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THE CONSOLATION OF POETRY: A STUDY OF THE MIDDLE ENGLISH PEARL

by

Nikki Stiller

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1972

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Introduction

A first reading of Pearl constitutes what John Dewey would call "an experience." The richness of description, the elegance of its form, and the wealth of theological material are overwhelming in their impact; the emotional urgency of the narrative voice, after six hundred years, equally impressive. The poem seems unapproachable in its perfection. The questions which then arise are uncomfortably large: perhaps this is the reason that, in the critical literature, for many years, debates concerning the actual existence of the Maiden and the orthodoxy of the Pearl-poet's beliefs have obscured issues more suitable for discussion in literary terms. In 1933, René Wellek, surveying the commentary available at the time, concluded:

> All these debates, we feel, about dialect, authorship, elegy versus allegory, theology, symbolism, etc., though they have been almost the only occupation of scholarship, say very little about the Pearl as a work of art. We may grant that a right conception of the contents of the poem has cleared the way for artistic appreciation, but the actual study of the artistic value of the poem is still in its beginnings. Even the obvious approach through questions of meter and structure has not been much utilized hitherto. Professor Northrup's paper, "A Study of the Metrical Structure of the Middle English Poem the Pearl" is rather a contribution to the history of unstressed e in the West Midland than a metrical investigation proper. Also, Oakden's treatment of the meter is rather a statistical survey of the alliteration and its use than an attempt at artistic interpretation.[1]

The situation remains more or less the same, with much attention given to the "investigation of the typical," in which, Peter Dronke remarks, there is a "danger that we should see the poetry of the Middle Ages in

terms of its most stereotyped minds and imaginings."[2] While Ian Bishop in Pearl in its Settings and Patricia M. Kean in Pearl: An Interpretation have written excellent and sophisticated books illuminating the genre of the poem, its theological and linguistic background, and its numerical scheme, they do not study the poem as a poem but treat it rather as a work of a very special kind.[3] Needless to say, it is impossible to understand the work of the Pearl-poet in general, and Pearl in particular, without knowledge of the period, medieval theology, and the esthetic values of the fourteenth century. Such an understanding is difficult to attain, and any information concerning the background seems close to the miraculous, given the opacity of the poet's dialect and the anonymity of the author. Thus, when Norman Davis can point out that the final stanza of the poem includes the formal greeting of fourteenth century parent to fourteenth century child,[4] the information seems like a raft in a sea of speculations. Basic problems remain: we do not know who wrote Pearl, as well as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience and Purity, all in MS. Cotton Nero A.x, and the audience that heard or read these poems. Attempts have been made to identify the author. He has been considered a member of Pembroke's household, and an agonized ecclesiastic;[5] one scholar sees stylistic similarities in the Awntyrs of Arthure, whereupon the Pearl-poet becomes Huchown.[6] Early in the debate, Gollancz vacillated between Huchown as author and Strode.[7] At this point, since fresh clues have not yet appeared, an attempt to comprehend the poem through the identity of its creator seems an impossible and profitless pursuit.

As indicated by Wellek, the province of the poem's language remains virtually unexplored. There are some articles, and the number is not great, on individual words or linguistic traits in the work of the Pearl-

poet, but one finally learns more about the word from the poem than about the poem from the word itself. Typical of these articles is an interesting discussion of "The Etymology and Meaning of Boy," Pearl, ll. 805-806.[8] Although it is good to know that "boye3" may mean "executioners" as well as "wretches," the interpretation of the poem, or the understanding of its effects, is not radically changed by such information. Much more enlightening are those studies which deal with words of great importance in the work. W. R. J. Barron's study of "Luf-daungere" is helpful in that a false reading of the term could alter the poem's meaning; an article by Dorothy Everett and Naomi D. Hurnard, on legal language, is even more necessary to the correct interpretation of the poem's central passages.[9] The examination of "Cortaysye in Middle English" by W. O. Evans is also most illuminating,[10] because it is not limited to etymology but moves from pure linguistic investigation to an inquiry about the implications of the term for a fourteenth century poet and his audience.

There is also a "garlande gay" of theological interpretations which range, as might be expected, from the tentative, as in Carleton Brown's early essay, (1904), "The Author of the Pearl Considered in the Light of his Theological Opinions,"[11] to later analyses that attempt to reduce the Pearl-poet's thought and religious beliefs to one scheme or another. Sister M. Madeleva, for example, in Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness, endeavoring to allegorize the entire work, obscures the most pressing issue in certain sections of the poem: the death of innocents and how God's justice differs in kind from human justice.[12] Wellek calls attention to the sensible opinions of Jefferson B. Fletcher who, in "The Allegory of the Pearl," (1921) denies that "a devout fourteenth century

Catholic" would be "acting the heretic," and, in reference to the tenacious elegy-allegory debate, asserts that recognizing the Pearl as symbolic does not preclude belief "in the historical existence of the child, just as, for instance, Albertus Magnus in his praise of the Virgin Mary described all the symbolic properties, delights, scents, meteorology, flora and fauna of Mary qua Garden without ever doubting her historical reality."[13] While Brown's stipulation that the Pearl-poet's emphasis on "grace" marks him as an anti-Pelagian represents a viable position to argue from, by the time D. W. Robertson addresses himself to the theological aspect of Pearl, in "The Heresy of Pearl,"[14] one has lost the sense of how the plethora of doctrinal disputes enables one to understand or appreciate the poem. There are, moreover, the numerous comparisons of Pearl with other long religious poems, especially Dante's Commedia, which, one would assume, would be a more profitable comparison in terms of the differences between the two works rather than in terms of their similarities.[15] Even Kean dwells longer than is neccessary upon the resemblances of Pearl to other poems.[16] The approach Bishop takes is thus refreshing: his book, Pearl in its Setting, is a compact and seemingly definitive exploration of the moral and theological background of the poem, the intellectual climate of the period, and the sources, in liturgy, of much of the poet's imagery. His discussion of genre is particularly valuable for this study.[17]

