting are recorded and condemned in numerous visitation records, while the use of expensive furs became so common that a decree of Benedict XII in 1337 made a special point of forbidding the wearing of 'gris' by all the cloistered clergy. If a monk wanted fur for warmth he was ordered to use serviceable lambskin.

Part of this laxity in dress was caused by administrative changes. Where monasteries had originally provided the monks with all their clothing, they later began to give an allowance of money.

> The giving of a fixed allowance of money to each monk in lieu of clothing became all but universal—departing from the Old English and Anglo-Norman practice, as laid down in the rule, of issuing clothing as required by the cellarer or chamberer. Throughout the latter half of the thirteenth century it was duly condemned yet persisted save at a few houses.[12]

The amount allowed for a year's clothing was usually about a pound (in 1403 at Ely it was £1 2s. 6d.). There is some indication of an annual clothing distribution being made at certain houses in addition to an allowance. This, of course, is a definite break with the principle that forbade all personal property and must have been a contributing factor to the abuses which were soon causing comment.

> Therefore these men of Holy Church that buckle their shoon with buckles of silver, and use great silver harnesses in their girdles and knives; and men of religion—monks and canons and such others that use great ouches of silver and gold on their hoods to fasten their hoods against the wind, and ride on high horses with saddles harnessed with gold and silver more pompously than lords, be strong thieves and do great sacrilege, so spending the goods of Holy Church in vanity and pride (and) lust of the flesh,

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[12] D. M. Knowles, The Religious Orders in England (Cambridge, 1948), p. 288.

by which goods the poor folk should live. A lady of a thousand marks a year can pin her hood against the wind with a small pin of latten, twelve for a penny. But a monk that is bounded to poverty by his profession will have an ouch or brooch of gold and silver, in value of a noble and much more.[13]

A further document, of 1386, ordered some drastic changes in the observances in Benedictine monasteries.

Moreover, in the colour of hoods and frocks we decree and order conformity henceforth in every monastery and church and in the wearing by every monk of our order; so that red, brown (burnetum), purple (bluetum), and every such colour be absolutely relinquished, and everyone clad simply in hoods and frocks of unrelieved black. We shall not be called red, or brown, or purple, but black monks, thus keeping our true name. . . . Also, we absolutely forbid, both for the monks and for prelates of this province, boots which are pointed (rostratas) or too narrow, together with silk girdles, or girdles of any such material, or with silver adornments, and hoods ornamented with silk or sendal of green or blue or any other colour but plain black; nor do we allow any monk, whether inferior or superior, to ride forth with a cloak or bell-shaped cape (rotundello) or any such dishonest apparel, or in hoods or other outer garments alone; but we command that whenever monks are to ride forth they shall be clad outwardly according to the ancient custom of our cloister in honest capes having their hoods sewn on.[14]

All monks, however, did not live in luxury. There were many instances where mismanagement and the appropriation of funds left a house and its inmates almost destitute. The Evesham Chronicle recorded the statement of one such monk:

Moreover, holy father, whereas according to our tradition we are not permitted to celebrate Mass without breeches, and many of us have no such garment, therefore, through this default, the celebration of many sacrements hath been omitted.[15]

The monk giving this evidence had only "his flannel shirt and cowl, wintertide as it was."

The second great monastic rule, that of Saint Augustine, was

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[13] Dives and Pauper, Com. VII, c. 12, as translated by Coulton, Medieval Panorama, p. 273.

[14] Rickert, p. 339.

[15] The Evesham Chronicle, as translated by Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, II, 369.

not actually set down as such by the Saint but grew out of certain of his writings and sermons describing the life he led with his clerics in Hippo. When regular Canons began to bind themselves by the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity, the Augustinian dicipline was almost universally adopted by them, thus a regular canon became almost invariably synonymous with an "Augustinian Canon."[16]

Most regular canons were, in virtue of their origin, essentially clerics, and as clerics their duty was to serve the parish churches in their patronage. They were also bound to the choral celebration of the divine office. It is difficult to define exactly the position of the regular canons within the Church. Erasmus explained them thus:

> there is a college of Canons, but of those which the Church of Rome terms regular; a middle kind between the monk and those termed secular canons.
> An amphibious sort of animal, like the beaver.[17]

The "secular canons" were the members of cathedral chapters that had resisted conversion to regular life.

Both regular and secular canons wore much the same habit, a long black cassock, often fur-lined, and over this a long white linen surplice or rochet girded with a leather belt. A black cape with a hood attached and a 'four-square' black cap (bireta) completed their ordinary dress. The black cope was referred to as their 'habit' and accounts for the name 'black canons' which was sometimes applied to them. The surplice was always worn during service as was the 'almuce' and choir cope. The latter was sometimes white instead of black. The 'almuse,' or 'amice,' or 'amess,' was originally a short

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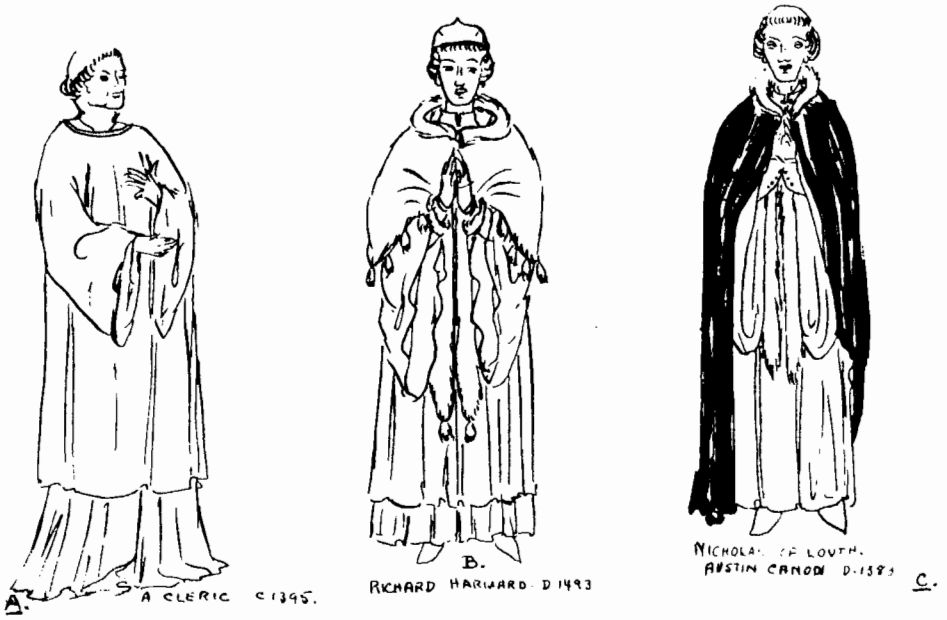
16 J. C. Dickinson, The Origin of the Austin Canons and Their Introduction into England (London, 1950), p. 72.

17 Erasmus, Pilgrimages, pp. 11-12.



Surplice Almuce Cope or Cappa Nigra

fig. 20.

cape with two long pendants in front. It was put on like a shawl but was later completely joined at the breast and put on over the head. It had a square hood, padded at the back. It is interesting to note that French women of the fourteenth century wore a similar hood called an ammusse, "an oblong piece of cloth, often fur lined, with two corners turned in at one end and joined to make a pocket for the head." [18]

Since the 'amice' originally provided protection against the cold of medieval churches, it was lined with fur. In time the fur became more and more ostentatiously luxurious, 'gris,' sable, and even ermine being worn by the higher clergy, and eventually the fur came to be used as the right side of the garment rather than as a

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[18] Evans, p. 21.

lining. The tails of the small animals made a fringe around the lower edge. In succeeding centuries the two long hanging ends of the 'amice' degenerated into a deep fur collar worn like a stole around the neck, becoming in time a mere scarf, the hood and cape having vanished entirely. This became the 'tippet' of the modern Anglican clergy.

A list of the clothing issued to each brother during the year was set down in The Book of Observances According to the Rule of Saint Augustine.

> against Easter to each one a surplice suitable for his use, containing seven ells of stuff; also one sheet of six ells, and three pairs of linen breeches, each of which is to be five ells. Also one pair of summer hose of soft leather, and one pair of gaiters of serge or canvas, according to the wishes of the receiver, and one cope of freize without fur. At the feast of Saint Michael, however, or rather before it, he will supply to each Canon one new tunic of woollen, or one cassock of lambskin, at the option of the Canon; also a pair of boots of felt, and a pair of gaiters of woollen, and two pairs of shoes similarly of woollen; also a black lambskin to mend the fur of the hood of his cope.[19]

Since the canons were, so to speak, on view to the public, their Observances noted the necessity of keeping up appearances, and as much stress was laid on the cleanliness and care of the garments as on over-indulgence in luxury.

> No Canon is to be allowed to remain in convent with a cloak improperly cut, or with surplice or shoes that have holes in them, or with his dress dirty, untidy, or of a colour other than that which the observances in accordance with the Rule demand.[20]

The Observances provided for the enforcement of these principles.

> The Chamberlain ought to provide a laundress of good character and good reputation to wash the garments of the convent. She must be able properly to mend and wash all the linen of the brethren, namely, surplices, rochets, sheets, shirts, and drawers. The linen ought to be washed once a fortnight in summer and once in three weeks in winter.

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[19] Observances in Use at the Augustinian Priory of Saint Giles and Saint Andrew at Barnwell, Cambridgeshire, ed. and trans. J. W. Clark (Cambridge, 1897), p. 197.

[20] Ibid, p. 199.

Moreover, the Chamberlain ought to provide a servant, who shall be fit for his place, trustworthy, sober, unassuming, secret, not talkative, drunken or lying. He is to know how to shape in due form the brethren's woollen and linen garments, which are to be neither too sumptuous nor too sordid. These the servant of the tailory is to shape in such a way that they be not too long, to short, hanging down unevenly, badly cut, or in any other way arranged contrary to usage or so as to attract attention but, having regard to the stature of each brother, such as fit him properly and according to usage.[21]

This concern shown for the proper and decent dress of the canons is very different from the disregard for clothing shown by the early founders of the third major division of the regular clergy, the mendicant friars.

Saint Francis of Assisi organized the Franciscans in 1209, and in less than six years Saint Dominic had brought the Dominican order into being. In both cases the ideal of absolute poverty was to be maintained by every member and by each house. The individual friar was to beg for his food and clothing, never to touch money, and to accept donations of essentials only as needed.

fig. 21.

This type of religious life became very popular, and by the middle of the thirteenth century, two other orders had been formed, making four major orders of mendicants: the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Carmelites and the Hermits of Saint Augustine or Austin Friars.

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[21] Observances, p. 195.

The 'Friars Preachers,' as the Dominicans were sometimes called, were the first to come to England; they established a house at Oxford in 1221. Very soon, however, the Franciscans followed them.

> In the year of Our Lord 1224, in the time of the Lord Pope Honorius, that is in the very year in which the Rule of the Blessed Francis was confirmed by him, in the eighth year of the Lord King Henry, son of John, on the Tuesday after the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin [Sept. 8], which that year was upon a Sunday, the Friars Minor first came into England, at Dover.[22]

These mendicant orders spread throughout England until, just prior to the black death, the Franciscans alone numbered two thousand.

The orders were distinguished by the colour of their habits. The Dominicans were commonly called the 'Black Friars' because their dress, although it consisted of a white tunic fastened with a white girdle, over which was worn a white scapulary, was entirely covered by their black mantle and hood. The lay brethren wore a black scapulary. The Franciscans, or 'Grey Friars,' wore a grey tunic with long loose sleeves and a knotted cord for a girdle. They sometimes wore a black hood and were distinguished from the other orders because of their bare feet (fig. 21). The habit was not changed to dark brown until the fifteenth century.

The Carmelites had originated as a community of hermits on Mount Carmel. When the order spread to the West the original habit of red and white stripes was changed to a white mantle over a dark brown tunic, and soon a scapulary was added. They were known, therefore, as the 'White Friars.' The Austin Friars wore a black gown with wide sleeves, girded with a leather belt, and a black cloth hood.

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[22] Friar Thomas of Eccleston, Chronicle (c. 1260), translated by Edward Hutton, The Franciscans in England 1224-1538 (London, 1926), p. 9.

This distinction in the colour of the habit appears to have increased in symbolic importance because at the time of the dissolution "the Franciscans were made to say that wearing a grey coat with a girdle full of knots was a dumb ceremony; the Carmelites forswore the wearing of a white coat, scapular and hood."[23]

By the fourteenth century, the dedicated spirit that had inspired the original friars to maintain a frugal existence was waning, and in its place formal regulations, set observances, and variations in the Rule were established. The pattern was the same in all orders, and the decay of the Franciscan ideal from the bare feet and vilitas vestimentorum of the founder will illustrate the general trend.

Very early the order divided into two main groups—the advocates (to adopt a later terminology) of the 'usus laxum' whose ideal was, as a 'discreet' and sarcastic brother put it, "poverty without penury," and the advocates of the 'usus pauper,' who maintained that the friars were bound to live a life of real poverty and hardship.[24]

In 1318 four friars were solemnly burned as heretics on several counts, one of which was their refusal to wear the pattern of frock commanded by their general; they had insisted on wearing a mean, coarse garment which resembled the robe Saint Francis himself had worn.

'Nuditas pedum' and 'vilitas vestimentorum' were, according to Albert of Pisa, among the features that exalted the Order of Saint Francis. Their Rule specified a habit of one tunic with a hood (caputium) and another without a hood for those who wished it.

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[23] G. Baskerville, English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries (London, 1937), p. 233.

[24] A. G. Little, Studies in English Franciscan History (Manchester, 1917), p. 4.

The Rule only implied that the brothers were to go barefoot by the exception "those who are obliged by necessity may wear shoes."[25] By 1292 the Constitution had been modified to state that "no friar shall go habitually (or usually) shod." By 1354 the rule was that:

> no friar shall wear shoes without urgent and manifest necessity and that by special license of the minister, which license may in the minister's absence be given by the custodian, guardian, or their vicars, with the advice of the 'discreti.'[26]

In spite of such urgings many friars disobeyed the rules of dress in the most flagrant manner. Piers the Ploughman's Crede, written about 1395, points out this change.

> Fraunceys bad his bretheren
> Bar-fot to wenden;
> Now han they buclede shone,
> For blenyng of her heles,
> And hosen in hard weder
> Y-hamled by the ancle.[27]

It would appear that the Franciscans were only too willing to adopt the pattern set by the other orders whose rules were not as severe.

The original Rule of Saint Francis stated that "all friars shall be clothed in coarse garments, and may patch them with sackcloth and other pieces with the blessing of God."[28] The Constitution of 1260 added that garments were to be poor both as to price and to colour (it will be remembered that dyed cloth was almost double the price of plain grey wool), entirely black or entirely white overtunics were not to be worn and carded cloth was not to be used if other were

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[25] "The Rule of Saint Francis," Section 2, Source Book, p. 500

[26] Little, pp. 55-60. The data on changes in the Franciscan Constitution has been taken from selected translations by A.G. Little, Studies in English Franciscan History.

[27] "The Crede of Piers Ploughman," The Vision and Crede of Piers Ploughman, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1856), II, 468, ll. 593-598.

[28] "The Rule of Saint Francis," Section 2.

available. Tunics were to be "without deformity of superfluity in length or width," and the same cloth was to be used by all friars, no distinction being made for ministers, lecturers, or other officers. No friar was to have more than one under-tunic, whether simple or lined, nor more than two habits or tunics. The Constitution of 1292 amended this last decree to state that "no friar shall have more than two new habits in one year." The material was sometimes 'blaunchet' (blanket) and sometimes russet or 'griseng,' and four ells went into a habit.

It would appear from the rulings in the thirteenth century that, although the Rule specified one tunic only, in northern countries the friars had added an under-tunic to their costume. An incised monument in Ghent depicts Frater Willemus, a Franciscan who died in 1322. He wears a habit of moderate fullness, girded with a knotted cord, and having a hood. The sleeves are just full enough that they fall back from his folded hands to reveal longer, tighter sleeves of a light-coloured under-tunic. His feet are bare, his head is tonsured. His dress is similar to that that shown on a fifteenth-century Burgundian statue of Saint Francis, now in the Metropolitan Museum, except that the sleeves of the habit of Saint Francis are very full and his under-tunic is darker than his habit. Albert of Pisa apparently accepted this custom for he wished friars "to wear the old tunic over the new, both for lowliness and to make them last longer." [29]

By the fourteenth century, however, writers such as William Langland were commenting on the luxury of the dress of the friars.

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[29] Little, p. 60.

His kyrtle of clene whiit,
Clenlych y-sewed.
Hit was good y-now of ground
Greyn for to beren.[30]

Wycliff laid stress on this aspect when he said that "þe kyng or þe emperour myȝtte wiþ worschipe were a garnment of a frere for goodness of þe cloþ."[31] It would appear that a life of poverty and poor garments had little appeal for many friars.

Nuns were no more proof against temptations than were their masculine counterparts, but they had excuses. While the orders of monks and friars drew their recruits from all walks of life, the nunneries of the middle ages were composed almost exclusively of women of the upper classes. There were sister organizations associated with all the major cloistered and mendicant orders, and in medieval England there were some 138 nunneries, excluding the double houses of the Gilbertines. Over half of these houses were under Benedictine rule while another quarter were of the Cistercian order. As to the actual number of nuns, Eileen Power makes a tentative estimate, basdd upon the fact that most houses had less than twenty inmates and sixty-three convents had less than ten nuns, and arrives at a number between fifteen hundred and two thousand.[32]

Since nuns followed the same rule as the other cloistered orders, their lives were similarly divided between lahour, meditation, and the chanting of the seven offices. The labour, however, often took such feminine forms as embroidery, and English nuns were famed for the

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[30] "Piers Ploughman's Crede," ll. 451-458.

