Pearl

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Abbreviations List

A	Anderson's edition
AW	Andrew and Waldron's edition
C	Cawley's edition
G	Gollancz's edition
Gor	Gordon's edition
H	Hillmann's edition
MS	British Library, MS Cotton Nero A.x.
V	Vantuono's edition

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Introduction

The poem known as *Pearl* was written in England in the fourteenth century. It exists today in a small vellum manuscript, one of the treasures of the British Library, MS Cotton Nero A.x., as the first of four poems copied by a single scribe. Following *Pearl* are three more alliterative narratives, two of them, *Patience* and *Cleanness*, retellings of Old Testament stories, and the last the Arthurian masterpiece, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. All four poems were probably written by the same poet, but who that poet was remains a mystery, as indeed does much of the manuscript's history. There is little surprising about the absence of an author's name attached to one or all of these poems; until the fifteenth century and later, writers working in English seldom signed their work. English was perhaps deemed too common and "vernacular" to bear claiming in a world where French had remained the lingua franca of international courtly business and of English high culture since the time of the Norman conquest. What is more surprising is the apparent marginalization of these sophisticated and exuberant poems. To gauge the popularity of a text in a pre-print culture, we can often use the number of surviving manuscripts as a general guide. For *Pearl*, *Patience*, *Cleanness*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, there remains only the one in which they have survived together. To gain a sense of a work's importance in its own time we can also pay attention to its critical legacy, the responses of contemporaries and followers, for popular narratives intercalate richly with other texts as writers read and borrow from each other. For the texts in the *Pearl* manuscript there exist only the vaguest of echoes in later writings to suggest that they were read or known at all. Yet these poems rank with the works of Chaucer and Langland for wit, virtuosity with language and prosody, learnedness, and sheer skill in telling a story.

Pearl, the first poem in the manuscript, leads off with a rich display of these qualities in a story of crossing-over, the stepping out from the ordinary life into a parallel universe where things operate by different natural laws: down the rabbit hole, through the wardrobe or looking glass, across the ocean to be shipwrecked on Prospero's island or, more recently, across a bridge to the island of Willow Springs in Gloria Naylor's haunting novel, *Mama Day*, where the crossing-over moves into a place of memory and hope, the nostalgic space of home as well as Beulah or Eden, the earthly paradise. If *Pearl* resists identification by author, date, occasion, or place of composition, it can be localized by its conversation with other stories of crossing-over, which most often take the form in the Middle Ages of dream visions, stories of transport that occur when the figure telling the story falls asleep. As a narrative structure, the dream vision claims a deep heritage in some of the most widely read vernacular texts of western European culture. The Italian *Divine Comedy* by Dante and the French *Roman de la Rose*, begun by Guillaume de Lorris and continued by Jean de Meun, both seem to have been read and known by the author of *Pearl*. The use of the dream as a narrative point of departure also structures the English *Piers Plowman* by William Langland and the four great dream visions by Geoffrey Chaucer. What these narratives share — and indeed, what it may be said that all stories of crossing-over share — is a place of possibility, where the narrative begins with a sense of being stuck or even trapped and then moves into a place of freedom or expansiveness. In his dream the narrator of *Pearl* slips into an "aventure," which means "marvel" or "quest" (line 64). Dante at the opening of *Inferno* is trapped in a dark wood, in the middle of his life, but in his vision becomes a traveler in time and space,

circling down through hell and then climbing up to a vision of paradise. Harry Potter is virtually a prisoner of the Dursleys, but transposed to Hogwarts, he is the airborne star of quidditch.

Pearl similarly opens in a setting that emphasizes limits: "clos," meaning "set" or "enclosed," is a key word of the second line. In its staging of a dream vision, *Pearl* is explicitly situated within a courtly and aristocratic world; and indeed, the poem in many respects takes its shape and particular power from the interplay between a courtly habitus, a place of money, judgment, pleasures, and rules of behavior, and the uncanny yet familiar space of the crossing-over. Beginning with a precious object, the poem also opens with attention to location and surveillance, set in motion through acts of judgment in familiar kinds of spaces. The jeweler/narrator looks at and judges gems in general; he has one in particular in a splendid setting, so "clanly clos" (line 2), but it falls from him and disappears into the ground; his "[a]llas" (line 9) precipitates the poem backwards into the past through a memory of loss.

The poem takes off from this point of departure as a story of loss and a quest, opening as well in a space that can only move outward from containment: the pearl in a setting, the earth into which the pearl disappears, the garden into which the narrator enters to grieve it. Following the narrator's swoon in the garden, he finds himself in a landscape peculiarly transformed into a place of natural delights, evocative of accounts of the earthly paradise and also of the sensuous love gardens that appear so frequently in medieval literature. In this sinuous Eden he forgets what he has lost. He follows a stream and enjoys the pleasures of the senses — fragrances of flowers and fruit, birdsong, the light through the leaves. Soon, however, he is literally brought up short when he sees a young woman standing on the other side of the brook. Dressed all in white, with a large pearl in the middle of her breast, she is disturbingly familiar. He asks her if she is his lost pearl, a question that she evades as she points to his faulty logic in saying that she is lost. From this point the story moves into a dialogue. In a passionate interrogation the narrator struggles to place her within known frames of reference and even to reclaim her: how can she be lost (dead) and found? Now that he has found her again, how can he give her up? Where does she live? How can she, who lived "not two yer" (line 483) in our land, be a queen in heaven? To his questions she responds with answers that are both learned and measured, and occasionally even disciplinary, meeting the rage of his questions with cool theological puzzles: he cannot understand the divide between them because she has moved to a place that operates by an apparently different set of laws — and whose operations form the intellectual substance of her replies. To his questions about where she lives, she promises him a sight of her home, and finally leads him to a vision of a beautiful city, the New Jerusalem, where she lives as a bride of the Lamb. This forms the final location of the vision, a visionary chthonic moment that moves him to try to cross the stream. It is at that point that he wakes up, and the poem ends.

Metaphor and Form

In the great dream vision stories of the Middle Ages, the drama of the other-world adventure is made explicitly homely or familiar through use of a first-person narrator, and one who conventionally falls into certain categories of "ordinariness": he is foolish or middle-aged, or overtired, or sad. The use of a first-person voice, coupled with techniques of familiarization, make it easy to assume the narrator's persona and go along for the ride. In *Pearl* that assumption or costuming in the narrator's identity quickly plays into a story of troubled equivalence, since from the first word we get it wrong; what we take as a pearl, we soon find out, is more than a pearl. The pearl is a metaphor whose various meanings, unfolding as the story progresses, are subject to repeated reassessment. Paul Ricoeur speaks of metaphor as a "planned category mistake" in which linguistic limits and categories are willfully broken to engage new possibilities: "the power of metaphor would be to break an old categorization, in order to establish new logical frontiers on the ruins of their

forerunners."[1] Metaphor, that is, forces a reevaluation of assumed truths: things may be as they seem, but are also more than they seem. As it takes on narrative form, ordering a set of meanings over and beyond the literal, metaphor becomes allegory. In medieval dream visions, most of them allegories, we are particularly aware of the divide between things in their essences or "object-hoods" and the contingencies of value and desire that circulate about them. Even as the naïve wanderer in the dream vision encounters a cyber world, rich and strange, the living body of the narrator is always present at the margins of the story, asleep in a swoon, however much we forget him or her (in medieval vision literature, invariably him) — and is a reminder that things operate according to familiar physical laws.

Pearl mobilizes a set of "calculated category mistakes" through the responses of both the reader and the narrator, and also through an extraordinarily rich set of changes rung on language throughout the poem. Both narrator and reader engage in acts of misreading and misinterpretation; and, in fact, the narrator's acts of passionate misreading structure the dialogue with the *Pearl*-maiden, which takes the form of a quiz in which he repeatedly tries to categorize her within known and familiar frames of reference — a set of collisions, we could argue, that pit the familiar surround of courtly culture, the narrator's ambit, against the scriptural stories and visions that the maiden lays out in the answers — that sets allegorical "truths" with particular abruptness against sense perception. We begin with the loss of a pearl in a garden; that pearl, we find out, is also a girl, the narrator's two-year-old daughter; it is also the kingdom of heaven described in Matthew 14:45–46: "the kingdom of heaven is like the merchant seeking valuable pearls, who, when he had found a pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." *Pearl* sets in motion a set of "category mistakes" that comment uneasily on the very nature of categories: what is a pearl? What is a girl? How do we know or evaluate what we see? What are the bases of aristocratic identity and affinity?

One of the particular achievements of *Pearl* lies in its overlay of a linear narrative with a set of metaphoric registers that with extraordinary facility rewrites the definitions of the poem's central terms. That which appears fixed, stable, and known is not: like the pearl itself, which slips away to transform into something else, words recur throughout the poem with new meanings. The economy of metaphor, or rather its hyper-economy, lies in its uncanny ability to express both equivalence and multiplicity; ostensibly an equation of identity, marked by an equal sign, metaphor also adds up to the sum of its parts.[2] The pearl *is* a gem, *is* a two-year old child, *is* a beautiful young woman, *is* the immortal soul, *is* the heavenly city — as well as a collective of the properties that inhere to each term singly. The language of *Pearl* is unusually rich in the double entendre, also a form of metaphor, particularly in terms for judgment and evaluation.[3] Indeed, *Pearl* uses a dizzying punnology, embedded within concepts, words and grammatical structures and even within the system of its meter and rhyme,[4] as if in invitation to engage with language as an encounter with haunting and repetition. In the first set of stanzas, the stanza-group in which the narrator returns to the place or spot where his pearl — née daughter — was lost, "spot" recurs in ways that force associative relationships between location and absence, between the set of compass points that places him physically and

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1 Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, S. J. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 197; Ricoeur takes the idea of the "category mistake" from Gilbert Ryle, *The Concepts of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), p. 10.

2 For an important discussion of medieval theories of metaphor, see Peter W. Travis, "Chaucer's Heliotropes and the Poetics of Metaphor," *Speculum* 72 (1997), 399–427.

3 For legal judgment, see Silar.

4 I take this term from Tomasch.

the negativity that marks the pearl as both without stain (without "spot") and without a place (without "spot") in his world. In this elegy, the instability of language recapitulates or, we might say, performs the poem's story of bereavement. Language itself tells us all we need to know about loss.

Integral to the poem's play with language are formal patternings that build repetition and change into the structure of the poem. In its principles of rhyme, versification, and numbering, *Pearl* is unmatched for complexity in Middle English poetry and perhaps rivaled only by Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Attention to number is a vital part of the poem's design. The use of a twelve-line stanza seems to be carefully chosen as part of a numerological structure: the New Jerusalem has twelve tiers in its foundation and is also twelve furlongs long; the poem itself, 1212 lines long, is a composite of twelves. Concepts of perfection and blemish parlayed through the image of the pearl are also graphed through number. Comprising twenty sets of five, the stanzas are grouped to add up to 100, a number of perfection. This symmetry is offset, however, by the curious addition of an extra stanza in the fifteenth set — with the result that the stanzas total 101. One hundred and one, a strong number that suggests new beginning after return, is doubtless no accident. This number appears as a stanza or chapter total in several other medieval texts; and most strikingly, 101 is also the sum of the stanzas of the Cotton Nero A.x. manuscript's most famous poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[5]

Repetition and change also structure the prosodic form of *Pearl* to an unusual degree. The stanzas themselves follow a tight rhyme scheme, with three sets of rhyme appearing in each: ababababbcbc. In stanza form, *Pearl* shares many affinities with French, Italian, and Latin fourteenth-century poems as well as with other lyrics in English from the late thirteenth century through the early fifteenth century. In its use of heavy alliteration and a complex stanza form *Pearl* bears some similarities to the lyrics from MS Harley 2253, c. 1340. In prosodic form, however, it shares closer affinities with later poems. *Pearl*'s use of a refrain and a twelve-line form of the ballade or pseudo-ballade stanza link it with a continental form that first appeared in English with lyrics by Chaucer, c. 1380, and that is used in several of the lyrics in the Vernon manuscript (c. 1390).[6] *Pearl*'s stanza moves with a rippling kind of musicality: two rhyme words alternate until the final four lines, which often work as a quatrain, where one of the rhymes continues, and a new counterpoint is picked up. Rhyme moves the poem in increments of repetition and change. As Marie Borroff describes the effect of rhyme in the ballade stanza, it is "like a series of shifts to the next higher musical key in successive choruses of a popular song."[7]

Where *Pearl* departs from English and continental forms of the ballade, however, is in its use of an intricate system of verbal echoes. While a refrain and verbal repetition are common features of late medieval lyrics, both English and continental, *Pearl* transforms the refrain into an echoic play of concatenation. Not only do the five stanzas in each stanza-group share a repeating last word and often entire line, but stanzas are also linked together by repetition of the last word of the refrain of one stanza in the first line of the next, an echoic effect that strings stanzas together like pearls on a necklace. *Pearl*'s mathematically precise system of stanza numbering and its uses of repetition and verbal linking produce a poem that is crafted with unusual care, the poem itself as a kind of precious object. At the same time, however, repetition of its link-words also

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5 For Franciscan texts based on 101, see Fleming; for discussion of the uses of number in *Pearl*, see Bishop, *Pearl in Its Setting*, pp. 27–32; Peck, pp. 44–51, 58–64; Røstvig; and Condren.

6 Fein, pp. 368, 382; Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, pp. 86–87; David Lawton, "Middle English Alliterative Poetry: An Introduction," in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1982), pp. 8–9.

7 Marie Borroff, *Pearl: A Verse Translation* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 35.

allows an unusual latitude and play with the possibilities of meaning. In each stanza within a stanza-group the final word is always the same, but the line in which that word is embedded is not, so meaning can vary by syntax as well as by the play of lexical possibilities within words themselves. Far from restricting or confining meaning, *Pearl*'s elaborate form allows the fullest play of its punnology. Words may repeat and return, but return as altered bearers of meaning.

The experience of reading *Pearl* can thus be unsettling, for while the story, as a narrative, appears to proceed in a sequential or linear way, the multiple meanings that radiate out from central terms, and the shifts in its categories that displace from its central image, are far less clear, particularly in the hallucinatory transformation of the pearl to the beautiful young woman who herself is understood to represent a two-year-old child, presumably the narrator's daughter. Yet at the same time that language and prosody enact processes of transformation on the pearl, and even theological possibilities of post-mortem transfiguration, its central metaphor never departs fully from its primary identity: the pearl is a pearl. Writing of the curious materiality of metaphor, Darrel Mansell locates the impulse to metaphor in a desire to ground language in objects, an impulse he assigns to a yearning for a mythic lost time of pre-linguistic plenitude when things were as they seemed: in metaphor, which is always a surplus, "the original world of matter is glimpsed still almost innocent of predication."[8] In *Pearl*, language and image never abandon the materiality of their metaphoric point of departure. *Pearl*, that is, continues to be the word/name that the narrator utters when addressing the maiden. Pearls appear throughout the transformed landscape of the crossed-over world: in the gems gleaming in the river, in the clothing of the maiden and indeed in the very whiteness of her skin, on the gates of the New Jerusalem, and, metaphorically, in the pearly fleece of the Lamb.

This material grounding in pearls points to a question: is pearl afferent or referent? Signifier or signified? While the pearl is of course a symbol for the evanescent or the spiritual, the child and/or immortal soul, and the narrator's search for the pearl an allegory for a spiritual search, the pearl lends the poem a peculiar materiality and presence; it is not just a point of departure. In his study of the elegy Peter Sacks writes of the ways that elegiac poetry grounds itself repetitively, indeed obsessively, in objects, replaying in poetry and in language the central trauma of loss, Freud's *fort/da*. The elegy, Sacks writes, is hauntingly recapitulative in impulse and form, replaying a series of losses that looks back to an originary trauma, the primal separation from maternal plenitude.[9] Language in elegy is unusually concretized, Sacks argues, and in *Pearl* we can perhaps see how the poem's central metaphor or object also enacts this material requirement.[10] The poem offers consolation through the maiden's discourse on the delights of heaven, but perhaps an even deeper consolation in the visual promise that that which is lost, the pearl, does not go away.

Contexts: Date, Authorship, Occasion

To this point I have been concerned with the poem's uses of words and of techniques of prosody as tools skillfully deployed to produce emotional and aesthetic effects — and effects, as we shall see, that are also ethically and politically charged. The poem's uses of language and of images, and especially the pearl, can also help to localize a possible time, place, and occasion for its composition. Efforts to identify a date and occasion of composition and an author for the poems of the *Pearl* manuscript, indeed, have occupied the

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8 Darrel Mansell, "Metaphor as Matter," *Language and Literature* 17 (1992), 117.

9 Peter Sacks, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 1–37.

10 Stanbury, "The Body and the City in *Pearl*"; for the gendering of the poem's embodied language, see Cox.

attention of numerous scholars in the last century. *Pearl*, along with *Patience*, *Cleanness*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, is remarkably evasive on matters that could identify a time and place of its composition, such as names of living people, real places, or current events, a feature of all four poems that Charles Muscatine has speculated is a form of escapism or reaction through "allegiance to high-medieval feudalism."[11] Some evidence for localizing the manuscript is provided by dialect, which has been identified as Northwest Midlands. Both text and manuscript have been localized to Cheshire, with a recent study by Hoyt Duggan placing the poet's natal dialect in Staffordshire and the scribe somewhat more northerly.[12] The dialect of the poems is difficult for most speakers of English today, for standard modern English has descended not from the Cheshire dialect of the Northwest Midlands but from London English, used by Chaucer and his London contemporaries. Although the dialect can locate the language of poet and scribe within a fairly precise isoglos, it does not necessarily identify the place of composition; and one question that has perplexed scholars is whether the poems are the product of a regional and provincial culture, or whether they could be at home in a much more central and urban location, or even the London court.[13] As for dating, language provides no clear evidence that can pinpoint the poems with precision, though one computer-based statistical study calibrating the percentages of words of Germanic, French, or Scandinavian origin indicates that the etymological mix of Cotton Nero A.x. is consistent with Middle English in 1390.[14] Use of descriptive details in these poems for purposes of dating can be particularly slippery. One scholar has attempted to locate *Gawain* in the mid-1300s on the basis of costume and armor; yet those details could well be the product of calculated invention to situate the poem in a somewhat earlier time.[15] In her study of *Pearl* and the ballade form Susanna Fein argues for dating *Pearl* in the mid-1380s, but that date may attempt to pinpoint its production somewhat too exactly.[16] As with language or details of place and costume, evidence from prosody can more securely suggest an earliest date rather than a final one, since a poet working somewhat later (1390s) could have chosen to work within a traditional form rather than attempt the latest thing. For fixed points regarding the production of these poems we have two dates that are quite widely separated in time. The earliest date must be 1348, the date for the founding of the order of the garter, whose motto, "honi soit qui mal pense," appears as a coda to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. On paleographical evidence the *terminus ad quem* must be c. 1400, the latest date for the composition of the manuscript.[17] While the question is by no means settled, recent research on the poems of the *Pearl* manuscript, and especially *Gawain* and *Pearl*, has tended to favor a late rather than an early date, in the 1380s or even the 1390s.

Authorship remains one of the prize questions about the poems of Cotton Nero A.x. Were the four poems contained in the *Pearl* manuscript written by a single poet, and might that poet also have written *St. Erkenwald*, a poem that has survived in a separate manuscript? *St. Erkenwald*, an alliterative London poem in the Cheshire dialect, shares many features of language and imagery, and on that basis has been linked

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[11] Muscatine, pp. 37, 40; see also Putter, who speaks of the poet's "techniques of defamiliarization" (p. 156).

[12] Angus McIntosh, "A New Approach to Middle English Dialectology," *English Studies* 44 (1963), 1–11; H. N. Duggan, "Meter, Stanza, Vocabulary, Dialect," in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 240–42.

[13] For a discussion of this question and of regional versus urban production in Ricardian poetry, see Turville-Petre, pp. 276–94.

[14] Duggan, "Meter," pp. 238–39, cites Norman Hinton, "The Language of the *Gawain*-Poems," *Arthurian Interpretations* 2 (1987), 83–94, and an unpublished paper by Hinton.

[15] W. G. Cooke, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: A Restored Dating," *Medium Aevum* 58 (1989), 34–48.

[16] Fein, p. 393.

[17] C. E. Wright, *English Vernacular Hands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 15.

with the *Pearl*-poet, though most readers now discount the connection.[18] The argument for linking the four poems in the Cotton Nero A.x. manuscript to a single author rests on a good deal of subjective criteria but also on certain features of the manuscript itself that give it an unusual integrity. It is the unique Middle English manuscript to contain only alliterative poems; it also contains illustrations, an unusual feature in a Middle English verse manuscript.[19] Dialect also argues in favor of common authorship, as do shared metrical and stylistic characteristics. Three are narratives written in an alliterative long line, and *Pearl*, a metrically regular poem, also makes use of alliterative patterning. Less quantifiably, the poems share certain thematic preoccupations: all four repeatedly pressure questions of behavior, or what we might call modeling, how one "confourns" or conforms to ideals of courtly or Christian behavior, to use a word from *Cleanness*. All four tell stories of crises in commensurating individual behavior with top-down or divine ordinances. All four present brilliantly visualized descriptions, particularly of nature, and make skilled and strategic uses of point of view. All four are "courtly."[20]

There is no firm evidence at all to suggest who might have written the poems, though numerous names have been put forth. The scholars who propose that *Pearl* is an elegy written on the death of Margaret, daughter of John Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, also suggest that the poem was written by either John Prat or John Donne, both of them clerks of Pembroke.[21] By far the candidate with the greatest longevity in the critical literature is Mascy or Massey. A spate of discussions has debated the possibility that the poems were written by a member of the Mascy family, a discussion initiated by linking the inscription "Hugo de" in the manuscript to the name "Masse" in *St. Erkenwald*, producing "Hugo de Masse," a name that can be connected to an important Cheshire family. Subsequent support for Mascy has drawn on a variety of cryptographic evidence, finding signatures hidden in the manuscript marginalia and encoded in the numbering and lettering.[22] The idea that *Pearl*, in particular, could contain a cryptogram in its elaborate prosodic and mathematical structure is plausible. As I discuss below, some of the marguerite poems of Machaut and Froissart, with which *Pearl* can perhaps be linked, hide the names of the poet and the poetic subject within

[18] For a review of the discussion, see Andrew, "Theories of Authorship," in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 26–28. For a recent argument including *St. Erkenwald*, see Borroff, "Narrative Artistry."

[19] A. S. G. Edwards, "The Manuscript: British Library MS Cotton Nero A.x," in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 197, 210. For a reconsideration of the illustrations and argument that they were composed with attention to the numerological and thematic issues of the poems, see Reichardt.

[20] For a study of the thematic similarities among the four poems, see Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet*.

[21] Oscar Cargill and Margaret Schlauch, "The Pearl and Its Jeweler," *PMLA* 43 (1928), 105–23.