A word on genre: this, too, has been a subject for debate in the critical literature. Is the poem an elegy? Some asked; some, G. G. Coulton, for example, answered that it was indeed, basing their reply upon belief in the actual existence of the maiden as daughter to the

poet.[18] Others answered no, including W. H. Schofield, one of the first to take issue with the wholly autobiographical interpretation.[19] The poem is, of course, a dream-vision, as no one would deny, yet the term, in and of itself, does not tell us much.[20] The issue has been narrowed to "a debate between those--including E. V. Gordon," Bishop notes, "who regard it as an elegy and those who, following Schofield's lead, believe it to be basically an allegory. The main reasons for supposing it to be an allegory are the use of the pearl as a symbol and the presence in the poem of a considerable amount of doctrinal and theological material that might seem out of place in an elegy."[21] The disparate elements in the poem probably prompted the wise comment of Dorothy Everett that "none of these labels, by itself" could do justice to the poem.[22] Bishop begins by remarking that Pearl is not an elegy and has more to do with "consoling the bereaved than with mourning the deceased."[23] He notes, too, that "an element of consolation is often present in an elegy, but in Pearl consolation is the fundamental purpose that unifies the argument and determines its direction."[24] Through the work of John Conley and V. E. Watts,[25] Bishop came upon the distinct although somewhat elusive genre of consolation whose ancestry in antiquity seemed to secure its usage in medieval Europe and which is indeed the genre of Boccaccio's Olympia.[26] This distinction made by Bishop is extremely important, for one no longer expects a panegyric on the qualities of the Pearl-maiden as she had been on earth; we no longer look for a literary resurrection, as it were, or a monument for the dead person. Consolation, of course, brings with it other questions, the foremost being: does itconsole? and whom? and by what means?

For, even if one is satisfied with the classification, why the poem accomplishes its ends remains unknown. Why it is not merely a successful tract, an impenetrable document, or, indeed, a complete failure as a work of art? The articles on diction and style do no more than scratch the surface. W. S. Johnson's essay on imagery and language, the poem's diction, in particular, is perceptive but, as Johnson himself suggests, it is no more than a beginning.[27] We wish to know from what deeper well the images and the language itself flow. The figurative language employed by the Pearl-poet has riches of its own, of course, yet the beauty of the work is not a by-product of the imagery. Pearl is not to be read in the same way as Kubla Khan, to give the most obvious example: much of the metaphor in Pearl is actually liturgical in origin, as Kean and Bishop have shown.[28] C. A. Luttrell has traced the "Symbolism in a Garden Setting" to its uses in French tradition;[29] R. J. Blanch finds the sources for the Pearl-poet's use of gems;[30] A. C. Spearing's work is concerned with the symbolic and dramatic development within the poem, and, though successful in demolishing the elaborate allegorical structures of Robertson and Stern,[31] nonetheless stays within the context of imagistic criticism.[32] Perhaps equation of poesis with imagery is the after-effect of the New Criticism but the emphasis which poets themselves have placed upon poetic factors other than metaphor has been great.[33] It also seems possible to write a bad poem with splendid imagery--and a good novel with a plethora of symbolic utterances, so that, in investigating the imagery of a poem without attention to other formal elements, we may very well reach a dead end. Spearing, in the concluding remarks of his essay, suggests an avenue

toward which such analysis may lead:

> Though the Dreamer's visionary experience is incomplete, the dramatic possibilities of his initial situation have been brought to a satisfying conclusion. The body of the poem has taken the form of a dramatic process in which symbolic development has gone along with human development, and which we are able to act out imaginatively for ourselves as often as we read it. It is this process, and not merely the doctrine embedded in it, which gives Pearl--the poem and the symbol--its lasting value.[34]

One searches for what this statement seems to promise in Spearing's book;[35] but, there again, further exploration of imagery, while interesting, does not reach the being of the poem. John Burrow, in Ricardian Poetry, has fully explored the mode and temper of the work on the ideational and cultural level.[36] What Spearing seems to indicate, however, in the passage cited above, is that the poem's importance and immortality reside not so much in what it is about but in what it does. And since imagery is the tool of visual art, and dramatic development that of narrative, I propose to examine those aspects of the poem proper to poetry: the ways in which words are exclusive of their figurative use.

Pearl is unique not only as every poem is unique but also because it is the only poem in Middle English, to my knowledge, which employs an elaborate form for such great length and with the narrator-dreamer-persona, as Charles Moorman points out,[37] central to the work itself. Only the stanzaic form of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde presents an equally intricate scheme but Chaucer has not limited his narrative to the realm of the subjective: most of the action takes place in the world. Pearl, to put it bluntly, takes place in the narrator's mind; how the poet exonerates his speaker of egoism and how the world is intro-

duced into the subjective mode, problems that are peculiar to the lyric form, are as crucial for Pearl as for Dylan Thomas' "Fern Hill." There is, in addition, the problem of movement, action, or process, for there is a narrative in Pearl. What, then, constitutes "lyric" action?