[31] The English Works of Wycliff, ed. F. D. Matthews (London, 1880), p. 50.

[32] Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries (Cambridge, 1922), p. 3.

beautiful vestments which they worked.

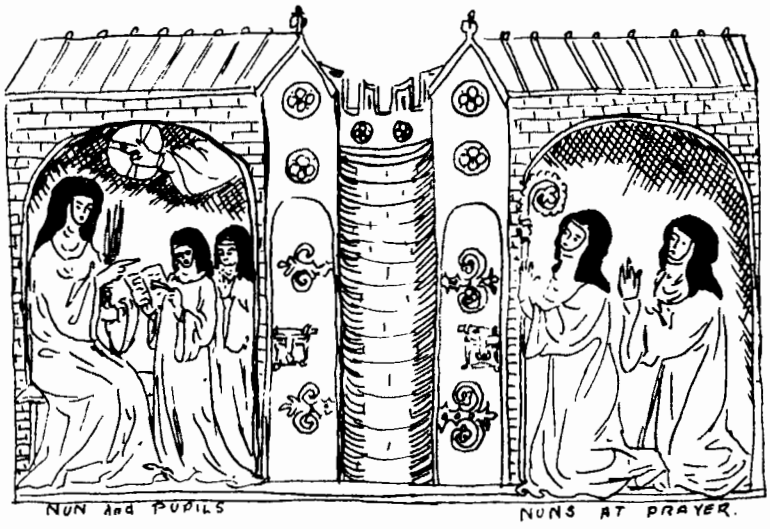

fig. 22.

The original dress of most orders was adapted from the rules set down for men. The following version of the Rule of Saint Benedict was translated and adapted for the use of certain nuns in Northern England.

> Thay sal be clade ful wele, we wate,
> Efter þer place es cald or hete.
> For in cald stedes who so er stede,
> þam nedes forto be better cled;
> . . .
> And al it sal be puruayd playne
> At þe ordinance of þeir souerayne.
> In comun places for alkins note
> Suffices a kirtil & a cote;
> And mantles sal þai haue certayne,
> In winter dubil, in somer playne;
> And changing kirtles sal þay haue
> In nyghtes þer oþer forto saue,
> Schos þai sall haue, whoe þai dwel,
> Swilk od þai may find for to sel
> Of þe fairest þai sal not by,
> But the vilest ful bowsumly.
> . . .
> And when þai sal went in cuntre
> þair clething sal mor honest be.[33]

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[33] Three Middle English Versions of the Rule of Saint Benet, ed. E. A. Knock, EETS, O.S. 120 (London, 1902), pp. 104-105.

The kirtle would correspond to the monk's cassock while the cote would be the gown or habit that distinguished the orders. Drawings in manuscripts show nuns wearing dark, unbelted cotes which fall to the ground and which have wide sleeves turned back to show the tight sleeves of a light-coloured undergarment (the kirtle). The mantle was the feminine counterpart of the cope and it was worn in processions, at confession, at prayers, and in the choir. It was probably very necessary in cold churches, and the Austin nuns wore a mantle lined with white cloth in the summer and rabbit fur in the winter.

The nun, like the monk, was expected to sleep in the under-tunic, "girded o-boun on al wise," so as to be ready to rise at midnight for Matins.

In England nuns wore the common feminine headdress. A wimple covered the chin and neck, and a veil was worn over the head. In the various illustrations in manuscripts, wimples cover the chin and frame the sides of the face while the veil falls over the head and brow. The artists seem to have been well aware that most nuns wore their veils well above their eyebrows and showed a considerable expanse of fashionably broad forehead, and this in spite of strict rules against the practice. Visitation documents record continual complaints against the fashionable exposed forehead, and the accusations brought against Clemence Medford, Prioress of Ankerwynk, in 1441 are typical:

> she carried her veil too high above her forehead, so that her forehead being entirely uncovered, can be seen of all, and she wears fur of vair.

As a result of this complaint Archbishop Alnwick made an injunction ordering that neither "the prioress ne none of the couente were no vayles of sylke no no syluer pynnes, . . . and that ye so atyre your hedes that your vayles come down nygh to your eyen.[34]

The 'barbe' was a variation of the wimple, and though it was essentially a garment of mourning worn by widows, there are references to 'barbes' worn by nuns. A 'barbe' was mentioned in the amusing punishment meted out by the Vicar General at the monastery of Romsey to Lady Alice Gorsyn for using bad language.

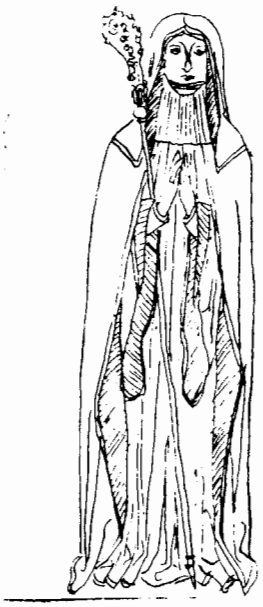

Fig. 23.
Abbess Hervey

> He absolved her from the sentence of excommunication and enjoined on her in penance that if she used bad language in the future . . . a red tongue made of red cloth should be used on the barb under her chin [in sua barba alba] and remain there a month.[35]

It is difficult to know whether the 'barbe' was a part of the habit at certain convents or was worn only by widows who entered religious life, such as the Abbess Hervey of Elstow, Bedfordshire, a Benedictine convent. It is possible that such a 'pleated wimple' was introduced in an effort to prevent the use of silk, which would not have held sharp pleats. Certainly the decree of the Council of Oxford in 1222 was very firm about the use of silk.

> Since it is necessary that the female sex, so weak against the wiles of the ancient enemy, should be fortified by many remedies, we decree that nuns and other women dedicated to divine worship shall not wear a silken wimple, nor dare to carry silver or gold tiring-pins in their veils.[36]

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[34] "Record of Visitations Held by William Alnwick," Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln, ed. A. H. Thompson, Canterbury and York Society Pub., Nos. 24-25 (London, 1919), II, 3, 8.

[35] As translated by Power, p. 301.

[36] As translated by Power, p. 585, from the Latin Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, ed. D. Wilkins (London, 1737), I, 590-1.

The colour of the habit was supposed to correspond to that of the masculine orders. The Franciscan nuns, or Poor Clares, wore the same grey habit as the friars, but with a black veil instead of a hood. The Benedictine nuns wore a black gown or habit over a white kirtle, a white wimple, and a veil of white or black depending upon the rule of the house and the position of the nun. These regulations did not always hold, however, for worldly fashions soon made their way into the cloisters and an almost continuous series of injunctions attempted in vain to stem the influx, now in one convent now in another. The Council of Oxford had issued the standard decree on the subject in 1222.

> let them measure their gowns according to the dimensions of their body, so that it does not exceed the length of the body, but let it suffice them to be clad, as beseems them, in a robe reaching to the ankles; and let none but a concecrated nun wear a ring and let her be content with one alone.[37]

Fifteen years later a Synod declared that nuns

> are not to use trained or pleated dresses, or any exceeding the length of the body, nor deliaate or coloured furs; nor shall they presume to wear silver tiring pins in their veils.[38]

In 1279 Archbishop Peckham wrote to the nuns at Godstow forbidding them "ever in future to wear cloth of burnet, nor gathered tunics, nor to make themselves garments of an immoderate width with excessive pleats."[39] Linings of dyed woollens (imposterum burneto) were prohibited as were red dresses (rugatas tunicas). At Swine, in 1298, large collars, barred girdles, and laced shoes were proscribed. At Wilberforce, in 1308, red dresses and long super-tunics like those worn by secular women were condemned. By 1397 the nuns at Nunmonkton were enjoined not to wear

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[37] Translated by Power, p. 585.

[38] Translated by Power, pp. 585-586.

[39] Translated by Lina Eckenstein, Women Under Monasticism (Cambridge, 1896), p. 400.

silken garments, silk veils, precious furs, finger rings and embroidered or ornamental jupes, in English called 'gownes,' after the fashion of secular women.[40]

Bishop Alnwick's injunction to the nuns at Ankerwyke in 1441 is even more specific but the abuses are the same.

> And also none of you, the prioresse ne none of the couente, were no vayles of sylke ne no sylure pynnes ne no gyrdles herneysed with syluere or golds, ne no mo rynges on your fyngers then oon, ye that be professed by a bysshope, ne that none of you vse no lased kyrtles, but butoned or hole be for (this would prohibit tight garments that revealed the figure too seductively), ne that ye vse no lases a bowte your nekkes wythe crucyfixes or rynges hangyng by tham, ne cappes of astate abowe your vayles.[41]

To understand this situation one must realize that most nuns as novices were expected to provide their own clothing. Furthermore, Canon Law specifically allowed the provision of a habit by friends when the poverty of house rendered this necessary, and many of the small houses were very poor.

Wills and other documents provide a record of the cost of outfitting a novice and sometimes list the items of clothing that she was expected to provide. The cost seems to have varied from ten marks to two hundred marks and the average was between ten and eleven pounds. However, "when Elizabeth Chauny—probably a relative of the poet Chaucer—became a nun at Barking Abbey in 1381, John of Gaunt paid £51 8s. 2d. in expenses and gifts on the occasion of her admission."[42]

The exaction of doweries was forbidden by the church but the convents almost demanded them. Payments were expected to be made to the convent and often to the Prioress and to the

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[40] Translated in Ekenstein, pp. 401-402.

[41] "Record of Visitations," p. 8.

[42] Power, p. 19.

nuns as well. These payments were disguised as free gifts, but this dowery, or entrance fee, sometimes as high as twenty pounds ($2,000 in today's money), was prohibitive for the poor and explains why the nunneries remained aristocratic institutions.

The dowery system was accepted as a matter of course, therefore it is not surprising to find wills that include bequests to support certain nuns during their lifetime. With the precedent of personal property thus established, bequests to nuns of jewelry, gouns, and household objects became common. Walter Skirlaw, Bishop of Durham, left to his sister Joan, Prioress of Swine, an elaborate gilt cup as well as

> Item, a robe of murrey cloth of Ypres containing a mantle and hood furred with budge, another hood furred with ermine, a cloak furred with half vair, a long robe (garnache) furred with vair. . . . Item, one bed of tapestry work of a white field, with a stag standing under a great tree and on either side lilies and a red border, with the complete tester and three curtains of white boulter.[43]

Margaret, a nun at Barking, was left cups and spoons and "three gold rings, with emerald, saphire, and diamond, respectively." Juliana de Crofton, nun of Hampole, received "a cloak lined with blue, money, a saddle with a bridle, and other household goods." When, in 1397, Margaret Fairfax was criticized for using "divers furs and even gris," it was no doubt the "cloak of black cloth furred with gris," that her brother left to her in 1393, that caused the reprimand.

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[43] Translated by Power, p. 327. The excerpts from wills have been selected from Power, pp. 326-330.

Bishop after Bishop complained of the luxurious dress of nuns, but it is only fair to note that this was an age when clothing was commonly handed down to relatives and that at the poor houses the Abbesses were often unable or unwilling to supply new habits of regulation colour and fabric for their nuns. In 1268 Archbishop Giffard's records that nuns complained that they were

> insufficiently provided with shoes and clothes; they had only one pair of shoes each year and barely a tunic in every three and a cloak in every six years unless they managed to beg from relatives and secular friends.[44]

There are many excuses that can be made for the growing worldliness of convents, but it was an immediate problem to the visiting Bishops who waged war in vain against silken veils and pleated robes. Synods and Councils issued decrees, but the gay colours and the extravagant modes of contemporary dress somehow found their way into the cloisters, perhaps with the women of the neighbourhood who sometimes boarded at local houses. The Bishops were fully aware that a secular guest might disrupt the ordered routine of convent life. A typical order to a Prioress reads:

> Let Felmersham's wife, with her whole household and other women, be utterly removed from your monastery within one year, seeing that they are a cause of disturbance to the nuns and an occasion to bad example by reason of their attire and of those who come to visit them.[45]

The custom of giving a monetary allowance from which the nun was to clothe herself (peculia) became common in the later

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[44] Register of Walter Giffard, as translated in Powers, p. 166.

[45] Translated in Power, p. 75.

middle ages. Instead of receiving clothing from the common store, nuns were able to buy gilt pins, barred girdles, and slashed shoes, which so horrified the Bishops. This custom had been condemned by the Council of Oxford as early as 1222.

> Moneys shall not be assigned to each separately for clothes, but shall be diligently attended to by certain persons deputed to this purpose. . . . Also it shall not be lawful for the chamberer or chamberess to give to any monk, canon, or nun, moneys or anything else for clothes.[46]

Regarding gifts, Bishop Wickwane ordered in 1281 that no nun of Nunappleton "shall appropriate to herself any gift, garment, or shoes, of the gift of anyone, without the consent of the Prioress."[47] But in spite of Bishops and Synods and the occasional strict Prioress, it was almost a necessity for the poor houses to encourage gifts, and even the officials of the Church recognized this for Bishop Praty ordered that the nuns of Eastbourne should receive half the sums paid them for their work, and Bishop Alnwick not only encouraged the acceptance of presents but enforced the payment of peculia. "It is plain that the lady Poverty had fallen on evil days."[47]

Worldliness was widespread throughout the fourteenth century, and if lady Poverty deserted the cloisters it was perhaps to be expected. For the most part the regular clergy were neither wicked nor vicious, they were merely men and women, unsuited to a life of self-denying withdrawal from the world, but forced by circumstances into a religious order. Under these conditions some

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[46] Translated by Power, p. 338.

[47] Power, p. 340.

compromise had to be reached and it was only when compromise was pushed too far in the direction of the world that it gave rise to the severe criticism that foreshadowed the Reformation. When luxurious dress and ostentatious display were problems that the civil government could not solve even by the passing of sumptuary laws, it is little wonder that the Church of the fourteenth century also fought a losing battle against these adversaries.

V

CONVENTIONS AND REGULATIONS OF DRESS

> Since many Necessities within the Kingdom have been greatly increased in price because divers people of divers Conditions use divers Apparel not pertaining to their estates; that is to say Servants [Garceons] use the Apparel of Craftsmen and Craftsmen the Apparel of Valets, and Valets the Apparel of Esquires and Esquires the Apparel of Knights, the one and the other furs that by reason belong only to Lords and Knights, poor women and others the Apparel of Ladies, poor clerks fur like the King and other Lords. Therefore the merchandise mentioned below sells at a greater price than it was accustomed to and the wealth of the land is destroyed, to the great damage of the Lords and the Commons.[1]

The people of the middle ages were accustomed to rank a man by his dress, and when social changes of the fourteenth century made this difficult, sumptuary laws were enacted in an attempt to restore the status quo. If the society of medieval England appears in retrospect to be easily divided into categories such as the nobility, the town, the guild, or the church, it must also be remembered that it was the time of the real Dick Wittington (d. 1423). Every apprentice could dream that one day he might become Lord Mayor of London and be entitled to sit at table with Barons and Bishops and to take precedence over knights and esquires.[2] He might even be knighted, for during the rebellion of Watt Tyler in 1381, King Richard II had knighted the Lord Mayor William Walworth and two aldermen.[3] His children and grandchildren might ascend to even greater heights than this. Gentle birth and the attendant titles were important social distinctions, but the legislation of the fourteenth century makes it abundantly clear that a man's place in the world was governed as much by his income and posessions as by his birth.

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[1] Rotuli Parliamentorum, II, 278. Translation.

[2] See Appendix B.

[3] See Anonimalle Chronicle, 1333-1381, ed. V. H. Galbraith (Manchester, 1927), pp. 149-50. A translation of the Anglo-French is available by Charles Ohman, The Great Revolt of 1381 (Oxford, 1906), p. 203.

Although gentle birth was the gift of fate, or of one's grandfather, wealth could be acquired by one's own efforts, and with it came power and prestige. Effort and intelligence, however, were necessary for the acquisition of money. To acquire the appearance of wealth, all that was required was credit with which to purchase rich and fashionable clothing. Thus the apprentice, who wished that he was Lord Mayor, attempted to dress like the young esquires. The squires, in turn, emulated the youthful and extravagant King Richard.

Laws were enacted in an attempt to alleviate this social confusion. In a comparatively rich and tranquil land and in a society where wealth was an important social qualification, the desire for luxuries was causing inflation. One obvious place to curb expenditures was in the manifestly extravagant dress which preachers deplored and which chroniclers alternately attributed to the example set by the King or by the French. This latter accusation was not unfounded, for with the pretensions of the English Kings to the French throne there was constant communication between the courts. Furthermore, the spoils and booty of the French wars had found their way back to England; ransom and loot in the form of jewels, gold, silver, rich furniture and hangings, fur-lined garments, and linens, were widely distributed, so that many Englishwomen possessed at least one piece of French finery.

Among the earliest English sumptuary laws was a statute enacted by Parliament in March, 1337, during the reign of Edward III. Concerned for the most part with the importation of fabrics and luxuries, it was not completely enforced for any appreciable length of time.[4]

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[4] F. E. Baldwin, Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England, John Hopkins University Studies, Ser. XLIV, No. 1 (Baltimore, 1926), p. 32.

During the fall and winter of 1362-63, Parliament met at Westminster and during the course of its deliberations set before the King a petition, the introduction to which is quoted at the opening of this chapter. The petition set forth the prevailing situation with admirable clarity and, since the King's response was favourable, a statute was enacted for the purpose of correcting "the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their estate and degree."[5] The law was never seriously enforced, for, while everyone was eager to see those below him kept in their proper places, no one was willing to accept the statute as it applied to himself and his own personal dress. In fact, the laws were revoked within two years, but they are of considerable interest and importance as evidence of the class structure and of the dress considered suitable to each level of society.