[22] For essays advancing the Mascy hypothesis, see Ormerod Greenwood, trans., *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Lion and Unicorn Press, 1956), pp. 6–12; Barbara Nolan and David Farley-Hills, "The Authorship of *Pearl*: Two Notes," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 22 (1971), 295–302; William Vantuono, "A Name in the Cotton MS. Nero A.x Article 3," *Medieval Studies* 34 (1975), 537–42, and "John de Mascy "; Katherine Adam, *The Anomalous Stanza of Pearl: Does it Disclose a Six-Hundred Year Old Secret?* (Fayetteville: Monograph Publishers, 1976); Eric Kooper, "The Case of the Encoded Author: John Massey in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 83 (1982), 158–68. For counter arguments see Thorlac Turville-Petre and Edward Wilson, "Hoccleve, 'Maister Massy', and the *Pearl*-Poet: Two Notes," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 26 (1975), 129–43; Clifford Peterson and Edward Wilson, "Hoccleve, the Old Hall Manuscript, Cotton Nero A.x and the *Pearl*-Poet," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 28 (1977), 49–56. These arguments are summarized in detail by Andrew, in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 28–31; see also William Vantuono, ed., *The Pearl Poems*, pp. xxii–xxiv.

cryptograms, as if to suggest that a hidden authorial signature is part of the game with metaphor.[23] Evidence from cryptography or other forms of textual and historical data has to date produced no consensus on the authorship of *Pearl* or any of the poems in Cotton Nero A.x, although it has produced many assertions.

In considering the occasion for which *Pearl* might have been written, the narrative form provides perhaps the most articulate evidence. Quite a few readers have approached *Pearl* as a formal allegory or spiritual quest, a poem that details the soul's progress, with the pearl as a symbol for certain bodily or spiritual qualities: purity or virginity; the soul; heaven.[24] *Pearl* clearly is informed by mystical and devotional practices current in late fourteenth-century England. Yet *Pearl*, in form an allegory, is above all an elegy, a poem written about the death of one who was beloved. Most early readers of *Pearl* assumed that the poet was writing of the death of his own daughter, with the implication that the poem was written in an effort to "work through" his grief.[25] An understanding of the systems of text production in the Middle Ages within structures of patronage now would argue against identifying the author with the narrator, and suggest instead that the poem was more likely a commissioned work, probably written as a consolatory piece to commemorate the death of a daughter, and probably the daughter of an important magnate or member of the royal house. As a possible source or model for *Pearl*, Boccaccio's *Olympia* is often mentioned, a poem in which a man named Silvio is granted a vision of Violante, his lost daughter, transformed and living as Olympia with the Virgin and Son on a paradisal mountain.[26] Although *Olympia* and *Pearl* bear some notable parallels, the form of Boccaccio's poem as Latin eclogue and its classicizing allusions give it a markedly different tenor from *Pearl*. Closer to *Pearl* in form and feeling is Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, a dream vision elegy written on the occasion of the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt. Names proposed for whom the poem could be commemorating include Margaret, granddaughter of Edward III,[27] and Anne of Bohemia.[28] Speculations on the occasion of the poem are not limited to elegy, however. Ian Bishop has suggested that the poem marks the initiation of an adult catechumen, or newly baptized person, and more recently Lynn Staley has suggested that the poem was composed to commemorate the entrance into a nunnery, a figurative death to the world, of an aristocratic child, and specifically Isabel, born in 1384 as third daughter of Thomas of Woodstock, one of the younger sons of Edward III.[29]

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[23] James Wimsatt, *The Marguerite Poetry of Guillaume de Machaut* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), pp. 40–41; see also Travis, "Chaucer's Heliotropes," pp. 404–05.

[24] For symbolism of pearls, see Donkin, pp. 250–75; and for studies with application to *Pearl*, see Bishop, *Pearl in Its Setting*, pp. 51–98; Kean, pp. 143–47; Bogdanos; and the brief but cogent discussion in Gordon, ed., pp. xxvii–xxix. For readings of the poem as developmental spiritual allegory, see Blenkner; Wimsatt, pp. 122–33; Hamilton; Finlayson; and Clopper.

[25] Gollancz, in his 1921 edition, provides an imaginary biography for the poet in which a formative episode is his daughter's death, pp. xl–xlvi. A more recent autobiographical narrative has been constructed by Bowers, "The Politics of *Pearl*," pp. 432–41.

[26] Gollancz, pp. 258–85, appends an edition and translation of *Olympia* to his edition.

[27] See note 21.

[28] Michael J. Bennett, "The Historical Background," in Brewer and Gibson, p. 84; the argument is detailed at length in John Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry*.

[29] Bishop, *Pearl in Its Setting*, pp. 113–21; Staley, "*Pearl* and the Contingencies of Love and Piety."

Courtly Economics and the Ricardian Court

By identifying the narrator as a jeweler and the central image as a pearl, the poet seems to be writing with the values and possessions of the rich clearly in mind. The term jeweler can encompass not only a goldsmith or artisan but also a dealer in or even owner of gems or art objects, and hence the projected identity of the speaker could be entirely at home among an aristocratic audience.[30] The poem's central image keeps the poem firmly grounded in a world of money and exchange, a world whose values and deluxe detailing are consonant with the cultural values and fittings of the fourteenth-century English court. If consolation is effected in part in the return of its repressed, the pearl, it is also effected in the certainty that the world in which the poem is "set" is also fixed and stable. "Paye," the last word of the poem's first line and also the link-word of the last stanza-group and, indeed, final word of the poem, bespeaks a set of comfortably transposed values, and values that are fully legible within idealized terms of monied exchange: "paye" in the first line refers to the judgment and pleasure of princes, who value pearls; "pay" in the last line refers to the reward and pleasures of heaven.[31] Indeed, the poem's elaborate gemmology and interest in aristocratic values have led recent scholars to argue for dating it in the last years of the fourteenth century and specifically within the milieu of Richard II's court. While these arguments are speculative, the circumstantial evidence is rich and tantalizing enough to merit summarizing here. Until recently the poem's dialect has led scholars to assume that it was produced within a monastic establishment or baronial home in Cheshire, and probably by a learned cleric intimately familiar with the Bible and also well-versed in French and Italian poetry. Recent studies on the cultural and even manpower interchanges between Cheshire and the royal court have led to a reevaluation of this view. Michael Bennett has argued persuasively that the poet's regional dialect does not limit the place of origin to a regional location. Richard II's court was fully hospitable to arts patronage of the kind that would support the *Pearl*-poet. Richard also surrounded himself with a large group of knights from Cheshire and elevated Cheshire to a region of prime importance: far from being an alien tongue, the dialect of the *Pearl*-poet would have been fully at home in Richard's court circles.[32] Perhaps a highly sophisticated and learned cleric, writing with the interests and tastes of a court in mind and au courant with the reading tastes of international high culture, the poet of *Pearl* was above all a "courtier's courtier."[33]

John Bowers has further argued for a set of parallels between the poem and the cultural life of Richard's court, with particular attention to some of the poem's more dramatic and vivid images, including the pearl, the lamb, and the New Jerusalem.[34] The remarkable detailing of ornament, the love of description as a kind of piling on of the deluxe, fits with particular consonance in Richard's court, which was often cited and criticized for extravagance by contemporary chroniclers. Richard's court was marked by its love of all things French, "a passion for jewelry in the court circles" and a love of aristocratic regalia.[35] Bowers, proposing a date for *Pearl* in or around 1395, argues that *Pearl* bespeaks Richard's political aspirations, with the poem's court of heaven as a visionary courtly body politic.[36] Both Bowers and Bennett have argued that the locus of the *Pearl*-poet within Richard II's court could also account for the demise and dramatic marginalization

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30 See Riddy, in Brewer and Gibson; Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting," p. 139; and especially Barr.

31 See David Aers, "Christianity for Courtly Subjects," in Brewer and Gibson, p. 94.

32 Bennett, "The Court of Richard II," pp. 11–16; and Bennett, "The Historical Background," p. 78.

33 Bennett, "The Historical Background," p. 81.

34 Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting," pp. 419–41.

35 Gervase Mathew, *The Court of Richard II* (London: Murray, 1968), pp. 38–39.

36 Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting," pp. 145–51.

of this spectacular set of poems.[37] This scenario, while built on circumstantial evidence, provides a fascinating if hypothetical political backdrop for the manuscript's history. The manuscript that survives, in single form, is doubtless a copy of an earlier exemplar, and an exemplar that perhaps was quite lavish. One scholar has argued, on the basis of scribal errors, that the surviving manuscript is at six or seven removes from the original version.[38] With the ascendancy of Henry IV and the Lancastrians after Richard's death or execution in 1399, the new court exacted a thorough repression of signs of the deposed king, extinguishing with particular thoroughness the Cheshire connection to promote London as the place of the new court, and of London English as the new language of the state. If the poems of the *Pearl* manuscript were a product of the Ricardian court, they could well have suffered a similar erasure. Written in the Cheshire dialect, the manuscript of *Pearl* might also have been the target of this systematic political repression and rewriting of the past.

Whether or not we situate *Pearl* within Richard II's court with the precision that Bowers and Bennett suggest, the poem certainly expresses many of the intellectual interests and aesthetic demands of an aristocratic milieu in the late fourteenth century — and an aristocratic milieu, it could be argued, that is at work to reconcile the pressures of the marketplace with both courtly and theological values. If the poem's visible surface is constructed of precious objects, from the pearl to the gem-encrusted and gilded New Jerusalem, those surfaces are also repeatedly subjected to speculation about their value and operate in the poem within a complex commentary on measure, merit, quantification and valuation. In a recent study of market economics and scholastic theology in the fourteenth century, Joel Kaye argues that a "passion to measure," which came to pervade every area of scholastic thinking in the fourteenth century, was directly influenced by the new monetization of the European marketplace. Rather than emerging solely from within intellectual debates within universities, the "measuring mania" of scholastic philosophy was directly influenced by interactions between gown and town; geometrical theorems of a new economics responded directly to daily transactions in the market squares in a dynamic interaction that, Kaye argues, was crucial to the development of scientific methodologies. Some of the most dramatic developments in new economic thinking in the fourteenth century, and particularly in geometry, concerned theories of equalization and commensurability, for money, like geometry, "commensurated the most seemingly in-commensurable goods and services."[39]

In *Pearl*, with its intricate numerological structure, verbal concatenation, and complex rhyme, we certainly find evidence of a "measuring mania," and indeed the poem could be described as a study in issues of relation — with language, in its rich metaphoricity and punnologies, itself a medium of exchange. The image of the pearl may itself situate the poem within a dialogue among late fourteenth-century poets on poetic composition, and particularly on the instability of language in a commensurate set of relationships. Another word for pearl is "margery," from the French *marguerite*, a term that is used to designate the pearl four times in the poem. Marguerite was a popular female name, given prominence, no doubt, by the tremendous vogue of St. Margaret in the late Middle Ages, and in French *marguerite* was also the word for the daisy or heliotrope. In 1364 Guillaume de Machaut, the popular French composer and poet, wrote the first of several "marguerite" poems, with the marguerite an allegorical daisy designating an actual woman,

[37] Bennett, "The Court of Richard II," pp. 14–16; and Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting," pp. 151–55.

[38] J. P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930), pp. 261–63; cited in Fein, p. 369n.

[39] Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 3, 219.

Marguerite of Flanders.[40] Following Machaut, marguerite poems, several of which take an allegorical daisy as an elaborate conceit to designate historical women, were also written in French by Machaut's contemporaries, Jean Froissart and Eustache Deschamps, and in English by Chaucer. It seems quite possible that the poet of *Pearl*, which also rings a set of changes between a "margery pearl" and a young girl or young woman, was familiar with at least some of these poems. In an essay on metaphor and the marguerite poems, Peter Travis has recently argued that the marguerite poems constitute an international dialogue of sorts among poets. In the marguerite poems, their practitioners were engaged in an exploration, through a metaphor, of the instability of language, or indeed, of the very workings of poetry.[41]

The theology of *Pearl*, played out in images and in the debate between the narrator and the maiden, also circles repeatedly around the problematics of relation. The poem's central homily, the maiden's long story of the parable of the vineyard and the penny, takes as its central problem the issue of relation or of equivalence, and specifically the commensurability between the rewards of the marketplace and the rewards of heaven: how is it that an infant, the narrator asks, can merit the same reward in heaven as those who have lived a long and devout life, or even those who have given their lives over to the church in the most directed ways as nuns or clerics?[42] In the parable the maiden tells to answer this question, the court — in this case the heavenly court — is ordered by a utopic labor system, one that resolves by edict the central tensions about fairness that govern market labor and exchange. The parable, a kind of homily or sermon right in the middle of the vision, seems surprisingly long and almost digressive, but as an explanation of the economics of a heavenly marketplace, it is strategically situated immediately before the vision of the New Jerusalem that will put theory into practice. The parable offers a textual definition of "paye" or reward.

The vision of the New Jerusalem that follows the parable, the most elaborately detailed of the poem's sequence of locations, is itself introduced as a problem in relation, voiced in the narrator's demand to the *Pearl*-maiden to know where she lives, and then in his incredulity that she, a two-year-old child, could be elevated to the status of a queen in such a place. In choosing the New Jerusalem as the climactic moment in which the two-year-old child is perceived fully transposed as a full participant in the heavenly court, a bride of the Lamb, the poet makes a brilliant strategic move to accommodate, in Kaye's terms, quantities that are incommensurable. As the final location in *Pearl*'s sequence of transforming places, the New Jerusalem is a rich and multi-layered symbol, understood in medieval theology and allegory to represent the soul, heaven, and both ideal city and ideal church. Frequently painted or sculpted on the west wall of the church, either inside or out, images of the Lamb and the throne of God and images of the Last Judgment marked central points of entrance — and, indeed, the saved from the damned. St. Peter's in Rome, an important pilgrimage site, had on its façade a mosaic of the adoration of the Lamb by the twenty-four elders, the same image that is the culminating moment in *Pearl*.[43] In a dramatic final move that ties mystical transport to daily collective ritual, the New Jerusalem in *Pearl* also takes the narrative *into* a church, as if the textual city were itself an

[40] James Wimsatt, Chaucer and his French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 96.

[41] Travis, "Chaucer's Heliotropes," pp. 403–05.

[42] *Pearl*'s theology of reward has been recently addressed by Watson, "The *Gawain*-Poet as a Vernacular Theologian," in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 293–313. The relationship between the parable of the vineyard and concerns with labor and economics in late fourteenth-century England is addressed by Bowers, "The Politics of *Pearl*," pp. 419–41; and by Watkins.

[43] See Jonathan Alexander, with Michael Michael and Martin Kauffmann, "The Last Things: Representing the Unrepresentable," in *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Frances Carey (London: British Museum Press, 1999), pp. 49, 44.

invitation over a triumphal arch, a theophanic move that is furthered as well by Eucharistic echoes. Some readers have suggested that the poem unfolds in imitation of the Mass, and that the pearl signifies the host; the round pearl enclosed in gold denotes a round and white Eucharistic wafer, displayed in a monstrance[44] — an equivalence that I would argue is just one of many in the poem's rich metaphoric display. The image of the Lamb, both symbol and enactment of the Eucharist, places the narrator, and reader as well, before the Eucharist, or more exactly within the performance of the Mass. In a final accommodation the New Jerusalem offers a housing not only for the maiden, but also for those who participate in the sacraments.

The New Jerusalem as depicted in *Pearl* is above all a power image, carefully keyed to the tastes and intellectual interests of an aristocratic audience in the late Middle Ages. The main textual source is the Book of Revelation, but the poet was evidently familiar with visual schema for representing the city in Apocalypse cycles, many examples of which survive in deluxe manuscripts.[45] Apocalypse cycles decorated not only the triumphal arches of churches and cathedrals, but also royal chapels and chapter houses. An elaborate Apocalypse cycle that still decorates the walls of Chapel of the Holy Cross at Karlstein Castle in Bohemia offers an example of the close ties between royal interests and devotional economics of salvation. Built in 1348–57 at a country residence for Charles IV that was also a treasury for the crown jewels, the chapel includes among the scenes painted on the walls between the arches the adoration of the Lamb by the elders with musical instruments, as in *Pearl*. In this exquisite gothic chapel the Apocalypse cycle seems designed to provide a housing not only for the imperial jewels but also for imperial souls. The woman clothed with the sun is symbolically equated with Anne of Schweidnitz, third wife of Charles IV.[46] While a chapel in a Bohemian castle may seem remote from the compositional context of *Pearl*, shared cultural interests in the late Middle Ages and the international movement of artists created a rich cosmopolitan exchange in patterns, subjects, and styles. If *Pearl* were produced in the circle of Richard II in the 1380s or 1390s, the choice to use the New Jerusalem as the poem's visionary destination could even be imagined as a deliberate one. In 1381 Richard married Anne of Bohemia, daughter of Charles IV. Doubtless Anne would have known of her father's chapel at Karlstein and have been familiar with its visual story of the Apocalypse. Bennett and Bowers even suggest that *Pearl* may have been composed as an elegy for Anne, who died in 1394.[47] If that is so, the New Jerusalem would be an entirely fitting housing for her imperial soul. A favorite image for aristocratic patrons, *Pearl*'s New Jerusalem, one might speculate, was strategically chosen to link not only this world with eternity, but also England with Bohemia and a royal international lineage.

In the culminating vision of the New Jerusalem, the poet overlays sharply contrasting ways of knowing and seeing. On the one hand, the narrator moves expansively from an enclosed garden to the mystical city; on the other, the dreamer passes through the delightfully open meadows of the otherworld to end the vision within a walled edifice in many ways evocative of the church. This overlay or juxtaposition in spatial resolution gives us the poem's most skillful act of commensuration, linking the unmeasurable with the measurable: we can be both here and there. "Here" and "there" are extravagant in latitude. Of the many desires expressed in this poem, a controlling drive is a passion for equalizing, the structuring of

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[44] See Phillips; Marti, pp. 44, 84–88; and Gatta.

[45] See Whitaker; Field; Nolan, pp. 54–83; and Stanbury, *Seeing the Gawain-Poet*, pp. 21–35.

[46] Vlasta Dvoraková, J. Krása, A. Merhautová, and K. Stejskal, *Gothic Mural Painting in Bohemia and Moravia 1300–1378*, trans. R. Finlayson-Samsour and I. Urwin (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 97; Alfred Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia: Czech Literature and Society 1310–1420* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 101.

[47] Thomas, p. 19, also proposes Anne as a candidate.

equivalences according to linguistic, musical, and mathematical models that can make it possible for a lost child to be a resident of the heavenly kingdom or, for that matter, for ordinary and aristocratic folks alike to attain salvation: the parochial moves engaged with the imagery of the New Jerusalem suggest that like rewards are available if we will be docile subjects, faithful parishioners and observers of the sacraments. Crucial to the narrator's spiritual progress, I would argue, is his understanding of accommodation, the "calculated category mistake" that makes it possible for the pearl, or lost child, to be both lost and found. On an individual level, *Pearl* describes the difficulties of the individual who we might say is "working through" grief with the aid of devotional psychology. On the collective level, *Pearl* offers the promise that the particular accommodation represented in the vision, the maiden one of 144,000 brides of Christ, can be available to all. And if the New Jerusalem suggests a figurative movement into clerical space replete with Eucharistic echoes, that transposition is even given an explicitly homely dimension in the poem's final stanza-group, when the narrator awakens roughly from the dream to acknowledge the consolation to be found in the daily ritual of the Mass, the subjection of the self to the social and ritual order.

A question that lingers with *Pearl*, and perhaps that accounts for much of its appeal, lies with the body of the narrator: does the poem resolve in an aristocratized and utopic vision, or is there a remnant, the narrator himself, not totally encapsulated within a formal sacramental or courtly system? The narrator skulks the banks of the stream: he cannot cross, and when he tries he awakens, and not very happily. Does he become, as he asserts, a docile subject (taking the sacrament), or does he remain a single consciousness, separate from the vision of metaphoric accumulation that he witnesses?[48] Excluded from paradise, is he the "spot" or blot, the one hundred and first stanza, so to speak? Among readers there has been little consensus on this point. Longing and what we might call "reality" seem to be across the stream, and perhaps how we read the resolution will depend on how compelling we find the poem's vision of theophany. However communal the vision of heaven, that social order, as one reader has put it, is of a fully "aristocratized theology."[49] Juxtaposed to the individualized venture works a public, hierar-chic, and above all courtly performance.

Notes on This Edition

Pearl's first printer and modern editor was Richard Morris, who edited *Pearl* for the Early English Text Society in 1864. Before Morris' edition, *Pearl* had remained in manuscript form. The first mention of the poem appears in a catalogue of books belonging to Henry Savile of Yorkshire, a collector of manuscripts from the northern monasteries (1568–1617). By 1621 the manuscript had been acquired by the antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton, where it remained until 1700, when the Cotton collection was given to the British nation, and finally to the British Museum in 1753.

Early printed editions of *Pearl* tended to the view that the copyist, or scribe, had produced a text substantively different from the poet's intent. Israel Gollancz, who edited *Pearl* in 1891 and then again in 1921, included in his later edition 124 emendations, or corrections, to the manuscript. Many of Gollancz's emendations were aimed at restoring metrical regularity to a poem he understood to be in a form of iambic tetrameter, with four regular stresses to a line.[50] Later editors, however, increasingly retained the scribe's transcription. A tendency to adhere to the scribe's version of the poem was based in part on E. V. Gordon's

[48] For the text's representation of individual self-consciousness, see Aers; and Watkins.

[49] Watson, in Brewer and Gibson, p. 312.

[50] Gollancz, pp. xxiii–ivn. Gollancz's understanding of the poem as iambic tetrameter was based on an essay by C. S. Northup, "A Study of the Metrical Structure of the Middle English Poem *The Pearl*," *PMLA* 12 (1897), 326–40.

influential characterization of the poem's highly problematic meter as a form in effect corrupted by the influence of the alliterative long line. Under the influence of writing alliterative verse, the poet wrote *Pearl* in a hybrid form that is part metrical verse, part alliterative line: "the chief effect of this close relationship is that the line is not measured, has not a fixed number of syllables, like the lines of French verse, nor is it systematically iambic or anapaestic, as the modern reader tends to make it."[51] A reluctance to correct potential errors in the manuscript also reflects practices in textual editing in general, which have tended against emending texts in cases where there is only a single copy. Andrew and Waldron, in their important edition of 1979, revised in 1996, have ninety-one emendations, and generally follow the lead of Gordon, the poem's most important modern editor (1953), in emending for lexical sense rather than for meter. The most recent edition, William Vantuono's from 1984, aiming to retain manuscript readings "wherever possible," has only twelve emendations.[52]

In its use of emendation to restore the regularity of the meter, this edition has more in common with Gollancz than with Vantuono. The poet who wrote *Pearl* had an expert ear for sound, language, and music, and it is hard to account for the poem's many rhythmically clashing stresses and mismetered lines unless we attribute them to the poem's copyists. Recent studies on alliterative meter and also on *Pearl* have mounted convincing arguments that the *Pearl* poet was a careful metrical stylist, and that deviations from metrical regularity represent scribal editing rather than authorial intent. Hoyt Duggan has recently argued that the poet wrote not in a hybrid and irregularly metrical form, as Gordon supposed, but in a regular iambic tetrameter, as described nearly ninety years ago in early studies on the poem's meter and more recently by Marie Borroff.[53] The poem uses alliteration, but in ways markedly different from the patternings of unrhymed alliterative poetry.[54] For the purposes of reading, *Pearl* should be thought of, as Borroff describes, as "iambic tetrameter varied by an occasional anapest" (p. 32), a form that she also compares to Gerard Manly Hopkins' sprung rhythm. There are four stresses to a line, but an irregular number of dips in between stresses. Final *-e* is not normally sounded, but occasionally it is required to avoid clashing stress — required, that is, to provide a dip between two words, often monosyllabic, that are stressed, as in line 17, "my herte thrange." Many of the lines have a natural pause, or caesura, in mid-line. In this edition I have added final *e* to remove clashing stress in the middle of the line, following the lead of Gollancz and Duggan.