Another difficulty in endeavoring to understand how the poem works is in its presentation of the divine. Bishop approaches this problem in two chapters, "The 'Allegory of the Theologians'" and "The 'Allegory of the Poets.'"[38] The terms are Dante's but Bishop employs them "in a broader sense than Dante;"[39] of the allegory of the poets he remarks:

> what I understand by it is any allegorical or symbolical device that does not fall within the definition of the 'allegory of the theologians.' The theologians themselves used the word 'allegory' in both a broad and a narrow sense; they employed it to refer not only to the sensus spiritualis of Scripture, but also to indicate one of the three divisions of that 'sense'--the one known specifically as the sensus allegoricus...neither the 'theologians' on the one hand, nor the 'poets' and rhetoricians on the other, appear to have had much use for any formal distinction between 'allegory' and 'symbolism;' whereas such a distinction provides the starting point for many modern discussions of allegory--including medieval allegory.[40]

All of Bishop's explorations in this direction seem to indicate that the poet must take, and has indeed taken, great care not to impose metaphors or earth upon divine essences or upon divinity itself. What sphere the poem inhabits or what sphere we are to believe it inhabits is a most important issue. Unfortunately, one is led, in Pearl in its Setting, into yet another discussion of imagery in which Bishop does not draw out the implications inherent in his own classification of images. Furthermore, the question of the poem's space is of seminal importance in that the form of the poem itself is justified in terms of that space.

The following chapters do not attempt to describe allegorical phenomena, nor do they attempt to cast new light upon the imagery or symbols *per se*; what materials the Pearl-poet utilized in the creation of his object, thanks to the efforts, in particular, of Bishop and Kean, are now known. How this master-craftsman worked them into an esthetically satisfying whole is an area virtually unexplored; indeed, why it is esthetically satisfying has not been asked. In Part I, I have tried to suggest the artistic purposes which emerge from the strategy of the form; whether these preceded the latter or grew out of it, I cannot claim to have discovered, and have not wished to invoke the intentional fallacy. But, in the belief that beauty has its causes, and that each cause is a discernible change in the material of a poem--its language--I wish, in Part II, to demonstrate that the Pearl-poet's virtuosity, far from being extraneous to the poem's meaning or significance, is that which endows the work with greatness and which is, in short, the consolation of poetry itself.

Footnotes

[1]Rene Wellek, "The Pearl: An Interpretation of the Middle English Poem," originally printed in Studies in English by Members of the English Seminar of Charles University, IV, (1933), pp. 5-33; reprinted by R. J. Blanch in Sir Gawain and Pearl: Critical Essays, 1966, pp. 3-36; see p. 36.

[2]Poetic Individuality in the Middle Ages, 1970, p. 21.

[3]Ian Bishop, Pearl in its Setting, 1968; P. M. Kean, The Pearl: An Interpretation, 1967.

[4]"A Note on Pearl," RES (N. S.), XVIII, 403-405.

[5]The poet-as-court-retainer theory is propounded by O. Cargill and M. Schlauch, "The Pearl and its Jeweller," PMLA, XLIII, (1928), 105-123; both C. O. Chapman, in "The Musical Training of the Pearl Poet," PMLA, XLVI, (1931), 177-181 and Sister M. Madelava, in Chapter IV of Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness, 1925, maintain that the poet was in religious orders, but differ on which.

[6]H. N. MacCracken, "Concerning Huchown," PMLA, XXV, (1910), 507-534.

[7]His edition of 1921 presents Strode as the poet, p. xxxviii, xl, and xlvi; for criticism of these assignments, see Marie P. Hamilton's Commentary on Pearl in A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, J. Burke Severs, ed., II (1970) particularly 339-341.

[8]MAE, IX, (1941), 121-123.

[9]"Luf-daungere" is one of the essays in A Medieval Miscellany presented to Eugene Vinaver, ed. F. Whitehead, 1965, pp. 1-18; Dorothy Everett and Naomi Hurnard, "Legal Phraseology in a Passage in Pearl," MAE, XVI, (1947), 9ff. Also see D. Everett's chapter on Pearl in which the commentary is more general, in Essays on ME Literature, ed. P. Kean, 1955.

[10]MS, XXIX, 143-157.

[11]PMLA, XIX,(1904), 115-153.

[12]Published in 1925; the most naive of the studies.

[13]JEGP, XX,(1921), 1-21.

[14]MLN, LXV, (1950), 152-161.

[15]For example, M. P. Hamilton in "The Meaning of the Middle English Pearl," PMLA, LXXX, (1955), 85-96; Everett, 85-96; J. Conley, "Pearl and a Lost Tradition," JEGP, LIV, (1955), 332-347, compares Pearl with Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, dissimilar, too, in its philosophic scope.

[16]Particularly in the chapter entitled "The Earthly Paradise," Pearl An Interpretation, pp 89-113.

[17]Particularly the chapters on "Genre," pp. 13-26, and "Sources for the Characterization of the Maiden," pp. 101-127.

[18]"In Defence of the Pearl," in MLR, LI, (1907), 39-43.

[19]PMLA, XXIV, (1909), 585-675.

[20]Bishop, p. 14: "The Roman de la Rose and Piers Plowman both belong to this category, but the two poems are quite different in their plans and purpose."

[21]Bishop, p. 15.

[22]Essays in Middle English Lit., p. 96.

[23]Bishop, p. 15.

[24]Bishop, p. 15.

[25]J. Conley, "Pearl and a Lost Tradition," see n. 15 above; V. E. Watts, "Pearl as a Consolatio," MAE, XXXII, (1963), 34-36.

[26]Olympia is included in an edition of the Pearl, with modern rendering by Sir I. Gollancz, 1921.

[27]W. S. Johnson, "The Imagery and Diction of the Pearl," subtitled "Toward an Interpretation," ELH, XX, (1953), 161-180; reprinted by E. Vasta in Middle English Survey, 1965.

[28]Bishop, pp. 101-122; Kean, pp. 53-89, "Images of Transformation."

[29]Neophilologus, XLIX, (1965), 160-176.

[30]"Precious Metal and Gem Symbolism in Pearl," originally printed in The Lock Haven Review, VII, (1965), 1-12. Reprinted by Blanch in Sir Gawain and Pearl, 1967, pp. 86-97.

