

## THE DERIVATION OF *HAWKIN* AND ITS APPLICATION IN *PIERS PLOWMAN*

Introduced in the middle of Passus xiii, the character Haukyn in *Piers Plowman* holds our attention until his repentance and disappearance at the close of Passus xiv. As A. V. C. Schmidt notes in the introduction to his 1978 edition of the B-Text, Haukyn's "appearance in xiii-xiv has long since been seen as linking the supposed *Visio* and *Vita*."<sup>1</sup> As early as 1939 Stella Maguire, in her important study, acknowledges the Haukyn episode's "close connexion with the *Visio*" and emphasizes that it is "a fundamental and indissoluble connexion. For Haukyn does not merely *belong* to the world of the *Visio* rather than to the more abstract world presented in the rest of *Dowel*; he is, in his own person, the *embodiment* of the world."<sup>2</sup> Noting that Haukyn "subsumes the Dreamer himself" and "takes over from the Piers of the *Visio*," Elizabeth Kirk similarly observes "that we clearly have to do, not with a character, even in the sense that the Dreamer is one, but with an emblem figure that brings together elements previously investigated separately."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Haukyn is seen as both a unifying and climactic figure, embodying the *Visio* and bringing to a close "a sequence of visions which may be described as 'carnal' rather than 'ghostly.'"<sup>4</sup>

Given the burden of meaning that the critics agree Haukyn must carry, it is remarkable that none has commented on the significance of his name. After all, *Piers Plowman* is an allegory relying on personifications whose names denote their meanings in the poem, and even the Christian names *Will* and *Piers* can be interpreted metaphorically as the human will and St. Peter. In 1970 essay Tauno Mustanoja raises the question of the significance of the name *Haukyn* only to back away from it:

It would be interesting to know what the author of *Piers Plowman* had in mind when he chose *Haukyn* as the name of his "active man." Did he associate it with some idea he wanted to express? It seems idle to speculate on this point; perhaps it was chosen simply because it was a common name, in accordance with the author's consistent attempt to handle a moralizing allegoric theme in a concrete and realistic way.<sup>5</sup>

It is unlikely the poet randomly chose a common name for such a key figure in his allegory; a consideration of the derivation of the name *Haukyn* will shed more light on the character's meaning in *Piers Plowman*.

The derivations of *Hawkin* provided in the standard dictionaries of surnames are unsatisfactory. In Harrison's dictionary the name *Hawkin* is described as "a double dim[inutive] (for orig. *Halkin*) of *Harry*."<sup>6</sup> Harrison quotes the following lines from *The Tournament of Tottenham* in Percy's *Reliques*:

Wo was *Haukyn*, wo was Herry  
Wo was Tomkyn, wo was Terry!

<sup>1</sup>A. V. C. Schmidt, ed., *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B-Text*, by William Langland (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1978), p. xxi.

<sup>2</sup>Stella Maguire, "The Significance of Haukyn, *Activa Vita*, in *Piers Plowman*," in *Style and Symbolism in Piers Plowman*, ed. Robert J. Branch (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p. 196.

<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Kirk, *The Dream Thought of Piers Plowman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>Schmidt.

<sup>5</sup>Tauno F. Mustanoja, "The Suggestive Use of Christian Names in Middle English Poetry," in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley*, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Harrison, *Surnames of the United Kingdom: A Concise Etymological Dictionary* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1969), p. 194.