In transcription of the manuscript, I have followed METS guidelines. Thorns and edhs are written as *th*, and yoghs have been transcribed as *g*, *gh*, *y*, *s*, according to the letter in modern spelling that the sound represented by the yogh has come to represent. *T* plus yogh is written as *s*. Manuscript abbreviations have

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[51] Gordon, p. 89.

[52] Vantuono, *The Pearl Poems*, pp. liv–lv.

[53] Duggan, "Libertine Scribes," pp. 219–37; and Duggan, "Meter, Stanza, Vocabulary, Dialect," in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 221–42. *Pearl* was first characterized as iambic tetrameter by Northrup; for a succinct description of the form in *Pearl* see Borroff, *Pearl*, pp. 32–35.

[54] Duggan's argument that the poet wrote a metrically regular line that the scribe, or scribes, transformed is based in part on recent studies defining the metrical characteristics of the alliterative long line; see Duggan, "Final –E and the Rhythmic Structure of the B-Verse in Middle English Alliterative Poetry," *Modern Philology* 86 (1988), 119–45; Marie Borroff, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); and Thorlac Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1977). In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Cleanness*, and *Patience*, the three alliterative poems of the manuscript, the scribe consistently makes lines unmetrical by the uses of dissyllabic forms, writing *other* for *or*. In copying *Pearl*, the scribe makes similar changes, using dissyllabic forms to transform metrically regular lines to unmetrical ones; Duggan, "Libertine Scribes," pp. 224–25.

been silently expanded. My choices for word division, often ambiguous in the manuscript, are indicated in the notes only where the choice of where to divide a word poses a significant interpretive problem. The manuscript, like many medieval English texts, is unpunctuated. I have punctuated minimally for sense. Lines are only rarely enjambed. In *Pearl*, the line is paramount as the unit of thought. In the notes, I have indicated manuscript forms as well as emendations adopted among a group of six comparison editions.

1

Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye — *pleasing; pleasure*
To clanly clos in golde so clere, — *To set elegantly*
Oute of Oryent, I hardyly saye, — *firmly*
Ne proved I never her precios pere. — *I never discovered; equal*
So rounde, so reken in uche araye, — *lovely; each setting*
So smal, so smothe her sydes were,
Queresoever I jugged gemmes gaye — *Wherever*
I sette hyr sengeley in synglure. — *apart as unique*
Allas, I leste hyr in on erbere; — *lost; a garden*
Thurgh gresse to grounde hit fro me yot. — *grass; it tumbled from me*
I dewyne, fordolked of luf-daungere — *I languish, wounded by unrequited love*
Of that pryvy perle withouten spot. — *special*

Sythen in that spote hit fro me sprange, — *Since; it sprang from me*
Ofte haf I wayted, wyschande that wele
That wont was whyle devoyde my wrange[1]
And heven my happe and al my hele. — *increase my luck; well-being*
That dos bot thrych my herte thrange,
My breste in bale bot bolne and bele.[2]
Yet thoght me never so swete a sange — *I thought*
As stylle stounde let to me stele; — *As a still time let steal over me*
Forsothe, ther fleten to me fele — *Indeed; flew; many [songs]*
To thenke hir color so clad in clot. — *dirt*
O moul, thou marres a myry juele, — *earth; mar a pretty*
My privy perle wythouten spotte.

That spot of spyses mot nedes sprede — *spice plants must be overgrown*
Ther such ryches to rot is runne: — *Where; are run*
Blomes blayke and blwe and rede — *white*
Ther schyne ful schyr agayn the sunne. — *must shine; brightly against*
Flor and fryte may not be fede — *withered*
Ther hit doun drof in moldes dunne; — *Where it sank in clods of brown earth*

[1] Lines 14–15: *I have often watched, longing for that precious thing / That used to be able to dispel my sorrow*
[2] Lines 17–18: *That does nothing but pierce my heart sharply, / Swell and burn my breast painfully*

For uch gresse mot grow of graynes dede, *each plant must; from dead seed*
No whete were elles to wones wonne.[3]
Of goud uche goude is ay bygonne — *each good thing; always begun*
So semly a sede moght fayly not *lovely; could not fail*
That spryngande spyces up ne sponne *springing; would not shoot up*
Of that precios perle wythouten spotte.

To that spot that I in speche expoun *describe*
I entred in that erber grene
In Augoste in a hygh seysoun *festival*
Quen corne is corven wyth crokes kene. *cut; sickles sharp*
On huyle ther perle hit trendeled doun *mound where*
Schadowed this wortes ful schyre and schene: *plants; bright; shining*
Gilofre, gyngure, and gromylyoun, *Gillyflower, ginger; gromwell*
And pyonys powdered ay bytwene. *peonies; everywhere*
Yif hit was semly on to sene *lovely to look on*
A fayr reflayr yet fro hit flot. *lovely fragrance also; floated*
Ther wonys that worthyly, I wot and wene, *lives; noble one; believe and know*
My precious perle wythouten spot.

Bifore that spot my honde I spenned *clasped*
For care ful colde that to me caght. *seized on me*
A deuely dele in my hert denned *desolating grief; lay deep*
Thagh resoun sette myselven saght. *Though reason would have reconciled me*
I playned my perle that ther was penned *mourned; trapped*
Wyth fyrce skylles that faste faght. *With vehement arguments that contended fiercely*
Thagh kynde of Kryst me comfort kenned, *nature; taught*
My wreched wylle in wo ay wraghte. *will; struggled*
I felle upon that floury flaght — *turf*
Suche odour to my hernes schot, *brains*
I slode upon a slepyng-slaghte *slid; sudden sleep*
On that precios perle wythouten spot.

2

Fro spot my spyryt ther sprang in space —
My body on balke ther bod in sweven. *mound; remained; dream*
My goste is gon in Godes grace *spirit*
In aventure ther mervayles meven. *quest; marvels happen*
I ne wyste in this worlde quere that hit wace *did not know; where; was*
Bot I knew me keste ther klyfes cleven. *But I knew myself cast where cliffs cleave*
Towarde a foreste I bere the face *made my way*
Where ryche rokkes wer to dyscreven. *to be seen*

[3] *Otherwise no wheat could be gained (harvested) for homes*

The lyght of hem myght no mon leven, *believe*
The glemande glory that of hem glent, *gleaming; glinted*
For wern never webbes that wyyes weven *For never were fabrics that people weave*
Of half so dere adubbemente. *adornment*

Dubbed wern alle tho downes sydes *Adorned were; hillsides*
Wyth crystal klyffes so cler of kynde; *bright by nature*
Holtewodes bryght aboute hem bydes *Woods; them lie*
Of bolles as blwe as ble of Ynde. *tree trunks; indigo*
As bornyst sylver the lef on slydes
That thike con trylle on uch a tynde;[4]
Quen glem of glodes agayns hem glydes *bright patches [of sky]*
Wyth schymeryng schene ful schrylle thay schynde. *brightly they shone*
The gravayl that on grounde con grynde
Wern precious perles of Oryente.
The sunnebemes bot blo and blynde *pale and blind (fig. dark and dim)*
In respecte of that adubbement. *comparison*

The adubbemente of tho downes dere *hills splendid*
Garten my goste al greffe forgete. *Caused; spirit*
So frech flavores of frytes were *scents; fruits*
As fode hit con me fayre refete. *did completely refresh me*
Fowles ther flowen in fryth in fere *Birds; flew; wood together*
Of flaumbande hwes bothe smale and grete; *glowing colors*
Bot sytole-stryng and gyternere *citole-string; gittern player*
Her reken myrthe moght not retrete, *Their lovely; imitate*
For quen those bryddes her wynges bete
Thay songen wyth a swete asent. *harmony*
So gracios gle couthe no mon gete *music could*
As here and se her adubbement.

So al was dubbet on dere asyse *adorned; manner*
That fryth ther fortwne forth me feres. *wood; takes*
The derthe therof for to devyse *splendor; describe*
Nis no wyy worthé that tonge beres. *There is no person*
I welke ay forth in wely wyse, *walk; blissful state*
No bonk so byg that did me deres: *hill; hindrance*
The fyrre in the fryth, the feier con ryse *further; fairer*
The playn, the plonttes, the spyse, the peres;
And rawes and randes and rych reveres[5]
As fyldor fyn her bukes brent. *gold thread their streamlets glistened*

[4] Lines 77–78: *Like burnished silver the leaves slide over / That quiver densely on each branch*

[5] *And hedge-rows and stream-banks and lovely river-meadows*

I wan to a water by schore that scheres — *came; flows*
Lorde, dere was hit adubbement. *lovely was its adornment*

The dubbemente of tho derworth depe *splendid depths*
Wern bonkes bene of beryl bryght. *banks pleasing*
Swangeande swete the water con swepe *Swirling*
Wyth a rownande rourde raykande aryght.[6]
In the founce ther stonden stones stepe *bottom; stood; staring*
As glente thurgh glas that glowed and glyght, *flashes through glass; glinted*
As stremande sternes quen strothe-men slepe
Staren in welkyn in wynter nyght.[7]
For uche a pobbel in pole ther pyght *pebble; pool; fixed*
Was emerad, saffer, other gemme gente — *sapphire; noble*
That alle the loghe lemed of lyght *pool gleamed*
So dere was hit adubbement.

3

The dubbement dere of doun and dales, *hill*
Of wod and water and wlonke playnes, *lovely meadows*
Bylde in me blys, abated my bales, *Built up; sorrows*
Fordidden my stresse, dystryed my paynes. *Abolished; distress*
Doun after a strem that dryyly hales *continually flows*
I bowed in blys, bredful my braynes. *went; brimful*
The fyrre I folwed those floty vales *further; watery*
The more strenghthe of joye myn herte straynes. *stirs*
As fortune fares theras ho fraynes, *she wishes*
Whether solace ho sende other elles sore, *she; sorrow*
The wyy to wham her wylle ho waynes *person; she sends*
Hyttes to have ay more and more. *Seeks*

More of wele was in that wyse *happiness; state*
Then I cowthe telle thagh I tom hade, *could; leisure had*
For urthely herte myght not suffyse *be adequate*
To the tenthe dole of tho gladnes glade. *part; delights*
Forthy I thoght that Paradyse *Therefore*
Was ther over gayn tho bonkes brade. *over against; broad*
I hoped the water were a devyse
Bytwene myrthes by meres made.[8]
Byyonde the broke, by slente other slade, *slope; valley*
I hoped that mote merked wore; *believed; walled city was situated*

[6] *With a whispering murmur flowing straight on*
[7] Lines 115–16: *As streaming stars when country folk sleep / Gaze in the heavens on winter night*
[8] Lines 139–40: *I thought the water was a division / Between joys, made by bodies of water*

Bot the water was depe, I dorst not wade,
And ever me longed ay more and more. *ever I longed always*

More and more and yet wel mare *still more*
Me lyste to se the broke byyonde, *I desired; beyond the brook*
For if hit was fayr ther I con fare *where I was going*
Wel loveloker was the fyrre londe. *Even lovelier; more distant*
Abowte me con I stote and stare; *did I stop*
To fynde a forthe faste con I fonde. *ford; eagerly I tried*
Bot wothes mo iwysse ther ware *dangers; more indeed*
The fyrre I stalked by the stronde, *further; stepped; shore*
And ever me thoght I shulde not wonde
For wo ther weles so wynne wore.[9]
Thenne nwe note me com on honde *matter came to my notice*
That meved my mynde ay more and more. *moved*

More mervayle con my dom adaunt; *stunned my reason*
I sey byyonde that myry mere *saw; pleasant water*
A crystal clyffe ful relusaunt; *shining*
Mony ryal ray con fro hit rere. *splendid; rose up from it*
At the fote therof ther sete a faunt, *child*
A mayden of menske ful debonere. *courtesy; gracious*
Blysnande whyt was hyr bleaunt. *Gleaming; silk clothing*
I knew hyr wel, I hade sen hyr ere. *before*
As glysnande golde that man con schere, *can cut*
So schon that schene anunder schore. *fair [maiden]; at the foot of the cliff*
On lenghe I loked to hyr there — *For a long time; at her*
The lenger, I knew hyr more and more.

The more I frayste hyr fayre face, *examined*
Her fygure fyn quen I had fonte, *after; noticed*
Suche gladande glory con to me glace *gladdening; glided*
As lyttel byfore therto was wonte. *As a little before used to [come to me]*
To calle hyr lyste con me enchace *desire drove me*
Bot baysment gef myn hert a brunt. *shock gave; blow*
I sey hyr in so strange a place, *saw*
Such a burre myght make myn herte blunt. *blow; stun my heart*
Thenne veres ho up her fayre frount, *raises she; forehead*
Hyr vysayge whyt as playn yvore, *face; polished ivory*
That stonge myn hert ful stray astount — *dazed in bewilderment*
And ever the lenger the more and more.

[9] Lines 153–54: *And all the time it seemed to me I should not hesitate / For fear of harm where joys were so delightful*

4

More then me lyste my drede aros; *More than I wished my fear arose*
I stod ful stylle and dorste not calle. *dared*
Wyth yyen open and mouth ful clos *eyes*
I stod as hende as hawk in halle. *courtly*
I hoped that gostly was that porpose; *thought; spiritual; quarry*
I dred onende quat schulde byfalle *concerning what*
Lest ho me eschaped that I ther chos, *escaped; looked at*
Er I at steven hir moght stalle. *for a meeting; stop [for a moment]*
That gracios gay wythouten galle, *lovely [creature]; flaw*
So smothe, so smal, so seme slyght, *seemly*
Ryses up in hir araye ryalle,
A precios pyece in perles pyght. *being; decorated*

Perles pyghte of ryal prys
Ther moght mon by grace haf sene *There might one by good fortune have seen*
Quen that frech as flor-de-lys *fair; lily (i.e., lovely one)*
Doun the bonke con bowe bydene. *bank came directly*
Al blysnande whyt was hir beau biys, *beautiful garment*
Upon at sydes and bounden bene *Open; beautifully*
Wyth the myryeste margarys, at my devyse, *loveliest pearls, in my opinion*
That ever I sey yet with myn yyen;
Wyth lappes large, I wot and wene, *hanging sleeves; believe and know*
Dubbed with double perle and dyghte, *Adorned; trimmed*
Her cortel of self sute schene *kirtle; matching*
Wyth precios perles al umbepyghte. *Adorned; trimmed*

A pyght coroune yet wer that gyrle *wore*
Of marjorys and non other ston, *pearls*
Highe pynakled of cler quyt perle *[With] high pinnacles*
Wyth flurted flowres perfet upon. *With perfect flowers figured upon it*
To hed hade ho non other werle, *On her head; covering*
Her here-leke al hyr umbegon. *hair-enclosure; all around*
Her semblaunt sade for doc other erle, *dignified; duke or earl*
Her ble more blaght then whalles bon; *complexion; white*
As schorne golde schyr her fax thenne schon *hair*
On schylderes that leghe unlapped lyghte. *lay unbound loosely*
Her depe colour yet wonted non *wide collar; nothing*
Of precios perle in porfyl pyghte. *embroidered border*

Pyght was poyned and uche a hemme *wristband*
At honde, at sydes, at overture, *wrist; sides; [neck] opening*
Wyth whyte perle and non other gemme,
And bornyste quyte was hyr vesture. *burnished white*
Bot a wonder perle wythouten wemme *blemish*

Inmyddes hyr breste was sette so sure, *In the middle of*
A mannes dom moght druyyly demme *man's judgment; be utterly baffled*
Er mynde moght malte in hit mesure. *Before his mind might take its measure*
I hope no tonge moght endure,
No saverly saghe say of that syght,[10]
So was hit clene and cler and pure,
That precios perle ther hit was pyght.

Pyght in perle, that precios pyse *precious being*
On wyther half water com doun the schore. *across the stream*
No gladder gome hethen into Grece *man from here to Greece*
Then I quen ho on brymme wore. *when she was on the bank*
Ho was me nerre then aunte or nece; *nearer to me*
My joy forthy was much the more. *therefore*
Ho profered me speche, that special spyce, *addressed me; creature*
Enclynande lowe in wommon lore, *Bowing; in woman's counsel*
Caghte of her coroun of grete tresore *Took off*
And haylsed me wyth a lote lyghte. *greeted; glad word*
Wel was me that ever I was bore *born*
To sware that swete in perles pyghte. *answer; sweet one*

5

"O perle," quoth I, "in perles pyght,
Art thou my perle that I haf playned, *mourned*
Regretted by myn one on nyghte? *Grieved; me alone at*
Much longeyng haf I for thee layned *concealed*
Sythen into gresse thou me aglyghte. *glittered away from me*
Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned, *Sorrowful, broken; wasted away*
And thou in a lyf of lykyng lyghte *pleasure joyful*
In Paradys erde, of stryf unstrayned. *land; untroubled*
What wyrde has hyder my juel vayned *fate; here; brought*
And don me in thys del and gret daunger? *put; sorrow; heartache*
Fro we in twynne wern towen and twayned *Since we were forced apart and separated*
I haf ben a joyles jueler."

That juel thenne, in gemmes gente, *elegant*
Vered up her vyse wyth yyen graye, *Raised; face*
Set on hyr coroun of perle orient
And soberly after thenne con ho say, *did she*
"Sir, ye haf your tale mysetente *distorted*
To say your perle is al awaye
That is in cofer so comly clente *strong box so handsomely riveted*

[10] Lines 225–26: *I believe no tongue could manage, / Nor describe that sight in fitting speech*

As in this gardyn gracios gaye,
Hereinne to lenge forever and play
Ther mys nee mornyng com never nere.
Her were a forser for thee, in faye,
If thou were a gentyl jueler.

"Bot, jueler gente, if thou schal lose
Thy joy for a gemme that thee was lef,
Me thynk thee put in a mad porpose
And busyes thee about a raysoun bref.
For that thou lestes was bot a rose
That flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef;
Now thurgh kynde of the kyste that hyt con close
To a perle of prys hit is put in pref.
And thou has called thy wyrde a thef
That oght of noght has mad thee cler.[11]
Thou blames the bote of thy meschef.
Thou art no kynde jueler."

A juel to me then was thys geste
And jueles wern hyr gentyl sawes.
"Iwyse," quoth I, "my blysfol beste,
My grete dystresse thou al todrawes.
To be excused I make requeste;
I trawed my perle don out of dawes.
Now haf I fonde hyt, I schal ma feste
And wony wyth hyt in schyr wod-schawes
And love my Lorde and al His lawes
That has me broght thys blysse ner.
Now were I at yow byyonde thise wawes,
I were a joyful jueler."

"Jueler," sayde that gemme clene,
"Wy borde ye men? so madde ye be!
Thre wordes has thou spoken at ene;
Unavysed, for sothe, wern alle thre.
Thou ne woste in worlde quat on dos mene —[12]
Thy worde byfore thy wytte con fle.
Thou says thou trawes me in this dene
Bycawse thou may wyth yyen me se.
Another — thou says in this countré

So as to be in this garden a gracious fair one stay
Where neither loss nor mourning Here would be a coffer for you, truly

was dear to you
And trouble yourself about a fleeting course that which you lost
as nature allowed it
chest; enclosed
has proved to be
fate
remedy for your misfortune
courteous

visitor/story
words
Well; excellent one
dispel
believed; out of existence
rejoice
live; bright groves
near
with; waves

Why joke
at the same time
Ill-considered, truly
has fled
believe; valley

[11] *That has clearly made for you something of nothing*
[12] *You have no idea what a single one of them means*

Thyself schal won wyth me ryght here. *live*
The thrydde — to passe thys water fre. *third; noble*
That may no joyfol jueler.

6

"I halde that jueler lyttel to prayse
That loves wel that he ses wyth yye, *what he sees with [his] eyes*
And much to blame and uncortoyse
That leves oure Lorde wolde make a lyye *believes*
That lelly hyghte your lyf to rayse *faithfully promised*
Thagh fortune dyd your flesch to dyye.
Ye setten Hys wordes ful westernays
That loves nothynk bot ye hit syye;[13]
And that is a poynt o sorquydryye *of pride*
That uche god mon may evel byseme — *ill-befit*
To leve no tale be true to tryye *believe; test*
Bot that hys one skyl may dem. *individual reason; judge*

"Deme now thyself if thou con dayly *have conversed*
As man to God wordes schulde heve. *address*
Thou says thou schal won in this bayly. *dwell; realm*
Me thynk thee burde fyrst aske leve — *you ought to*
And yet of graunt thou myghtes fayle. *permission*
Thou wylnes over thys water to weve; *wish over; pass*
Er moste thou cever to other counsayle. *First; submit to another plan*
Thy corse in clot mot calder keve, *body; ground; sink more coldly*
For hit was forgarte at Paradys greve; *ruined; grove*
Oure yorefader hit con mysseyeme. *abused*
Thurgh drwry deth bos uch man dreve *Each man must make his way through dire death*
Er over thys dam hym Dryghtyn deme." *water; God allows*

"Demes thou me," quoth I, "my swete, *Condemn*
To dol agayn, thenne I dowyne. *grief; pine away*
Now haf I fonte that I forlete, *found; lost*
Schal I efte forgo hit er ever I fyne? *again; before ever I die*
Why schal I hit bothe mysse and mete?
My precios perle dos me gret pyne. *pain*
What serves tresor bot gares men grete *makes; weep*
When he hit schal efte wyth tenes tyne? *again; pains lose*
Now rech I never for to declyne
Ne how fer of folde that man me fleme;[14]

[13] Lines 307–08: *You, who love nothing but what you see, / Set His words completely awry*
[14] Lines 333–34: *Now I do not care if I fall from prosperity / Nor how far from the land men banish me*

When I am partles of perle myne, *deprived*
Bot durande doel what may men deme?" *What may men expect but endless grief*

"Thow demes noght bot doel dystresse," *grief-sorrow*
Thenne sayde that wyght, "why dos thou so? *person*
For dyne of doel of lures lesse
Ofte mony mon forgos the mo.[15]
Thee oghte better thyselven blesse *cross yourself*
And love ay God in wele and wo,
For anger gaynes thee not a cresse. *cress (i.e., not a straw)*
Who nedes schal thole be not so thro; *Whoever must suffer should not be so stubborn*
For thogh thou daunce as any do, *writhe; doe*
Braundysch and bray thy brathes breme, *Struggle; agonies wild*
When thou no fyrre may to ne fro *further*
Thou moste abyde that He schal deme.