[31]M. R. Stern, "An Approach to Pearl," JEGP, LIV, (1955), 684-92.

[32]A. C. Spearing, " Symbolic and Dramatic Development in Pearl," MP, LX, (1962), 1-12. Reprinted by Blanch.

[33]See "Medieval Poetics: Geoffrey of Vinsauf and John of Garland" J. W. H. Atkins' English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase, 1961, pp. 91-118.

[34]Ibid.n.32, p. 119.

[35]The Gawain Poet, 1970.

[36]Published in 1971.

[37]"The Role of the Narrator in Pearl," MP, LIII, (1955), 73-76.

[38]Pearl in its Setting, pp. 49-72.

[39]Ibid. 38, pp. 49-50.

[40]Ibid. 38, p. 50.

PART I

THE DILEMMA OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER I - THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

The Pearl-poet was, above all, a master of contrast; in Purity, his description of sumptuous vessels serves to increase one's sense of how sacrilegious is their misuse;[1] in Patience, the joyousness of the seaman upon setting forth heightens the violence of the storm;[2] the winter morning of Gawain's testing appears much more cold and dismal because, in contrast, the poem discloses the world of the hall where Gawain has been regaled in warmth and comforted by laughter.[3] The problem central to Pearl, however, is one which would seem to call for the utmost gravity and control on the part of its creator; the event which merely threatens in Patience and Gawain and the Green Knight, has already occurred at the very beginning of Pearl, that event being the death of a much loved individual--more precisely, the untimely extinction of a faultless child. The theological difficulty of such an occurrence invites the most conspicuous decorum in imagery and tone: the justice of the life process itself is, and must be, questioned. The alternative to resolution of the poem's problem is despair, for the issue is starkly in evidence; a lesser poet might have been intimidated by its gravity. But the author of Pearl was daring. Instead of weakening the issue by invoking death as an abstraction, his poem concentrates, fiercely, as it were, upon the wonders and beauties of the natural world. Even in the most abstract and cerebral passages, one is never permitted to forget the bounty of life which, again, by contrast, makes the limitations of nature and her subjects that much more unreasonable and unnerving.[4] The poet has maintained this tension consistently, either directly, in

the dialogue or imagery, or indirectly, in the structure of the verse itself.

The world of the poem is not the seventh sphere, nor is it the region of theological intelligence inhabited, for example, by the dreamer in Piers Plowman.[5] The world of the poem is the earth, and one is made to wee the earth through the eyes of a man, a persona, who is earth-bound even in his dreams. Whatever is visionary, or, rather, envisioned, in this work, takes place not in a holy and sanctified trance but in the sleep of an adult human being who is both mentally and physically exhausted by grief:[6]

> þa3 kynde of Kryste me comfort kenned,
> My wreched wylle in wo ay wra3te.
> I felle vpon þat floury fla3t,
> Suche odour to my herne3 schot;
> I slode vpon a slepyng-sla3te
> On þat precios perle wythouten spot.[7]
> (11. 55-60)

So, too, the longing of the speaker for the Pearl-maiden is presented as anguish over the physical separation; such is the connotation of "luf-daungere" (l. 11). Loss is seen, at least initially, as a loss of sensorial pleasure, not to speak of sensual joy. The evocation of the maiden's physical form appears to accord with the dictum of Andreas the Chaplain that a blind man cannot love.[8] While the very physicality of the description in Pearl has caused some skepticism in regard to the dreamer's paternity, the relegation of the senses and sensory experience to the realm of sexuality seems a notion perhaps more helpful in reading nineteenth and twentieth century poetry than that of the fourteenth century.[9] One of the most striking and fearful

aspects of death is, of course, simple physical dissolution. And, since the dreamer is not only an earthly man but also a somewhat earth character, his experience of the world, and of his beloved child, has been of an apparent nature, as whose has not? The poignancy of the opening section stems from the persona's full expression, in imagination, of what the reader must realize is intangible:

> Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye
> To clanly clos in golde so clere,
> (11. 1-2)
>
> So rounde, so reken in vche araye,
> So smal, so smoþe her syde3 were,[10]
> (11. 6-7)

But might one not object, at this point, that the poem reads allegorically, that the persona addresses not only a small girl possibly named Pearl, or Margaret, but The Pearl of Great Price which the reader will be asked, later in the poem, to identify?[11] The question of sensus historicus aside, how is one to interpret the poet's indirection, his use, that is, of a certain amount of allegorical technique?[12] Despite the particular use of allegory in political works to veil meanings or identities, the more important function of allegory is clarification of meaning, and not creation of mystery or poetic ambiguity. Since the Pearl-poet is concerned only secondarily with meaning, and primarily with evocation, as we will see in Part II, the allegorical elements are present in Pearl in order to clarify or illuminate states of being rather than sequences of thought.[13] The poet's presentation of the bereaved as a jeweler, for example, who has lost his "priuy perle wythouten spotte," (l. 24), engenders a series of actions

which in turn correlate with the dreamer's inner development. The poet is able to avoid the frivolity of metaphor. Symbolic actions occur by means of the allegorical premise: if a jewel falls in the grass, one must search there, and not merely contemplate its loss. The symbols themselves are appropriate to the poem for several reasons, not the least of which is their quality of tangibility. Giving shape to diffuse emotions may well be the poet's business in general; it is the peculiar genius of the Pearl-poet to employ this faculty in order to create a heightened sense of loss, absence, and diffusion in time and space.