Although this ordinance of 1363 ostensibly grouped people according to their rank and occupations, the essential division was that of wealth. Those below a certain income level were denied almost all luxuries. Those above it were left unrestricted, though only the King and his richest nobles retained the exclusive right to wear ermine, lettuce (a pale grey fur similar to ermine), and to embroider their clothes with precious stones. The very poor, carters, labourers, plowmen, herdsmen, and other farm labourers, not having goods and chattels to the value of 40s., were permitted only blanket or russet, costing not more than 12d., a yard. Their girdles and linen were to be according to their estate.[6]

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[5] Rotuli Parliamentorum, II, 281.

[6] Citations from the sumptuary legislation of 1363 have been translated from Rotuli Parliamentorum (37 Edw, III), II, 281-282.

The amount of cloth required for the "vestiture and hosing" of grooms, servants of Lords, craftsmen, or artificers, was not to exceed 2 marks (26s. 6d.) in price, nor were such men to have anything made of "gold, silver, nor embroidered, enamelled [with painted borders or decoration?], nor of silk, nor anything appendant to the said things." Their wives and children were to do likewise, and their wives were to have "no veils or kerchiefs exceeding 12d."

Yeomen and craftsmen were limited to cloth costing 40s. the whole cloth; and they were forbidden "precious stones, cloth of silk, or of silver, and girdles, knives, buttons, rings, broochs, bands, chains, or seals of gold or silver." They could wear "no clothing embroidered, enamelled, or of silk." Their wives were forbidden silk veils and "all manner of pellure [rich fur] and budge except lamb, coney, cat, or fox." These same luxuries of dress were forbidden to esquires and gentlemen, below the rank of knight, whose yearly income from land and rents was under £100. They were, however, allowed to use cloth costing 4½ marks "the whole cloth." Wives of such men were not to wear "revers or purfils [edgings on garments], nor ornaments of gold, silver, or precious stones." In this same category were placed clerks having a yearly rental of under 200 marks and "merchants, citizens, burgers, artificers, craftsmen [gentz de Mystere], both in London and elsewhere, who possessed goods and chattels to the clear value of £500, and their wives and families."

Equated in the same manner were esquires and gentlemen having lands and rents to the value of £200 a year and merchants, citizens, and burgers, who had goods and chattels to the clear value of £1000.

This group were granted many privileges. They could use cloth costing five marks the whole piece. They were allowed to wear silk, cloth of silver, ribbons, belts, and other apparel reasonably garnished with silver, and their wives were permitted to wear fur, revers of miniver (but not of ermine or lettuce), and headdresses ornamented with precious stones.

Knights with an annual income of 200 marks were entitled to cloth costing six marks but were not allowed to wear "cloth of gold, nor cloaks, mantles, or gowns furred with pure miniver, nor sleeves of ermine, nor apparel embroidered with precious stones." Their wives were forbidden revers of ermine and lettuce but were allowed to wear precious stones in their headdresses. Clerks having a yearly rent of 200 marks might dress like knights of the same income.

All knights and dames who had lands and rents above the value of 400 marks, but under 1000 marks, a year, might dress as they wished though they were not allowed to wear "ermine or lettuce or embroider their garments with precious stones."

It would appear that the important distinction was that made between those members of the community who were entitled to wear silk and silver and those to whom it was forbidden. The division was purely one of wealth, and it is not surprising that such an ordinance was almost impossible to enforce. The act was repealed during the following session of Parliament, but in 1379 the 'Commons' again petitioned Parliament to order that no one having under £40 a year be allowed to wear "precious stones, pellure, cloth or ribbons of gold, or of silk, knights and ladies excepted." This limit of £40 a year would seem

to be more realistic than one of either £200 per annum or possessions worth £1000, particularly in the latter half of the century. A petition to Parliament in 1402 attempted to reduce the limits further. It requested that no man "use silver daggers, harnesses, etc., if he does not have lands and rents to £20 a year, or goods and chattels worth £200."[7]

This petition of 1402 was the first which made any attempt to regulate fashions in dress. It was asked that "no man, if not Banneret or higher estate, should wear cloth of gold, of velvet, of crimson, or of velvet motley, great hanging sleeves open or closed, nor any long gown touching the ground, nor ermine, lettuce, or martin." Gentz d'armes, however, "when they were armed, might do as they pleased." A similar petition in 1406 asked that ornamental cutting on garments be forbidden to all men whatever their condition.[8]

In spite of the concessions made to the rich and powerful merchant class, fashionable dress as opposed to luxurious dress was generally an indication of nobility. Cloth of gold, miniver, lettuce, and garments embroidered with precious stones had always been reserved for royalty and wealthy nobles. Furthermore, it was among courtly society that the extravagant fashions and extreme styles originated. The petition of 1402 sought to limit such fashions to the titled aristocracy, doubtless because penniless apprentices and parish clerks were attempting to imitate the young Banneret who, in turn, followed the fashions set by the King.

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[7]Citations from this petition are translated from Rotuli Parliamentorum (4 Hen. IV), III, 506.

[8]Rotuli Parliamentorum, III, 593.

The esquire and the burger might dress alike if their incomes were equivalent, yet their attitudes to dress were frequently very different. The gentleman, within the fringe of court circles, whose income came from inherited estates, was far more likely to indulge in extravagances of fashion than the merchant whose income was the product of hard work and thrift. On the other hand, although the burger might condemn the fashionable dress of the squire and punish his apprentices for copying it, this same merchant was usually anxious to proclaim his success and the most obvious way to do so was to wear the luxuries of dress which were forbidden to the poorer classes. Thus the majority of well-to-do citizens, while wearing gowns of conservative style and practical length, wore richly ornamented belts from which they hung silken purses and silver knives.

The love of luxury and display was common to all classes. The tastes of the provinces might amuse Londoners, who had for their example the city magnates and the courtiers, but the countryman was not without his own standards of wealth and position. The latest fashions were generally unknown outside the main centers of commerce. Cloth-of-gold, sendal, or embroidered velvets were equally unfamiliar exoticisms. Fine scarlet cloth, however, was universally prized, and silver brooches, brass pins, wimples and veils of sheer linen or silk, ornamented purses, girdles of silk, and silk thread for embroidery, were items which could be purchased from a wandering pedler who might also bring word of the fashions he had seen in London several years previously.

Whether there were sumptuary laws or not, different standards of luxury and different fashions of dress served to distinguish the citizens of medieval England, one from the other. The ordinances and petitions, though seldom enforced, are of particular importance for they show that wealth rather than rank determined how a man should dress. Fortunately for the modern student, they provide documentary evidence on the garments and luxuries that were considered suitable to each class of society. The regulations reflect the opinions of the wealthy and powerful classes, and probably bore little relation to actual practice. They may represent ideal rather than real conditions, but to appreciate satire directed against deviation from an ideal, a reader must be fully cognizant of the ideal itself. Such a thoroughly detailed record of the standards of dress in the late fourteenth century is invaluable to any study of Chaucer's use of dress.

VI

CHAUCER'S USE OF DRESS TO INDICATE SOCIAL POSITION

> But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere
> The heraudes knewe hem best in special,
> As they that weren of the blood roial.[1]

Both the literature and the sumptuary legislation of the fourteenth century make it clear that, with regard to luxuries in dress, society was divided into three broad categories. Royalty and the high nobility retained the exclusive right to wear cloth-of-gold, miniver, and 'lettuce' and to embroider their garments with precious stones. A middle group, whose principal qualification was wealth, was allowed to wear clothing and accessories of silk and to adorn these with silver, embroidery, and valuable furs. At the lowest level all luxuries were considered unsuitable, and silks, silver, embroidery, and ornamental borders of any sort were forbidden, as were all but the most common furs such as lamb, coney, cat, and fox.

Chaucer could assume that his audience was aware of these conventions, and thus, by mentioning such items of dress, he could indicate to which level of society a character belonged or wished to belong.

Cloth-of-gold and garments embroidered with jewels (perree) were the traditional dress of kings and nobles, and Chaucer followed this familiar pattern in both his original works and in those adapted from classic or European sources. Descriptions of such lavish dress serve not only to ornament and add richness to a tale but also to emphasize the rank and position of the wearer.

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[1] KnT, I.1016-18.

Any device which demonstrated "greet prosperitee" was of value in medieval de causibus tragedy which told

> Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly. (Mk Prol VII.1975-77)

Therefore, rulers such as Queen Cenobia were frequently described as "clad in perree and in gold."[2] The irony of the situation is emphasized when the captive queen was led in triumph, still in her royal robes:

> Biforen his triumphe walketh shee,
> With gilte cheynes on hir nekke hangynge.
> Corouned was she, as after hire degree,
> And ful of perree charged hir clothynge. (MkT VII.2363-66)

An entirely different situation occurs in the tale of the patient "Grisildis" when, her tribulations at an end, she was led away by the ladies of the court who

> strepen hire out of hire rude array,
> And in clooth of gold that bright shoon,
> With a coroune of many a riche stoon
> Upon hire heed, they into halle hire broghte,
> And ther she was honured as hire oghte. (ClT IV.1116-20)

In the Knight's Tale, which concerns the adventures of kings and princes, there are many splendid fabrics, garments, and precious jewels.[3] Among the most lavish descriptions is that of Emetreus, King of Inde:

> Upon a steede bay . . .
> Covered in clooth of gold, dyapred weel,
> Cam ridynge lyk the god of armes, Mars.
> His cote-armure was of clooth of Tars
> Couched with perles white and rounde and grete;
> His sadel was of brend gold newe ybete;
> A mantelet upon his shulder hangynge,
> Bret-ful of rubyes rede as fyr sparklynge. (KnT I.2157-64)

In Chaucer's works there are many passing references to the "riche array"

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[2] MkT VII.2035; cf. LGW F.1201; SNT VIII.132; MkT VII.2468 ff.

[3] See KnT I.979, 2145-47, 2871-73.

or "roial vestiments" of rulers which make it apparent that monarchs and kings were expected to wear exceptionally luxurious garments. Descriptions of such robes are not merely a literary convention, they also stress the rank of the wearer, and in many tales the high degree of the protagonist is essential to the plot of the story.

Both convention and sumptuary legislation decreed that only those members of society who possessed a certain degree of wealth should wear garments and accessories of silk or be entitled to ornament these with embroidery or silver. The amount of wealth required before a man and his family were allowed to adopt such luxuries varied over the century, but those who took this privilege unto themselves aspired to a high place in society even when they were not truly entitled to it. Thus Chaucer was able to comment on the social status of a number of his characters by referring to such materials and ornaments.

Embroidery, for which England was famous in the middle ages, was a popular method of decorating garments. The Squire of the Canterbury pilgrimage indulged in this fashion.

> Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
> Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.
> (Gen Prol I. 89-96)

This would indicate that, in spite of the austere dress of the Squire's father, the Knight, these men were moderately wealthy and were not among those aristocrats who had been impoverished by the economic changes of the fourteenth century.

Silk and silken accessories were in the same category as embroidery. The status of certain members of the pilgrimage becomes clear if this is understood, for the statement that the Man of Law was "girt with a ceint

of silk, with barres smale" (I.329), at once places him among those with large incomes. Similarly, the "gipser al of silk" (I.357), worn by the Franklin, suggests a degree of wealth and position. On the other hand, the "purs of sylk," into which Damien put his letter to May (MerchT IV. 1883), was probably a lover's affectation rather than a sign of wealth. The silken girdle and fillet, as well as the silken embroidery worn by Alisoun in the Miller's Tale (I.3235-43), are clear indications that she was dressed above her station, for, though her husband may have been a "riche gnof," it is unlikely that he would have possessed goods and chattels valued at something between £200 and £1000.

Silver ornaments were also theoretically limited to the wealthier segment of the population. Unlike silk and embroidered fabrics, however, silver ornaments could readily be converted into bullion. Even a poor citizen, therefore, might safely invest in a silver brooch or buckle if he had a bit of extra cash. For a man to have a girdle, dagger, and purse, all richly ornamented with silver, was another matter entirely and indicated that, in his own eyes at least, he owned sufficient property to place him on a level with wealthy esquires and gentlemen. It is this fact which makes Chaucer's description of the five Guildsmen so ironic.

> Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;
> Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras
> But al with silver; wroght ful clene and weel
> Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.
> (Gen Prol I.365-368)

The emphasis on the newness of the silver makes it clear that the wealth of the Guildsmen had been acquired recently. Their ostentatious display of this mark of their new position must have amused Chaucer's aristocratic audience[4] who might have suspected that the tradesmen had made the

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[4] Not because silver ornamentation was forbidden, as Miss Bowden suggests (p. 183), for such was not the case.

pilgrimage to give thanks for a particularly successful business enterprise, the proceeds of which had at last placed them within the category of "Marchantz, Citeins & Burgies, q'ont clerement biens & chateux outre la value de Mille livres."[5] In this instance Chaucer's description of dress not only indicates the social status of the guildsmen but provides an ironic comment on it.

Like luxuries in dress, the fashionableness or unfashionableness of garments had certain connotations to Chaucer's readers. In general, the newest and most extravagant styles originated at court and were worn by the aristocracy. Rich citizens of the large cities soon followed the modes of the courtiers, yet fads and novelties spread slowly to other parts of the realm. Furthermore, when even the simplest fabrics and plainest clothes costing as much as two or three weeks' wages, poor people wore garments for many years and rarely indulged in styles which required excess material. References to older and simpler styles would have indicated to Chaucer's London audience of the upper classes that the wearers were poor and that they probably came from the provinces.

A number of passages in Chaucer's works stress the differences in dress between the aristocrat and the working man. In the Knight's Tale, Arcite, determined to return to Athens, disguises himself.

> And right anon he chaunged his array,
> And cladde hym as a povre laborer,
> And al allone, save oonly a squier
> . . .
> Which was disgised poverly as he was.
>
> (I.1408-12)

In the Wife of Bath's Tale, the old "wyf," referring to women in general, spoke of "hem all,/ That wereth on a coverchief or a calle" (III.1017-18).

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[5] Rotuli Parliamentorum, II, 278.

This included both the women of the lower classes, who commonly wore a coverchief and a wimple, and the ladies of wealth and fashion who adopted the elaborate netted headdress termed a "calle" or caul.[6]

There was a similar distinction in the headcoverings worn by men. The common people wore hoods until well into the fifteenth century, but in the fashionable dress of the latter part of the fourteenth century various forms of hats replaced the hood. It is worth noting in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales that it was the servants and members of the lower classes who wore hoods. The Pardoner was influenced by the change in fashion.

> But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,
> For it was trussed up in his walet.
> Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet. (I.680-683)

In an early work, the Book of the Duchess, Chaucer pictured himself as a humble man respectfully greeting a nobleman dressed in black:

> how y stood
> Before hym, and did of myn hood,
> And had ygret hym, as I best koude.
> (BD.515-517)

Here, by picturing himself in the dress of a commoner, the poet emphasized the rank of the man in mourning, Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt.

A garment peculiar to women of the lower classes, who, of necessity, performed numerous domestic chores, was the apron. Alisoun, in the Miller's Tale, wore such an apron, a "barmclooth eek as whit as morne milk" (I.3236).

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6 In the Treatise on the Astrolabe, Chaucer compared a portion of the instrument to "the clawes of a loppe spider , or ells like the werk of a wommans calle" (i. 19.3). See Tr iii. 775, for the trope "maken hym an howve above a calle," meaning to deceive.

The Chronicler who described the 'goun' as a new fashion in 1362 [7] may provide the clue as to why Chaucer saw fit to array certain pilgrims in 'gouns' and others in 'cotes.' The latter was the older term and in Chaucer's writings is, with one exception, applied to the dress of servants like the Knight's Yeoman or men from rural districts such as the Miller and the Reeve. Cosmopolitan people like the Squire and the Shipman were garbed in the newer 'goun.' The well-to-do Man of Law "rood but hoomly in a medley cote" (I. 328), but here the reference to the older style serves to emphasize the conservatism in dress which was a characteristic of the Lawyer's personality.

Chaucer also made use of archaic terms to suggest provincialism. "Gyte" appears in the Wife of Bath's Prologue where she explained how she "wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes" (III.559) and in the Reeve's Tale where Sympkyn's wife "cam after in a gyte of reed" (I.3954). The context indicates that the "gyte" was some form of cote-hardie or surcote. It is believed that the word was of French origin, but the term was used more commonly in the north of England than in the district about London. The fact that the garments were probably both of scarlet cloth is a further indication that the wearers were affluent countrywomen.

The attacks of contemporary chroniclers and moralists on the fads and fashions of their day make it possible for modern readers to understand many of Chaucer's references to styles of fourteenth-century dress. The sumptuary legislation of Richard II provides a concise tabulation of the views held by the poet's aristocratic audience regarding the wearing of luxurious dress. We can never be certain of all Chaucer's nuances and implications, but it is possible to appreciate,

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[7] See p. 20.

to some extent, how the poet made use of variations in dress existing between different social levels and divers parts of the country in order to place the fourteenth-century Englishmen, whom he depicted so realistically, within their correct social environment.

VII

CHAUCER'S USE OF DRESS TO INDICATE OCCUPATION

"A forester was he, soothly, as I gesse."[1]

Although both government functionaries and members of trade guilds wore liveries on state occasions, such costumes were not worn every day, and there were many trades with which no specific garments were associated. Those who wore distinctive robes while officiating in the courts of Law or in Church did not, except for special events, wear such dress outside these institutions. There were, however, some garments which were peculiar to particular occupations, and in a number of instances Chaucer made use of this fact either to elaborate upon a statement concerning a character's position or as an indication of his trade.