"Deme Dryghtyn, ever Hym adyte, *accuse*
Of the way a fote ne wyl He wrythe. *He will not turn aside a foot from the path*
Thy mendes mountes not a myte, *rewards increase*
Thagh thou for sorwe be never blythe. *Even if you in [your] sorrow*
Stynst of thy strot and fyne to flyte *Stop complaining; quit wrangling*
And sech Hys blythe ful swefte and swythe; *seek; mercy; swiftly and earnestly*
Thy prayer may Hys pyté byte *penetrate*
That mercy schal hyr craftes kythe. *So that; powers show*
Hys comforte may thy langour lythe *misery relieve*
And thy lures of lyghtly fleme. *And your sorrows quickly drive off*
For marre other madde, morne and mythe, *[whether you] lament; rave, mourn; mutter*
Al lys in Hym to dyght and deme." *lies*

7

Thenne demed I to that damyselle, *said*
"Ne worthe no wraththe unto my Lorde *Let it be no offense to my Lord*
If rapely I rave, spornande in spelle. *rashly; stumbling; speech*
My herte was al wyth mysse remorde *loss afflicted*
As wallande water gos out of welle. *welling; spring*
I do me ay in Hys myserecorde; *put myself; mercy*
Rebuke me never wyth wordes felle *cruel*
Thagh I forloyne, my dere endorde, *rush too fast; gold-adorned [one]*
Bot kythes me kyndely your coumforde, *send*
Pytosly thenkande upon thysse:
Of care and me ye made acorde, *You made sorrow familiar to me*
That er was grounde of alle my blysse. *You who ever were*

[15] Lines 339–40: *For clamor of grief over lesser losses / Often many a man loses the greater [reward]*

"My blysse, my bale, ye han ben bothe;
Bot much the bygger yet was my mon — *grief*
Fro thou was wroken fro uch a wothe. — *Since; removed; path*
I wyste never quere my perle was gon; — *knew never where*
Now I hit se, now lethes my lothe; — *softens; sorrow*
And quen we departed we wern at on. — *were parted*
God forbede we be now wrothe — — *angry*
We meten so selden by stok other ston![16]
Thagh cortaysly ye carpe con — *can speak*
I am bot mol and maneres mysse. — *dust; manners lack*
Bot Crystes mersy and Mary and Jon,
Thise arn the grounde of alle my blysse.

"In blysse I se thee blythely blent, — *blended*
And I a man al mornyf mate; — *sorrowfully dejected*
Ye take theron ful lyttel tente — *notice*
Thagh I hente ofte harmes hate. — *suffer; sorrows burning*
Bot now I am here in your presente — *presence*
I wolde bysech, wythouten debate,
Ye wolde me say, in sobre asente,[17]
What lyf ye lede erly and late. — *i.e., all the time*
For I am ful fayn that your astate — *glad; rank*
Is worthen to worschyp and wele, iwysse; — *Has become [one of] honor*
Of alle my joy the hyghe gate, — *highway*
Hit is in grounde of alle my blysse." — *at the ground of*

"Now blysse, burne, mot thee bytyde," — *Now happiness, man, may come to you*
Then sayde that lufsoum of lyth and lere, — *lovely [one]; limb; face*
"And welcum here to walk and byde,
For now thy speche is to me dere.
Maysterful mod and hyghe pryde — *Arrogant*
I hete thee arn heterly hated here. — *assure; fiercely*
My Lorde ne loves not for to chyde — *complaining*
For meke arn alle that wones Hym nere,
And when in Hys place thou schal apere
Be dep devote in hol mekenesse. — *devout; total*
My Lorde the Lamb loves ay such chere; — *demeanor*
That is the grounde of alle my blysse.

"A blysful lyf thou says I lede;
Thou woldes knaw therof the stage. — *station*

[16] *We meet so seldom by stump or stone (i.e., anywhere)*
[17] *If you would tell me, in a serious way (lit. in a quiet agreement)*

Thow wost wel when thy perle con schede — *know; fell*
I was ful yong and tender of age,
Bot my Lorde the Lombe, thurgh Hys Godhede
He toke myself to Hys maryage,
Corounde me quene in blysse to brede — *dwell*
In lenghe of dayes that ever schal wage. — *continue*
And sesed in alle Hys herytage — *endowed with; inheritance*
Hys lef is. I am holy Hysse — — *beloved; wholly*
Hys pyese, Hys prys; and Hys parage — *maiden; honored one; lineage*
Is rote and grounde of alle my blysse."

8

"Blysful," quoth I, "may thys be trwe? — *Blissful one*
Dyspleses not if I speke errour. — *Do not be displeased*
Art thou the quene of hevenes blwe
That al thys worlde schal do honour?
We leven on Marye that grace of grewe, — *believe; from whom grace grew*
That ber a barne of vyrgyn flour. — *child*
The croune fro hyr, quo moght remwe — *remove*
Bot ho hir passed in sum favour? — *Unless she surpassed her in some noble quality*
Now for synglerty o hyr dousour — *singularity of; sweetness*
We calle hyr Fenyx of Arraby — *Phoenix*
That freles flewe of hyr fasor — *flawless; from her creator*
Lyk to the quen of cortaysye."

"Cortayse quen," thenne sayde that gaye,
Knelande to grounde, folde up hyr face, — *covering*
"Makeles moder and myryest may, — *Spotless; maiden*
Blessed bygyner of uch a grace."
Thenne ros ho up and con restay — *paused*
And speke me towarde in that space, — *after that interval*
"Sir, fele here porchases and fonges pray — *many strive [for] here and receive a prize*
Bot supplantores none wythinne thys place. — *usurpers*
That emperise al hevens has — *empress*
And urthe and helle in her bayly, — *Both; realm*
Of erytage yet non wyl ho chace — *Yet from inheritance will she drive no one*
For ho is quen of cortaysye.

"The court of the kyndom of God alyve — *living*
Has a property in hytself beyng; — *its own nature*
Alle that may therinne aryve
Of alle the reme is quen other kyng; — *realm*
And never other yet schal depryve, — *dispossess*
Bot uchon fayn of otheres hafyng — *each one glad; possession*
And wolde her corounes wern worthe tho fyve

If possyble were her mendyng.[18]
Bot my lady of quom Jesu con spryng
Ho haldes the empyre over uus ful hyghe,
And that dyspleses non of oure gyng — *group*
For ho is quene of cortaysye.

"Of courtaysye, as says Saynt Poule,
Al arn we membres of Jesu Kryst.
As heved and arme and legg and navle — *head; navel*
Temen to Hys body ful trwe and tryste, — *Are joined to; faithfully*
Ryght so is uch a Krysten sawle — *soul*
A longande lym to the mayster of myste. — *A limb belonging; spiritual mysteries*
Thenne loke what hate other any gawle — *rancor*
Is tached other tyyed thy lymmes bytwyste; — *attached; between*
Thy heved has nauther greme ne gryste — *resentment; spite*
On arme other fynger, thagh thou ber byghe. — *ring (or bracelet)*
So fare we alle wyth luf and lyste — *behave; love and desire*
To kyng and quene, by cortaysye."

"Cortaysé," quoth I, "I leve, — *believe*
And charyté grete be yow among.
Bot my speche that yow ne greve, — *But that my words may not offend you*
. . . . .
Thyself in heven over hygh thou heve — *too; exalt (yourself)*
To make thee quen that was so yonge. — *yourself queen*
What more honour moghte he acheve
That hade endured in worlde stronge — *steadfastly*
And lyved in penaunce hys lyves longe — *all his life*
Wyth bodyly bale hym blysse to byye? — *torment to buy himself happiness*
What more worschyp moght he fonge — *he receive*
Then corounde be kyng by cortaysé? — *Than to be crowned king through courtesy*

9

"That cortaysé is to fre of dede — *too liberal in action*
Yf hyt be soth that thou cones saye.
Thou lyfed not two yer in oure thede; — *land*
Thou cowthes never God nauther plese ne pray — *never knew how to*
Ne never nawther *Pater* ne Crede — — *Paternoster nor Creed*
And quen mad on the fyrste day! — *queen made*
I may not traw, so God me spede, — *believe, so God me speed (mild oath)*
That God wolde wrythe so wrange away. — *turn; wrongly away [from right]*
Of countes, damysel, par ma fay,

[18] Lines 451–52: *And would wish their crowns five [times as valuable] / If their improvement were possible*

Wer fayr in heven to halde asstate[19]
Other elles a lady of lasse aray —
Bot a quene! Hit is to dere a date."

"Ther is no date of Hys godnesse,"
Then sayde to me that worthy wyghte,
"For al is trawthe that He con dresse
And He may do nothynk bot ryght.
As Mathew meles in your Messe,
In sothfol gospel of God almyght,
In sample He can ful graythely gesse
And lyknes hit to heven lyghte.
'My regne,' He says, 'is lyk on hyght
To a lorde that hade a vyne, I wate.
Of tyme of yere the terme was tyght
To labor vyne was dere the date.'

"That date of yere wel knawe thys hyne;
The lorde ful erly up he ros
To hyre werkmen to hys vyne
And fyndes ther summe to hys porpos.
Into acorde thay con declyne
For a pené on a day, and forth thay gos,
Wrythen and worchen and don gret pyne,
Kerven and caggen and man hit clos.
Aboute under the lorde to marked tos[20]
And ydel men stande he fyndes therate.
'Why stande ye ydel?' he sayde to thos,
'Ne knawe ye of this day no date?'

"'Er date of daye hider arn we wonne,'
So was al samen her answar soght.
'We haf standen her syn ros the sunne
And no mon byddes uus do ryght noght.'
'Gos into my vyne, dos that ye conne,'
So sayde the lorde and made hit toght.
'What resonabele hyre be naght be runne,
I yow pay in dede and thoghte.'[21]
Thay wente into the vyne and wroghte
And al day the lorde thus yede his gate

Or else; lesser
exalted; goal

limit
person
ordains

tells; Mass
truthful
parable; aptly conceive
bright
on high
vineyard, I know (interj.)
season was come
cultivate; good; season

these households

hire

They come to an agreement
penny a day
Toil; labor
Cut; tie up; make it secure

i.e., Do you not know what time it is?

Before dawn; come
together; given

anything at all
Go; do what
firm (i.e., a contract)

worked
went his way

[19] Lines 489–90: *Of a countess, damsel, by my faith, / It would be proper [for you] to hold the rank*
[20] *About the third hour (i.e., 9 am) the lord goes to market*
[21] Lines 523–24: *Whatever fair wage is accrued by evening, / I will pay you in deed and in intention (fig. fully)*

And nw men to hys vyne he broghte — *new*
Welnegh wyl day was passed date. — *Almost until*

"At the date of day of evensonge, — *time*
On oure byfore the sonne go doun, — *One hour*
He sey ther ydel men ful stronge — *saw*
And sade to hem, wyth sobre soun, — *tone*
'Wy stonde ye ydel thise dayes longe?'
Thay sayden her hyre was nawhere boun. — *their hire; arranged*
'Gos to my vyne, yemen yonge, — *laborers*
And wyrkes and dos that at ye moun.' — *what you can*
Sone the worlde bycom wel broun, — *dark*
The sunne was doun and hit wex late.
To take her hyre he mad sumoun; — *pay*
The day was al apassed date. — *daytime was all over*

10

"The date of the daye the lorde con knaw; — *knew*
Called to the reve, 'Lede, pay the meyny! — *overseer; My good man; hired hands*
Gyf hem the hyre that I hem owe — *payment*
And fyrre, that non me may reprené, — *further; find fault with me*
Set hem alle upon a rawe — *row*
And gyf uchon inlyche a peny. — *alike*
Bygyn at the laste that standes lowe
Tyl to the fyrste that thou atteny.' — *reach*
And thenne the fyrst bygonne to pleny — *complain*
And sayden that they hade travayled sore. — *worked*
'These bot on oure hem con streny! — *a single hour; worked*
Uus thynk uus oghe to take more. — *ought*

"'More haf we served, uus thynk so, — *deserved, we think*
That suffred han the dayes hete — *heat*
Thenn thyse that wroght not houres two —
And thou dos hem uus to counterfete.' — *make them equal to us*
Thenne sayde the lorde to on of tho, — *one of those*
'Frende, no waning I wyl thee gete.[22] — *loss; grant*
Take that is thyn owne and go
And I hyred thee for a peny agrete. — *Since; all together*
Quy bygynnes thou now to threte? — *Why; complain*
Was not a pené thy covenaunt thore? — *contract then*

[22] *i.e., I do not want to shortchange you*

Fyrre then covenaunde is noght to plete.[23]
Wy schalte thou thenne aske more?

"'More, wether louyly is me my gyfte — *Moreover, is not my own right to give lawful*
To do wyth myn quatso me lykes? — *my own whatever pleases me*
Other elles thyn yye to lyther is lyfte — *Or else is your eye turned to evil (i.e., bitterness)*
For I am goude and non byswykes.' — *Because; cheat no one*
'Thus schal I,' quoth Kryste, 'hyt skyfte: — *arrange*
The laste schal be the fyrst that strykes — *who comes*
And the fyrst the laste, be he never so swyft. — *however swift he is*
For mony ben called thagh fewe be mykes.' — *chosen [ones]*
Thus pore men her part ay pykes — *share always get*
Thagh thay com late and lyttel wore; — *expend*
And thagh her sweng wyth lyttel atslykes,[24]
The merci of God is much the more.

"More haf I of joye and blysse hereinne,
Of ladyschyp gret and lyves blom, — *bloom of life*
Then alle the wyyes in the worlde myght wynne — *people*
By the way of ryght to aske dome. — *If they asked for an award according to justice*
Whether welnygh now I con bygynne, — *Even though I began just now*
In eventyde into the vyne I come.
Fyrst of my hyre my Lorde con mynne; — *My Lord thought of my wages first*
I was payed anon of al and sum. — *immediately in full*
Yet other ther werne that toke more tom, — *time*
That swange and swat for longe yore, — *toiled; sweated; long before*
That yet of hyre nothynk thay nom — — *That still received nothing for their work*
Paraunter noght schal to-yere more." — *Maybe nothing; for a long time*

Then more I meled and sayde apert, — *spoke; plainly*
"Me thynk thy tale unresounable.
Goddes ryght is redy and evermore rert — *prompt; supreme*
Other Holy Wryt is bot a fable.
In Sauter is sayd a verce overte — *Psalter; verse plain (open)*
That spekes a poynt determynable: — *definite*
'Thou quytes uchon as hys desserte, — *reward each according to*
Thou hyghe kyng ay pertermynable.' — *supreme*
Now he that stod the long day stable
And thou to payment com hym byfore —

[23] *One should by no means claim more than the contract*
[24] *And though their labors are spent with little result*

Thenne the lasse in werke to take more able,
And ever the lenger the lasse, the more."[25]

11

"Of more and lasse in Godes ryche," *kingdom*
That gentyl sayde, "lys no joparde, *exists (lies) no uncertainty*
For ther is uch mon payed inlyche *fully*
Whether lyttel other much be hys rewarde.
For the gentyl Cheventayn is no chyche; *Ruler; skinflint*
Quether-so-ever He dele, nesch other harde,[26]
He laves Hys gyftes as water of dyche *pours out; dike*
Other gotes of golf that never charde.[27]
Hys fraunchyse is large; that ever dard
To Hym that mas in synne rescoghe,[28]
No blysse bes fro hem reparde, *will be withheld*
For the grace of God is gret inoghe.

"Bot now thou motes, me for to mate *But now you argue, in order to shame me*
That I my peny haf wrang tan here; *wrongly taken*
Thou says that I that com to late
Am not worthy so gret fere. *reward*
Where wystes thou ever any bourne abate,[29]
Ever so holy in hys prayere,
That he ne forfeted by sumkyn gate *some kind of way*
The mede sumtyme of hevenes clere? *reward*
And ay the ofter, the alder thay were; *more often; older*
Thay laften ryght and wroghten woghe. *left; did wrong*
Mercy and grace moste hem then stere, *guide*
For the grace of God is gret innoghe.

"Bot innoghe of grace has innocent.
As sone as thay arn borne by lyne *lineage*
In the water of babtem thay dyssente. *baptism; descend*
Then arne thay boroght into the vyne.
Anon the day, with derk endente,
The niyght of deth dos to enclyne

[25] Lines 599–600: *Then those who work less are entitled to take more, / And ever the longer the less [they do], the more [they get]*
[26] *Whatever He deals, pleasant or hard*
[27] *Or streams of a current that has never stopped flowing*
[28] Lines 609–10: *His generosity is large; those who lurked in dread / From Him that makes rescue from sin*
[29] *Where did you ever know any man to bow down*

That wroght never wrang er thenne thay wente.[30]
The gentyle Lorde thenne payes hys hyne; *servants*
Thay dyden hys heste, thay wern thereine. *command; there (i.e., the vineyard)*
Why schulde he not her labour alow — *recognize*
Yys, and pay hym at the fyrste fyne? *them according to the first contract*
For the grace of God is gret innoghe.

"Inoghe is knawen that mankyn grete *it is well known*
Fyrste was wroght to blysse parfyt;
Oure forme fader hit con forfete *first*
Thurgh an apple that he upon con byte.
Al wer we dampned for that mete, *food*
To dyye in doel out of delyt *die in grief*
And sythen wende to helle hete *go to hell's heat*
Therinne to won withoute respyt.
Bot theron com a bote astyt; *But for it came a remedy immediately*
Ryche blod ran on Rode so roghe *Cross so cruel*
And wynne water then at that plyt. *precious; plight*
The grace of God wex gret innoghe. *grew*

"Innoghe ther wax out of that welle, *flowed*
Blod and water of brode wounde;
The blod uus boght fro bale of helle, *redeemed*
And delyvered uus of deth secounde.
The water is baptem, the sothe to telle,
That folwed the glayve so grymly grounde, *spear; sharpened*
That wasches away the gyltes felle *guilts cruel*
That Adam wyth inne deth uus drounde. *With which Adam drowned us in death*
Now is ther noght in the worlde rounde
Bytwene uus and blysse bot that he wythdrow, *he (Adam) took away*
And that is restored in sely stounde, *blessed hour*
And the grace of God is gret innogh.

12

"Grace innogh the mon may have
That synnes thenne new, yif hym repente;
Bot wyth sorw and syt he mot hit crave *grief; must it implore*
And byde the payne therto is bent. *endure; penalty; set*
Bot resoun, of ryght that con not rave, *that cannot deviate from justice*
Saves evermore the innossent.
Hit is a dom that never God gave *judgment*

[30] Lines 629–31: *Soon the day, inlaid with dark, / Draws to the night of death / Those that never did wrong before they departed*

That ever the gyltles schulde be schente. *guiltless; punished*
The gyltyf may contryssyoun hente *guilty; grasp*
And be thurgh mercy to grace thryght, *thrust*
Bot he to gyle that never glente
As inoscente is saf and ryghte.[31]

"Ryght thus I knaw wel in this cas
Two men to save is God, by skylle; *God is to save two men, for certain*
The ryghtwys man schal se Hys face,
The harmles hathel schal com Hym tylle. *innocent man; to*
The Sauter hyt sas thus in a pace, *Psalter; passage*
'Lorde, quo schal klymbe Thy hyghe hylle
Other rest wythinne Thy holy place?'
Hymself to onsware He is not dylle:
'Hondelynges harme that dyt not ille,[32]
That is of hert bothe clene and lyght —
Ther schal hys stepe stable stylle.' *remain fixed*
The innosent is ay saf by ryght.

"The ryghtwys man also sertayn
Aproche he schal that proper pyle *fine stronghold*
That takes not her lyf in vayne *their (i.e., his) life*
Ne glaueres her nieghbor wyth no gyle. *backbites*
Of thys ryghtwys, sas Salamon playn, *righteous one, says Solomon*
How kyntly oure Koyntyse hym con aquyle. *naturally our Wisdom welcomed him*
By wayes ful streght he con hym strayn *led*
And scheued hym the rengne of God awhyle, *kingdom*
As quo says, 'Lo, yon lovely yle! *Like one who says; realm*
Thou may hit wynne if thou be wyghte.' *brave*
Bot hardyly, wythoute peryle, *assuredly; risk*
The innosent is ay save by ryghte.

"Anende ryghtwys men, yet says a gome, *Concerning; man*
David in Sauter if ever ye sey hit, *Psalter; saw*
'Lorde, Thy servaunt draw never to dome,
For non lyvyande to Thee is justyfyet.'[33]
Forthy to corte, quen thou schal com
Ther alle oure causes schal be tryed,
Alegge the ryght — thou may be innome *If you plead righteousness; trapped*
By thys ilke spech I have asspyed. *observed*

[31] Lines 671–72: *But he that never glanced at guile / As an innocent [he] is saved and sanctified*
[32] Lines 680–81: *He Himself is not slow to answer: / "He who did no evil handling harm*
[33] Lines 699–700: *Lord, never draw Your servant to judgment, / For no living person is justified before You*

Bot He on Rode that blody dyed, *Cross*
Delfully thurgh hondes thryght, *Painfully; pierced*
Gyve thee to passe, when thou arte tryed, *Should allow you to go free*
By innocens, and not by ryghte.

"Ryghtwysly quo con rede, *Correctly*
He loke on bok and be awayed *Let him look; instructed*
How Jesus Hym welke in arethede, *Himself walked in olden times*
And burnes her barnes unto Hym brayde *people their children; brought*
For happe and hele that fro Hym yede. *luck and healing (coll. good luck); went*
To touch her chylder thay fayr Hym prayed.
His dessypeles wyth blame, 'Let be!' hym bede, *disciples sharply; commanded them*
And wyth her resounes ful fele restayed. *their objections many [people] restrained*
Jesus thenne hem swetely sayde, *to them*
'Do way, let chylder unto me tyght; *come*
To suche is hevenryche arayed.'
The innocent is ay saf by ryght.

13

"Jesu con calle to Hym Hys mylde *gentle ones*
And sayde Hys ryche no wyy myght wynne *kingdom; person*
Bot he com thyder ryght as a chylde
Other elles nevermore com therinne.
Harmles, trwe, and undefylde,
Wythouten mote other mascle of sulpande synne — *polluting*
Quen such ther cnoken on the bylde, *knock; building*
Tyt schal hem men the gate unpynne. *Instantly*
Ther is the blys that con not blynne *cannot cease*
That the jueler soghte thurgh perré pres *gems precious*
And solde alle hys goud, bothe wolen and lynne, *wool and linen*
To bye hym a perle was mascelles. *spotless*

"This makelles perle, that boght is dere, *peerless*
The joueler gef fore alle hys god, *For which the jeweler gave all his goods*
Is lyke the reme of hevenesse clere — *realm of heaven*
So sayde the Fader of folde and flode — *land; sea*
For hit is wemles, clene, and clere, *spotless*
And endeles rounde and blythe of mode, *serene; character*
And commune to alle that ryghtwys were.
Lo, even inmyddes my breste hit stode! *exactly*
My Lorde, the Lombe that schede Hys blode,
He pyght hit there in token of pes.
I rede thee forsake the worlde wode *advise; senseless*
And porchace thy perle maskelles."