The presentation of loss through its contrary, abundant beauty, the bountiful, seems the prevailing poetic impulse through the fourth section of the work. One notes that such bounty is not easily traceable to a divine source--there is scarcely a mention of the deity outside of the dream itself. The Pearl-poet's nature, like the Nature of Jean de Meun, is also a force of limitation. Nature in Pearl, however, is not quite so co-operative in regard to God or man.[14] It is indeed the abundance and profusion of nature that irks the narrator, the immediate absurdity of nature's gratuitous bestowal and withdrawal that drives him to frenzy. He accepts cyclical processes which the continuation of life necessitates:

> For vch gresse mot grow of grayne3 dede;
> No whete were elle3 to wone wonne.
> (11. 31-32)

It is not the growth of wheat and barley which exacerbates his sorrow but that of "gilofre, gyngure and gromylyoun" (1. 43). He is driven

wild by the absurd loveliness of what is mutable:

> þat spot of spyse3 mot nede3 sprede,
> þer such ryche3 to rot is runne;
> Blome3 blayke and blwe and rede
> þer schyne3 ful schyr agayn þe sunne.
> (11. 25-28)

Of the "erber grene" (1. 38), the dreamer forlornly remarks:

> 3if hit wat3 semly on to sene,
> A fayr reflayr 3et fro hit flot.
> þer wonys þat worþyly, I wot and wene,
> My precious perle wythouten spot.
> (11. 45-48)

Everett and other have discussed the conventional use of garden imagery in the poetry of the Middle Ages;[15] and, as E. V. Gordon points out, in erotic poetry from the time of the Song of Songs to that of the 13th century lyric "Annot and Johan," the garden of spices acquires particular associations.[16] It would, of course, be rather misleading to view the imagery of the garden in Pearl as directly erotic; but, Gordon continues, "in the romances spices were commonly found in any landscape or garden intended to be surpassingly charming or luxuriant:...The use of plants for spice brought no utilitarian associations to the medieval mind; spices were then costly, and the flowers of spice-plants were believed to have the richest scents."[17] One is invited to correlate the beauty of the garden, and the beauty of the dead child; in his rebellion against the ways of Nature, the dreamer is shown as blind to the distinction between the two kinds of beauty, a distinction which the Pearl-maiden herself endeavors to explain:

> For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose

þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef.
Now þur3 kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close
To a perle of prys hit is put in pref.
(11. 269-272)

In the natural world, then, there are also phenomena of different kinds--different entities which are dependent upon physical causes. These seem to differ either in regard to their degree of permanence or to their degree of consciousness. More will be said later of the symbolic role played by the gemstones and precious metals in the work--why, that is, a poet of such high seriousness should have allotted so much space to these objects. At the beginning of Pearl, the narrator refuses to accept these degrees of differentiation; and, as his bereavement does occur to him at first in terms of sensual deprivation, the irony of his suffering, of which he is all too conscious, is enlarged in proportion to his refusal to accept that very consciousness. The narrator, like Gawain on his day of testing,[18] must face a supreme challenge away from society, and, once again, in a primal setting. Just as the deprivation is, at this point, physical deprivation, his anguish has a physical form; he has not merely lost sight of his jewel but "þur3 gresse to grounde hit fro me yot" (1. 10); heaven and earth, spirit and body have been sundered:

Syþen in þat spote hit fro me sprange,
Ofte haf I wayted, wyschande þat wele,
þat wont wat3 whyle deuoyde my wrange
And heuen my happe and al my hele.
þat dot3 bot þrych my hert þrange
My breste in bale bot bolne and bele;
(11. 13-18)

The narrator's swelling and burning grief is like a bodily wound

for which there is only momentary and sensory distraction:

> 3et þo3t me neuer so swete a sange
> As stylle stounde let to me stele.
> (11. 19-20)

If tempted to draw the inference from the lines above that, even in his abandoned state, the narrator is still susceptible to the glories of civilization, one has only to recall another character much comforted by "sweet sounds";[19] like the primitive Caliban, the bereaved in Pearl assigns will or intention to the inanimate earth:[20]

> For soþe þer fleten to me fele,
> To þenke hir color so clad in clot.
> O moul, þou marre3 a myry iule,
> My priuy perle wythouten spotte.
> (11. 21-24)

The remarkably effective image in line 21, cited above, derives its power from the almost brutal clarity of the perception: the jewel-like luminous aspect of the child as contrasted with the dark opacity of earth. No intercession of the spirit ameliorates the physical fact of death. The content of the repetitions and word-play in the first section is quite important; in the face of nature's vegetative profusion and continuity, in which such "ryches to rot is runne" (l. 26) and yet "vch gresse mot grow of grayne3 dede" (l. 31), what could possibly be more ironic than the narrator's fixation upon the harrowing individuation of the human condition? The key-word in the section is "spot," which comes to refer not only to the state of the narrator, his being in time and space, but also the Maiden's being outside of the human, local condition. Her being without the limitations of nature will come to be equated with the literal and first figurative

meaning of "without spot,"--"without blemish or fault." Thus, negation is made to imply the object being negated.

In detail: each stanza begins with the narrator's return, in the opening verses, to "þat spote," the grave, presumably, of his daughter;[21] but the various levels of punning upon "spot" enrich it so that it is no longer a setting but an image or symbol. The grave is a plot of earth, and the poet's constant attention to that fact again makes physical the difficult concept of dissolution. The narrator has lost the pearl "...in or erbere;/ þur3 gresse to grounde hit fro me yot" (11. 9-10); it distresses him to think she is "so clad in clot" (1. 22); as mentioned above, he blames the "moul" itself for destroying his jewel (1. 23). As if he expected the very clods to yield up what they have taken as their own, he searches the ground:

> Bifore þat spot my honde I spenned
> For care ful colde þat to me ea3t;
> (11. 29-30)