Reaney, in *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, rejects Harrison's conclusion, pointing out that "as *Tomkyn* is certainly not a pet-name for *Terry*, it is a fair assumption that *Hawkyn* is not for *Herry*."<sup>7</sup> Reaney suggests that "*Havekyn* . . . must be for *Havek-in*, a diminutive of OE *Hafoc*, which was still in use in the middle of the 13th century . . . and had at least one other diminutive *Havekott*."<sup>8</sup> Reaney's explanation of *Hawe* is likewise speculative: "*Hawe* is clearly a pet-form of some common name, but of what it is difficult to decide. It may be for OE *Hafoc*, from the diminutives *Havekin*, *Havecot*."<sup>9</sup>

A more direct explanation for the hypocorisms *Hawe* and *Hawkin* is to be found in the popular process of forming rhyming pet-names. The name *Robert*, for example, yields the rhymed short-forms *Bob*, *Dob*, and *Hob*, and is the source for the common surname *Hopkins*. Likewise, *Richard* yields *Dick* and *Hick*, *Dickens* and *Higgins*, and *Roger* furnishes *Dodge* and *Hodgkin*.<sup>10</sup> The pet-forms *Dawe* and *Dawkin*, whose derivation from *David* is undisputed,<sup>11</sup> invite an explanation of *Hawe* and *Hawkin* as rhyming forms. The special popularity of initial *h* and the generation of pairs in *d* and *h* (e.g., *Dob/Hob*, *Dick/Hick*, *Dodge/Hodge*) support the derivation.<sup>12</sup> Further, Mustanoja quotes those lines from *The Tournament of Tottenham* that Harrison cites (though the versions are inconsistent) and adds the following lines:

per hopped Hawkyn,  
per daused Dawkyn,  
per trumped Tomkyn,  
And all were trewe drynkens.<sup>13</sup>

The lines are not evidence of the derivation *per se*, but the use of the two names as a rhymed pair makes plausible the derivation of *Hawkin* as a rhyming form of *Dawkin*. A final circumstance encouraging this derivation of *Hawe/Hawkin* is the unusual popularity of the Christian name *David*; according to Matthews' appendix of "Surnames from Men's Christian Names," *David* and its derivatives are surpassed in frequency only by *John* and *William* in the Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup> Whether as a result of familiarity or as a matter of practicality (i.e., to alleviate the ambiguity of too many *David*'s), the popular name produced a large number of alternate forms.

The derivation of *Hawkin* from *David* suggests a reading of *Piers Plowman*'s *Haukyn* as a representation of the Biblical *David*. *Haukyn* recalls *David* in three respects. First, *Haukyn* introduces himself as "a Mynstrall."<sup>15</sup> His resume of negative qualifications (xiii, 230ff.) divorces him from the more disreputable contemporary entertainers, making him a suitable version of *Saul*'s minstrel—who is, in fact, named twice in the *Haukyn* episode (xiii, 432; xiv, 131) with quotations from the "sauter." Further, *Haukyn*'s primary occupation is "wafre" (xiii, 226); that *Haukyn* provides holy bread is suggested at line 243 ("I fynde payn for þe pope") and may recall *David*'s feeding himself and those with him with the bread of the Presence (1 Sam. 21:1–5), an act *Christ* refers to in Mark 2:23–28.

Second, like *David*, *Haukyn* is known for his deeds: "my name is Actiua vita./Al yde[1] ich hatie for of

<sup>7</sup>P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames*, 2nd ed. with corrections and additions by R. M. Wilson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 169. Reaney also argues that "no such form [as *Halkin*] has been adduced"; however, Charles W. Bardsley does identify "an uncouth spelling" of *Halkin* "in the De Lacy Inquisition, where the entry occurs, 'Henry, son of Holekyn.'" *English Surnames: Their Sources and Significations*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Paul Flesch and Co., 1968), p. 51n.

<sup>8</sup>Reaney. C. M. Matthews accepts both suggestions, attributing *Hawkin* to both *Hafoc* and *Halkin* (from *Henry*). *English Surnames* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 160, 214–15.

<sup>9</sup>Reaney.

<sup>10</sup>Albert H. Tolman, "English Surnames," in *The Views about Hamlet and Other Essays* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1906), p. 326. Also see Appendix 3 in Matthews, pp. 324–25.

<sup>11</sup>Reaney, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup>Though due to the preposition *de*, the variation between *d* and *h* is also seen in *Dawtre* and *Hawtre*, from Latin *de alta ripa* and Norman-French *hauterive* (Bardsley, p. 233; Reaney, p. 90).