"O maskeles perle, in perles pure,
That beres," quoth I, "the perle of prys,
Quo formed thee thy fayre fygure?
That wroght thy wede, He was ful wys.[34]
Thy beauté com never of nature;
Pymalyon paynted never thy vys, *face*
Ne Arystotel nawther by hys lettrure *learning*
Of carpe the kynde these propertes. *Speaks of the nature of these properties*
Thy colour passes the flour-de-lys;
Thyn angel-havyng so clene cortes — *angelic bearing; refined*
Breve me, bryght, quat kyn ostriys *Tell; oyster*
Beres the perle so maskelles?"

"My makeles Lambe that al may bete," *remedy*
Quoth scho, "my dere destyné,
Me ches to Hys make, althagh unmete
Sumtyme semed that assemblé.[35]
When I wente fro yor worlde wete, *wet*
He calde me to Hys bonerté: *beatitude*
'Cum hyder to me, my lemman swete *sweetheart*
For mote ne spot is non in thee.' *stain*
He gef me myght and als bewté; *also*
In Hys blod He wesch my wede on dese *clothing; dais*
And coronde clene in vergynté,
And pyght me in perles maskelles." *adorned*

"Why, maskelles bryd, that bryght con flambe, *bride; brightly; shines*
That reiates has so ryche and ryf, *royal honors; abundant*
Quat kyn thyng may be that Lambe *kind of*
That thee wolde wedde unto Hys vyf? *wife*
Over alle other so hygh thou clambe *climbed*
To lede wyth Hym so ladyly lyf. *queenly*
So mony a comly anunnder cambe *So many a beauty (lit. fair one under headdress)*
For Kryst han lyved in much stryf,
And thou con alle tho dere out dryf *And you drive out all those worthy ones*
And from that maryag al other depres — *exclude*
Al only thyself so stout and styf, *Except for; strong; firm*
A makeles may and maskelles."

[34] *The one who made your clothing was most skillful*
[35] Lines 759–60: *He chose me for His spouse, although inappropriate / Sometimes might seem that match*

14

"Maskelles," quoth that myry quene,
"Unblemyst I am, wythouten blot, *stain*
And that may I wyth mensk menteene, *honor maintain*
Bot 'makeles quene' — thenne sade I not. *said*
The Lambes uyves in blysse we bene, *wives*
A hondred and forty thowsande flot *in company*
As in the Apocalyppes hit is sene.
Sant John hem syy al in a knot *saw; throng*
On the hyl of Syon, that semly clot; *knoll*
The apostel hem segh in gostly drem,
Arayed to the weddyng in that hyl-coppe, *hilltop*
The nwe cyté o Jerusalem.

"Of Jerusalem I in speche spelle; *discuss*
If thou wyl knaw what kyn He be, *kind*
My Lombe, my Lorde, my dere juelle,
My joy, my blys, my lemman fre, *sweetheart noble*
The profete Ysaye of Hym con melle *spoke*
Pitously of Hys debonerté: *humility*
'That gloryous gyltles that mon con quelle *kill*
Wythouten any sake of felonye, *charge (e.g., criminal)*
As a schep to the slaght ther lad was He, *slaughter; led*
And as lombe that clypper in lande nem, *shearers; takes hold of*
So closed He hys mouth fro uch query'—
Quen Jues Hym jugged in Jerusalem.

"In Jerusalem was my lemman slayn
And rent on Rode wyth boyes bolde. *slit open on Cross by thugs*
Al oure bales to bere ful bayn, *Ready to take on all our troubles*
He toke on Hymself oure cares colde;
Wyth boffetes was Hys face flayn *scourged*
That was so fayr on to byholde.
For synne He set Hymself in vayn *as nothing*
That never hade non Hymself to wolde. *That never had any Himself*
For uus He lette Hym flyye and folde[36]
And brede upon a bostwys bem; *stretched; strong*
As meke as lomp that no playnt tolde *lamb*
For uus He swalt in Jerusalem. *died*

"Jerusalem, Jordan, and Galalye,
Ther as baptysed the goude Saynt Jon, *Where*

[36] *For us He let Himself be torn and bent down (i.e., by the Cross)*

His wordes acorded to Ysaye. *agreed with Isaiah*
When Jesu con to hym warde gon, *went towards him*
He sayde of Hym thys professye:
'Lo, Godes Lombe, as trwe as ston,
That dos away the synnes dryye *heavy*
That alle thys worlde has wroght upon.'
Hymself ne wroghte never yet non *committed*
Whether on Hymself He con al clem. *And yet; claimed*
Hys generacyoun quo recen con *ancestry; recount*
That dyyed for uus in Jerusalem?

"In Jerusalem thus my lemman swete
Twyes for lombe was taken there, *revealed*
By trw recorde of ayther prophete, *i.e., both*
For mode so meke and al Hys fare. *manner; demeanor*
The thryde tyme is therto ful mete, *third; fully consistent*
In Apokalypes wryten ful yare. *clearly*
In mydes the trone there sayntes sete, *Amid; where; sat*
The apostel John Hym saw as bare, *very clearly*
Lesande the boke with leves sware *Opening; leaves (pages) square*
There seven syngnettes wern sette in seme; *seals; on the border*
And at that syght uche douth con dare *creature bowed down*
In helle, in erthe, in Jerusalem.

15

"Thys Jerusalem Lombe hade never pechche *patch*
Of other huee bot quyt jolyf *white bright*
That mot ne masklle moght on streche, *To which neither spot nor stain might adhere*
For wolle quyte so ronk and ryf. *white; abundant*
Forthy uche saule that hade never teche *stain*
Is to that Lombe a worthyly wyf,
And thagh uch day a store He feche *supply [of wives]*
Among uus commes nouther strot ne stryf, *dispute*
Bot uchon enlé we wolde were fyf. *But each one singly we would wish were five*
The mo the myryer, so God me blesse!
In compayny gret our luf con thryf, *thrives*
In honour more and never the lesse.

"Lasse of blysse may non uus bryng *Less; no one*
That beren thys perle upon oure bereste,
For thay of mote couthe never mynge
Of spotles perles tha beren the creste.[37]

[37] Lines 855–56: *For they could never imagine quarreling / Who bear the crest (heraldic) of spotless pearls*

Althagh oure corses in clottes clynge — *bodies*
And ye remen for rauthe wythouten reste, — *cry out; pity*
We thurghoutly haven cnawyng; — *We have complete understanding*
Of on dethe ful oure hope is drest.[38]
The Lombe uus glades, oure care is kest; — *cast out*
He myrthes uus alle at uch a mes. — *feast*
Uchones blysse is breme and beste — — *Each one's; intense*
And never ones honour yet never the les. — *And yet never is one's honor any the less*

"Lest les thou leve my tale farande,[39]
In Appocalyppece is wryten in wro: — *a passage*
'I seghe,' says John, 'the Loumbe Hym stande — *saw*
On the Mount of Syon ful thryven and thro, — *lovely; noble*
And wyth Hym maydennes an hundrethe thowsande
And fowre and forty thowsande mo.
On alle her forhedes wryten I fande — *found*
The Lombes nome, Hys Faderes also.
A hue fro heven I herde thoo, — *cry; then*
Lyk flodes fele laden runnen on resse,[40]
And as thunder throwes in torres blo — *rolls; thunderheads dark*
That lote, y leve, was never the les. — *clamor I believe*

"'Nautheles thagh hit schowted sharpe — *rang out*
And ledden loude althagh hit were, — *din of voices*
A note ful nwe I herde hem warpe; — *utter*
To lysten that was ful lufly dere. — *wonderfully delightful*
As harpores harpen in her harpe,
That nwe songe thay songen ful cler
In sounande notes, a gentyl carpe. — *melodious; discourse*
Ful fayre the modes thay fonge in fere — *melodies; sang together*
Ryght byfore Godes chayere, — *throne*
And the fowre bestes that Hym obes, — *obey*
And the aldermen so sadde of chere — — *elders; dignified; expression*
Her songe thay songen never the les. — *Their*

"'Nowthelese, non was never so quoynt — *skillful*
For alle the craftes that ever thay knewe,
That of that songe myght synge a poynt — *phrase (of music)*
Bot that meyny the Lombe that swe. — *Except for the retinue that follow the Lamb*
For thay arn bogh, fro the urthe aloynte, — *redeemed; earth far removed*

[38] *On one death (i.e., Christ's) our hope is fully placed*
[39] *Unless false (lit. less) you believe my wonderful story*
[40] *Like voice of many waters run together in a torrent*

As newe fryt to God ful due,
And to the gentyl Lombe hit arn anjoynt — *they are joined*
As lyk to Hymself of lote and hwe. — *voice; sound*
For never lesyng ne tale untrwe — *lying*
Ne towched her tonge for no dysstresse.
That moteles meyny may never remwe — *retinue; depart*
Fro that maskeles mayster never the les.'"

"Never the les let be my thonc," — *Never consider my gratitude any the less*
Quoth I, "my perle, thagh I appose. — *interrogate*
I schulde not tempte thy wyt so wlonc — *test; superb*
To Krystes chambre that art ichose. — *chosen*
I am bot mokke and mul among, — *dust*
And thou so ryche a reken rose — *noble; splendid*
And bydes here by thys blysful bonc — *shore (bank)*
Ther lyves lyste may never lose. — *life's pleasures*
Now, hynde, that sympelnesse cones enclose, — *gracious one, that encloses simplicity*
I wolde thee aske a thynge expresse,
And thagh I be bustwys as a blose, — *blustery; churl*
Let my bone vayle never the lese. — *request prevail*

16

"Neverthelese cler I yow bycalle — *call upon*
If ye con se hyt be to done. — *If you can see [how] it may be done*
As thou art gloryous, wythouten galle,
Wythnay thou never my ruful bone. — *Refuse; request*
Haf ye no wones in castel walle, — *residences*
Ne maner ther ye may mete and won? — *manor; live*
Thou telles me of Jerusalem, the ryche ryalle, — *kingdom royal*
Ther David dere was dyght on trone — — *Where; placed*
Bot by thyse holtes hit con not hone, — *woods; be situated*
Bot in Judee hit is, that noble note. — *enterprise*
As ye ar maskeles under mone, — *spotless under the moon*
Your wones schulde be wythouten mote. — *dwellings; stain*

"Thys moteles meyny thou cones of mele, — *company; do speak of*
Of thousandes thryght, so gret a route — — *thronged; retinue*
A gret ceté, for ye arn fele, — *many*
Yow byhod have wythouten doute. — *must*
So cumly a pakke of joly juele
Wer evel don schulde lyy theroute; — *i.e., It were unfortunate if they should be outside*
And by thyse bonkes ther I con gele — *did stroll*
I se no bygyng nawhere aboute. — *building*
I trowe alone ye lenge and loute — *believe; linger; bow low*
To loke on the glory of thys gracious gote. — *stream*

If thou has other bygynges stoute, *stately*
Now tech me to that myry mote." *lead; city/castle*

"That mote thou menes in Judy londe," *Judea*
That specyal spyce then to me spakk.
"That is the cyté that the Lombe con fonde *sought out*
To soffer inne sor for manes sake. *pain*
The olde Jerusalem, to understonde, *that is to say*
For there the olde gulte was don to slake. *brought to an end*
Bot the nwe that lyght, of Godes sonde, *But the new that descended, of God's sending*
The apostel in Apocalyppce in theme con take. *as a theme*
The Lompe ther wythouten spottes blake *Lamb/Lamp*
Has feryed thyder Hys fayre flote, *carried; flock*
And as Hys flok is wythouten flake, *blemish*
So is Hys mote wythouten moote. *court; stain*

"Of motes two to carpe clene *expound*
And Jerusalem hyght bothe, nawtheles — *were named*
That nys to yow no more to mene *That is to mean to you no more*
Bot 'Ceté of God' other 'Syght of Pes' — *than*
In that on oure pes was mad at ene. *In that one our peace was made secure*
With payne to suffer the Lombe hit chese. *chose it*
In that other is noght bot pes to glene *glean*
That ay schal laste wythouten reles. *end*
That is the borgh that we to pres *city; hurry toward*
Fro that oure flesch be layd to rote; *Since*
Ther glory and blysse schal ever encres
To the meyny that is wythouten mote."

"Moteles may, so meke and mylde," *Spotless maiden*
Then sayde I to that lufly flor, *flower*
"Bryng me to that bygly bylde *pleasant dwelling*
And let me se thy blysful bor." *bower*
That schene sayde, "That God wyl schylde! *shining one; prevent*
Thou may not enter wythinne Hys tor. *stronghold*
Bot of the Lombe I have thee aquylde *petitioned*
For a syght therof thurgh gret favor.
Utwyth to se that clene cloystor *From outside*
Thou may, bot inwyth not a fote; *within; smidgen*
To strech in the strete thou has no vygour *go*
Bot thou wer clene wythouten mote. *Unless*

17

"If I this mote thee schal unhyde, *city; reveal*
Bow up towarde thys bornes heved, *Go; stream's head*

And I anendes thee on thys syde — *opposite*
Schal sue tyl thou to a hil be veved." — *follow; brought*
Then wolde I no lenger byde,
Bot lurked by launces so lufly leved — *moved furtively past branches; leafed*
Tyl, on a hyl, that I asspyed, — *Until, from a hill, I saw [it]*
And blusched on the burghe as I forth dreved. — *gazed; city; went*
Byyonde the brok, fro me warde keved
That schyrrer then sunne wyth schaftes schon.[41]
In the Apokalypce is the fasoun preved — *form shown*
As devyses hit the apostel John. — *describes*

As John the apostel hit syy with syght,
I syye that cyty of gret renoun,
Jerusalem so nwe and ryally dyght — *royally adorned*
As hit was lyght fro the heven adoun. — *As [if] it had descended*
The borgh was al of brende golde bryght, — *pure*
As glemande glas burnist broun — — *burnished bright*
Wyth gentyl gemmes anunder pyght, — *underneath*
Wyth bauteles twelve on basyng boun, — *With twelve arches arranged on the foundation*
The foundementes twelve of riche tenoun. — *tiers; joinery work*
Uch tabelment was a serlypes ston, — *Each tier (of foundation); single*
As derely devyses this ilke toun — *same town*
In Apocalyppes the apostel John.

As John thise stones in Writ con nemme, — *Scripture; named*
I knew the name after his tale: — *account*
Jasper hyght the fyrste gemme — *was called*
That I on fyrst basse con wale. — *base perceived*
He glente grene in the lowest hemme; — *It; step*
Saffer helde the secounde stale. — *Sapphire; place*
The calsydoyne thenne wythouten wemme, — *chalcedony; flaw*
In the thrydde table con purly pale. — *translucently gleamed*
The emerade, the furthe, so grene of scale; — *facet*
The sardonyse, the fyfthe ston, — *sardonyx*
The sexte, the rybé, he con hit wale — *ruby; perceive*
In the Apocalyppce the apostel John.

Yet joyned John the crysolyt — *chrysolite*
The seventhe gemme in fundament;
The aghtthe, the beryl cler and quyt, — *eighth; white*
The topasye twynne-hew, the nente endent. — *ninth inlaid*

[41] Lines 981–82: *Beyond the brook, across from me descended / That [city] shining brighter than the sun shone with shafts of light*

The crysopase, the tenthe is tyght, *cyrosophrase; fastened*
The jacyngh, the enleventhe gent. *jacinth; eleventh noble*
The twelfthe, the tryeste in uch a plyt, *truest; array*
The amatyst, purpre wyth ynde blente. *indigo blended*
The wal abof the bautels bent *arches curved*
Of jasporye as glas that glysnande schon. *jasper*
I knew hit by his devysement *description*
In the Apocalyppes, the apostel John.

As John devysed yet saw I thare;
Thise twelve degres wern brode and stayre. *steps; steep*
The cyté stod abof ful sware, *square*
As longe, as brode, as hyghe ful fayre;
The stretes of golde as glasse al bare — *clear*
The wal of jasper that glent as glayre — *shone; enamel*
The wones wythinne enurned ware *decorated*
Wyth alle kynnes perre that moght repayre. *kinds gems; be there*
Thenne helde uch sware of this manayre *square*
Twelve forlonge space, er ever hit fon, *furlong; ended*
Of heght, of brede, of lenthe to cayre, *traverse*
For meten hit syy the apostel John. *measured; saw*

18

As John hym wrytes yet more I syye;
Uch pane of that place had thre gates, *side*
So twelve in poursent I con asspye. *enclosing wall*
The portales pyked of ryche plates *adorned; metal plates*
And uch gate of a margyrye, *pearl*
A parfyt perle that never fates. *fades*
Uchon in scrypture a name con plye *Each one; inscription expressed*
Of Israel barnes, folewande her dates — *children, according to their*
That is to say, as her byrth-whates. *fortunes of birth*
The aldest ay fyrst theron was done. *oldest always first was done (written) thereon*
Such lyght ther lemed in alle the strates, *gleamed; streets*
Hem nedde nawther sunne ne mone. *They needed*

Of sunne ne mone had thay no nede;
The selfe God was her lambe-lyght, *lamplight*
The Lombe her lantyrne, wythouten drede. *doubt*
Thurgh Hym blysned the borgh al bryght. *shone*
Thurgh wowe and won my lokyng yede, *wall; dwelling; went*
For sotyle cler noght lette no syght.[42]

[42] *Because of luminous transparency nothing hindered any sight*

The hyghe trone ther moght ye hede — *observe*
Wyth alle the apparaylmente umbepyghte, — *the hosts of heaven arranged around*
As John the appostel in termes tyghte; — *expressly expounded*
The hyghe Godes self hit set upone. — *Himself*
A rever of the trone ther ran outryghte — *river from*
Was bryghter then bothe the sunne and mone.

Sunne ne mone schon never so swete
As that foysoun flode out of that flet; — *copious; room*
Swythe hit swange thurgh uch a strete — *Swiftly; rushed*
Wythouten fylthe other galle other glet. — *slime*
Kyrk therinne was non yete — — *Church; moreover*
Chapel ne temple that ever was set. — *built*
The Almyghty was her mynster mete, — *temple fitting*
The Lombe the sakerfyse ther to refet. — *refresh*
The gates stoken was never yet, — *shut*
Bot ever more upen at uche a lone. — *open; roadway*
Ther entres non to take reset — *no one; refuge*
That beres any spot anunder mone.

The mone may therof acroche no myghte; — *moon; steal*
To spotty ho is, of body to grym, — *dull*
And also ther ne is never nyght.
What schulde the mone ther compas clym
And to even wyth that worthly lyght[43]
That schynes upon the brokes brym? — *river's surface*
The planetes arn in to pouer a plyght
And the selfe sunne ful fer to dym.
Aboute that water arn tres ful schym — *bright*
That twelve frytes of lyf con bere ful sone; — *fruits; quickly*
Twelve sythes on yer thay beren ful frym — *times; abundantly*
And renowles nwe in uche a mone. — *renew*

Anundre mone so gret merwayle
No fleschly hert ne myght endeure
As quen I blusched upon that bayle, — *when I gazed; castle wall*
So ferly therof was the fasure. — *marvelous; appearance*
I stod as stylle as dased quayle
For ferly of that freuch fygure, — *In amazement; vivid vision*
That felde I nawther reste ne travayle — *So that I felt*
So was I ravyste wyth glymme pure. — *radiance*
For I dar say, wyth conciens sure, — *conviction*

[43] Lines 1072–73: *Why should the moon climb her circuit there / And compete with that noble light*

Hade bodyly burne abiden that bone, *Had a man in the body experienced that boon*
Thagh alle clerkes hym hade in cure *learned men; care*
His lyf wer loste anunder mone.

19

Ryght as the maynful mone con rys *powerful*
Er thenne the day-glem dryve al doun,[44] *sinks*
So sodanly on a wonder wyse *wonderful way*
I was war of a prosessyoun. *aware*
This noble cité of ryche enpryse *renown*
Was sodanly ful, wythouten sommoun,
Of such vergynes in the same gyse
That was my blysful anunder croun. *[maiden] beneath*
And coronde wern alle of the same fasoun,
Depaynt in perles and wedes qwyte. *Adorned; clothes white*
In uchones breste was bounden boun *fastened firmly*
The blysfyl perle with gret delyt.

With gret delyt thay glod in fere *proceeded together*
On golden gates that glent as glasse. *streets*
Hundreth thowsandes, I wot ther were,
And alle in sute her livrés wasse; *alike their livery*
Tor to knaw the gladdest chere. *Difficult*
The Lombe byfore con proudly passe
Wyth hornes seven of red golde cler.
As praysed perles His wedes wasse. *precious*
Towarde the throne thay trone a tras. *made their way*
Thagh thay wern fele, no pres in plyt,[45]
Bot mylde as maydenes seme at mas
So drov thay forth with gret delyt. *moved*

Delyt that hys come encroched, *coming brought*
To much it were of for to melle. *explain*
Thise aldermen, quen he aproched, *elders*
Grovelyng to his fete thay felle. *Prostrate*
Legyounes of aungeles, togeder voched, *summoned*
Ther kesten ensens of swete smelle. *scattered incense*
Then glory and gle was nwe abroched; *poured out*
Al songe to love that gay juelle. *worship*
The steven moght stryke thurgh the urthe to helle *sound; earth*
That the Vertues of heven of joye endyte. *Which the Virtues of heaven chant in joy*

[44] Lines 1093–94: *Just as the powerful moon rises / Before the day-gleam sinks completely down*
[45] *Though they were many, no crowding in their ordering*

To love the Lombe His meyny in-melle, *retinue among*
Iwysse I laght a gret delyt. *Truly I took*

Delit the Lombe for to devise *contemplate*
With much mervayle in mynde went,
Best was He, blythest, and moste to pryse *to esteem*
That ever I herde of speche spent. *described in speech*
So worthly whyt wern wedes Hys,
His lokes symple, Hymself so gent;
Bot a wounde ful wyde and weete con wyse *wet/bloody showed*
Anende Hys hert thurgh hyde torente. *Near; torn*
Of His quyte syde his blod outsprent. *gushed out*
Alas, thoght I, who did that spyt? *outrage*
Ani breste for bale aght haf forbrent
Er he therto hade had delyt.[46]

The Lombe delyt, non lyste to wene; *No one would doubt the Lamb's delight*
Thagh He were hurt and wounde hade,
In His sembelaunt was never sene,
So wern His glentes gloryous glade. *glances*
I loked among His meyny schene, *shining*
How thay wyth lyf wern laste and lade. *charged; filled*
Then saw I ther my lyttel quene
That I wende had standen by me in sclade. *believed; valley*
Lorde, much of mirthe was that ho made *she*
Among her feres that was so quyt! *companions; white*
That syght me gart to thenk to wade *made me; wade [across]*
For luf longyng in gret delyt.