Moreover, obsessed as he is by the pearl's disappearance, disintegration yielding to placelessness, he returns again and again. The poem's technical structure reinforces the meaning for, at the beginning of each stanza, in the first line, the key-word must appear. The psychological fixation becomes an actual fixation: "Syþen in þat spote hit fro me sprange," he relates, (1. 13) he cannot escape. The stanzas also conclude with the same word and it is in the juxtaposition, in its dual use, that the suggestions proliferate. The pearl, one is informed no less than five times, is "wythouten spot" meaning 1) without blemish but 2) without location. If the pearl's lack of blemish

is taken to refer not only to her past condition of sinlessness but also to her present condition of being without body, being a pure spirit, then the blemish of mortality comes to be associated with this fixed being, this corporeal--spiritual state. The narrator is here seen as "grounded" by his location in time and space; he does not with to accept the dual nature of living man which is, on the one hand, vulnerable and easily destroyed, and, on the other hand, limited and aware of its limitations. Thought is quite literally trapped in the verse between absolute location and absolute placelessness: the first line in every stanza begins with reference to the dreamer's spot, the last to the maiden's lack of "spotte." The contrast, moreover, is one between human fault and absolute faultlessness. Reason, of course, cannot come to the narrator's aid, for-his senses and his will have destroyed any possibility of achieving the peculiarly human equilibrium:

> Bifore þat spot my honde I spenned
> For care ful colde þat to me ca3t;
> A deuely dele in my hert denned,
> þa3 resoun sette myseluen sa3t.
> I playned my perle þat þer wat3 spenned
> Wyth fyrce skylle3 þat faste fa3t;
> (11. 49-54)

The irony of the situation is apparent in the twice-employed word "spenned" in the passage cited above; the first time it is used, according to Gordon,[22] it means "clasped" whereas the second time, used in reference to the pearl, it means "imprisoned." It is the dreamer-to-be who is imprisoned, at this point, for his movements are restricted while the pearl, like the "spryngande spyce3" (l. 35) has "sprange"

(l. 13) away, or, at the very least, "hit trendeled doun," (l. 41)--again, movement away from the infamour "spot." Overwhelmed as he is by his teeming senses, he, too, is released, if only momentarily, from his body and its demands:

> Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space;
> My body on balke þer bod in sweuen.
> My goste is gon in Gode3 grace
> In auenture þer meruayle3 meuen.
> (11. 61-64)

But just before this, he is overcome by the fullness of physical nature, his sensations being of the less advanced faculties of touch and of olfaction:

> þa3 kynde of Kryst me comfort kenned,
> My wreched wylle in wo ay war3te.
> I felle vpon þat floury fla3t,
> Suche odour to my herne3 schot;
> I slode vpon a slepyng-sla3te
> On þat precios perle wythouten spot.
> (11. 55-60)

Bountiful nature, then, and the beauties of the natural world, at the beginning of the poem, increase the impression of loss in two ways; the health and luxuriance of that which is purely physical suggests the absence of the child from the narrator's world far more powerfully than dwelling upon that absence would have done; on the other hand, the poet, in presenting the narrator as being so fixed, so much a creature of time and place, also suggests the limitations upon his "wreched wylle in wo" (l. 56)--for, if the narrator has suffered a loss in terms of pure pleasure, he has the innocence of the happy as well. From the profusion of sensory impressions, the poet has created a necessity, an esthetic necessity, for more

spiritual probings on the part of his persona. It is at this point that the dream begins.

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As support for her view that Pearl must be read as a spiritual autobiography, Sister Madeleva writes of the dream itself that "in the magic wonder of the place the poet forgot all grief, which would be highly improbable in the case of an inconsolable father."[23] From this she deduces that "such beauty would be to him rather a mockery than a source of complete oblivion."[24] But Constance Hieatt has pointed out that the converse is psychologically valid: in that dreams give form to, and fulfill, the deepest wishes and desires of the individual, the dreamer's impression of emotional well-being while asleep testifies to the acuity of the poet in matters of characterization.[25] And the setting in which the dream takes place is not outlandish although it is truly wonderful--more wonderful, perhaps, in that it is the same setting as that in which the dreamer has fallen asleep. There is one major difference, however, in its material composition: the elements which constitute the world of the dream preclude mutability, at least in terms of human time. There is also a qualitative difference in the creatures found therein--the birds sing in harmony, and discord in nature is stilled:

> Fowle3 þer flowen in fryth in fere,
> Of flaumbande hwe3, boþe smale and grete;
> Bot sytole-stryng and gyternere
> Har reken myrþe mo3t not retrete;
> For quen þose brydde3 her wynge3 bete,
> þay songen wyth a swete asent.
> (11. 89-94)

The dream-world, while certainly an exotic one, seems not so much a repudiation of the natural world and its beauties as a transmutation of them. The splendour which the dreamer beholds seems more closely related in kind to that of Bercilak's castle and the Celtic courts of faerie than to Henry Suso's vision of the Coelum Empyrean.[26] The dream-setting is one of nature intensified; if one reads the dreamer's descriptions closely, the place is not difficult to envision:

> I ne wyste in þis worlde quere þat hit wace,
> Bot I knew me keste þer klyfe3 cleuen;
> Towarde a foreste I bere þe face,
> Where rych rokke3 wer to dyscreuen.
> (11. 65-68)

> Dubbed wern alle þo downe3 syde3
> Wyth crystal klyffe3 so cler of kynde.
> Holtewode3 bry3t aboute hem byde3
> Of bolle3 as blwe as ble of Ynde;
> (11. 73-77)

> I welke ay forth in wely wyse;
> No bonk so byg þat did me dere3.
> þe fyrre in þe fryth, þe feier con ryse
> þe playn, þe plonte3, þe spyse, þe pere3;
> And rawe3 and rande3 and rych reuere3,
> As fyldor fyn her bonkes brent.
> I wan to a water by schore þat schere3--
> Lorde, dere wat3 hit adubbement!
> (11. 101-108)

But, one asks, has not the dreamer had enough of this world, even the world of marvels and glories? Why does the environment make him oblivious to his sorrow? Or is the setting merely concurrent with his oblivion? And, above all, how is one to interpret this transmutation of nature with its crystal cliffs and jeweled pathways? The key-word in Section II of the poem is "adubbement"; since it

appears no less than nine times within sixty lines, it may be assumed to be of some importance in governing the content and intent of the remaining verse.