His simplest technique was to state the occupation and to follow this with a brief description of the associated costume. In certain instances this was merely elaboration:

> And somme corouned were as kynges [of Armes],
> With corounes wroght ful of losenges;
> And many ryban and many frenges
> Were on her clothes trewely.
> (HF III.1316-19)

Again the Herald's dress was enlarged upon:

> Thoo atte last aspyed y
> That pursevantes and heraudes,
> That crien ryche folkes laudes,
> Hyt weren alle; and every man
> Of hem, as y yow tellen can,
> Had on him throwen a vesture
> Which that men clepe a cote-armure,
> Enbrowded wonderliche ryche,
> Although they nere nought ylyche.
> (HF III.1320-27)

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[1] Gen Prol I.117.

In other cases, dress serves to indicate a particular function, as in the Merchant's Tale, where a marriage was about to be celebrated and the priest came forth "with stole aboute his nekke" (IV.1703). The wearing of such a vestment indicated that the clergyman was about to celebrate a sacrament, in this case, marriage. The General Prologue contains another instance of this device. Here, after narrating at length the Knight's prowess in battle, Chaucer emphasized his status as a warrior by reference to his armour.

> Of fustian he wered a gypon
> Al bismotered with his habergeon.
> (I.76-77)

Chaucer had little opportunity to indicate occupation by dress alone, for there were few distinctive costumes. The dress of the professional fool, however, was unique, and in the House of Fame Fortune asked the ironic question

> But what art thow that seyst this tale,
> That werest on thy hose a pale,
> And on thy tipet such a belle?
> (III.1840-43)

Another technique Chaucer used was to describe the dress of some character at considerable length and to deduce from that his occupation. One example is found in the General Prologue.

> A Yeman hadde he . . .
> And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.
> A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,
> . . .
> And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.
> . . .
> An horn he har, the bawdryk was of grene;
> A forester was he, soothly, as I gesse.
> (I.101-117)

A similar passage is found in the Canon's Yeoman's Prologue:

> us gan atake
> A man that clothed was in clothes blake,
> And under-nethe he had a white surplys.
> . . .
> What that he was, til that I understood
> How that his cloke was sowed to his hood;
> For which, whan I had longe avysed me,
> I demed hym som chanoun for to be.
> (VIII.557-573)

In both instances, although the reader was probably able to guess the occupation after two or three lines, Chaucer, who delighted in picturing himself as not very bright, spun out many lines of evidence. Although members of religious orders would generally have been recognized by their habits, only in the case of the Canon did Chaucer make direct use of this fact.

The description of the Pardoner includes a reference to the "sign" of the medieval pilgrim.

> A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.
> His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe,
> Bretful of pardouns, comen from Rome al hoot.
> (Gen Prol I.681-683)

This "vernycle," the souvenir of the pilgrimage to St. Peter's in Rome, is evidence that, even if the Pardoner had not been to Rome he had taken great pains to counterfeit the journey.[2]

The special dress worn by ladies when hunting was mentioned by Chaucer in several tales. In the House of Fame, "a knyght, highte Achate,"

> Mette with Venus that day,
> Goynge in a queynt array,
> As she had ben an hunteresse.[3]

In the Knight's Tale Chaucer described a hunting party which included "Emelye, clothed al in grene" (I.1686).

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[2]For other clerical 'pilgrims' see SumT III.1737, where the Friars carry pilgrim's 'scrippes' and staffs.

[3]HF I.227-229. Cf. LGW F.970 ff., another version of the episode.

Traditionally, gods and goddesses as well as allegorical figures wore distinctive garments or accessories. In reference to mythological figures, primarily those adapted from French sources, Chaucer mentioned such typical dress. The opening section of his translation of the Romaunt of the Rose abounds in such descriptions. In his original works, however, he pictured such 'occupational dress' briefly. Most of the passages are found in the Parliament of Fowles where the poet-dreamer entered a garden, derived from the garden in the Romaunt of the Rose, and found "Beaute withouten any atyr" (l.225), women dancing "in kertels, al dishevele,"[4] and Priapus

> In swich aray as whan the asse hym shente
> With cri by nighte, and with hys sceptre in honde.
> (11.225-226)

Here Chaucer assumed his readers to be familiar with Ovid's tale. The poet-dreamer also found Venus, on a bed of gold, "naked from the brest unto the hed" (l.269). Similarly, in the House of Fame, Venus was described as "naked fletynge in a see" (I.134). There is still another portrait of Venus in the Knight's Tale.

> The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
> Was naked, fletynge in the large see,
> And fro the navele doun al covered was
> With wawes grene, and brighte as any glas.
> (I.1955-58)

In this same tale a description of "Dyane's" statue is a reminder that she was the goddess of the hunt.

> In gaude grene hir statue clothed was,
> With bowe in honde, and arwes in a cas.
> (I.2079-80)

Perhaps the most interesting description of a mythological figure in Chaucer is that of the god of Love in the Legend of Good Women. The passage is closely related to a similar portrait in the

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[4] PF 1.235, cf. Rom 1.778.

Romaunt of the Rose, but there are important differences. Chaucer's god of Love and his companion are described thus:

> Yclothed was this myghty god of Love
> In silk, enbrouded ful of grene greves,
> In-with a fret of rede rose-leves,
> . . .
> His gilte heer was corowned with a sonne,
> . . .
> And by the hand he held this noble quene,
> Corowned with whit, and clothed al in grene,
> (F.226-242)

A later version was amended to read:

> Yclothed was this myghty god of Love
> Of silk, ybrouded ful of grene greves,
> A garlond on his hed of rose-leves,
> Stiked al with lylye floures newe.
> (G.158-161)

Guillaume de Lorris's god of Love was not clad in embroidered silk but

> al in floures and in flourettes,
> Ypaynted al with amorettes,
> And with losenges, and scochouns,
> And with briddes, lybardes, and lyouns,
> And other beestis wrought ful well.
> (Rom 11.890-95)

Chaucer changed this strange costume made of flowers and symbols of nature into a fashionably embroidered silk gown, making his god more of a medieval courtier than a spirit of nature. In neither case, however, is this god of Love the classic Cupid, son of Venus. He is, rather, a descendant of the primitive vegetation spirits, familiar in English folklore as the May King or Father May. This figure still exists in folk festivals and such a person "is generally marked by dressing him or her in leaves or flowers."[5] Both Chaucer and Guillaume de Lorris followed this primitive pattern by making the queen, who accompanied the god of Love, a secondary figure. The connection between this god of

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[5] Sir James Frazer, The Golden Bough (New York, 1951), pp. 148-149.

Love, the old English celebration of 'May Day,' and the portrait of the Squire in the General Prologue cannot be overlooked. In describing this youth, "fresshe as is the month of May," dressed in a flower-embroidered gown, and singing or "floytynge, al the day," Chaucer made use of this long tradition in order to suggest spring, joy, and love and to associate these with the squire.

Although Chaucer made little direct use of the legendary dress assigned to mythological figures, such traditions served to add depth to his descriptions of human beings. The poet also made considerable use of the few medieval costumes that were distinctive to certain trades or callings, yet he rarely used such dress to indicate occupation without further comment. Chaucer added details concerning working garments to reinforce statements regarding the employment of individuals, and these particulars increase the reality of his portraits.

VIII

CHAUCER'S USE OF DRESS AS A MEANS OF CHARACTERIZATION

For certes, if ther ne hadde be no synne in clothyng, Christe wolde nat so soone have noted and spoken of the clothynge of thilke riche man in the gospel.[1]

Normal dress, which for the purpose of this study may be defined as dress appropriate to class and station and to the occasion on which it is worn, is seldom to be found in Chaucer's works. Whereas luxurious, fashionable, or even austere dress automatically characterizes its wearer, normal dress has a neutral quality which is neither particularly interesting nor valuable unless it partakes somehow of the character of the wearer. In the few passages where Chaucer described in detail a person whose garments were neither unduly luxurious nor rigidly austere, he carefully included sufficient detail to ensure the individuality of the portrait.

Among the Canterbury pilgrims very few wore clothing entirely suited to the occasion, that is to say, a journey of several days by horse-back over dusty country roads where outlaws were a possible danger. The dress of the Knight's Yeoman, however, was practical and appropriate both to his calling and his journey. Furthermore, Chaucer's description contains a variety of details, each of which illustrates some quality or characteristic of the Yeoman.

> And he was clad in cote and hood of grene,
> A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene
> Under his belt he bar ful thriftily,
> . . .
> And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.

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[1] ParsT X.413.

A not heed hadde he, with a brown visage.
. . .
Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,
And by his syde a swerde and bokeler,
And on the other syde a gay daggere
Harneised wel and sharp as poynte of spere;
A Christopher on his brest of silver sheene.
A horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;
(Gen Prol I.101-116)

The dress of green, the usual raiment of a forester,[2] provided the evidence by which the poet purported to guess the man's occupation. In addition to the usual dagger, he bore the weapons of the common man, the sword and buckler,[3] and also a bow. These arms would have been useful if the pilgrims had needed protection. His tanned complexion was that of a man who lived out of doors and his archer's equipment indicated that he came from a forest district. The "Christopher" proclaimed his religious faith; his well dressed "takel," his devotion to his craft.

The poet selected adjectives which suggest a lively personality; the arrows are "bright," the medal shines, and both the bracer and dagger are "gay." All the details combine to portray an ideal English Yeoman, dressed as a Yeoman should dress. Chaucer's detailed description of this normal costume suggests the straightforward, solid, normal character of the wearer.

Two other pilgrims who may be said to be normally dressed are the idealized Parson and his brother, the Plowman. Since the Parson's garb is never mentioned, the reader may assume that the clergyman's dress passed unnoticed and was therefore suitably dull and unobtrusive. The Plowman in his "tabard"—a poncho-like outer garment which is still

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[2]Cf. FrT III.1382.

[3]The Miller (I.558) also carried a sword and buckler; the Reeve (I.618) carried only a sword. Cf. Rotuli Parliamentorum, III, 82.

a typical item of peasant dress in many parts of the world—was also correctly attired. At a time when many low-born men dressed above their stations, this brief mention of a single item of peasant dress suggests that the Plowman had no ambition to rise in the world. He wore the perfect costume for the idealized Plowman, and Chaucer did not elaborate, for to do so would be to ruin the simplicity of the design.

A pilgrim whose normal dress illustrates his particular character is the Shipman. "In a gowne of falding to the knee" (I.391), he was dressed for travel by land or water. "Falding,"[4] a coarse woollen cloth, similar to freize, was rough, shaggy, and hard wearing. It doubtless made a durable gown which the sailor wore cut to a practical knee-length. Such a garment suggests a tough, rugged, but prudent "good felawe." The Shipman's habit of wearing "a daggere hangynge on a lass . . . aboute his nekke" (I.392) was unusual but may indicate a practical nature. Worn thus, it was readily available either to cut a rope or slash an adversary. Thus Chaucer assigned to the Shipman dress which was appropriate to his calling, suitable to his journey, and suggestive of his personality.

The Wife of Bath had also travelled widely. She had been thrice to Jerusalem, as well as to most of the European shrines, and the dress she wore on the pilgrimage would indicate such experience even if no other facts were given.

> Upon an ambler esily she sat,
> Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat
> As brood as is a buckler or a targe;
> A foot-mantel aboute hir hippes large
> And on hir feet a pair of spures sharpe.
>
> (Gen Prol I.469-473)

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4 M. C. Linthicum, "Falding and Medlee," JEGP, XXIII (1924), 83-93.

Her wimple was the simple neck and head covering which women had worn for over a hundred years, yet, combined with her broad-brimmed hat, it would have provided excellent protection from the elements. The "foot-mantel," though not particularly elegant, covered her feet and skirts and must have been an admirable garment to wear when riding along dusty or muddy roads. Since she wore spurs, the reader knows that she rode astride, as did most women of her class in Chaucer's day.

The Wife of Bath, when on a pilgrimage, therefore, made no pretense at elegance or fashion. She dressed in a style suitable to her station, and though her costume was not normal everyday dress, it was thoroughly practical and suitable for travel. Chaucer pictured her on her journey as a sensible woman, with few pretensions to style, who considered her comfort and convenience above her appearance. This practical plainness, however, gave way to a love of luxurious dress when she was at home. Dressed in her 'Sunday best,' the Wife of Bath was a different, and very impressive, figure.

> Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;
> I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound
> That on a Sonday weren upon hir heed.
> Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,
> Ful streite yteyed, and shoes ful moyste and newe.
> (Gen Prol I.453-457)

She wore no fashionably trailing 'houppeland' which would have hidden her expensive scarlet hose and costly new shoes from view, rather, in her Prologue she boasted of her "gaye scarlet gytes" (III.559). Such costly but outdated garments suggest a woman who, although well dressed by village standards, was not a fashionable figure.

Dale E. Wretlind has attempted to explain the puzzling

"coverchiefs" that "weyden ten pound" by claiming that the Wife of Bath wore the latest style of headdress, the fashionable round crespinettes and padded roundel, introduced to England by Anne of Bohemia.[5] This would have been most unusual for a woman of the Wife's position; such headdresses were worn almost exclusively by women of the nobility and gentry. Miss Bowden's suggestion that she wore an elaborate and heavy veil[6] is reasonable, particularly if it was of the multi-layered 'nebulé' form. J.M. Manly's comment that coverchiefs "had not been 'in style' since the middle of the century"[7] is not born out by pictorial evidence. Brasses showing ladies of quality wearing 'nebulé' and other types of coverchiefs are dated as late as 1400 (fig. 8c, p.26), and while at this date such headdresses were conservative in the extreme, such a fashion would have accorded with the Wife's clothing in general. She did not attempt to imitate the latest court fashions, rather her aim was to assert her position by dressing as her neighbour dressed but in the most elaborate and expensive form acceptable within this range of style. Similarly, when on the pilgrimage, she demonstrated her experience as a traveller by wearing the most comfortable and practical garments she could select.

Chaucer's picture of the Wife of Bath is one of the most complex in the Canterbury Tales, for he showed her in two settings, at home and on the pilgrimage, thus revealing two aspects of her character: her love of physical comfort at the expense of fashion, and her desire

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[5]Dale E. Wretlind, "The Wife of Bath's Hat," MLN, LXIII (1948), 381-382.

[6]Bowden, p. 216.

[7]J.M. Manly, Some New Light on Chaucer (New York, 1926), pp. 230-231.

to display her wealth, position, and experience.

A Pilgrim who selected his clothes in order to impress his fellows was the Man of Law, who, of all the pilgrims, was perhaps the most fittingly attired.

> He rood but hoomly in a medlee cote,
> Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smalle;
> Of his array telle I no lenger tale.
> (I.328-330)

This well-to-do, self-made man is described as having departed on a pilgrimage modestly dressed in a "cote," a conservative fashion, made of a multi-coloured tweed-like fabric of good quality. He wore a silk belt with "smalle" bars that quietly, but decisively, proclaimed his social status. His clothes were appropriate for such a journey yet of a type suitable to his position, much as the custom-made tweed suit of the modern executive is properly elegant for a country week-end. The picture which the Man of Law presented seems almost too perfect to be accidental. Doubtless Chaucer intended his dress as an ironic comment on the discretion and care which marked the Lawyer's every action. There was no need to tell a "lenger tale," two lines stated all the facts and implied much more. The Man of Law might have taken as his precept the verse:

> Let thy apparell not exceed,
> to pass for sumptuous cost,
> Nor altogether be too base,
> for so thy credit's lost.[8]

The dress of the Merchant and the Doctor suggest that they too had taken pains to create the impression of wealth and success. The status of the doctor in medieval society was somewhat dubious, and the

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[8] Richard Weste, "The Book of Demeanor," The Babees Book, ed. F.J. Furnivall (London, 1868), p. 296.

exotic garments of "sangwyne" and "pers, . . . lyned with taffata and with sendal" (I.440) were doubtless chosen with a view to creating an impression of wealth and position. Chaucer stressed the fact that, in spite of this display of expensive clothing, the Doctor "was but esy of dispense." If we may judge by the other pilgrims, silk-lined robes were not commonly worn on journeys, and certainly such delicate and costly fabrics were most unsuitable for a pilgrimage. The ostentatious robes of the Physician, therefore, serve to set him apart from his travelling companions much as his particular calling isolated him in society. Such lavish dress also reveals that this man, fond as he was of gold, realized how essential the appearance of success was to one of his profession.

The Merchant, it would seem, was compelled by his awkward financial position to assume a successful appearance. His taste was more flamboyant than that of the Man of Law, more conventional than that of the Doctor. In "mottelee," an expensive, parti-coloured or figured woollen cloth, he would have made a striking figure. Motley was used in the livery of many companies and perhaps Chaucer's choice of this fabric, combined with the phrase "high on a hors," was intended to suggest a picture of the Merchant riding as if in some civic procession.[9] He also wore boots "clasped fair and fetisly" (I.273), and Chaucer's audience, familiar with the Romaunt of the Rose, must have realized with amusement that the solemn and dignified Merchant had followed the advice regarding shoes which the god of Love gave to the Poet-lover.

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[9]Edith Rickert, "Extracts from a Fourteenth-Century Account Book," MP, XXIV (1926), 256.

> Of shon and bootes, newe and faire,
> Loke at the leest thou have a paire,
> And that they sitte so fetisly
> That these rude may uttirly
> Merveyle, sith that they sitte so pleyn,
> How they come on or off ageyn.
> (Rom 11.2265-70)

Chaucer duly "merveyled" at the boots, yet the passage indicates the Merchant's concern with appearances and hints at his reliance on courtesy literature as a means to the manners to which he was not bred.