<sup>13</sup>Mustanoja, p. 59.

<sup>14</sup>Matthews, p. 324.

<sup>15</sup>*Piers Plowman: The B Version. Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best*, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London: The Athlone Press, 1975), xiii, 224. Subsequent references will be identified parenthetically.

Actif is my name" (xiii, 224–25). He expresses his desire for a papal pardon that would "lechen" human illness (xiii, 247ff.). In Passus xix, Haukyn, David, and Christ are brought together in Conscience's account of Christ's "doynge" (xix, 125–31). Christ healed the sick (i.e., accomplished the aim of Haukyn's pardon) and was called "for þe dedes þat he dide, *Fili dauid*, Iesus./For dauid was doghtiest of dedes in his tyme" (xix, 133–34).

Third, both Haukyn and David are notable sinners brought to dramatic repentance. Haukyn embodies, under one morally filthy coat, the Seven Deadly Sins; brought by Conscience to a disturbing awareness of his own guilt, he "cride mercy faste,/And wepte and wailed" (xiv, 334–35). Similarly, for his adultery with Bathsheba and his responsibility for the death of Uriah—an act referred to in an earlier passus (x, 429)—David is rebuked by Nathan the prophet. The headnote to the Miserere (Psalm 51) suitably suggests that the psalm was composed by David following Nathan's visit. There are, in fact, echoes of the Miserere in Haukyn's lament. Just as Haukyn "weyled þe tyme/That [euere he] dide dede þat deere god displede" (xiv, 327–28), the psalmist expresses his awareness that his sin was against God: "Tibi soli peccavi" (51:6). Haukyn knows sin is inescapable: "Synne seweþ vs euere" (xiv, 325–26); the psalmist writes: "peccatum meum coram me est semper" (51:5). Throughout the psalm there are references to washing and cleanliness, recalling the salient metaphor of Haukyn's sinfulness, his stained coat: "Penitus lava me a culpa mea" (51:4); "Lava me, et super nivem dealbabor" (51:9). Clearly, in the final thirteen lines of Passus xiv, Haukyn makes the sacrifice that, according to the Miserere, is acceptable to God: "spiritus contritus, Cor contritum et humiliatum" (51:19).

Haukyn's similarity to David reinforces our impulse to read Haukyn as an embodiment of the *Visio* world, the community seeking Piers, for David is the embodiment of the Davidic kingdom, the world in anticipation of the messiah. The Haukyn-Piers relationship reflects that of David to Christ. Piers is recalled in Haukyn's industry and his pardon, but in the allusion to Haukyn's service to Piers (xiv, 234–37) and in the contrast between their pardons (Haukyn's has a temporal, physical aim, whereas Piers' focuses on eternity),<sup>16</sup> we see that Haukyn is inferior to Piers, that he is "included in" and transcended by Piers.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Christ comprehends and surpasses David. Although David is the paradigm of earthly kingship,<sup>18</sup> unlike Christ, he is not a "conqueror"; Christ, recognized in Passus xix, 136–39, as heir to the Davidic throne, extends his kingship beyond earthly dimensions—beyond death itself: "And þo was he conqueror called of quyke and of dede" (xix, 53). David and Haukyn, as exemplars of the active life, reveal the limits of the temporal world. The association of Haukyn with David strengthens our perception of Haukyn as an embodiment of the sinful, penitent world, encourages our looking ahead in the allegory, and supports our apprehension of Piers as a type of Christ and as the spiritual head of Christ's Church.

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<sup>16</sup>Maguire, p. 200.

<sup>17</sup>Maguire, p. 198.

<sup>18</sup>In Passus iii, 288–91, Conscience introduces David as the ideal king, whose rule corresponds to the rule of Reason and promises the overthrow of Mede. For a brief discussion of David's kingship, see Alan Richardson, "David," *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 59–60.