In the first section of the poem, up to and including that moment in which the narrator falls into his heavy, trance-like sleep and becomes a somewhat different character, as the dreamer, the poet has presented nature as sameness-in-flux, the cyclical integrity of which the narrator can no longer tolerate (11. 49-60). The disarrangement of the narrator's faculties, (sense, reason, will), provides esthetic motivation, as it were, for the dream itself which is to have a restorative or healing effect. The first step in this process is restoration of sensory delights: the narrator must learn once again to praise and celebrate the world as God's creation. That which is "dubbed," i.e., adorned, implies an adorner; it also implies the order inherent in all art.[27] Surprisingly, the concept or image of the Deity as practitioner of the Eternal Art, while seeming, at first, a symboliste notion, had some currency in medieval times and is developed in the writings of St. Bonaventura.[28] Moreover, it will be remarked that the stuff of earth reappears in the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem (11. 973-1032); indeed, jewels and gemstones, precious pearls and precious metals, serve a different purpose than that of mere embellishment. In the second section of the poem, there seems little reason not to accept the dreamer's avowal that the scene itself, before there is any indication of the Pearl-maiden's presence, provides certain solace:

> The dubbement dere of doun and dale3,
> Of wod and water and wlonk playne3,
> Bylde in me blysse, abated my bale3,
> Fordidden my stresse, dystryed my payne3,
> Doun after a strem þat dry3tly hale3
> I bowed in blys, bredful my brayne3;
> þe fyrre I fol3ed þose floty vale3,
> þe more strenghþe of ioye myn herte strayne3.
> (11. 121-128)

"Dubbement" appears to be playing a very important part in the healing of the formerly distraught narrator. While one cannot often accept what the dreamer within the dream says or thinks in any but an ironic sense, when he is presented as a naif, yet his report of his feelings is, in contrast, straightforward.[29] The syntax in the passage cited above is plain: what comforts him is not spiritual but esthetic in kind. When one recalls that the speaker is himself a jeweler, a pattern or motif begins to show itself; within the poem, a fairly consistent relation exists between the phenomenal and the fashioned, in which God, or, since the Deity is not active in the work, Creative Force is to the phenomenal world as the artist is to the materials of his craft or art. Had it not been for this aspect of the work, the poet might well have depicted the bereaved as the prince of the opening lines; the logic would not have been very different. And in that the narrator is a jeweler, with, one assumes, more than a casual interest in stones and settings, the justification for the poem's coronal form becomes clearer: it is a kind of celebration in imitation of the deity, the Christian God who, in this poem, is able to give shape even to something of nothing: as the Maiden tells the dreamer, "þat o3t of no3t hat3 mad þe cler" (l. 274).[30] While much more needs to be said

in reference to the poem as objet, and in reference to the peculiar significance of each stone and metal, what seems to be of importance in the use of gems at the beginning of the dream-vision is that these gems initiate a reconciliation, on the part of the dreamer, with the divine will as the artificer of such:

> The dubbemente of þo derworth depe
> Wern bonke3 bene of beryl bry3t.
> Swangeande swete þe water con swepe.
> Wyth a rownande rourde raykande ary3t.
> In þe founce þer stonden stone3 stepe,
> As glente þur3 glas þat glowed and gly3t,
> As stremande sterne3, quen stroþe-men slepe,
> Staren in welkyn in wynter ny3t;
> For vche a pobbel in pole þer py3t
> Wat3 emerad, saffer, oþer gemme gente,
> þat alle þe lo3e lemed of ly3t,
> So dere wat3 hit adubbement.
> (11. 109-120)

While commentators pass over the section (11. 61-120) with some kind words for the glorious imagery, the curious admixture of the rough and the polished, in the passage cited above, and others, has not been accounted for.[31] It is too effective to be mere connective tissue. How, then, does such an admixture function in the poem as a whole? There is, in this stanza, an effective juxtaposition of images which serve to create an impression of control over natural forces. Between the banks of beryl, the dreamer hears, not a gently trickle of water as in a court fountain, but "a rownande rourde raykande ary3t," (1. 112);[32] he is then made to look down in the "founce" where the stones are shining, but the word which suggests that their shining is more than the glitter of gewgaws is "stepe," used to indicate the brilliance and the luminous quality of stars and eyes as

well as jewels.[33] A simile, and one which is extended, opens up a vista not only of the earth but of the heavens as well. The somewhat problematic reference to "strope-men" seems to indicate or suggest low-lying marshland, and, close to that humble station, physically and by association socially as well, men asleep.