As Chaucer suggested by their dress, these members of the rising bourgeoisie, the Man of Law, the Doctor, and the Merchant, were men who had risen in the world by their own abilities and shrewdness. Each dressed with a purpose other than the mere enjoyment of luxury. Their varied tastes in clothing provide interesting contrasts yet, whether the dress was studiedly normal, exotically luxurious, or ostentatiously rich, it reveals an attitude towards the visible display of wealth characteristic of the men and of their age.

The five Guildsmen were not under the same necessity of appearing successful as were the Merchant, Doctor, and Man of Law, but they were no less blatant in their efforts to exhibit their prosperity. It has already been noted how Chaucer, by describing the newness of their silver ornaments, suggested their recent rise in the social scale. The Poet's amusement at their ostentatious display is apparent throughout his portrait, and in the case of these tradesmen, their dress is so closely associated with their social and political aspirations that these must be considered together. The Guildsmen's obvious manifestations of wealth are evidence of their ambition. The poet, by disclosing the limited extent of this ambition, revealed the ridiculousness and triviality of the tradesmen's pretensions.

A Haberdasshere and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Dyere, and a Tapycer,-
And they were clothed all in o lyveree
Of a solempne and a greet fraternitee.
(I.361-364)

That these five men were engaged in different crafts yet wore the livery of one "greet fraternitee" may seem puzzling, but it has been shown that in addition to craft guilds, there were also guilds of a social and religious nature whose membership included men of various trades. Such guilds were generally associated with a parish church or patron saint.[10] They were the fourteenth-century equivalent of the lodge, brotherhood, or chowder-and-marching society, combining the functions of a social club, mutual-aid association, and burial society.

In the studies concerning Chaucer's Guildsmen, their guilds, their place in civic politics,[11] and their possible association with patron saint or parish church, little attention seems to have been paid to the possible humour of the passages. The Poet's studied grave pronouncements have been taken as seriously by scholars as they would have been by the Guildsmen, and the Guildsmen obviously took themselves very seriously. These men wore the livery of their brotherhood (doubtless the most splendid robes they owned) on their journey to Canterbury. No other pilgrims wore such livery. They garnished their gear with bright new silver to proclaim their wealth, and, as did the gentlemen, they hired a servant to attend them. Unlike the Knight, however, who was served by a Yeoman who might make himself generally useful, the Guildsmen were so interested in their dinners as to bring along a cook! A cook might well have been part of the retinue of a great lord but for him to be the sole attendant of these five pompous tradesmen is

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[10] A.B. Fullerton, "The Five Craftsmen," MLN, LXI (1946), p. 519.

[11] E.P. Kuhl, "Chaucer's Burgesses," Trans. Wisconsin Acad. of Sciences, XVIII (1916), 652-675. See also Fullerton.

delightfully ridiculous. Chaucer's sophisticated audience could hardly be expected to have taken the pretentious little fraternity seriously. If we think of them as Brothers of the Moose, or perhaps Shriners, off on an outing, dressed in their regalia and very proud of the show they were making, the satire inherent in Chaucer's description becomes clear.

That the Guildsmen would have made very fine Aldermen was a fact agreed upon by both the men and their wives, but must it therefore be assumed that the poet and his audience would also concur? Chaucer states:

> Everiche, for that the wisdom that he can
> Was shapely for to been an alderman.
> For Catel hadde they ynogh and rente.
> (I.371-373)

This, however, may not have been intended as a serious assessment of their wisdom and worth. To say that a man was wise enough to be an Alderman——and had enough money too——is not necessarily a compliment, particularly if spoken by a courtier of Richard II. London politics were in a turmoil, and even the court was divided by the struggle between the victualing and non-victualing guilds. It is doubtful whether courtiers held Aldermen in great esteem and certainly the ambitions and achievements of the Guildsmen could hardly have appeared very impressive to Chaucer's readers. It has been suggested that Chaucer's selection of guilds not directly involved in the contest for power was extremely tactful. Might it not be possible that he chose neutral guilds which wielded little influence in order to make the Guildsmen's aspirations seem all the more trivial?

The Guildsmen's wives were not among the pilgrims, but in three lines Chaucer revealed that they were no less ambitious than their husbands and equally fond of display.

> It is ful fair to been yeleped "madame,"
> And goon to vigiles al bifore,
> And have a mantle roialliche ybore.
> (I.376-378)

To use a title in the manner of the wives of knights and esquires[12] and to be attended by a servant when abroad were marks of circumstance, wealth, and respectability. The verbal sketch of these ambitious women at a formal dinner, attended by flunkies who were to be employed carrying their splendid mantles and displaying this finery for all to admire, is an amusing satire on their pretensions. As the wives of Aldermen, these women would have achieved a social standing much higher than that to which their birth entitled them, and it is hardly surprising that they coveted such honours. Indeed, the importance attached to precedence on all occasions and in all levels of society is born out by numerous lists in courtesy books, and is even echoed in the description of the Wife of Bath.

> In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
> That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon.
> (I.449-450)

Although the Wife of Bath held a very high position in her village, the Guildsmen's wives would have considered her unfashionably provincial, for though her numerous husbands left her "hir lond and hir tresoor," her ideas of elegance were those of the lower middle class, not of the would-be-lady.

Two members of the provincial middle class whose dress shows that they were trying to impress their neighbours were the miller, Sympkyn, and his wife.

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[12] See Sylvia L. Thrupp, The Merchant Class of Medieval London (Chicago, 1948), p. 18, "Although their husbands used no personal title the wives of Aldermen seized upon the title of Lady, which was used by the wives of Knights and Esquires, and clung to it to the end of their lives, even when widowed and remarried to men who held no office."

> On halydayes biforn hire wolde he go
> With typet bounded aboute his heed,
> And she cam after in a gyte of reed;
> And Sympkyn hadde hosen of the same.
> (RvT I.3953-55)

Here Chaucer selected items of dress which suggest rural elegance: scarlet hose, a red gown, and a hood with a tippet so extravagantly long that Sympkyn had to twist it about his head to keep it out of the way. It is clear that this miller would force the respect of his neighbours if they did not give it willingly. Sympkyn was armed with a multitude of small but deadly weapons. He would slay an offender "with panade, or with knyf, or boidekyn" (I.3950).

> Ay by his belt he baar a long panade
> And of a swerd ful trenchant was the blade.
> A jolly poppere baar he in his pouche;
> . . .
> A Sheffield thwitel baar he in his hose.
> (I.3929-33)

Sympkyn went about at all times with a veritable arsenal, , extraordinary even in an age when most men carried a knife and often a small sword.

A more pretentious villager than Sympkyn's wife was Alisoun, the young wife in the Miller's Tale. In describing her, Chaucer selected luxurious items of dress quite unsuited to her station in life.

> A ceynt she wered, barred al of silk,
> A barmclooth eek as whit as morne milk
> Upon hir lendes, ful of many a goor.
> Whit was hir smok, and broyden al bifoore
> And eek bihynde, on hir coler aboute,
> Of col-blak silk, withinne and eek without.
> The tapes of hir white voluper
> Were of the same suyte of hir coler;
> Hir filet brood of silk, and set ful hye.
> . . .
> And by hir girdel heeng a purs of lether,
> Tasseled with silk, and perled with latoun.
> . . .
> A brooch she baar upon hir lowe coler,
> As brood as is the boos of a bokeler.
> Hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye.
> (I.3235-69)

Alisoun's disregard of convention in wearing silken filets and embroidery is mitigated by her youth and charm and also by the fact that she combined these luxuries with such plebian garments as the "barmclooth." The large brooch, probably of 'latoun' or brass, and the gaily ornamented purse might have been bought from a wandering pedler. Her high-laced shoes would have been expensive, but the very fact that they were visible indicates that her skirts must have been turned up to a practical length. They may even have been turned up a trifle more than necessary in order to display her new shoes and perhaps a trim ankle. With her high forehead, plucked eyebrows, and little luxuries of dress,[13] Alisoun attempted to imitate the heroine of a medieval romance rather in the way her modern counterpart might copy a favorite film star. Her pretensions are the follies of a pretty young woman of the lower class and indicate no serious attempt to climb above her station.

Luxurious dress was considered acceptable for those members of society whose birth or wealth entitled them to certain privileges, yet even in these cases Chaucer made use of dress to indicate certain traits of character. An example of Chaucer's technique is found in his first description of Criseyde "in widewes habit large of samyt broun" (Tr i.109). Criseyde's conformity to convention is apparent from the fact that she wore widow's weeds, and the heavy, expensive silk (samite), of which her habit was made, was not out of keeping with her rank.

Criseyde's modesty and concern for appearances was comparable to that of the heroine of the Legend of Lucrece who, on

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13 Cf. Rom ll. 1190-96, esp. ll. 1195-96.

> For thorough hir smok, wrought with sylk,
> The flesh was seen as whit as mylk.

her death-bed,

> of hir clothes yet she hede tok,
> For in hir fallynge yet she had a care,
> Lest that hir fet or suche thyng lay bare.
> (LGW F.1857-59)

Chaucer added a touch of irony to a later portrait of Criseyde.

> And ofte tyme this was hire manere,
> To gon ytressed with hire heres clere
> Doun by hire coler at hir bak byhynde,
> Which with a thred of gold she wolde bynde.
> (Tr v.809-812)

This fashion of binding the hair with a gold thread was generally associated with Venus or the companion of the god of Love.[14] Chaucer's audience was doubtless aware of this and would have appreciated the implications of associating such a style with the desolate Criseyde, immediately before she deserted Troilus for Diomede.

Another well born person whose dress was reminiscent of mythological figures is the Squire of the Canterbury Tales. His luxuriously embroidered gown, while perfectly suited to his station in life, contrasted sharply with the fustian gypon worn by his father, and this difference in attitude towards dress distinguishes the charming, ideal young Squire from the "parfait gentil knyght," helping to individualize the characters of the two men. Without such a sharp distinction in taste and appearance the Squire might easily have become merely a youthful variant of the ideal knight rather than a personality in his own right.

If luxurious dress was a pretension on the part of the middle classes and a foible of the wealthy aristocrats, it constituted a sin for the clergy; and most of the clerics described by Chaucer had fallen into this sin. Only the Parson and the Clerke of Oxenford were exempt.

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[14] Cf. PF 1.267; LGW F.215.

The Prioress of the Canterbury pilgrimage travelled with a considerable retinue, but only Madame Eglentyne herself is pictured in detail. She appears to have worn a conventional habit, probably of the Benedictine order.[15] Though Chaucer made no mention here of silken veils, scarlet gowns, or fashionably pointed shoes, his Prioress nevertheless displayed a degree of feminine vanity. Her veil was doubtless of linen but it was worn high enough to reveal a fashionably broad forehead. The poet told his readers that "ful semyly hir wympul pynched was," and also "ful fetys was hir cloke" (I.151-157). These details suggest not so much a love of luxury as extreme fastidiousness and correspond with other remarks concerning her manners and her looks.

The Prioress's pleated wimple is a puzzling item. A wimple was not a garment that lent itself to pleating (any more than does a stocking). A variation of this neck covering, however, the 'barbe,' was a pleated length of fabric that hung from the chin. This particular form was worn by widows (Tr ii.110). If Chaucer actually visualized the Prioress in a pleated 'barbe' (the artist of the Ellsmere MS saw her thus), he may have intended his readers to assume that she was a widow, like the Abbess Hervey, who had entered the religious life (see fig.23, p.72). On the other hand, the barbe may have been adopted as a part of the habit at certain convents in order to discourage the wearing of silk which would not have held pleats as well as linen. In the same way that G.G. Harper's suggestion that the Prioress was fat[16] adds humour to a description that otherwise paralleled those

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[15] Bowden, pp. 100-101.

[16] Gordon W. Harper, "Chaucer's Big Prioress," PQ, XII (1933), 308-310.

of the heroines of romance, so the possibility that she may have been a widow adds to the irony of Chaucer's portrait.

One item of the Prioress's dress was worn in defiance of the rules of dress commonly prescribed for the orders. There can be no excuse for the rich brooch which hung from her prayer beads, and Chaucer makes none.

> Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
> A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
> And thereon heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,
> On which there was first writ a crowned A,
> And after Amor vincit omnia.
> (I.158-162)

The detailed description and, indeed, the brooch itself could have been taken directly from a romance. Such jewels were often given as love tokens (Tr iii.1370). Although the Church had adopted Virgil's motto and applied it to sacred love, nevertheless, in the fourteenth century the words Amor vincit omnia were again frequently applied to profane love. In the case of the Prioress, however, it may be assumed that she thought of it "as concerning love celestial."[17] In describing the Prioress's fastidious dress, her fashionably broad forehead, her valuable beads, and her brooch with its ambiguous motto, Chaucer has indicated that, though not as open to criticism as were some of her sisters, she was not an ideal nun, rather, she was typical. Charming as she was, her worldly attitude was not commendable.

In many ways the Monk was also a typical representative of his calling. The description of his dress reveals that he had even less regard for the rules of his order than had the Prioress.

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[17] Bowden, p. 97.

I seigh his sleves purfiled at the hond
With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;
And for to festne his hood under his chyn,
He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
A love-knotte in the gretter end ther was.
. . .
His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.
(I.193-203)

The author of Dives and Pauper complained that monks used pins of gold to fasten their hoods (see p.60). In a decree of 1377, Pope Benedict XII specifically forbade the wearing of 'grys.' Furthermore, the Monk's boots are reminiscent of those worn by the Merchant, and such boots were not only costly, they required constant lubrication with expensive grease in order to keep them "souple."

In order to indicate his prelate's love of bodily comfort at the expense of the rules of his order, Chaucer appears to have selected the common luxuries in which clerics indulged themselves. In the Monk's Prologue "oure Hooste" jokingly reprimanded the cleric on his well-fed appearance and also questioned the extravagance of his dress, asking him "why werestow so wyd a cope?" (VII.1949)

The Friar of the Canterbury pilgrimage was equally negligent of the rules of dress set down by the founders of the mendicant orders.

Of double worstede was his semycope,
That rounded as a belle out of the presse.
(I.262-263)

This fashionably shaped cloak of heavy and costly worsted was a far cry from the vilitas vestimentorum which had exalted the orders of Friars two centuries previously. Furthermore, Chaucer noted that the Friar carried with him small gifts which would have insured his welcome at comfortable lodgings.

His typet was ay farsed ful of knyves
And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.
(I.233-234)

It is amusing to note that the artist of the Ellsmere MS drew the hood of the Friar full and bulging, whereas the hoods of the other pilgrims lie flat against their backs.

In all three portraits, the Nun, the Monk, and the Friar, Chaucer used dress to indicate worldly or self-indulgent characteristics, and, though each of these representatives of the regular clergy has been given individual traits of personality, in each instance Chaucer portrayed representative fourteenth-century types.[18] All departed to some extent from the strict observance of their rules, yet none was entirely misplaced in the religious life. Each was a successful member of his or her order. That this success was material rather than spiritual is an indictment of the institution to which they belonged and of the society in which it flourished as much as it is of the clerics themselves.

Except for the idealized Parson, the only cleric on the Canterbury pilgrimage to be poorly dressed was the Clerk of Oxenford. He was probably in minor orders, for Chaucer remarked that "he hadde geten hym yet no benefice" (I.291). "Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy" (I.290), and this disregard of appearance and comfort, Chaucer explained, was the result of his love of learning, for the Clerk spent all his money on books. The poet here used the threadbare clothing as an example of the immediate result of this desire for knowledge.

The Canon and his Yeoman, who joined the pilgrimage on the road, were both poorly dressed. The Canon, like the Clerk, had spent all his money on an extravagance other than clothing. The Canon's expenditures,

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[18] See Eileen Power; G.G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama, pp. 273-274; A. Williams, "Chaucer and the Friars," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), 499-513; Gilbert W. Mead, "Chaucer's Friar, a Typical XIV Century Friar," Master's Thesis, Columbia University, 1917.

however, were not devoted to true learning but to alchemy. The tattered and bedraggled figure who claimed that he could turn lead into gold was a stereotyped figure of the fourteenth century, and Chaucer pictured the Canon as such. The Host asked the obvious question.

> Syn that they lord is of so heigh prudence,
> By cause of which men sholde hym reverence,
> That of his worshipe rekketh he so lite.
> His overslope nys nat worth a myte,
> As in effect, to hym, so moot I go!
> It is al baudy and totore also.
> Why is thy lord so sluttish, I the preye,
> And is of power bettre clooth to beye,
> If that his dede accorde with they Speche?
>
> (CY Prol VIII.630-638)

The Host, like so many of his contemporaries, apparently judged by appearances. The Canon's Yeoman, however, had an answer.

> And if a man wole aske hem pryvely
> Why they been clothed so unthriftily,
> They right anon wol rowen in his ere,
> And seyn that if they espied were,
> Men wolde hem slee by cause of his science.
>
> (CYT VIII.892-896)

The Yeoman had an answer for almost everything. He was as poorly dressed as his master although this was not his usual habit. Nevertheless, this cheerful soul was able to joke about the state of his hose.

> Ther I was wont to be right fressh and gay
> Of clothyng and of oother good array,
> Now may I were an hose upon myn heed.
>
> (CYT VIII.724-726)

He meant, of course, that the hole in the knee of his stocking was so large that he could wear it as a hood, or draped about his head in the manner of a chaperone-type hat.

In an age when religion stressed the transitory nature of earthly things, mortification of the flesh was thought commendable. The hair

shirt was worn by religious penitents, and the nobly-born Christian who wore this uncomfortable garment under robes of silk and gold was a favorite example of piety. Saint Cecile was typical.