20

Delyt me drof in yye and ere — *eye*
My manes mynde to maddyng malte. *human; madness dissolved*
Quen I sey my frely, I wolde be there *saw; noble one*
Byyonde the water, thagh ho were walte. *chosen*
I thoght that no thyng myght me dere, *hinder*
To fech me bur and take me halte, *deal a blow; hold me back*
And to start in the strem schulde non me stere *plunge; restrain*
To swymme the remnaunt, thagh I ther swalte. *died*
Bot of that munt I was bitalt. *aim; shaken*
When I schulde start in the strem astraye, *impetuously*
Out of that caste I was bycalt; *intention; summoned*
Hit was not at my Prynces paye. *pleasure*

[46] Lines 1139–40: *Any breast ought to have burned up for grief / Before he had delight in that*

Hit payed Hym not that I so flonc — *pleased; would fling myself*
Over mervelous meres so mad arayde. — *waters*
Of raas, thagh I were rasch and ronk, — *In rushing; impetuous*
Yet rapely therinne I was restayed. — *quickly; checked*
For ryght as I sparred unto the bonc, — *sprang; bank*
That brathe out of my drem me brayde. — *violence; yanked*
Then wakned I in that erber wlonk; — *garden lovely*
My hede upon that hylle was layde
Ther as my perle to grounde strayd.
I raxled and fel in gret affray, — *awoke; agitation*
And sykyng to myself I sayd, — *sighing*
"Now al be to that Prynces paye."

Me payed ful ille to be outfleme — *driven out*
So sodenly of that fayre regioun —
Fro alle tho syghtes so quyke and queme. — *vivid; pleasant*
A longeyng hevy me strok in swone, — *swoon*
And rewfully thenne I con toreme, — *sorrowfully; cried out*
"O perle," quoth I, "of rych renoun,
So was hit me dere that thou con deme — *spoke of*
In thys veray avysyoun! — *true vision*
If hit be veray and soth sermoun — *true speech*
That thou so stykes in garlande gay, — *who are set*
So wel is me in thys doel-doungoun
That thou art to that Prynses paye."

To that Prynces paye hade I ay bente — *submitted*
And yerned no more then was me gyven, — *yearned*
And halden me ther in trwe entent
As the perle me prayed that was so thryven — *lovely*
As helde, drawen to Goddes present, — *As most likely; presence*
To mo of His mysterys I hade ben dryven. — *brought*
Bot ay wolde man of happe more hente
Then moghten by ryght upon hem clyven.[47]
Therfore my joye was sone toriven — *torn apart*
And I kaste of kythes that lastes aye. — *cast from lands that last forever*
Lorde, mad hit arn that agayn Thee stryven — *they are*
Other proferen Thee oght agayn Thy paye. — *offer You anything*

To pay the Prince other sete saghte, — *please; to be reconciled*
Hit is ful ethe to the god Krystyin. — *easy*
For I haf founden Hym, bothe day and naghte, — *night*

[47] Lines 1195–96: *But always would man grasp more good fortune / That rightly could belong to him*

A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin. *most excellent*
Over this hyul this lote I laghte[48]
For pyty of my perle enclyin; *humble*
And sythen to God I hit bytaghte *committed it*
In Krystes dere blessyng and myn, *mine*
That in the forme of bred and wyn
The preste uus schewes uch a daye.
He gef uus to be His homly hyne[49]
And precious perles unto His pay.
Amen Amen

[48] *On this mound I grasped this chance (had this experience)*
[49] *May He grant us to be His loyal (lit. household) servants*

1 *Perle*. The pearl is the text's central object and symbol. Pearls were luxury items, widely used to decorate expensive clothing and precious objects: the *Breviaire de Belleville* that Richard II received in 1396 as a gift from Philip the Bold had a cover studded with pearls, as described by Jeanne Krochalis, "The Books and Reading of Henry V and His Circle," *Chaucer Review* 23 (1988), 59–60. The immense popularity of pearls as decorative items in the fourteenth century is attested by the inventory of Alice Perrers, mistress of Edward III, when her goods were seized in 1379, listing 21,800 pearls and 30 ounces of seed pearls (Frederick Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer; Being a Collection of Payments Made out of His Majesty's Revenue, from King Henry III to King Henry VI Inclusive. With an Appendix. Extracted and Translated from the Original Rolls of the Ancient Pell Office, Now Remaining in the Custody of the Right Honourable Sir John Newport, Bart. Comptroller-General of His Majesty's Exchequer*. Vol. 2 [London: J. Murray, 1837], pp. 209–10; cited in Donkin, p. 268). The most valuable pearls were imported from the far east ("Oute of Oryent," line 3) via the Mediterranean. The analogy between the pearl of price and the kingdom of heaven, explicated in lines 732–35, derives from the parable in Matthew 13:45–46, and was a popular allegorical theme for medieval theologians. Pearls were also conventionally equated with the pure soul and virginity, as described in the etymology opening the legend of St. Margaret in the immensely popular *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, and with the Virgin Mary, the star of the sea (*stella maris*). For gems in late fourteenth-century court culture, see Riddy, in Brewer and Gibson; Barr; and Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting"; and for pearls, see Donkin, "Pearls in the Medieval World," pp. 250–75; Lightbown, pp. 30–31; and R. Allen Shoaf's edition of Usk's *The Testament of Love* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), pp. 8–10, with frontispiece reproductions of the Virgin Mary and babe, the pearl as both star of the sea, and a pearl oyster in the sea, from MS Bodley 602, fol. 34. In *The Apocryphal New Testament*, ed. M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), pp. 209–16, Mary at the moment of her Assumption is compared to a pearl: "Then the Saviour spoke [to Mary], saying: 'Come, thou most precious pearl, enter into the treasury (receptacle) of eternal life.'"

paye. Used as a verb *paye* means both "to please" and "to pay." *Paye*, with its suggestions of both worldly commerce and also spiritual rewards, is the link-word of the final stanza group and the last word of the poem.

2 *To clanly clos*. Unpunctuated, as is the whole manuscript, this line has been variously interpreted: "too chastely set in gold" (G), "for a splendid setting" (V), or "to set radiantly in gold so clear," as other editors, myself included, have read the line. *Clanly* is also used in Middle English in the sense of "cleanly," "chastely."

3 *Oute of Oryent*. I.e., where the best pearls come from. See note to line 1.

4 *Ne . . . never*. Double negatives are equivalent to single negatives. "I never found her precious peer (equal in value)."

5 *reken*. As an attribute of person, *reken* can mean "capable" or "righteous."

araye. Pertains to forms of display or ordering and can range in meaning from the concrete to the abstract.

6 *sydes*. The term appears elsewhere in the poem to denote a feature of landscape, as in hill side (line 73) or the side of a river (line 975), but in Middle English *syde* is often anatomical and a standard of courtly rhetoric for denoting a woman's figure or clothing; see *sydes* as features of the *Pearl*-maiden's garment, lines 198 and 218. The use of the term in the opening stanza foreshadows the metonomy that will link pearl with maiden. For discussions of gender and embodiment in *Pearl*, see Bullon-Fernandez; Cox; and Stanbury, "Feminist Masterplots" and "The Body and the City."

9 *erbere*. The *MED* gives as its first definition for *herber* a "pleasure garden," which is borne out here by the description of spice plants and flowers. See Luttrell.

10 *hit*. Gor explains that conventions in Middle English for indicating gender were, to an extent, case-dependent. Whereas "poetic license" might allow interchange between masculine and feminine pronouns when a word is used as a direct object or object of a preposition, in subject position a pronoun signals a clear mark of gender C or its absence. Hence the uses of the feminine "hyr" as direct agent in lines 4, 6, 8, and 9, but the neuter *hit* as subject of the verb in line 10. As both Gor and AW note, the uses of "hyr" hint at the pearl's feminine apotheosis, even as the neuter *hit* returns us to the gemstone.

yot. I follow H and AW in reading *yot* as derived from *yette*, "to pour, tumble"; see *OED yet*. Other editors have read the unusual *yot* as a variant spelling of *yode*, past tense of the verb *gon*, "to go." "Tumble," coupled with the subsequent "sprange" in line 13, suggests the pearl's vivacity and even agency.

11 *luf-daungere*. Apparently a unique compound in Middle English, *luf-daungere* is a term from courtly love and evokes desire for the unattainable as well as feudal service to the lady, from OF *daungere*, "feudal power," as AW note. Compare Chaucer's The Wife of Bath's Prologue, where Alisoun says her fifth husband "was of his love daungerous to me" (*CT* III[D]514). In *Le Roman de la Rose* Dangiers signifies the lady's refusal; see lines 2831–32.

12 *pryvy*. From OF *privé*, it has the sense of personal, intimate, or one's own.

spot. The link-word of the first stanza group, *spot* conveys the double senses of blemish and place that remain in contemporary usage. For link-words see Macrae-Gibson and Tomasch.

17 *That*. I.e., pondering and wishing, which only cause pain.

19 *swete a sange*. The orchestration of sound into song is a central component of the narrator's vision of the landscape and of the New Jerusalem, as in lines 91–94, 877–88, and 1123–28. As Gor notes, the song is also the lyric and text of *Pearl* itself.

23 *juele*. G emends to *mele*, i.e., a "merry theme," yoking song and pearl. Subsequent editors have not followed suit. Riddy, in Brewer and Gibson, p. 147, notes that Middle English *juele* means not only a gemstone but also a precious art object. See also Barr.

28 *schyne*. MS: *schynez*. I follow AW who emend to *schyne* to correct for grammatical agreement. *Schyne* and "sprede" (line 25) both depend on "mot nedes" (line 25) a reading consistent with the stanza's picture of natural conditionality: that spot must be overgrown with spice plants; flowers must shine. This stanza imagines the cycle of decay and regeneration in the "erber"; the fourth stanza will then move to direct experience when the narrator recounts his entrance into the garden. Note the uses of the conditional and the convoluted negatives that mark this stanza's exposition of regeneration.

29 *fede*. Most editors read as "faded" from OF *fade*, with the vowel *a* modified to *e* by poet or scribe for rhyme. My reading accords with G, who translates as "rotted" or "decayed" from the ON *feyja*, a reading supported by the *MED* as well as the stanza's display of rot and regeneration as a causal cycle.

31–32 This proverbial phrase is based on I Corinthians 15:34–38 and John 12:24, as Gor notes.

39 *hygh seysoun*. In medieval texts dates are customarily identified by the event celebrated in the religious calendar, rather than by the lunar calendar as in modern practice. Here the high season may refer to the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin on August 15; the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ on August 8; or Lammastide, on August 1, a harvest festival in which bread made from the first harvested grain was offered in the churches; see Christina Hole, *English Traditional Customs* (London: Batsford, 1975), p. 89. The following line defining *hygh seysoun* through the actions of the harvest supports Lammastide, as G first argued.

43–44 All the flowers named are highly aromatic and had uses as spices in the Middle Ages, adding to the picture of the "erber" as a pleasure garden. See Stern; as G first noted, the list of plants is reminiscent of the spice garden in *Le Roman de la Rose*; compare Chaucer's translation, lines 1367–72. In the *Romaunt*, the spices are after-dinner condiments: "And many a spice delitable / To eten whan men rise fro table" (lines 1371–72).

44 *powdered*. To powder or to scatter also suggests decorative illustration, often in heraldry as in *OED powder*, v.1, sense 4, "to ornament with spots or small devices scattered over the surface," as V notes. Terms describing the landscape in the language of manuscript illumination also appear in lines 77–78, 106.

45 *hit*. I.e., the "spot" (line 37), "erber" (line 38), and "huyle" (line 41) where the pearl was lost.

47 *wot and wene*. A verse tag and alliterative formula.

59 *slepyng-slaghte*. *Slaghte* is derived from OE *slæht*, meaning slaughter or a violent stroke, and normally means a sudden blow in Middle English; see AW and Gor.

61 *in space*. AW, Gor, and H read *in space* as "in a space of time." I accord with other editors in favoring reading *space* as location, though both meanings may well apply.

62 *sweven*. Dreams are conventional points of departure for many philosophical or political verse narratives (dream visions) in the Middle Ages. Although truth of dreams was much debated, majority opinion appears to have taken seriously their prophetic and revelatory potential. See Lynch, pp. 1–46, but also pp. 163, 193; and Nolan, pp. 156–204. Chaucer gives a vivid replay of the debate in The Nun's Priest's Tale.

71 *webbes*. Throughout the text the poet frequently makes analogies between natural forms and works of art or craft (here textiles); see for instance lines 76, 77, 114, and note to line 44.

91 *sytole-stryng*. The citole was a plucked instrument similar to the lute, and a precursor to the cittern.

gyternere. A gittern was a guitar-like instrument, usually with four strings.

95 *gle*. Also means "mirth," "entertainment."

105 *reveres*. Although *reveres* usually means "rivers" in alliterative poetry, the word can also mean "meadows along a streambank," a sense more in keeping with the logic of the dreamer's movement toward a body of water, as Gor notes. H and V gloss as "rivers."

113 *stepe*. As Gor notes, *stepe* is often used in Middle English to refer to eyes "staring" or "glaring," though it is also used to convey the sense of "brilliant." "Staring" evokes the action of visual rays that is also suggested in "stremande" (line 115) and "[s]taren" (line 116). The passage as a whole animates place with extromissive powers of vision, even as the people sleep. For vision in medieval aesthetics, see Michael Camille, *Gothic Art: Visions and Revelations in the Medieval World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1996), pp.16–25; Norman Klassen, *Chaucer on Love, Knowledge and Sight* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), pp. 53–74; and Stanbury, *Seeing the Gawain-Poet*, pp. 12–41.

115 *strothe-men*. The term is uncertain. Gor argues that *stroth* had the meaning of "marshy land (overgrown with brushwood)," and *strothe-men* likely means "men of this world." Ralph W. V. Elliott, "Some Northern Landscape Features in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *Iceland and the Mediaeval World: Studies in Honour of Ian Maxwell*, ed. Gabriel Turville-Petre and John S. Martin (Melbourne: Organising Committee, 1974), pp. 132–43, notes that in Old Icelandic *storth* carries the sense of a young wood or plantation and hence proposes "country folk, woodlanders." Evidently the poet is juxtaposing extremes from the stars on high to swamp dwellers at the bottom through which distance the wondrous light streams.

117 *pyght*. *Pyght* is frequently used in the poem to describe adornment with pearls or gems; see lines 192, 205, 217, 229, 240, and 241.

129 *fraynes*. A, Gor, and H translate *fraynes* as "makes trial" or "puts (men) to the test." I accord with G and V in translating as "wishes," a gloss the *MED* supports.

131 *her wylle*. AW emend to *his*, believing *her* to be a scribal error for *his*, and read the lines, "the man to whom she sends his desire seeks to have more and more (of it)." As I read the lines, *her wylle* conveys the sense of fortune as the catalyst of the will, which in turn incites desire, "ay more and more" (line 132).

132 *Hyttes*. AW gloss as "seek, wish"; A, G, and Gor gloss as "comes, chances, attains as a result"; H reads as "is likely." "Casts" in the sense of "thrusts," might also be implied. The *more* that fortune sends is further specified in the next stanza.

139–40 Most editors generally accord with Gor: "I thought the stream was a division made by pools, separating the delights" — i.e., the delights on both sides of the water. G emends line 140 to *Bytwene meres by Myrthe made*. D. C. Fowler, "On the Meaning of *Pearl*, 139–40," *MLQ* 21 (1960), 27–29, offers the suggestion, "I thought that the water was a deception / Made by meres among the delights."

161 *faunt*. The *MED* gives "young child" and "infant" for *faunt* (from OF *enfaunt*), though H translates as "youthful being."

165 The comparison is to sheets of gold leaf, consistent with a pattern of analogy between the sights of the dreamer's vision and manuscript illumination.

172 AW read: "as had been but little wont to do so before," as do A and G. I accord with V and H in reading *lyttel* as a duration of time: "as a short while ago was wont thereto" (H). Gor notes both readings are possible.

184 *hawk in halle*. A courtly hunting image, consistent with his fears of her escape ("eschaped") in line 187.

197 *beau biys*. MS shows five minims, or vertical strokes, between *a* and *y*. A, AW, and Gor read as *beau biys*, "beautiful white linen garment," after Revelation 19:8, where the bride of the lamb is arrayed in splendid "byssinum." As Riddy, in Brewer and Gibson, p. 144, notes, citations in the *MED* make it clear that biys is a luxury cloth. G, H, and V read as *beaumys*, with *be* as "around" and *mys* derived from Latin *amice*, "cape" or "surcoat": hence "mantle or surcoat."

199 *at my devyse*. Editors have read *at my devyse* as "in my opinion," a common expression in Middle English. It is possible the phrase may also refer to a heraldic emblem or coat of arms, i.e., "after my device," and hence the daughter's dress as a heraldic gown. *OED* "device," sense 9, gives "an emblematic figure or design . . . heraldic bearing." In line 856 the *Pearl*-maiden speaks of her pearls as a heraldic crest. Froissart mentions the dresses of ladies attending the jousts in

Smithfield as decorated with the livery of Richard II. In *Confessio Amantis*, Gower describes a group of ladies dressed after the new fashion introduced by Anne of Bohemia, "the new guise of Beme," as dressed in clothing embroidered with fanciful devices; see *Camden's Remains*, p. 197, cited in J. R. Planché, *History of British Costume, from the Earliest Period to the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1874), pp. 178, 179–80. An unmarried daughter could be represented as bearing the paternal arms. In a miniature in the Luttrell Psalter, fol. 202v (c. 1325–35), Agnes Sutton and Beatrice Scrope are both represented in heraldic gowns showing the signs of their husband and father, respectively; see *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England, 1200–1400*, ed. Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1987), p. 58. See also the fifteenth-century stained-glass portraits in Long Melford Church, where the dresses of the Clopton women are decorated with both the paternal and marital coats of arms (*Mapping Margery Kempe*, http://www.holycross.edu/kempe, s.v., Parish and Cathedral). On heraldic badges, see Lightbown, pp. 196–201.

201 *wot and wene*. Verse tag. See line 47.

210 *here-leke*. MS: *lere leke*. I agree with Gor, who reads as *here leke*, "her hair enclosed her." H reads *lere leke* as "face-radiance, radiance of countenance"; G reads *here heke*; A, AW, and V read *lere-leke* as "wimple," lit. "face-linen." Since the stanza emphasizes her unbound hair and lovely complexion, she would have been unlikely to be wearing a wimple. The description is evocative of late medieval depictions of the virgin martyrs, who rarely wear face linen and most often have unbound hair. For images, see Karen Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

215 *depe colour*. A, AW, and Gor translate as "glowing whiteness" (G as "glowing beauty"), whereas H and V follow A. S. Cook, "*Pearl*, 212ff," *Modern Philology* 6 (1908), 197, who argues that *depe colour* stands for "wide collar." "Collar" follows the logic of the top-to-toe description and makes sense of "porfyl," "embroidered border," in line 216.

233 *nerre then aunte or nece*. *Nerre* can imply either location or relationship, as in contemporary usage, though the sense here is clearly filiative.

235 *spyce*. G, Gor, and H emend to *spece*, "person." As V notes, emendation is unnecessary, since *e* is a normal variant with *i* (*y*). *Spyce* also means "spice plant," certainly within the metaphoric register of the poem, especially since in stanzas 2 and 3 the poet describes how the spice plants of the "erber" are fertilized by the decay of the girl's body.

236 *wommon lore*. Editors have translated *wommon lore* as "woman's way" or "in womanly fashion." By far the commonest uses of *lore* in Middle English concern teaching, instruction, or doctrine. *MED*, sense 2a, offers examples of the possessive; e.g., Chaucer's "Christes lore" (The General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, line 527). *Lore* as "counsel" follows logically from her speaking in the preceding line.

245 *aglyghte*. A, AW, Gor, and V translate as "slipped away," G as "glided," but I prefer H's more literal "glittered away," in keeping with the kinetic and lapidary imaging of loss throughout the poem.

250 *daunger*. See line 11, and note on *luf-daungere*.

254 *graye*. The eyes of beautiful women are conventionally described as gray in English courtly love poetry.

259 *cofer*. Usually a "strong box for storage of valuables," but also with secondary meaning of "coffin."

260 *gracios gaye*. AW read *gracios gay* as an adjective modifying garden: "charmingly fair garden." *Gracios gaye* may also mean "gracious fair one," as in line 189. The grammatical construction is ambiguous.

271 *kynde of the kyste*. The maiden speaks enigmatically of roses, chests, and pearls to introduce ideas of death and transfiguration. *Kyste* can also suggest a reliquary.

274 *oght of noght*. I.e., has made a pearl out of an ephemeral rose.

277 *geste*. The *MED* cites this line for *geste* as "one newly arrived in a place." The meaning of *gesta*, "story, tale," which alliterates with *juel*, may also pertain.

283 *ma feste*. "Make a festival," i.e., "make merry."

307 *westernays*. For a summary of the debate on this term, see V. *Westernays* does not appear elsewhere in Middle English, and may be the poet's neologism from OF *bestorner*, e.g., "wrongly turned," as when a church faces west rather than east.

312 *dem*. G emends to *deme*. The link word of this stanza group, *dem* covers a broad range of actions under the general rubric "judge," from God's judgment to human acts of evaluation, consideration, and critique.

345 *daunce as any do*. The image is a hunting metaphor and describes the agonal moment.

351 *mendes*. H translates as "opinions," taking *mendes* as a variant for *mynde*: "Your opinions mount to not a mite." V translates after *OED mend*, sb., sense 2, "remedy."

359 *mythe*. As V notes, most editors have read *mythe* as "conceal." *Mythe* from Middle English *mouthen*, "to say, speak, pronounce," and hence "mutter" or even "mouth off," is more consistent with the thought of the stanza.

365 Early editors joined lines 365 and 366, "as water gushing from a stream / I put myself at his mercy," but following the suggestion by Gor I have joined lines 364–65: "my heart was afflicted with loss / As water welling from a spring." Although water flowing from a spring

would be expected to be redemptive (baptismal waters), the irruptive emotions in this stanza are all on the side of grief. Hence the image of spring-water is ironically placed — on the side of grief but belonging properly to consolation.

368 *forloyne*. A hunting term to describe when dogs race ahead too fast and lose the pack; see Ad Putter, "The Ways and Words of the Hunt: Notes on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Master of Game, Sir Tristrem, Pearl,* and *Saint Erkenwald*," *Chaucer Review* 40 (2006), 354–85, at 373.

endorde. G reads "adored one," but as AW note, Gert Rønberg, "A Note on 'Endorde' in *Pearl* (368)," *English Studies* 57 (1976), 198, argues that it is from OF *endorer*, "to invest with gold or a gold-like quality."

375 *wothe*. G reads "path," H reads "search," and other editors "dangers." My reading follows G's "path" from OE *wath*, "hunting ground, hence generically, place."

380 *by stok other ston*. As H notes, this common phrase in alliterative poetry can also be a mild oath.