> Under hir robe of gold that sat ful fair,
> Had nexte hir flessh yclad hir in an haire.
>
> (SNT VIII.132-133)

The Parson in his sermon recommended the "werynge of heyres, or of stamyn, or of haubergeons in hir naked flessh, for Christes sake, and swich manere penances" (X.1050-55). In the Pardoner's Tale, the old man who knew where death might be found yearned for "an heyre clowt to wrappe in me" (VI.736), or in other words, he longed to die and be buried. The reference is to the custom of wrapping a corpse in a hair shroud, rather than in one of the usual white or black cloth, apparently an extension of the principle of penance. This aspect of medieval life presents a stark contrast to the love of luxury and the extravagant display of wealth which characterized the age. Chaucer's few references to such austerity serve to point out how far most of his characters had strayed from the ideals of Christian piety.

In Chaucer there seems to be no fixed pattern in the use of dress as a means of characterization. His descriptions of normal dress may indicate normality in character and the acceptance of fate's decrees or it may reveal a desire to impress. Austere dress may suggest piety and moderation, but it may be the result of some other extravagant taste. Luxurious garments, though usually an indication of a desire for comfort and a love of display, may sometimes suggest a practically prudent nature or serve to advertise success. Chaucer's use of dress as a means of characterization is obvious in many passages but his techniques are as varied as the people he portrayed.

IX

CHAUCER'S USE OF FASHION AS A MEANS OF CHARACTERIZATION

> Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;
> Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.[1]

In the same way that Chaucer used normal dress, luxurious dress, and austere dress to reveal traits of character (in addition to wealth and social position), he made use of fashions or foibles in dress. Although in some instances it is difficult to separate fashions from luxuries, there are a number of passages in the poet's works where the style of a garment is the essential factor in revealing a character.

Nothing is so passé as yesterday's fad in dress, and in the picture of Absalon in the Miller's Tale Chaucer portrayed a village dandy who, though he may have been the most fashionably dressed person in his village, must have appeared amusingly outdated and provincial to London readers.

> Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,
> And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
> Ful streight and even lay his joly shod.
> . . .
> With Poules wyndow corven on his shoos,
> In hose rede he went fetisly.
> Yclad he was ful smal and properly
> Al in a kirtel of a lyght waget;
> Ful faire and thikke been the poyntes set.
> And thereupon he hadde a gay surplys.
>
> (I.3314-23)

This sketch suggests elegance, yet the fashions mentioned are those of the third quarter of the fourteenth century, not of the last decade when the tale was written. Absalon's shoes, with their cut-out decoration, and his doublet, which fitted so tightly, would appear to

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[1] Gen Prol I.682-83.

have resembled those worn by the young king portrayed in Saint Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, about 1350. In 1390, however, courtiers were wearing shoes with extremely long pointed toes, and their gowns, while often worn very short, were amply cut "with sleves longe and wyde" (Cf. figs. 2a, 2b, p.18). The hair style that Absalon affected was also a fashion which had already prevailed for many years (see fig. 6e. p.24).

Absalon, one remembers, wears a surplice over a "kirtel." This use of the term 'kirtel' is most unusual. The word generally referred to a woman's under-tunic,[2] although it may also have been applied to the long under-tunic, or cassock, which monks and clerics wore under their habits or surplices. In this case, the use of the word 'kirtel' to describe the short, pale blue, doublet, to which Absalon trussed his red hose, points up the sharp contrast between the clerk's improper garb and the correct clothing for a Church functionary. The satiric portrait reveals Absalon's utter disregard for Church regulations concerning dress as well as his desire to present a fashionable appearance, yet it shows him in a ridiculous light for he was as unsuccessful at aping the styles of court as he was at courting the fair young Alison.

In contrast to Absalon, the Squire is an example of a successful follower of fashion. His short gown with its full sleeves was the latest mode. A reader can only wonder whether his attire provoked the Parson's long diatribe against "the synful costlewe array of clothynge, and namely in to muche superfluite, or ells in to desordinat scantness" (ParsT X.415). The Parson's outburst is typical of the criticism of

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2 See FranklT V.1580; PF 1.235; Rom 1.778.

fashions by which many reformers hoped to stem the extravagances of the age, yet Chaucer's picture of the Squire is sympathetic and uncritical. It serves to differentiate the youth and his father, the Knight, rather than to condemn a taste for fashionable dress.

The Parson would probably have approved of the hint given in the Friar's Tale that the Devil was stylishly dressed. In addition to the yeoman's green courtepy he wore "an hat upon his heed with frenges blake" (III.1383). The only type of medieval hat which could have been described as having a fringe would have been the newly introduced and fashionable 'chaperone.'

The Merchant's "Flaundrysh bever hat" is another style over which scholars have speculated. "Bever" was the most popular material for expensive hats throughout the period, and such an obviously costly item fitted with the rest of the Merchant's dress. Because a beaver hat was a part of the livery of the Sheriffs of London, this has been taken as evidence to identify the Merchant with a one-time Sheriff, Gilbert Mangfeld.[3] It should be remembered, however, that such headgear was common among the wealthy classes of the period. The "Flaundrysh" origin of the article has been thought to indicate that the Merchant had lived abroad.[4] Imported fashions, however, were probably as desirable in the fourteenth century as they are today, and this alone could account for Chaucer's use of the word. Such a reference made in 1387, however, might have been intended to suggest a conservative style. Edward III's Queen, Phillipa of

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[3]Rickert, "Extracts," p. 114.

[4]Manly, New Light, p. 192.

Hainault had brought the fashions of the Low Countries to England where they were a dominant influence during the middle of the century. With the accession of Richard II in 1377 and his subsequent marriage to Anne of Bohemia in 1383 a change took place. German elements were imported into English fashion and contributed to the extravagant changes in dress which marked the last quarter of the century. It is possible that the styles of Hainault and Flanders were somewhat outdated by the time Chaucer wrote his Prologue and that he used this fact to imply that the Merchant's taste in fashion was conservative and typical of his class.

It is perhaps difficult for a modern reader to realize the important role arms and armour played in the lives of the aristocratic citizens of Chaucer's day. In the fourteenth century the knight still constituted the main fighting strength of the army, and the equipment of such a warrior was of widespread concern. It is hardly surprising that Chaucer evinced interest in such details, for he himself had fought abroad during the so-called Hundred Years' War.

Like all 'shop talk,' that of the fighting man had its own vocabulary, and many terms changed their meaning as types of armour altered. It is difficult today to trace these changes, yet we may be quite sure that the majority of Chaucer's readers knew exactly what impression the poet intended to convey and whether a knight was a man who had continued to wear the armour of his youth or one who was forever trying something new.

The most familiar knight in Chaucer's tales is undoubtedly the

"parfait gentil knight" of the Canterbury pilgrimage who told the chivalric romance of Palamon and Arcite. The poet cast some light on the character of the Knight by describing his array on the pilgrimage.

> His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
> Of fustian he wered a gypon
> Al bismotered with his habergeon,
> For he was late ycome from his viage,
> And went for to doon his pilgrimage.
> (I.74-78)

The immediate impression is one of a practical fighting man who, upon returning from the wars, doffed his heavy armour and departed at once on his pilgrimage. It is apparent even today that the stained 'gypon' of coarse cotton and linen cloth would be worn by a man who cared little for fashion and appearance. Whether the 'gypon' was worn under or over the chain-mail habergeon is unimportant,[5] although a statement in the Knight's Tale would seem to confirm the fact that Chaucer considered the 'gypon' an outer garment.

> With hym there wenten knyghtes many on;
> Som wol ben armed in an habergeoun,
> And in a brestplate and a light gypoun.
> (I.2118-20)

This passage was not taken from Boccacio's Teseid but was inserted by Chaucer, thus it may have had particular significance with regard to the narrator, and may even refer to the type of armour favoured by the Knight. If so, the fact that the Knight did not select an elaborate 'cote-armure' but chose instead a coarse gypon, unadorned with embroidered or painted arms, indicates that he was a man who dressed for fighting rather than for show.

By the time that Chaucer wrote the General Prologue and adapted the Knight's Tale to the teller, the "habergeoun, ... brestplate and a light gypoun" were rather outdated. A "paire," or set, of plate

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[5] See p. 46.

armour which covered the entire torso was the desire of fashionable knights. Such plate-armour, however, was not universally worn. Armour was costly, and many knights of Chaucer's day doubtless continued to wear coats of fine chain-mail which had served them throughout their careers. It may be assumed that the Knight's taste in armour remained conservative, and the fact that he wore armour of the more traditional form may be one reason for the compliment that "he was nat gay,"

An experienced fighting man, the Knight must have seen many forms of armour and weapons, and his description of the knights attending the tournament reflects this.

> Som wol ben armed in an haubergeoun,
> And in a brestplate and a light gypoun;
> And som wol have a paire plates large;
> And som wol have a Pruce sheeld or a targe;
> And som wol ben armed on his legges weel,
> And have an ax, and some a mace of steel—
> Ther is no newe gyse that it nas old.
>
> (I.2118-25)

The Knight described both old and new battle equipment, and he summed up his discourse on 'modern' armour with a statement which reflects both his experience as a warrior and his attitude as a person. The Knight must have seen many things tried and discarded, only to be tried again by the next generation. His remark, "There is no newe gyse that it nas old," suggests an amused tolerance, a sense of proportion, and a sense of humour. If it also implies a slight slur on those knights who were always seeking the newest invention in arms and the latest style in armour, the criticism is slight for, as always, he was a "parfait gentil Knight."

Chaucer was fully aware that a person's attitude towards fashion might reveal many aspects of character and he used it as an intrinsic part of his portraits, whether he described an unsuccessful dandy, a fashionable squire, a conservative Merchant, or a Knight.

X

CHAUCER'S USE OF COLOUR

This fals Arcite, of his newfanglenesse,
. . . saw another lady, proud and newe,
And ryght anon he cladde him in her hewe--
Wot I not whethir in white, rede, or grene--
And falsed fair Anelida the quene.[1]

Colour had great significance for the people of the middle ages. Each shade had a symbolic meaning of which only traces remain today.[2] In the traditions of the Courts of Love the colour of dress was particularly important, for instance, a Spanish 'historical novel,' published in 1595 but describing the chivalric society of the Moors before the fall of Granada in 1492, tells of an enamoured knight who customarily changed his clothes according to the passion he felt.

Unas vezes vestia negro solo; otras vezes, negro y pardo; otras, de moraclo y blanco, por mostrar su fe; lo pardo y negro por mostrar su trabajo. Otras vezes vestia azul, mostrando divisa de rabiosos celos; otras, de verde, por significar su esperança; otras vezes, de amarillo, por mostrar desconfiança, y el dia que hablava con su Zayda se ponia de encarnado y blanco, sinal de alegria y contento.[3]

As might be expected, the meaning of colours in fifteenth-century Spain differed from those recorded by the French poet, Guillaume

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[1] Anel ll.141-147.

[2] See Genevieve Martin, "Color and Color Symbolism in Chaucer," Unpub. M. A. thesis, St. Louis Univ. 1944.

[3] Ginéz Peréz de Hita, Guerras Civiles de Granada, ed. Paula Blanchard-Demouge (Madrid, 1913-15), Part I, 45-46.

Sometimes he dressed all in black; other times in black and brown, others in purple and white, to show his faith; the brown and black to show his diligence. Other times he dressed in blue, showing the sign of excessive zeal (in love); again in green to show his hope; other times in yellow, to show his lack of confidence, and the day when he spoke with Zaida he dressed in sanguine-red and white, sign of happiness and contentment. (Translation by R. L. Eakins).

de Machaut, in his Le Remede de Fortune written about the middle of the fourteenth century.

> Or te vueil ces couleurs aprendre,
> Comme en Amours les dois entendre:
> Saches que le pers signefie
> Loiauté qui het tricherie,
> Et le rouge amoureuse ardure
> Naissant d'amour loial et pure;
> Le noir te moustre en sa couleur
> Signefiance de douleur,
> Blanc joie, vert nouveleté,
> Et la jauve, c'est fausseté.[4]

In another work this same poet recorded his delight when, on meeting his beloved for the first time, he saw that she wore a white dress and a sky-blue hood with a design of green parrots. To him blue signified fidelity, green, new love. After he became her lover, however, and he dreamed that he saw her dressed in green, he reproached her in a ballad, "En lieu de blue, dame, vous vestez vert."[5] In his early poetry Chaucer would appear to have accepted Machaut's colour symbolism,[6] for the refrain in the balade Against Women Unconstant, "In stede of blew, thus may ye wear al grene," is almost a direct translation of the French poem. Although these verses may not have been by Chaucer, other passages in his works refer to the same colours and assign to them the same meanings.

> Then thynketh me that your figure
> Before me stont, clad in asure,
> To profren eft a newe asure
> For to be trewe.
> (Anel 11.329-331)

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[4] As quoted in Haldeen Braddy, "Three Chaucer Notes," Essays and Studies in Honour of Carleton Brown (New York, 1940), p. 93.

[5] Huizinga, p. 120.

[6] Braddy, pp. 91-95.

> And by hire beddes heed she made a mewe,
> And covered it with veluettes blewe,
> In signe of trouthe that is in women sene.
> And al withoute, the mewe is peynted grene,
> In which were peynted alle thise false fowles.
>
> (SqT V.643-647)

It is possible to assign definite meaning and significance to colours as they are used in Chaucer's works. Black was a colour of sorrow and mourning. To Chaucer's readers, however, white symbolized joy more often than purity. Red signified ardour in love or war, while yellow indicated hostility and treachery.[7] The traditional meanings assigned to blue and green were so widely known that these colours became unfashionable. A man might expose himself to raillery "by dressing in blue or green, above all in blue, for a suggestion of hypocrisy was mixed up with it,"[8] Eventually blue became associated with false loyalty and infidelity until finally it became the colour of fools and cuckolds. Green has always been the colour of nature and spring and is therefore the colour of youth and newness. Green was associated with amourous passion and to Guillaume de Machaut it signified new love. A "new love" would mean disloyalty to a former love, and such connotations soon led to the equating of green with falseness.

In heraldry, colour was primarily a means of identification, and the symbolic value of the different shades was less important than in the courts of love. The tinctures of heraldry were gules (red), azure, sable, purpure (purple), and vert, together with two metals, or and argent. There were two furs, vaire and ermine. Certain practical conventions governed the juxtaposition of metals and colours, but in general, the charges on a coat-of-arms were more important than the

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[7] Cf. KnT I.1929, where Jealousy "wered of yelewe gooldes a gerland," and Gen Prol I.675, "The Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex."

[8] Huizinga, p. 272.

colours which might even be changed in order to differentiate between several branches of a family. Some symbolic significance was attached to certain tinctures; gold was of a higher value than silver, and red, being the sovereign's colour, was held to be superior to all others (though in France, blue commanded this distinction).

The old armorists of the Renaissance worked out very elaborate schemes of colour symbolism. The late George Burnett, Lyon King of Arms, commented on the value of these systems.

> The old armorists covered their ignorance of the history of the subject on which they wrote, and filled their treatises, by assigning to each metal and colour special attributes, not only when they were used alone, but varying according to their combination with others. Into these absurdities we need not enter; they were quite incompatible with the long prevalent system of differencing the coats of members of the same family by changes of tincture; and as a matter of fact at no time, and in no country, were the moral qualities of the bearer indicated by the tincture or charges of the shield.[9]

By the fourteenth century many coats-of-arms had been in existence long enough that any significance the colours might originally have had would have become a matter of family tradition and legend. There does not appear to have been any colour code such as prevailed in the courts of love.

Although servants frequently wore their lord's livery, other men might choose the colour of their dress for purely practical reasons. Huntsmen and foresters wore green, and the white "cote" of the miller was probably selected as least likely to show flour dustings. Nevertheless, the age of Chaucer was a period when a man might publicly proclaim his love, his mood, his loyalty, or his occupation, by the colour of his dress, and it is not surprising, therefore, that Chaucer made frequent references to the colours of clothes in his writing.

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[9] George Burnett and John Woodward, A Treatise on Heraldry British and Foreign (London, 1892), I. 62.

Black was the colour of death and sorrow, the colour worn by widows and often by nuns.[10] Criseyde promised to wear black when she was separated from Troilus.

> And, Troilus, my clothes everychon
> Shul blake ben in tokenyng, herte swete,
> That I am as out of this world agon.
> (Tr iv,778-780)

Criseyde had been dressed in widow's weeds when Troilus first saw her, and in several passages Chaucer contrasted her dark garments with her radiant beauty.[11]

> Among thise othere folk was Criseyde
> In widewes habit blak; . . .
> Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre
>
> As was Criseyde, as folk seyed everichone
> That hir behelden in hir blake wede.
> (Tr i.170-171, 175-177)

In the Book of the Duchess the black garments of the stranger showed that he was in mourning. Similarly, in the Knight's Tale, the mourning women who greeted Thesus were "clad in clothes blake" (I.899), and the black garb of the mourning Palamoun was noted in the description of Arcite's funeral (I.2884, 2979).

There are, in fact, only three instances where Chaucer referred to black clothing for any purpose other than to indicate sorrow. In the Canon's Yeoman's Prologue the Canon's black clothes serve to indicate his occupation, for the usual habit of a Canon was black. In the Friar's Tale the "frenges blake" on the Devil's hat (III.1383) help to create an ominous atmosphere about the stranger. In the Miller's Tale, Alisoun's black brows and black silk embroidery have no special

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[10] MerchT IV.2079. "But evere lyve as wydwe in clothes blake."

[11] Tr i.109. The reference here to a "widewes habit large of samyt broun" was apparently taken from Boccacio, who referred to bruna vesta.

significance in themselves but serve primarily as a contrast to the white of her "smok" and her "barmclooth."

White was the colour of joy, and in almost every case the characters whom Chaucer pictured as wearing white were joyful or jolly people. The Squire, we are told, was "syngynge . . . or floytynge, al the day." The Miller, too, was a great singer of songs and a teller of tales, and he piped the pilgrims out of town with his bagpipes. Alisoun, in her milk-white apron, was young and gay, and "hir song, it was as loude and yerne / As any swalwe" (I.3257). Her suitor, Absalon, wore a gay white surplice; he could sing, dance, and play several instruments. "A myrie child he was, so God me save." The Franklin, whose singing and dancing days were probably over, nevertheless believed in enjoying life. The Canon who overtook the pilgrims on the way to Canterbury wore a white surplice, but in his case, white was an indication of his calling not of his state of mind.

The Second Nun's Tale, which Chaucer adapted from the Legenda Aurea, mentions an "oold man, clad in white clothes cleere" (VIII.201), and in this passage white symbolized purity. Later in the tale, the white lilies, which were in the crowns presented to Cecile and Valerian, had the same significance. This tale, however, was based upon Christian tradition which had its own colour symbolism.

Red was the colour of ardour, and wherever Chaucer mentioned this colour he also provided other clues that the wearer was either an eager lover or an ardent warrior. The Wife of Bath, who rejoiced in many husbands and lovers, had a face which was "reed of hewe."

Her gown and her hose were of scarlet, and no other colour is associated with her. In the Reeve's Tale, the well armed and hot-tempered Sympkyn wore scarlet hose. Furthermore, in describing Sympkyn's wife as also dressed in red, Chaucer may have been hinting ironically at her ardour, both in love and in battle, which was to culminate the tale.

Rubies were associated with the kings who fought in the tournament in the Knight's Tale (I.2146, 2164), and a ruby was also the central stone in the brooch which Criseyde gave to Troilus as a love token.[12]

> But wel I woot, a brooch, gold and asure,
> In which a ruby set was lik an herte.
> (Tr iii.1370-71)

Azure settings were popular for love tokens, since traditionally, blue signified loyalty.[13] In this instance, however, it may also be Chaucer's method of hinting at Criseyde's eventual disloyalty. In his later works Chaucer's use of blue always seems to be associated with dishonesty, falseness, or hypocrisy. The Miller, who wore a "whit cote and a blew hood," may have been a jolly fellow, but he also "hadde a thomb of gold." The Doctor, garbed "in sangwyn and in pers," had a mutually profitable arrangement with his apothecary; the Reeve, who was also dressed in "pers," lined his own pockets at the expense of his lord. Here Chaucer made use of the same colour, "pers," to relate, and thus to contrast, two very different men. The clerk Absalon may have selected his "kirtel of a lyght waget" as a symbol of fidelity in love, but to Chaucer's readers this must only have added to the irony of the portrait, for to them blue would have suggested hypocrisy.

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[12] Cf. Mars ll.245-246, "The broche of Thebes was of such a kynd,/ So ful of rubies."

[13] Cf. CIT IV.245, "Of gemmes, set in gold and asure."

Although to Guillaume de Machaut green was the colour of falseness, in Chaucer it is almost always associated with nature, youth, and love. In the Knight's Tale the statue of Diane, goddess of the hunt, is described as clad in green, and Emelye is said to wear a green hunting dress (I.1686). The Yeoman of the Prologue and the Yeoman of the Friar's Tale were dressed in green, and both were associated with forests. A natural relationship between green and the spring time accounts for such phrases as "grene and lusty May" (PF 1.130). The Squire is compared to "the month of May," his dress, to a "meede," thus suggesting green even though the colour is not directly mentioned. Since green was associated with love, it is not surprising that the god of Love was pictured as wearing a gown embroidered with green leaves, nor that his Queen was "clothed al in grene" (LGW F.246). In both of these portraits white flowers or white crowns were mentioned, and in one version red rose leaves were included in the embroidery which ornamented the dress of the god of Love. The Squire also wore a gown embroidered with flowers "whyte and reede," and such combinations of colours have an interesting significance. G.G. Coulton has pointed out several other instances in medieval literature where the combination of red, white, and green is to be found, and he has suggested that this combination of colours is symbolic of the extremes of medieval life, illustrating how men achieved harmony "not by the blending but by the balance of opposite factors."[14] Chaucer's Squire is an example of such a balance, for he was both a promising warrior and a sentimental lover; he was youthful and gay, he dressed in the extreme of fashion, and yet he was a well-mannered

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[14] Coulton, Medieval Panorama, p. 255.

gentleman, much admired by the conservative Franklin. The Squire's colours, white and red, even serve to associate him with the Franklin, for the older man wore a gipser of white silk, and

> Whit was his berd as is the dayesey;
> Of his complexious he was Sangwyn.
> (I.331-332)

In his old age the white of the Franklin's beard would have contrasted sharply with his ruddy complexion, but perhaps once the beard was red and a trace still showed, just as the English daisy has a touch of red on the edge of the petals. In this portrait, Chaucer may be said to have used colour as a means of characterization. To state that a man had a sanguine complexion was a clear indication of his personality. Chaucer's contemporaries were aware that it was said of the Sanguine man:

> Of yiftes large, in love hath grete delite,
> Jocunde and gladde, ay of laughing chiere,
> Of ruddy colour meynt somdel with whyte;
> Disposed by kynde to be a champioun,
> Hardly i-nough, manly and bold of chere.
> Of the Sangwyn also is it sygne
> To be demure, right curteys, and benyne.[15]

The details which Chaucer gave regarding the Franklin's way of life bear out this character.

Red and white flowers were often combined in garlands and, since the colours suggest joy and love, it is not surprising to find such garlands worn by lovers as well as by Venus and the god of Love.[16]

The Prioress carried beads of coral "gauded al with grene." This combination of red and green, which was usually related to love and spring, sounds a somewhat ironic note when associated

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[15] R.H. Robbins, Secular Lyrics of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (Oxford, 1952), p. 132.

[16] Cf. HF 1.135; KnT I.1053-54, 1957; LGW G.160; SNT VIII. 220, 254. In this last passage the roses are symbols of martyrdom, the lilies, of purity. See Robinson, p. 865 (Notes).

with the nun. When one considers the beads together with the brooch and its suggestive motto, however, in this particular instance, it is difficult to disassociate the two colours from their usual attributes.

Chaucer's selection of colours for the cock Chanticleer, in the Nun's Priest's Tale, has received considerable critical attention. The colours are those of the common barnyard fowl, but they were also the tinctures of the arms of Bolingbroke, and the tale has been interpreted as an allegory of the duel of Bolingbroke and Mowbray (as represented by the fox).[17] The colours associated with Chanticleer—red, black, azure, white, and gold—do not seem to have the same symbolic value that they have elsewhere in Chaucer's works, and here they may well have had a heraldric association. Indeed, Chanticleer, in his pride, is himself almost a heraldric device and might well be used as a crest or supporter in a coat of arms.

In conclusion, it may be said that Chaucer appears to have used colour to point up or reinforce certain personal qualities in his characters. It also served as a means of relating or contrasting people in a series of portraits. The poet's surprisingly consistent association of certain colours with certain types of personality suggests that it was deliberate on his part, and we are probably justified in attaching symbolic meanings to most of his allusions.

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[17] Robinson, pp. 257-258 (Notes).

XI

CHAUCER'S USE OF DRESS IN NARRATIVE

What shul thise clothes thus manyfold,
Lo! this hote somers day?--
After greet hete cometh cold;
No man cast his pilche away.[1]

Finally, references to dress are to be found in tropes or proverbs, and there are a number of instances where dress serves as a plot device or as a basis of humour or irony.

In the House of Fame, Chaucer commented on the tales and stories told by pilgrims and travellers.

And, Lord, this hous in alle tymes,
Was ful of shipmen and pilgrimes,
With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges,
Entremedled with tydinges,
. . .
Saugh I eke of these pardoners,
Currours, and eke messengers
with boytes crammed ful of lyes. (ll.2121-2129)

Here, by his reference to the large pouches and boxes carried by the voyagers, Chaucer manages to suggest not only the immense number of tales and lies but also to give them an almost tangible reality which somehow improves the joke.

In many instances Chaucer's humour depends upon the reader being familiar with either legendary material or literary tradition. As already noted, the description of Priapus in the Parliament of Fowls consisted merely of a reference to a tale told by Ovid. The Summoner in the General Prologue had a garland set upon his head, "as greet as it were for an ale-stake" (I.666), and the immediate

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[1] Proverb, Robinson, p. 639.

association with the Summoner's thirst is obvious. Chaucer's readers, however, were doubtless aware that in poetry and legend it was either the gods of Love, Christian martyrs, or fashionable lovers, who were pictured as wearing garlands.[2]

> The statue of Venus, glorious for to se,
> . . . on hir heed, ful semely for to se,
> A rose gerland, fressh and wel smellynge;
> (KnT I.1955-61)

> (Emelye) gadereth floures, party whit and rede,
> To make a subtil gerland for hir hede.
> (KnT I.1053-54)

Seen against this background of tradition, the Summoner's garland has an air of amusing incongruity.

Literary traditions were satirized by Chaucer in Sir Thopas, which is a parody of the metrical romances that constituted the 'popular' literature of the period. The arming of Sir Thopas is part of the joke, for in the old romances every detail of the hero's array was described. A serious example from Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight occupies over seventy lines in which each piece of armour is itemized. The passage in Sir Thopas is short by comparison.

> He dide next his white leere,
> Of clooth of lake fyn and cleere,
> A breech and eek a sherte;
> And next his sherte an aketoun,
> And over that an haubergeoun
> For percynge of his herte;
>
> And over that a fyn hawberk,
> Was al ywroght of Jewes werk,
> Ful strong it was of plate;
> And over that his cote-armour
> As whit as is a lilye flour
> In which he wol debate.
>
> His sheeld was al of gold so reed,
> And therinne was a bored heed,

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[2]Cf. LGW G.160; HF I.135; Rom 11.566, 845, 869, 908; SNT VIII, 220 ff.; KnT I.1570, 1961.

A charbocle by his syde;
. . .
His jambeux were of quyrboilly,
His swerdes shethe of yvory,
His helme of latoun bright;
His sadel was of rewel boon,
His brydel as the sonne shoon,
Or as the moone light.

His spere was of fyn ciprees.
(Thop VII.857-881)

Although J.M. Manly has attempted to prove that this description of the armour is "ridiculous from beginning to end,"[3] it has been shown that such is not the case.[4] In actual fact, the armour described in Sir Thopas is of a type popular about 1350 and similar in style to that referred to in many romances such as Guy of Warwick and Sir Gawayne. By 1390, however, when the "rym" was written, such armour would have been out of date. Chaucer's presentation makes Sir Thopas sound even more old-fashioned than he was, for the use of the phrase "and over that," which is repeated a number of times, immediately calls to mind the multitude of layers worn with the 'cyclas' armour of the years 1325-35 (see fig. 14, p.44). The references to "jambeux" and "quyrboilly" increase the impression of quaintness. The picture, therefore, which Chaucer presented to his readers, was that of a knight dressed in outdated armour of mixed styles, some pieces of which may have been inherited by the wearer. Each item was the finest of its kind, so Chaucer stated. Nevertheless, a gold shield would have provided little protection in battle, and similarly, the ivory sheath, the helmet of bright latoun, the 'sadel' of whale ivory, and the polished bridle were more suited to state processions than to actual fighting. Chaucer's humour

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[3] J.M. Manly, "Sir Thopas: a Satire," Essays and Studies, XIII, 70.

[4] Robinson; p. 845 (Notes); Herben, pp. 475-487.

is subtle. Sir Thopas's armour is not ridiculous, it is simply not quite right. Chaucer pictured the knight on an ambling grey steed, dressed in armour which might have been borrowed piecemeal from half-a-dozen other heros of romance, and an audience familiar with the older works might even have been able to place the original owners.[5]

Chaucer sometimes made the characters themselves give opinions concerning dress. The Knight's statement that "ther is no newe gyse that is nas old" has already been noted. The Wife of Bath, too, had some pertinent views on dress.

> [Thou] seye thise wordes in the Apostles name:
> "In habit maad with chastitee and shame
> Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," quod he,
> "And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,
> As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche."
> After thy texte, ne after thy rubriche,
> I wol nat wirche as much as a gnat.
> (III.341-347)

She even boasted to the party of pilgrims about her fine clothes:

> Therfore I made my visitaciouns
> To vigilies and to processiouns,
> . . .
> And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.
> Thise wormes, ne thise motthes, ne thise mytes,
> Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;
> And wostow why? for they were used weel.
> (III.555-560)

The Wife's remarks on clothing are entirely compatible with her general theory that what one has one should use.

In the Clerk's Tale there is an amusing bit of by-play when the ladies of the court were told to strip "Grisildis" of her poor

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5 See Laura Hibbard Loomis, "Chaucer's 'Jewes Werk' and Guy of Warwick," PQ, XIV (1935), 371-3.

garments and clothe her in golden raiments,

> . . . [they] were nat right glad
> To handel hir clothes, wherinne she was clad.
> (IV.375-376)

This touch may be Chaucer's although it is also found in a French translation of Petrarch's Latin version of the tale.

Chaucer often poked fun at old men, their appearance, and their follies, but his humour was usually ironic. The picture of old January in the Merchant's Tale is amusing, but bitter.

> But God woot what that May thoughte in hir herte,
> Whan she hym saugh up sittynge in his sherte,
> In his nyghte-cappe, and with his nekke lene.
> (IV.1851-53)

The portrait of the Reeve, in the General Prologue, is also ironic.

> The Reeve was a sclendre colerik man.
> His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;
> His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;
> His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.
> Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,
> Ylyk a staf, ther was no calf ysene.
> . . .
> A long surcote of pers upon he hade,
> And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.
> (I.588-618)

Here the picture of the lean and balding Reeve, with his long gown tucked up to show his thin legs, contrasts sharply with other descriptions of more elegant pilgrims. The reference to the rusty sword is an amusing comment on "Oswolde's" generally poor appearance. The irony of the description, however, becomes apparent when, in the Prologue to his tale, the Reeve reveals his thoughts on old age.

Dress also serves the mechanics of plot in certain of Chaucer's works. In the Reeve's Tale, a non-existant night-cap, or "volupeer," played an important role in the confused fight which culminated the tale:

she saugh a whit thyng in her ey.
And whan she gan this white thyng espye,
She wende the clerk hadde wered a volupeer,
And with the staf she drow ay neer and neer,
And wende han hit this Aleyn at the fulle,
And smoot the millere on the pyled skulle.
(I.4301-06)

There is both humour and dramatic irony in this passage.

An item of dress also plays an important part in the unwinding of the plot of Troilus and Criseyde. Here, however, there is no humour, only irony. Criseyde gave Troilus a brooch when they first became lovers. Later, when she accepted Diomede's love, she gave him a brooch also, one which Troilus had given to her when they parted. Diomede pinned the love token to his "cote-armure" which was torn from him in battle and born "throughout Troye Town, / As was the gise."

And whan this Troilus
It saugh, he gan to taken of it hede,
. . .
Ful sodeynly his herte gan to colde,

As he that on the coler fond withinne
A broche, that he Criseyde yaf that morwe
That she from Troie moste nedes twynne,
In remembraunce of hym and of his sorwe.
And she hym leyde ayeyn hire feith to borwe
To kepe it ay! But now ful wel he wiste,
His lady nas no lenger on to triste.
(v.1655-66)

Criseyde's concern for appearances is the source of humour and irony in an earlier part of the tale. Pandarus, attempting to arouse her interest in love and in Troilus, tells her to "do wey youre barbe and shewe your face bare" (ii.110). Later he is even more specific in his request:

lat us daunce,
And cast youre widewes habit to mischaunce!
What list yow thus youreself to disfigure.
(ii.221-223)

To the reader, already acquainted with Criseyde's character, Pandarus's deeper motives are apparent. His attempt to persuade Criseyde to discard her widow's weeds, the outward symbol of her propriety and conformity, is merely a prelude to his efforts to woo her for Troilus.

The ironic implications of the clerk Absalon's "kirtle" have already been noted. Another instance of a brief mention of dress which has ironic overtones occurs in the Pardoner's Tale. The revelers who go in search of death meet an old man. They rudely demand of him: "Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?" This is the first implication that the old man may be an ominous and mysterious figure. It suggests that he wore a garment remarkably like a shroud, a strange comment on his wish for death and his knowledge of where death was to be found.

Chaucer made use of familiar proverbs and popular sayings in many of his works and they are often set in humourous contexts. A number of these sayings include references to some item of dress. The phrase which Pandarus used to warn Criseyde of a trick, "Loke alwey that ye fynde/ Game in myn hood" (ii.1109-10), is a reference to a well known joke where an ape was placed in a man's hood.[6] To "find game in a hood" meant to be tricked. To "maken hym an howve (hood) above a calle" (Tr iii.775), apparently also meant to trick or hoodwink a person.

In her Prologue, the Wife of Bath quoted one of her husband's favorite proverbs, "womman cast hir shame away,/ Whan she cast of hir smok" (III.782-783). A saying in the Knight's Tale, "That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte" (I.1566), has interested

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[6] Cf. Preface to PrT VII.440; HF 1.1810.

commentators but seems to be simply an expression of the fatalistic view that a man's destiny is determined before his first garment is made in infancy.[7] The four-lined proverb beginning "What shul thise clothes"[8] may have been Chaucer's comment on the shortness of the English summer. Certainly the fur-lined "pilche" was a valued part of most men's wardrobes.