385 *blent*. I.e., "blended in bliss," "set in joy."

395 *hyghe gate*. Most editors have read as "highway," after *OED gate*, sense 1b, which gives the line as an example of the meaning of *gate* as road: "the highway of all my joy." The more common meaning of *gate* in Middle English is the modern sense; that meaning may pertain as well — e.g., the main gate, a reading that evokes the gates of the New Jerusalem in lines 1034 ff.

407 *My Lorde the Lamb*. This is the first of many references to Christ as the Lamb of God.

410 *stage*. G glosses as "degree of advancement," after *OED stage* sb., sense 3. The attention to hierarchical ordering anticipates the dreamer's intellectual and emotional crisis concerning the Pearl's place in the hierarchy of heaven, as V notes.

416 *wage*. G argues that *wage* must come from French "wager," and here must be used in the sense of "to be assured." Gor emphasizes the mercantile in "continue securely" or "bring reward," anticipating the material rhetoric of line 417 and later of the vineyard parable.

419 *pyese*. I accord with V who argues that what editors have read as *prese*, "value," is in fact *pyese*, "maiden," rendering lines 417–19: "And endowed with all His heritage / Is His beloved. I am entirely His, / His maiden, His honored one; and His lineage . . ." *Pyece* for maiden appears in lines 192 and 229. The maiden's description of her marriage echoes the mystical marriage of St. Katherine in the many late medieval versions of the legend. When pressed to marry, Katherine finally agrees, but sets the condition that her bridegroom must be the richest, the most beautiful, and the most noble (compare *parage*, also in line 419) man in the world — adding, in some versions, that he also has to be born of a virgin. See for example, *St. Katherine of Alexandria: The Late Middle English Prose Legend in Southwell Minster MS 7*, ed. Saara Nevanlinna

and Irma Taavitsainen (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), p. 73, and Katherine J. Lewis, *The Cult of St. Katherine in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2000).

430 *Fenyx of Arraby*. Christ is often compared to the phoenix, a symbol of rebirth; in this case the phoenix represents Mary's immaculate conception. As G notes, Blanch is compared to the *Fenix of Arabye* in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* (lines 980–81).

431 *freles*. AW follow H and emend to *fereles*, "without equal," in keeping with the emphasis in the stanza on the Virgin's uniqueness. "Flawless," however, is consistent with the metaphor of the phoenix as a sign of the immaculate conception.

432 *quen of cortaysye*. I.e., the Virgin Mary.

434 *folde*. I.e., folds her face in her hands or, as G (also H) suggests, her garment. A, AW, and Gor translate as "upturned."

441 *emperise*. I.e., Mary the "quen of cortaysye" (line 432).

445–52 Compare *The London Lapidary of King Philip*: "nyne ordres of angeles that lyven in that joye that noon hath envye of othre, that is the life corouned, in the which shal noon entre but he be kyng corouned or quene, for all be corouned be name" (*English Medieval Lapidaries*, ed. Joan Evans and Mary S. Sargeantson, EETS o.s. 190 [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], pp. 19–20, as noted by Robert J. Blanch, "Color Symbolism and Mystical Contemplation in *Pearl*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 17 [1973], 74). See also V.

450 *fayn of otheres hafyng*. The maiden describes heaven as egalitarian and without envy, with each queen or king (i.e., saved soul) rejoicing in the *hafyng* or possessions of the others.

457 *Saynt Poule*. The definition of courtesy that follows is an exposition of St. Paul's analogy in I Corinthians 12:12–31. The image of the corporate body describes the ordering of heaven and of the soul as an idealized courtly society, an organism of egalitarian hierarchy.

464 I.e., exists between your limbs.

473 *over hygh*. The dreamer objects to the beatitude of one so young, noting that the same reward is given to one who suffers "in penaunce" all his life (line 477).

485 *Pater ne Crede*. The dreamer's point that the *Pearl*-maiden's two-year sojourn in "oure thede" (line 483) was too short to learn the Paternoster (Lord's Prayer) or Creed suggests that she was a child, as most readers have assumed. H suggests that she was a novitiate, as does Staley, "*Pearl* and the Contingencies of Love and Piety." Mother Angela Carson, O.S.U., "Aspects of Elegy in the Middle English *Pearl*," *Studies in Philology* 62 (1965), 17, argues that the lines indicate she was a foreigner.

497 *As Mathew meles*. The parable of the vineyard, lines 497–500, is from Matthew 20:1–16. The poet's changes to the biblical source give the parable application to fourteenth-century social

conditions, and perhaps even specifically to the Statute of Laborers of 1388, according to Bowers, "The Politics of *Pearl*"; and Watkins.

504 *dere the date*. The time of year is March and the activity is the pruning of vines, as in the March entry in the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duc de Berry. *Date* as link-word juxtaposes church time and merchant time; see Barr, pp. 71–72.

505 *hyne*. A, AW, and Gor translate as "laborers." I translate as "households" because the uses of *hyne* in the poem (lines 632, 1211) refer broadly to members of a household or even God's household, rather than to laborers, as G notes.

512 *man hit clos*. I.e., tie up the pruned vines.

555 Matthew 20:12 reads: *Hi novissimi una hora fecerunt* ("These last have worked but one hour"). This verse is paraphrased in line 551, but here *houres two* effectively recalls that the maiden "lyfed not two yer in oure thede" (line 483), as noted in V.

565–68 As G notes, these lines paraphrase the Vulgate and seem to echo uncannily the Wycliffite Bible, Matthew 20:15: "'Whether it is not leueful to me to do that that Y wole? Whether thin iye is wicked, for Y am good?'"

570–72 These lines paraphrase Matthew 20:16.

581–88 I.e., though she died early, she was received fully into heaven.

588 *to-yere*. Most editors have translated "this year," but as G notes, *to-yere* carries the colloquial sense of "for a long time."

603 *inlyche*. Editors, except H and V, have translated as "alike, the same." As V comments, in note to line 546, "fully" "suits the interpretation of the parable of the vineyard more exactly, since each soul receives 'fully' the reward of salvation, even though there are ranks in the hierarchical system of heaven."

609–10 *dard*. The word may derive from OE *darian*, "lurk in dread," or from OE *durran*, "dare," as Gor notes in a comment on the difficulty of these lines. Most editors have followed G in rendering "His privilege is great who always stood in awe / Of Him who brings salvation from sin." My reading accords with AW, "His (God's) generosity is great (or abundant): those who at any time in their lives submitted to Him who rescues sinners — from them no bliss will be withheld."

617 *bourne abate*. The sense of the maiden's argument here is that everybody sins and forfeits heaven, but God's grace can save them.

635 *fyne*. Most readers have read as adverb, "at the first in full." I accord with the suggestion by Carter Revard, "A Note on 'at the fyrst fyne' (*Pearl* 635)," *English Language Notes* 1 (1964),

164–66, who interprets *fyne* as a noun according to *MED* senses 6–11 (legal terms related to contracts) and translates "as according to the original contract."

652 *deth secounde*. The first redemption over death, determined by Adam's fall, is baptism; the second is in Christ's resurrection.

674 *God*. A, G, and Gor interpret this as "good," but, following suggestion by H, other editors, myself as well, have read as *God*.

677 *Sauter*. A Psalter, or collection of the psalms. Collections of the psalms were among the few prayer books normally owned by the laity; the term "psalter" could also mean a book of hours or a type of compilation prayer book commonly owned by non-clerical or lay people, often exquisitely illuminated. Many were owned by women. The passage paraphrases Psalm 14:1–3 or Psalm 23:3, 4. For the history and use of books of hours, see John Harthan, *Books of Hours and Their Owners* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).

689 *sas*. G, Gor, H, and V translate word as "sees," but "says" makes far more sense with the biblical source. AW emend to *sayz*, a change that, as V shows, is not necessary.

691 *he*. Gor and H emend to *ho*, i.e., "wisdom," a female personification. As G notes, Wisdom would have suggested Christ to a medieval reader; hence the pronoun *he* to indicate Wisdom as Christ.

697–700 See Psalm 142:2.

703 *Allege*. Early editors read *allege* as an imperative, "renounce your claim." Following Gor, editors have read *allege* as conditional subjunctive, "if you plead," i.e., "if you try to plead your case before God, you might get trapped by the same kind of talk," entrapment, that is, in legalisms. For use of legal terms, see Silar.

711–24 Passage is based on Luke 18:15–17, Matthew 19:13–15, and Mark 10:13–16.

721 *Jesu*. This line is the only place in the poem where the concatenation fails. AW substitute *ryght* for *Jesu*, "justice," as a personification of Jesus.

730–35 The story of the pearl of price comes from Matthew 13:45–46.

733 *makelles*. G emends to *maskeles*, and also in line 757, to preserve the continuity of the link words. But by alternating *makeles* with *maskeles* the poet plays on the equivalence of spotlessness and peerlessness.

735 *hevenesse clere*. G emends to *hevenes spere*, "heaven's sphere," to avoid repeating *clere* as rhyming word twice in one stanza. H and V translate as "heaven's brightness," whereas other editors, and myself, translate *clere* as an adjective modifying the noun *hevenesse*, "heaven."

740 *stode*. V accords with G in reading *stode* as a noun meaning "place": *hit stode*, "its place." Other editors, myself included, understand *stode* as a verb meaning either "stood" or "shone." *Stode*, which appears frequently in the MS, almost always is in the form of the verb. One possible meaning of the term as noun, however, is *MED* sense 4, s.v., *stod*, "an ornamental boss on a garment."

750 *Pymalyon paynted*. The contrast between the work of nature and of art is conventional; see *Le Roman de la Rose*, 16013 ff. As Ovid tells the story, Pygmalion carved an image of a beautiful woman and then fell in love with it. The story was often used in the Middle Ages to signify the seductions of art and idolatry. For discussion and illustrations, see Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 316–38; and D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 99–103, 157–58. Chaucer uses the trope as a debate between art and nature in The Physician's Tale, lines 8–38.

755 *ostriys*. The reading of this word has been the subject of a long debate. G emends to *of triys*, "of peace, truce." Gor reads the word as *offys*, "office," a reading that has been followed by subsequent editors; so too AW, A, and C. The issues over interpretation are based on the central letters of the word: are they *ff* or *st* followed by a scribal abbreviation for *ri*? My vote for "oyster" has been swayed by the argument of E. T. Donaldson that *ostriys* is acceptable on orthographic, syntactic, and textual/symbolic grounds; "Oysters, Forsooth: Two Readings in *Pearl*," in *Studies Presented to Tauno F. Mustanoja on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972), 75–82. While the abbreviation mark indicating *ri* could possibly be read as the top of an *f* that missed its connection with the stroke, as Davis argues in his defense of a reading of the term as *offys* (Norman Davis, review of Gordon's edition of *Pearl*, *Medium Aevum* 23 [1954], 98–99), the word presents in the MS very clearly, and the letter in question is unlike *f* as written elsewhere in the MS. V says that "the tops of f's are not always securely joined in the MS" — but the example he gives, *of* in line 752, is not convincing, for in that example the top is much closer to the stroke.

"Oyster," which can be derived without emendation, can also be defended on textual grounds. As Donaldson argues, introducing an oyster at this point in the poem would be entirely what one might expect of both poet and dreamer. This stanza in particular is remarkable for its density of metaphor, full of supposition and grounded in localizing particulars as the dreamer asks the pearl who formed her and what bears her. In medieval natural history, pearls were believed to be produced from dew drops swallowed by the oyster, a belief that contributed to the rich symbolism of pearls. See Donkin, pp. 1–22.

761 *wete*. I accord with A, AW, G, and Gor who translate as "wet," e.g., "dismal" — a characterization of the world that also perhaps answers, tongue-in-cheek, the narrator's question about her origin as oyster. Other editors have proposed very different translations: H reads as noun, "woe," and V the very plausible adjective "mad," derived from *wede*, "to go insane."

763 The language is from the Song of Songs 4:7–8: *Tota pulchra es, amica mea, et macula non est in te. Veni de Libano, sponsa mea . . .* ("You are fair, my love, there is no flaw in you. Come with me

from Lebanon, my bride . . . "). The verse was widely used in medieval literature, and in both sacred and fully profane contexts.

769 *bryd*. Both meanings of "bride" and "bird" are implied. The use of *bryd*, "bird," for a girl is conventional in Middle English love poetry.

776 I.e., have lived in much strife as virgin martyrs, as suggested by Morton Bloomfield, "Some Notes on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (lines 374, 546, 752, 1236) and *Pearl* (lines 1–12, 61, 775–776, 968)," in *Studies in Language, Literature, and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later: Studies in Honor of Rudolph Willard*, ed. E. Bagby Atwood and Archibald A. Hill (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), p. 302; or as "career virgins," as argued by Watson, in Brewer and Gibson, p. 302. For virgin martyrs, see Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

792 *The nwe cyté o Jerusalem*. This is the first of many references to the New Jerusalem, references that increase in intensity up to the climactic or chthonic moment when the dreamer sees the Lamb in the middle of the city. Representations of the New Jerusalem, the mystical and heavenly city as distinct from the material city of "Jerusalem, Jordan, and Galalye" (line 817) that the maiden describes in the next stanzas (lines 793–840) appear in illustrations of the Book of Revelation (Apocalypse). Illuminated manuscripts of the Apocalypse were popular items among wealthy patrons in the high and late Middle Ages. See Introduction, pp. 15–17; on political appropriations of Apocalypse imagery in late medieval England, see Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting."

805–06 Jesus' scourging and carrying of the Cross to Calvary were popular subjects, illustrated widely in English panel painting and alabasters and described in countless ways in lyrics, in devotional literature, and in the medieval drama. A powerful dramatization of the nailing of Christ to the Cross appears in the York *Crucifixion*.

811 I.e., "for the sake of sin He set His own life as totally unimportant."

818 According to the Gospels John baptized in Jordan, not in Jerusalem and Galilee.

819 *Ysaye*. See Isaiah 53:7, where Christ's silence before his accusers is prophesied.

824 *upon*. V reads as adverb, "openly," but most editors follow G, who has made a more convincing case for *upon* as a "preposition placed after the pronoun it governs," "upon that," i.e., "at which all this world has worked," or colloquially, "that all this world has committed."

829 From this point until the last stanza group much of the imagery and language is taken from the Book of Revelation.

829–30 I.e., was perceived as a lamb by "ayther prophete" (line 831), both John the Baptist and Isaiah, as named in lines 819–20.

833 *The thryde tyme*. I.e., first by Isaiah (53:7), then by John the Baptist, then (the third time) by St. John the Evangelist (Revelation 5:6).

837 *leves sware*. In Revelation John reads a scroll. *Leves sware* suggest he reads a book, as Gor notes.

841 This stanza group contains six stanzas, unlike the five stanzas in each of the other nineteen stanza-groups. The additional stanza, which brings the total lines of the poem to 1212, furthers the play on the number twelve throughout the text: twelve lines per stanza, twelve gemlike foundation layers of the New Jerusalem (lines 993–1021); twelve degrees of the New Jerusalem (lines 1021–32); twelve gates of the New Jerusalem (line 1035). See Introduction, p. 5, and Peck, pp. 15–64. Peck, pp. 44–51, considers structural and symbolic uses of 12 in *Pearl*.

pechche. Most editors translate as "stain." My reading as "patch" accords with G, H, and V.

865–900 See Revelation 14:1–5 for biblical source.

869 *maydennes*. In his biblical commentary, widely read in the fourteenth century, Augustine glosses "maidens" to mean virgins generically — i.e., either female or male, as AW note. In the Latin Vulgate Bible, however, "virgins" are explicitly male — i.e., "they who were not polluted by women." For virginity in the Middle Ages see Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), pp. 28–35. Although *mayden* may designate a male who has abstained from sex, it is a common term in Middle English love poetry, and the person named as such is almost invariably female. For the virginity tradition and *Pearl*, see Watson, in Brewer and Gibson, p. 301.

873–75 The destructive scenes of the Book of Revelation are not evoked in *Pearl*. These lines alone convey something of the sense of destruction, or at least natural forces at work, so common in many medieval visual renderings of the Book of Revelation, from illuminated apocalypse manuscripts to tympani, carved scenes over doorways, on medieval parishes and cathedrals. See Introduction, pp. 15–17. For a richly illustrated introduction to the topic, see Jonathan Alexander, with Michael Michael and Martin Kauffmann, "The Last Things: Representing the Unrepresentable," in *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Frances Carey (London: British Museum Press, 1999), pp. 43–98.

886–87 *fowre bestes . . . aldermen*. The four beasts are the Evangelists, represented in medieval iconography as lion (Mark), ox (Luke), eagle (John), and man (Matthew). *Aldermen* doubtless signifies the twenty-four elders. Scenes representing God enthroned and surrounded by the four evangelists and by elders with musical instruments appear frequently in illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts. For the biblical sources for the imaging of beasts, elders, and enthroned God, see Revelation 4:4, 7, and Ezekiel 1. The term *aldermen* may give this description a particularly familiar and urban cast. A chronicle entry for 1392 recounts that the Mayor of London was summoned with "24 aldermannis" (among others) to a council with the king; *Knighton's Chronicle 1337–1396*, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 544.

892 *meyny*. Used here as in lines 899 and 960, *meyny* describes a lord's retinue in terms consistent with late fourteenth-century aristocratic practice.

swe. Probably from *sue*, "follow," but perhaps from *sough* and meaning "the swell of praise," in keeping with the emphasis on music and sound.

894 *newe fryt*. Compare the fruits in the transformed garden at the beginning of the poem, lines 87 and 104.

895 *hit*. I.e., the "meyny" or "retinue" of virgins singing in praise of and in likeness to the Lamb.

896 *lote*. The word may signify either voice or appearance, as may *hwe*; compare line 873, where "hue" refers to the cry sounded in heaven. The evocation of sound is consistent with the emphasis on voice and melody in these stanzas. Editors translate *hwe* as "hue" (color); I prefer "sound" in keeping with references to song earlier in the stanza.

905 *mokke and mul*. *Mul*, "dust" or "mud," recalls "moul" of line 23, and here specifically suggests the difference in social class between the pearl and himself. As Barr notes, mud is often used in medieval texts to designate peasants (pp. 60, 74n17).

920 *David*. David was the conqueror of Jerusalem and second king of Israel, 1000–962 BCE.

922 *note*. A term that suggests both a dazzling undertaking as well as musical sound. As Osgood points out, in St. Erkenwald the new building of St. Paul's is also "a noble note."

923 *under mone*. I.e., on earth. The phrase also implies a contrast between the maiden's spotlessness and the changeable nature of the moon — its spottiness: see line 1070.

925 *moteles meyny*. A pun on "homeless" and "spotless," evoking the similarly uneasy pun developed in the uses of "spot" in the first stanza group.

943 *nwe*. *Nwe* may refer to the new law (Christianity) or to the new Jerusalem. The maiden explains that the literal Jerusalem is the city of the old law, remade figuratively as the new or heavenly Jerusalem through the crucifixion, the event enacting the new law — i.e., that humans can win eternal life.

sonde. *Sonde* may alternatively be read as a noun, as in AW and V who translate *sonde* as "embassy" and "dispensation": "but the new, that descended by God's embassy."

952 *Ceté of God*. Used in the Old Testament and in biblical exegesis to denote both old and new Jerusalems.

Syght of Pes. Also *visio pacis*; denotes more directly the new or heavenly city.

953 *at ene*. Editors translate variously: G and H as "formerly"; A, AW and Gor as "was made secure"; V as "immediately."

967 *aquylde*. Editors translate variously: AW as "obtained permission" and V as "prevailed upon." S.v., *aquylde MED* gives "obtain" as well as "flush, track, pursue," meanings that continue a pattern of hunting references that appears throughout the poem, e.g., lines 184 and 345.

969 *cloystor*. "Cloister," "enclosure," as metonym for "city," but with sense of enclosure, emphasizing the idea that heaven is an ideal cloister.

970 *fote*. Editors have differed on whether we are to take *fote* as a measure of distance or as the body part. Its placement as final word in the line leaves both possibilities in play.

979–81 In Revelation 21:10. John is taken by the angel to a mountain, where he sees the city descending from heaven.

994–1020 The natural and mystical properties of each of these stones are detailed in medieval lapidaries; see Robert J. Blanch, "Precious Metal and Gem Symbolism in *Pearl*," in *Sir Gawain and Pearl: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert J. Blanch, pp. 86–97; and Riddy, in Brewer and Gibson, pp. 143–55. Except for the ruby of line 1007, the catalogue follows closely the account in Revelation 21.

999 *Jasper*. As AW and Gor note, not the modern jasper, but a brightly colored and especially green chalcedony.

1003 *calsydoyne*. Probably a kind of white quartz. See note in Gor.

1012 *twynne-hew*. MS: *twyn̄e how* (*twynne how*). A, AW, and Gor emend to *twynne-hew*. As notes in G and Gor explain, the twin-hue of the topaz may derive from the lapidaries or from a commentary on the Apocalypse, such as Bede (Migne, PL 93.200): *topasius . . . duos habere fertur colores; unum auri purissimi, et alterum aetherea claritate relucentem* [topaz . . . is said to have two colors; one of the purest gold, and the other reflecting ethereal clarity].

1027 *wones wythinne*. As G notes, Revelation 21 says nothing of dwellings within the city.

1030 *Twelve forlonge*. Revelation 21:16 has 12,000 furlongs. G omits *space* and adds *thousande*. He is probably correct that 12 represents a scribal error and that the line was somehow initially rendered to convey 12,000, in keeping with the biblical source. Charles Moorman, however, argues that 12 furlongs accords with the dimensions of a medieval manor, "manayre" (line 1029). See "Some Notes on *Patience* and *Pearl*," *Southern Quarterly* 4 (1965), 72–73. Revelation 21 also makes no mention of "wones wythinne" (line 1027), a detail added to both familiarize and domesticate the New Jerusalem.

1032 I.e., measured by the angel with the measuring rod of Ezekiel 40–44.

1041 *byrth-whates*. G emends to *byrthe-whates*. The idea that the names of the children of Israel are written on the gates of the city derives from Revelation 21:12; that they appear according to the order of their birth, from Exodus 28.

1052 *apparaylmente*. The term likely refers to the elders and evangelists, as H argues, as the maiden has described in lines 885–87.

1058 *flet*. Editors have translated variously as "tidal estuary" (V) and as the verb "flowed" (H). *Flet*, from "floor, ground" accords most closely with the sense of the source in Revelation: "flowing from the throne of God," a scene depicted in some illuminated manuscripts, i.e., the Trinity College Apocalypse, which shows the river flowing out of the room in which God is enthroned. See the illustration in Jonathan Alexander, "The Last Things: Representing the Unrepresentable," in *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Frances Carey, p. 77.

1069 ff. The stanza describes the miraculous, God-generated light of the New Jerusalem, a brilliance that eclipses other celestial bodies, i.e., moon and sun.

1077–80 See Revelation 22:2.

1093 *maynful*. Compare the expression "might and main," in Middle English a conventional formula, "myghty and maynful."

1098–1100 See Revelation 14:4.

1099 *vergynes*. See note to line 869.

1106 See Revelation 21:21.

1107 See Revelation 5:11.

1108 *livrés*. G emends to *livre*. Most editors translate as "dress." *Livrés* also means the official garb of a group or guild, which would seem to be the sense intended here. For a discussion of livery badges in the court of Richard II and in the Wilton Diptych, see Riddy, in Brewer and Gibson, p. 153n; Bowers, "*Pearl* in Its Royal Setting," pp. 136–39; and Barr, pp. 67–68. See also note to line 199.

1110 See Revelation 14:1–4.

1111 *golde*. MS: *glode*. Editors emend. See Revelation 5:6.

1126 *Vertues*. One of the nine orders of angels.

1135 *wounde ful wyde*. The image is of the sacrificial Lamb, Christ crucified. Field and Whitaker discuss the medieval pictorial traditions for the image; for a psychoanalytic reading of the wound, see Stanbury, "Feminist Masterplots."

1156–59 These lines present many possibilities for interpretation. In line 1156, *walte* has been read as "held, set," from Middle English *wale* or *welde*, by A, AW, G, and Gor; as "kept" by C; and as "vexed" by H and V. The *MED* suggests "chosen," p. ppl. of *walen*, a reading with which I con-

cur: i.e., although she has already been claimed or chosen by the Lamb, the dreamer still wants to hurl himself into the stream.

1157–59 G connects *fech me bur* (line 1158) with the dialect phrase "to take one's birr," i.e., to gather momentum for a leap, and translates: "Nothing, methought, might hinder me / From fetching birr and taking off; / And noght should keep me from the start." A reads: "I thought that nothing might hinder me from gathering my strength and taking possession (of the Maiden) for myself." My reading of the lines approximates that of AW: "I thought that nothing could harm me by dealing me a blow and offering obstruction to me." *Bur* appears frequently in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the sense of a martial "blow." This stanza and the following are rich in abrupt monosyllabic words conveying suddenness and violence.

1174 *raxled*. I.e., in the sense of awakening from a swoon.

1205 *lote*. *Lote*, Middle English *lot*, which some editors translate as "experience," carries connotations of chance or luck. AW note that *lote* can also mean "speech" or "word": "I received this word."

1206 *enclyin*. Editors translate "lying prostrate" — i.e., the dreamer. I accord with V in following *MED* suggestion that term is an adjective, *enclin*, modifying the pearl, "bowed down, humble, submissive."

1208 *In Krystes dere blessyng and myn*. This phrase appears frequently in addresses from parent to child in the late Middle Ages, as observed by Norman Davis, "A Note on *Pearl*," in Conley, ed., pp. 325–34.

1209 *forme of bred and wyn*. I.e., the visual display of the host during the Mass. The phrase, part of the prayer at communion, was, as Margaret Aston says, "the laconic lay equivalent for transubstantiation in all its complexities." See *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350–1600* (Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 46–47. For uses of the formula, see also John Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Edward Peacock, EETS o.s. 31 (London: Trübner & Co., 1868; Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1996), p. 8, line 246, and p. 291. The formula also appears frequently in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century debates about the Eucharistic rite: see for example the "Testimony of William Thorpe" in *Two Wycliffite Texts: The Sermon of William Taylor 1406: The Testimony of William Thorpe 1407*, ed. Anne Hudson, EETS o.s. 301 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 31.

Most editors understand *That* as a reference to Christ. Phillips, p. 479, argues that *That* refers to the pearl ("hit" of line 1207) and both refer to the Eucharistic wafer.

1211 *homly hyne*. The term *homly* defies precise translation in modern English. It refers literally to the "homely," to things of the household and private life, with the implication that *homly hyne* are trustworthy and trusting household servants, allied with the lord or head of household in a harmonious hierarchical relationship.

8 *synglure*. I.e., "unique." A and Gor emend to *synglere*; G to *syngulere*. I follow the MS reading, since *-ure* rhymes with *-ere* in words of French origin, as H notes.

11 *fordolked*. G emends to *fordokked*.

17 *herte*. MS: *hert*. G also emends for the sake of meter.

25 *mot*. In the MS only the *t* is clear. Editors have emended to *mot*.

26 *runne*. MS: *ruñen* (*runnen*). Editors, except V, emend.

35 *spryngande*. MS: *sprygande*. I accord with A, AW, G, and Gor who emend to *spryngande*; H and V retain MS reading and divide *spryg ande*.

46 *fayr reflayr*. AW suggest that word division in the MS is unreliable and that *fayrre flayr*, the conditional/comparative construction gives a more logical reading. But *Cleanness*, line 1079, gives "Þer watȝ rose reflayr where rote hatȝ ben ever," which suggests that the MS reading in *Pearl* is probably correct. See *MED reflair(e)* n.

49 *spenned*. MS: *speñd* (*spennd*). V reads *spenud*; AW retain *spennd*.

53 *penned*. MS: *speñed* (*spenned*). I follow AW and G in emending to *penned* ("imprisoned") on the basis of alliteration and the grounds that the poet normally avoids repeating rhymes.

54 *fyrce*. MS: *fyrte*. Editors, except H and V, emend. See note to line 675.

60 *precios*. MS: *p^{9}cos* (*precos*). Editors, except V, emend.

68 *ryche*. MS: *rych*. G also emends.

72 *adubbemente*. MS: *adubmente*. My emendation accords with AW, G, and Gor. A and V emend to *adubbement*.

77 *on slydes*. MS: *onslydeȝ*. My reading agrees with A, AW, and Gor, who read as two separate words, "slide over each other."

81 *gravayl that*. G emends to *gravayl that I*.

89 *flowen*. MS: *floyen*, with *y* changed to *w* by scribe.

95 *gracios*. MS: *gracos*. Editors, except V, emend.

103 *feier*. G and H emend to *feirer*.

106 *bukes*. Editors, except V, have emended as *bonkes*. The word in the MS is either *bukes* or *bnkes*. Although *u* and *n* are virtually indistinguishable in the MS, editors have added *o* to read *bonkes*, "steep banks." V argues for a reading of *bukes* as variant spelling of *bek*, "small stream." Streams sparkling as spun gold makes far more sense than river banks sparkling.

113 *stonden*. AW emend to *stoden*, "shone."

115 *As*. MS: *a*. Editors, except V, emend.

119 *alle*. H emends to *all*.

122 *wlonke*. MS: *wlonk*. G also emends.

131 *waynes*. H reads as "gains": "the mortal for whom she gains her intent."

134 *I tom*. G emends to *tom I*.

138 *over*. MS: *oþ*^{9} (*other*). Editors emend to *over*, except H and V, who retain MS reading.

142 *hoped*. MS: *hope*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

144 *ay*. MS: *a*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

154 *wo*. G emends to *wothe*.

166 *schore*. Gor emends to *shore*.

179 *astount*. MS: *atount*. I follow AW and G in emending to *astount* on the basis of alliteration.

185 *hoped*. MS: *hope*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

192 *precios*. MS: *p*^{9}*cos* (*precos*). Editors, except V, emend.

200 *yyen*. G and Gor emend to *ene*.

225 *tonge*. MS: *tong*. G also emends.

229 *pyse*. G and Gor emend to *pyece*; H to *pece*.

241 *quoth*. Gor and H render as *quod*. The manuscript abbreviation for this word gives no indication of present or past tense. I expand throughout to *quoth*.

244 *thee*. MS: *þe*. I have followed METS policy of differentiating the pronoun from the article on grounds that they were probably pronounced differently in the fourteenth century; so too in lines 263, 266, 267, 268, 274, 316, 341, 343, 385, 397, 402, 474, 558, 560, 700, 707, 743, 747, 764, 910, 967, 973, 975, and 1199.

252 *jueler*. MS: *juelere*. I have emended so that the spelling corresponds with the other end-words of stanzas in this fitt.

262 *nee*. G emends to *ne*.

nere. MS: *here*. H and V retain *here*. I follow A, AW, G, and Gor in emending for logic.

286 *broght*. MS: *broȝ*. Editors, except V, emend.

blysse. MS: *blys*. G also emends.

288 *joyfol*. Gor reads *ioyful*.

302 *loves*. Most editors emend to *leves* ("believes") here and in line 308. I agree with V in retaining MS *louez*. The dreamer's love of the visible world is central to the story. As V notes, *loves* also builds effective word-play with the two uses of *leve* in the stanza.

319 *counsayle*. MS: *coūsayl* (*counsayl*). G's emendation, followed by Gor.

323 *man*. MS: *ma*. G, H, and V do not emend.

331 *gares*. G emends to *gare*.

335 *perle*. MS: *perleȝ*. Editors, except H, emend.

342 *in wele and wo*. MS: *& wele & wo*. Editors, except V, emend.

353 *Stynst*. A, AW, G, and Gor emend to *stynt*. As G notes, the scribe also used a similar form in *Cleanness*, line 359. V cites H. L. Savage's review of Gordon's edition of *Pearl* (*MLN* 71 [1956], 127), who argues that *stynst* is a correct form.

358 *And thy*. G emends to *that alle thy*.

fleme. MS: *leme*. Along with A, C, and AW, I follow Gor's emendation to *fleme*, "banish." Other editors retain *leme*, "And through thy losses gently gleam" (H).

359 *marre*. G emends to *marred*.

363 *rapely I rave*. MS: *rapely raue*. Editors, except V, emend.

369 *kythes*. MS: *lyþez*. Following G, editors, except H and V, emend.

381 *carpe*. MS: *carp*. G also emends.

382 *maneres*. MS: *marerez*. G emends to *maneres*, "manners," and is followed by A, AW, and Gor. H derives *mareres* from *mare res*, "great eloquence"; V retains *mareres*, "vitality," as variant spelling of *marrow*.

396 *in*. A emends to *and*.

399 *byde*. V reads as *uyde*, "wade."

418 *Hys lef is*. For logic there must be a stop, however unusual the mid-line caesura, following *is*.

426 *vyrgyn flour*. H emends to *vyrgynflor*.

433 *sayde*. MS: *syde*. Editors, except V, emend.

441 *hevens*. H emends to *hevenes*.

460 *tryste*. MS: *tyste*. Editors, except V, emend.

461 *sawle*. MS: *sawhe*. Editors emend, though V claims that MS indicates correction to *sawle*.

469 *Cortaysé*. G emends to *cortaysye*.

472 Line missing in MS. G supplies, *Me thynk thou spekes now ful wronge*, and V suggests, *To speke of a new note I long*.

479 *he*. MS: *ho*. Editors, except V, emend.

480 *cortaysé*. G emends to *cortaysye*. AW and H read *cortayse* as a noun, "courteous one."

486 *fyrste*. MS: *fyrst*. G also emends.

499 *In sample*. G and V join words as *insample* for *ensample*, "parable."

505 *thys*. G emends to *hys*.

510 *pené on a day*. G omits *on*.

523 *resonabele*. G emends to *resnabele*.

524 *pay*. MS: *pray*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

527 *nw*. G emends to *new*.

529 *date of day*. MS: *day of date*. Editors, except V, emend.

532 *hem*. MS: *hen*. Editors, except V, emend.

535 *yemen*. Editors, except V (*ye men*), write as one word.

538 *and*. MS: *& &*. H and V retain *and and*, "and when."

542 *meyny*. G emends to *meny*.

543 *owe*. G emends to *awe*.

544 *reprené*. G emends to *repreny*.

547 *lowe*. G emends to *lawe*.

550 *hade*. H emends to *had*.

557 *on*. MS: *om*, with the third minim crossed out.

558 *waning*. MS: *wanig*. Editors, except H, emend.

564 *aske*. MS: *ask*. G also emends.

565 *louyly*. G emends to *leuyly*.

572 *called*. MS: *calle*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

574 *wore*. I follow V's reading of MS *wore* as variant of *ware*, "expend." Other editors have translated as past of verb "to be," i.e., "were."

586 *longe*. MS: *long*. G also emends.

596 *pertermynable*. G, Gor, and H expand the abbreviation to read *pretermynable*.

615 *com*. A and H emend to *come*.

616 *fere*. MS: *lere*. G emends to *here* ("wage"); H and V retain MS *lere* ("lure, compensation" — usually a term from hunting). My reading accords with A, AW, and Gor, reading *fere* which carries meanings in Middle English of "company," or "rank" or "reward."

630 *niyght*. G and H read as *myght*, which makes good sense; *niyght* is more consistent with the pattern of imagery.

635 *hym*. A, C, G, and Gor emend to *hem*. V points out that *hym* is occasionally used as the plural form in this MS.

fyrste. MS: *fyrst*. G also emends.

645 *theron com*. MS: *þer on com*. G joins the verbal: *ther oncom*.

astyt. MS: *as tyt*. H and G write as two words; other editors, and myself, as one, "immediately."

649 *out*. MS: *out out*. Editors emend.

656 *inne*. G emends to *in*.

665 *con not*. A emends to *con noght*.

672 *As*. MS: *at*. G retains and emends: *At inoscence, is saf by ryghte*, "In innocence, is saved by right"; Gor emends to *And*. My emendation accords with H, C, A, and AW.

673 *thus*. MS: *þ9 þ9* (*thus thus*). Editors emend.

675 *face*. As V notes, in MS *t* and *c* are often difficult to distinguish. Editors have read *face*. See also line 672 for editors' uncertainties over "inoscent[c]e," and also "fyrce," line 54, where MS may read "fyrte."

678 *hyghe*. MS: *hyȝ*. G also emends.

hylle. MS: *hyllez*. Editors emend.

683 *stepe*. MS: *step*. G also emends.

688 *nieghbor*. G emends to *neghbor*.

690 *How kyntly oure Koyntyse hym con aquyle*. MS: *how kyntly oure con aquyle*. Although V retains line as written in MS, most editors agree that there is clearly a scribal error. AW emend: *Hym Koyntyse oure con aquyle*. A and Gor emend: *How Koyntise onoure con aquyle*. H emends: *How kyntly onore con aquyle*. My emendation follows the suggestion by G that the scribe dropped two words, *koyntyse hym*, from the middle of the line. The source of the passage is Wisdom 10:10: *Haec profugum irae fratris iustum deduxit per vias rectas, et ostendit illi regnum Dei* ("She [Wisdom] conducted the just, when he fled from his brother's wrath, through the right ways, and showed him the kingdom of God").

698 *sey*. G and Gor emend to *syz*.

700 *For*. MS: *sor*. All editors emend.

701 *com*. G emends to *come*.

702 *tryed*. AW and G emend to *cryed*, in part to further alliteration and in part to avoid use of two repeating end-words in the same stanza. Yet the stanza is striking for its lack of alliteration; and, as V notes, occasionally end-words are repeated within stanzas, as in the repetition of "clere" in lines 735 and 737. C also follows the MS.

714 *touch*. Some editors read *touth*, then emend. But see note to line 675.

715 *hym*. A, G, and Gor emend to *hem*. Most editors read *hym* as legitimate variant spelling for "them," i.e., the people bringing their children to be healed by Christ's touch. My reading of syntax and punctuation in this line accords with AW. Other editors translate the line with indirect speech, "asked them to let (Christ) be."

739 *ryghtwys*. MS: *ryȝ tywys*. Editors emend.

752 *carpe*. A, AW, G, and Gor emend to *carped*. The use of present tense, retained by H and V, is consistent with the movement from past to present in the stanza as a whole.

propertes. G emends to *propertys*.

768 *And pyght me*. G emends to *He pyght me*.

775 *anunnder*. AW, G, and Gor read first letter as *o*, *on-uunder* (AW: *onuunder*). H emends to *onunder*. My reading accords with A and V.

778 *maryag*. G emends to *maryage*.

785 *Lambes*. Gor emends to *lambeȝ*.

786 *A hondred and forty thowsande flot*. G and Gor emend the number to *a hondred and forty fowre thowsande* for consistency with Revelation 14:1, 3. In lines 869–70 the number of brides is given as 144,000.

802 *lande nem*. MS: *lande men*, though *l* can easily be read as *h*, as Gor has noted. A, AW, and Gor emend to *hande nem*, "took hold of." V leaves as is, translating "as a lamb that the shearers appraise in fields." My emendation accords with G and H, "takes hold of in the field," emending minimally for logic and rhyme while preserving alliteration. The prophecy of Christ as a lamb silent before the shearers derives from Isaiah 53:7.

803 *query*. G emends to *quere*.

815 *lomp*. G emends to *lomb*. As Gor notes, Appendix 2, p. 93, *lomp* is a legitimate West Midland variant spelling for *lomb*. The poet uses both spellings in the MS, perhaps to play as well on the metonymy between lamb and light.

817 Most editors add *In*: *In Jerusalem*, etc. H and V retain the line as in MS, as do I for metrical reasons.

825 *wroghte*. MS: *wroȝt*. G also emends.

829 *swete*. MS: *swatte*. Editors, except H and V, emend for rhyme.

836 *John*. MS: *iohn̄*. MS abbreviates *John* variously in the many appearances of the word. V expands, unaccountably, to *Johan* here and in following appearances. I follow practices of former editors in rendering according to modern usage.

saw. MS: *saytȝ*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

838 *in seme*. G joins *inseme*, "together."

843 *masklle*. G emends to *maskelle*.

848 *nouther*. MS: *non oþ*^{9} (*non other*). G emends as *nother*; V writes as *no nother*; H retains MS. My emendation accords with A, AW, and Gor.

856 *tha*. A, AW, C, G, and Gor emend to *that*. *Tha* is similarly used in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 877, as V notes; it also makes a more musical line.

861 *Lombe*. MS: *lonbe*. G reads *loumbe*.

865 *tale*. MS: *talle*. Editors, except AW and V, emend. *Tale* would be glossed as "story." *Talle* might mean "account," as in "tally." The catch phrase at the bottom of the previous page reads: "leste les þow leue my tale farā," which supports the emendation.

867 *the*. H emends to *tha*.

873 *fro*. Gor emends to *from*.

874 *laden*. G emends to *leden*.

892 *that*$_{1}$. MS: *þay*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

905 *among*. G emends to *amonc*.

911 *blose*. *Blose* is a hapax logomenon. I agree with most editors in translating as "churl." G emends to *wose*, "wild man of the woods"; AW emend to *bose*, "boss" or "a lump of a man"; V reads *blose* as an alteration of *blas*, "gust of wind."

912 *vayle*. MS: *vayl*. G also emends.

918 *won*. G emends to *wone*.

932 *I se*. MS: *& I se*, retained by H and V. Other editors emend.

934 *gracious*. MS: *g^{9}co9* (*gracous*). Editors, except V, emend.

935 *bygynges*. Whether the first letter of the word is a *b* or *l* is uncertain. G and H read MS: *lygynges*, "lodgings"; A, AW, and Gor read as *lygynges* and emend to *bygynges*, a common Middle English word meaning "a large house." V argues convincingly that MS reads *bygyngez*.

945 *Lompe*. G emends to *lombe*. As in line 1046, the pun links light and the Lamb that is Christ.

958 *flesch*. MS: *fresth* or *fresch*. Editors, except V, have emended to *flesch*, "flesh." V argues for retaining MS *fresch*, "young bodies," but the line then becomes a tongue twister.

977 *I*. Added by editors, except V. G emends to *wolde I ther*.

992 *bauteles*. Editors read *banteles*. Michael Thompson, "Castles," in Brewer and Gibson, p. 121, argues that *banteles* should properly be read *bauteles* and describe small arched machicolations, a tiered feature of castle fortification that would date the poem after 1360. Thompson's argument also applies to *bauteles* in *Cleanness*, lines 1458–59.

995 *ilke*. MS: *ilk*. G also emends.

997 *John*. Supplied by editors.

998 *name*. G emends to *names*.

999 *fyrste*. MS: *fyrst*. G also emends.

1004 *thrydde*. MS: *thryd*. G also emends.

1007 *rybé*. G emends to *sarde*, after Revelation.

1014 *jacyngh*. A, AW, G, and Gor emend to *jacynght*. I accord with H and V, who note that the scribe dropped final *-t* before words beginning with *th* — likely a practice that reflected pronunciation.

1015 *tryeste*. MS: *gentyleste*. Along with AW, I follow G's emendation, which attempts to correct for what G labels an obvious scribal error, repeating *gent* from the preceding line.

1017 *bautels*. See note to line 992.

bent. G emends to *brent*, "steep." Other editors have retained and translated as "attached," but *bautels* would logically be *bent* or "curved"; see note to line 992.

1018 *Of*. Editors, except V, read *o*. A small *f* is inserted above the line between *o* and *j*. Osgood argued the *f* is in a later hand, but V notes it is in the same brown ink, a reading with which I concur.

1026 *glayre*. Egg-white fixative used in manuscript illumination.

1028 *perre*. A, AW, Gor, and V write *perré*. I retain as *perre* for metrical regularity.

1035 *poursent*. H reads *n* as *u*: *pourseut*, "in succession."

1036 *ryche*. MS: *rych*. G also emends.

1046 *selfe*. MS: *self*. G also emends.

lambe-lyght. *Lombe* or *lambe* is unclear in the MS, but looks more like *lambe*. A and V read *lambe*; other editors read *lombe*. G emends to *lompe*.

1050 *syght*. MS: *lyȝt*. With AW, I follow G's emendation, on the grounds that the poet is unlikely to have repeated the same rhyming word in one stanza. These lines may pun on lamb and lamp.

1058 *As*. MS: *a*. Editors, except H and V, emend.

1063 *mynster*. MS: *mynyster*. AW, Gor, H, and V also emend.

1064 *refet*. MS: *reget*. I accord with A, AW, and Gor in emending to *refet*, "refresh."

1076 *selfe*. MS: *self*. G also emends.

1081 *gret*. Gor emends to *great*.

1083 *bayle*. MS: *baly*. G, Gor, and H also emend to *bayle*. V argues emendation is unnecessary, since *y* varies with *e*, but in this case *bayle* is preferable for rhyme.

1086 *freuch*. A and AW emend to *frech*; Gor to *frelich*.

1092 *wer*. Gor emends to *were*.

1097 *enpryse*. MS: *enpresse*. I accord with A, G, Gor, and H in emendation for rhyme.

1104 *with gret*. MS: *w*^{t}*outen*. Emendation for logic accords with A, AW, C, G, and Gor. V follows MS.

1112 *wedes*. G emends to *wede*.

1117 *that*. G emends to *that ther*.

1125 *thurgh the urthe*. H emends to *thurgh urthe*.

1133 *Hys*. G emends to *hyse*.

1170 *brathe*. MS appears to have *þ* written over *h*, but it is uncertain. G, H, and V write *brathe*; A, AW, and Gor write *braththe*. Both spellings were in use in the fourteenth century.

1179 *quyke*. MS: *quykez*. Editors emend.

1185 *If*. MS: *īf*. Editors emend.

1186 *stykes*. AW and G emend to *strykes*, "who come," i.e., "you who come in a fair crown."

1190 *gyven*. MS: *geven*. I accord with A, G, and Gor in emending for the sake of rhyme.

1196 *moghten*. A, AW, G, and Gor emend to *moghte*. I retain MS reading for metrical reasons.

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