There are a few references in Chaucer to social customs involving some item of dress. Men doffed their headgear as a sign of respect (BD 1.516), and as it was customary to wear some sort of head covering at almost all times, Pandarus's remark to Troilus, "don thyn hood" (ii.954), meant merely "put on your hat and go."[9]

It is apparent throughout Troilus and Criseyde that Chaucer pictured his Trojans in medieval dress, even though he mentioned only the most common articles of clothing and never described specific fashions. References to the hoods,[10] the shirts,[11] the furred cloak,[12] the "barbe", and the arms and armour,[13] all suggest the clothing of the middle ages. The Knight's tale also contains numerous references to armour and weapons, and the general impression created is that they were envisioned in medieval form. The fact that Criseyde made Diomede "were a pencel of hir sleve" (v.1043) also discloses that Chaucer thought of Trojan life as similar to his own society, for this was a custom of chivalry.

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[7] Robinson, p. 776 (Notes).

[8] See p. 137.

[9] Robinson, p. 932 (Notes).

[10] Tr ii.1181; v.1151.

[11] Tr iii.738, 1099, 1372; iv.96, 1522.

[12] Tr iii.738.

[13] KnT I.1006-1019, 1613-1630, 2118-2181, 2496-2546, 2696, 2896.

Such references are a clear indication that, although Chaucer often used traditional plots and characters, he adapted them to contemporary thoughts and manners.

One custom of Chaucer's time, referred to in several instances, was the giving of clothing as a reward or payment. The Man of Law received "fees and robes," and the Reeve was given "a thank, and yet a cote and hood" for good service. A "gowne-clooth" (fabric enough to make a gown) was the prize won by Jankyn in the Summoner's Tale for his ingenious solution to the Friars' problem.

In several well known legends, retold or translated by Chaucer, some article of dress plays an important part in the plot. In one of the Monk's tragedies a poisoned shirt brought about the death of Hercules (MkT VII.3312-20). The climax of the Legend of Thisbe resulted from Thisbe's loss of her "wimple," for when Pyramus found it, he thought she was dead (LGW F.798, 813, 845). In the same poem, in the Legend of Ariadne, the deserted princess attempted to attract the attention of the departing Thesus.

> Hire coverchief on a pole up steked she,
> Ascaunce that he shulde it wel yse
> And hym remembre that she was byhynd.
> (LGW F.2202-04)

In the Complaint of Mars, Chaucer, in retelling the tale of Mars and Venus, described the arming of the god of War.

> (He) hente his hauberk, that ley hym besyde.
> Fle wolde he not, ne myghte himselven hide.
> He throweth on his helm of huge wyghte,
> And girt him with his swerd, and in his hond
> His myghty spere, as he was wont to fyghte.
> (11.97-101)

In the Man of Law's Tale, the legend of 'Custance,' the reader is reassured that 'Custance' was not set adrift by her mother-in-law without proper provisions. Food was given to her "and clothes eek she hadde" (II.444).

In another traditional tale, that told by the Clerk, of the patient Griselda. Chaucer remarked on certain details concerning dress. He explained, for example, how the nobleman was able to have clothes ready for Griselda when he claimed her for a bride.

> But natheless this markys hath doon make
> Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,
> Brooches and rynges, for Grisildis sake;
> And of hir clothyng took he the mesure
> By a mayde lyk to hire stature,
> And eek of othere aornementes alle
> That unto swich a weddyng sholde falle.
> (IV.253-259)

These passing references to clothes as everyday objects, to garments having no symbolic meaning and little value to the plot, nevertheless give to Chaucer's writings a feeling of realism and veracity. Even though fashions in dress change, clothing and the problems it presents remain. Moths plague the modern housewife even as they did the Wife of Bath. Thus the seemingly irrelevant details of dress which Chaucer noted in his tales have a timelessness in significance. Even the stereotyped figures in familiar legends seem more like human beings when they have to be measured for clothes and obviously devote a certain portion of their lives to dressing and undressing.

Thus far only isolated examples of Chaucer's use of dress have been considered. His numerous references to clothes have been

noted and it has been shown how a line or phrase might indicate occupation, social status, character or personality. The more elaborate descriptions, however, usually contain references to a number of items of dress each of which serves a somewhat different purpose but which combine to create a complex portrait. Furthermore, wherever Chaucer presented a series of sketches, his remarks concerning the dress of the various individuals often assist in relating or contrasting characters. This is particularly evident in the Canterbury Tales.

The perfect Knight and the promising Squire differed in age and experience, but they are individualized primarily by their opposing attitudes to dress and display. The red and white embroidery of the Squire's gown seems even brighter by contrast with the coarse and colourless garb of his father. The dress of the Squire also points up his connection with the traditional god of Love who appeared so frequently in the poetry of the Courts of Love. In addition, the Squire serves as an example of the fashionable young nobleman with whom the reader can later compare the village dandy, Absalon, and perhaps the poor, scholarly, Clerk of Oxenford.

Throughout the catalogue of the Canterbury Pilgrims, Chaucer alternated luxurious dress with poor dress and normal dress. His references to clothing varied from single lines to complex portraits embodying numerous details. The ostentatious Merchant is portrayed from head to toe, while following him, the poor Clerk's impoverished appearance is summed up in a single line concerning only a threadbare

"overeste courtepy." The practically dressed Shipman contrasts sharply with the Doctor in his brilliant silken robes, and the portrait of the luxuriously dressed Wife of Bath is followed by that of the Parson, whose garments are left to the imagination.

Chaucer used similar garments to relate certain groups of people in much the same way as he used colour. The scarlet legs of the Wife of Bath, Absalon, and the miller Sympkyn, the "souple" boots of the Monk and the Merchant, the scarlet "gytes" of the Wife of Bath and Sympkyn's spouse, and the garlands worn by Venus, the god of Love, and the Summoner, these may or may not have been intentional associations on Chaucer's part, but they add a richness to his tales that rewards the attentive reader.

Chaucer's use of dress in narrative is varied and serves a multitude of purposes, contributing to the humour, the irony, or to the plot, and adding a touch of reality wherever it occurs. It also serves to relate or contrast characters or groups of characters within a work and so adds richness to the portraits.

It is evident that, although Chaucer used dress for many purposes, in the instances where he described a person's costume in any great detail his purpose was primarily that of characterization. Regardless of the length of a portrait, however, his technique remained that of the brief reference to individual items. This method of selecting only certain articles, colours, or fashions for emphasis gives these items a vivid reality even for modern readers. The articles of dress that Chaucer chose for his pilgrims

were not the result of a haphazard selection of unusual and memorable hats and gowns. The poet wrote for a sophisticated London audience and he counted on their knowledge of contemporary styles and conventions of dress. When Chaucer mentioned an article of clothing, an ornament, a fabric, a fashion, or a colour, he knew that his readers would grasp the full implication of his words. Today, while we can sometimes only guess at his meaning, his descriptions are still vivid and amusing.

In Chaucer's works a reader will find members of every level of Medieval society. Saint and Devil, Monk and Merchant, Prince and apprentice, all are to be found somewhere. Chaucer visualized them as his contemporaries did and in describing their dress gave them a remarkable degree of individuality and humanity. Chaucer used dress in almost as many ways and for almost as many purposes as there are characters in his tales. Each example of his use of dress differs in some way from every other example. One can generalize concerning his methods but except for his references to colour it is almost impossible to establish any set pattern. Chaucer's use of dress is as varied as the world which he recorded in his writings.

APPENDIX A

Wages and Prices in Chaucer's England

Table 1 — Wages

Decennial Average Wage for Casual Labour (Wages are in pence)

	1351-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	90-1400
Threshing a quarter of wheat	/3½	3-4¾	3-5	3-3½	2¾-4
Threshing a quarter of barley	2-2¾	2-3¾	2¼-3¼	2-2½	2-2½
Reaping an acre of wheat	7¾	7¾	10	10	7½
Thatcher, daily wage	3½	3½	4⅛	3⅞	4⅛
Carpenter, " "	4¼-5¾	4¼-5½	5-6½	4¾-5½	4⅝-6¾

Plowmen, before 1348 were paid about 8d. an acre, and after the plague they received between 1s. and 1s. 6d. an acre.

The average daily pay of a thresher would appear to have been 2d. to 3d. per day, a reaper would be paid 3d. to 4d., and a mower might receive as much as 5d. a day. Skilled workers, thatchers and carpenters, would not be assured of steady employment, but allowing a carpenter a working year of about 300 days, his yearly earnings might be £5 15s. 7d. (before the plague this would have been about £3 18s. 1½d.).[1] Present day farm wages average between $6.00 and $8.00 a day. Skilled labourers may receive as much as $20.00 a day. The following table shows the cost of other types of casual labour.

1361, Sheppy Castle, Clerk of the Works, day ..... 1s.

1363, Oxford, Ratcatcher..... 8d.

1366, Hoton, 2 foxhunters of the king employed to kill foxes, 4 days ..... 2s.

Oxford, Writing a book called Comylton ..... 8s. 9d.
Caminus to do. ..... 1s. 2½d.
Illumination..... 3s. 4d.
Binding ..... 2s. 1d.

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[1] Figures are taken from J. E. Thorold Rogers, A History of Agriculture and Prices in England (Oxford, 1866).

Table 1 (cont.)

1367, Eastwood, Man & 3 horses, day..... 9d.
(today, a man and team receive about $20.00 a day)

1367, Eastwood, John Hunt, the parker, ... day @ 4d. ... 121s. 8d.

1385, Southampton Fleet, The Earl of Arundel's pay as admiral of the fleet is daily.... 6s. 8d.

1400, London, Painting angel at porte of high altar..... 13s. 4d.

The following account is representative of payments made to farm servants hired by the 'term.' Together with these payments went an allowance of produce, for example, in 1363 at Cheddington, the Plowman, Driver, and Daya were to have one quarter of wheat every 10 weeks.

1359, Ibstone,	Michlemas Term.	John Okslad, Ploughman, ...	6s.
		Wm. West, Ploughman, ...	5s.
		Wm. Driver, Driver, ...	4s.
		Cowherd.....	2s.
	Lady-day.	Wm. West.....	3s.
		Wm. Carter.....	2s.
		John Driver.....	1/6
		Thos. Shepherd.....	2s.
		Cowherd.....	6d.
	Holy Cross Term.	Wm. West.....	1s.
		Wm. Carter.....	1s.
		Thos. Shepherd.....	1s.
		Cowherd.....	6d.
		John Driver.....	4d.

1350, Oxford, Wm. the Chaplain to receive 16s. 8d. each term, and so much because he would not stay for less, and the fellows agreed to give him the increase sooner than he should go away.

1366, Whadon,	Bailiff	60s. 8d.	Robe ..... @ 20s.
	Seneschal.....	13s. 4d.	Robe ..... @ 20s.
	Clerk	6s. 8d.	
1382, Weedon,	Bailiff	20s.	Robe ..... @ 10s.

1396, Hornchurch, Bailiff ... 100s. (in this case there was no other allowance made).

Bailiffs were generally paid by the year and received allowances of produce as well as robes and livery.

Table 2— Commodity Prices

Decennial Average Prices of Commodities (Prices are in shillings and pence)

Item	1351-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-1400	1956
Quarter of wheat	6/10½	7/3¼	6/1¼	5/2	5/3	
Quarter of barley	4/7	5/0¼	3/10¼	3/4¼	3/5¾	
Cows	10/2	11/10¾	11/4½	8/7¼	10/8	$200.00
Cart-Horses	17/0¼	23/9½	22/9¼	23/2¼	20/8½	$225.00
Ewes	1/4¼	1/6½	1/4¾	1/2	1/0½	$20.00
Wool (7 lb. clove)	1/7¾	2/3¾	2/8¾	2/0	2/0½	48¢/lb.

These prices naturally varied from year to year and from place to place depending upon many variables. In general, however, prices rose throughout the century although a series of good harvests during the last twenty years (1380-1400) resulted in a decline in agricultural prices. The most startling rises were caused by the increase in the cost of labour after the plague (1348). The average price of manufactured goods almost doubled during the second half of the century.

Average Price of Manufactured Articles and Imported Goods

	Salt (bushel)	Iron (c=180 lb.)	Plough-shares	Wheels (ad ferr.)	Oil (gal.)	Sugar (lb.)
1261-1350	/5¼	4/1	9/9	2/11¼	1/0½	1/0½
1350-1400	/9½	9/5¼	19/1¾	7/2	1/4¼	1/7

Imported goods did not increase in price to the same extent as domestic products, nevertheless, a general rise took place over the period of a century.

The increase in the cost of cloth after the plague is particularly notable. Canvas and linen more than doubled in price, and only a serious depression in the value of raw wool during the second half of the century prevented the price of woollen fabrics from doing the same.

Table 3 - Fabric Prices

Average Price of Fabrics (Prices are in pounds, shillings, and pence)

	Canvas (doz. ells)	Linen (doz. ells)	Table Linen (doz. ells)	Woollen Cloth Best Cloth (24 yards)	Woollen Cloth 2nd. Quality (24 yards)
1260-1350	2/6¾	4/1¼	3/3	£3/19/8	£1/13/2¾
1350-1400	4/10½	8/4½	6/7¼	£4/3/2	£2/6/6½

The following selection of entries in accounts indicates the price of various special fabrics during the latter half of the century.

1352, Oxford, Summer robe, ... 51s. 11d.
Silk lining to do. . . . . 25s. 6d.

1355, Oxford, ½ pannus (for winter robe) . . 49s. 4d.
½ do. (for summer) . . . . 36s.
(yd: @ 3s.)

1356, Oxford, ½ pannus (winter robe of Warden) 46s. 8d.
furrae . . . . . 5s.

1358, Oxford, 2 furrae and hood of miniver . . 30s.

1365, Oxford, Double cloak . . . . . 11s. 9d.
Summer robe . . . . . 41s. 8d.
Sindon . . . . . 24s.

1377, Oxford, Cloth for winter robe . . . . . 40s.
(8 yd: @ 5s.)
Summer robe . . . . . 40s.
(8 yd: @ 5s.)
Hood to do. . . . . 10s.
(3 yd: @ 3/4)
Green taffata, (16 yds: @ 10½d). 14s.
Tantaryn (for hood) 1 yd. . . . 3s. 8d.
Miniver caput . . . . . 8s.
2 black caps . . . . . @ 10d.
4 pr: caligae . . . . . @ 1s. 8d.

1382, Southampton, tunic for a miller . . . . . 2s. 8d.

1396, Takly, Ploughman's tunica . . . . . 3s.

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1358, Oxford, 2 purses (leather set in silver). 15s. 4d.

1371, Oxford, Knife . . . . . 7d.

1383, Oxford, 2 pr. boots and spurs . . . . . 6s. 8d.

1387, Oxford, pr. boots (for Warden). . . . . 3s. 4d.

APPENDIX B

The Ordre of Goyng or Sittyng

A pope hath no pere
An emprowre A-lone
A kyng A-lone
An high cardynall
A Prince, A kyngis son
A duke of blod Royall
A busshop
A markes
An erle
A vycownt
A legate
A baron
An abbot mytered
the ij cheff Iugys
the mayre of london
the chif baron of the cheker
An Abbot without myter
A knyght
A pryoure
A deane
An Arche-dekon
the Master of the rollis
the vnder Iugis
the vnder baron of the cheker
the mayre of caleis
A provyncyall
A doctur of diuinite
A prothonotory ys boue
the popes colectour
A doctur of both lawes
A sergeant of lawe
the Masters of channsery
A person of Chyrche
A seculer prest
A marchant
A gentylman
An Artificer
A yeman of good name[1]

An archebysshop and a duke may not kepe the hall, but eche estate by them selfe in chaumbre or in pauylyon, that neyther se other.

Bysshoppes, Marques, Erles, & Vycountes, all these may syt two at a messe.

A baron, & the mayre of London, & thre chefe Iuges, and the speker of the parlyament, & an abbot with a myter, all these may syt two or thre at a messe.

And all other estates may syt thre or foure at a messe.[2]

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[1] From Balliol MS. 354, ff C lxxxxi, or leaf 203, back, as reprinted in The Babees Book, ed. F. J. Furnival, London, 1868, p. 381.

[2] From "The Boke of Keruynge: Wynkyn de Worde," as reprinted in The Babees Book, p. 285.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. Chaucer's Works

Anel	Anelida and Arcite
Astr	A Treatise on the Astrolabe
BD	The Book of the Duchess
CkT	The Cook's Tale
ClT	The Clerk's Tale
CT	The Canterbury Tales
CYT	The Canon's Yeoman's Tale
Form Age	The Former Age
FranklT	The Franklin's Tale
FrT	The Friar's Tale
Gen Prol	The General Prologue
HF	The House of Fame
KnT	The Knight's Tale
LGW	The Legend of Good Women
MancT	The Manciple's Tale
Mars	The Complaint of Mars
MerchT	The Merchant's Tale
MillT	The Miller's Tale
MkT	The Monk's Tale
MLT	The Man of Law's Tale
NPT	The Nun's Priest's Tale
PardT	The Pardoner's Tale
ParsT	The Parson's Tale
PF	The Parliament of Fowles
PhysT	The Physician's Tale
PrT	The Prioress's Tale
Rom	The Romaunt of the Rose
RvT	The Reeve's Tale
SNT	The Second Nun's Tale
SqT	The Squire's Tale
SumT	The Summoner's Tale
Thop	Sir Thopas
Tr	Troilus and Criseyde
WBT	The Wife of Bath's Tale

2- Journals, Publications, Studies, and Texts.

AEAP	Publications of the American Economic Association
EETS	Publications of the Early English Text Society
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MP	Modern Philology
NED	New English Dictionary
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PQ	Philological Quarterly

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