At this point, one may observe just how sensitive the poet is to phenomena of space or proportion. Like the poet or redactor of the Book of Job, who was also involved in assimilating the evil of despair to the notion of a just God, the Pearl-poet exploits the relative insignificance of the human in the cosmic scheme.[34] Line 116, in its starkness and scope, seems to have come from an entirely different kind of poem, and threatens to upset the decorum of its stanza. Nothing in either Purity or Patience equals, in terms of Biblical severity, this observation on the stars which "Staren in welkyn in wynter ny3t." The suggestion of wind in the alliteration on "w," the broad and open "a" in "staren," which, according to Gordon, does not mean "shine," or is not its equivalent, and the metaphoric suggestion of cold and darkness would suit, as well, an Anglo-Saxon heroic poem. It is an awe-inspiring line, with its intimation of the indifference and grandeur of eternity. Then one realizes that these images are being employed in a simile, that the dreamer is not seeing stars but comparing the jewels in the basin of a pool to stars; there is a sharp drop from Line 116 to Line 117:

> For vche a pobbel in pole þer py3t
> Wat3 emerad, saffer, oþer gemme gente.
> (11. 117-118)

Are we to assume, then, that the poet simply knew a fine image when he had written one, and could not resist its insertion? Would it not be more likely that an image of such grandeur and power, set in the center of a stanza, would affect both the preceding and the following lines in a way that only an inexperienced poet could overlook? While a simile in logic remains a simile, in poetry, by association, meanings are carried over even when they have been negated.[35] In effect, that the stones in the pool resemble stars incorporates the stars in them. The lyric poet, whose actors do not appear in mythic guise and who do not act on a cosmic stage, nonetheless suggests that such a realm exists. The world in which man lives, and in which he can take pleasure, gains thereby in importance. These lines deal with reflections, a far from trivial field of inquiry for medieval thinkers, as anyone who reads Jean de Meun's portion of the Roman de la rose discovers.[36] These images in Pearl, like the famous and enigmatic twin crystals in the section by Guillaume de Lorris,[37] utilize the reflective quality of water rather than mirror or optic device of some sort; the poet, writing of images seen in a pool, may evade more easily issues such as the deception implicit in appearances for, in naturalistic terms, what one observes in water both reflects the world and distorts it. The Pearl-poet can imply, or, rather, suggest a scheme in which the macrocosm is reflected in objects on the microcosmic scale without undue insistence or rhetorical extravagance: the poem does not, and should not strive towards presenting this, after all, as the best of possible worlds.[38] Yet such an illu-

sion is imagined as of comfort to the dreamer; and another association linking jewels and heavenly bodies is realized:

> For vche a pobbel in pole þer py3t
> Wat3 emerad, saffer, oþer gemme gente,
> þat alle þe lo3e lemed of ly3t,
> (ll. 117-119)

The light of these jewels, the "glemande glory þat of hem glent," (l. 70), in the course of the dreamer's spiritual struggles, provides illumination while his soul is in transition, as it were, between the world of nature and the kingdom of heaven, at least as he is made to see it. Much later in the poem, the same word, "ly3t," is used again, and its significance made explicit:

> Of sunne ne mone had þay no nede;
> þe self God wat3 her lombe-ly3t,
> þe Lombe her lantyrne, wythouten drede;
> þur3 hym blysned þe bor3 al bry3t.
> þur3 wo3e and won my lokyng 3ede.
> For sotyle cler no3t lette no ly3t.
>
> **********
>
> A reuer of þe trone þer ran outry3te
> Wat3 bry3ter þen hoþe þe sunne and mone.
> (ll. 1045-50; 1055-56)

Again there is a progression in the imagery from the purely phenomenal, sun and moon, to the man-made, or artificial, "lantyrne," then back to the phenomenal again. One observes that the verse is negating in fact that which is most powerful in it: the light of the Lord is "bry3ter þen" suns, moons, and lamps, but, because these are included in the verse, they tend to be subsumed by the holy light in meaning as well.

Adornment, then, when presented in the same metaphoric breath with the created universe, becomes a more serious service. Moreover, the

poet employs, in the refrain of the second section, a word with several meanings even in its common usage: "dere," Within the poem, it means, according to context: noble and glorious (11. 72, 85, 97, 108, 120, 920); exalted (1. 492); prized or precious (11. 1183, 1208); good (1. 504); beloved (11. 368, 758, 795); pleasing (11. 400, 880); as a noun, in the sense of "worthy ones" (1. 777); and, as an adverb, it is used to mean "for a great price" (1. 733).[39] The word, thus constantly employed, because of the repetition, would seem to have some significance; given the word's basic double meaning, i.e. valued/expensive, as used in Section II, it strengthens the sense of effort and design in the "dubbemente."

The poet does not apply the same term to the abudnant beauties of the phenomenal world in the first section; the element of personality, and with it the notion of that which is precious, has been absent. Earth is, of course, indifferent to what it destroys, but the fabulous arrangement of gems that constitutes the "natural" world of the dream implies intention. The dreamer, however, finding comfort in the wonders of the place, mistakes what is nonetheless earthly beauty for the perfection of heaven:

> More of wele wat3 in þat wyse
> þen I cowþe telle þa3 I tom hade,
> For vrþely herte my3t not suffyse
> To þe tenþe dole of þo gladne3 glade;
> Forþy I þo3t þat Paradyse
> Wat3 þer ouer gayn þo bonke3 brade.
> (11. 133-138)

The emphatic brevity of Line 137 stresses the dreamer's faulty logic: the loveliness around him makes him feel better; therefore he is ap-

proaching Paradise. Yet he passes over his own words so blithely that their irony cannot be lost on the reader; "vrþely herte" indeed does not "suffyse," and, instead of becoming reconciled to the created universe, and to his own limited nature, which is better able to perceive beauty than truth, he becomes increasingly desirous of the absolute:

> I hoped þe water were a deuyse
> Bytwene myrþe3 by mere3 made;
> By3onde þe broke, by slente oþer slade,
> I hoped þat mote merked wore.
> Bot þe water wat3 depe, I dorst not wade,
> And euer me longed ay more and more.
> (11. 139-144)

The dreamer's report on the kingdom of heaven, or what he understands has been a glimpse of it, has some bearing on the way in which he perceives the Pearl-maiden. That the parable of the pearl of great price is intended seriously, there is little doubt--but the way in which the dreamer envisions her has as much to do with his condition as it has to do with her significance. The Maiden is presented, after all is said and done, as a creature of his imagination. While the Maiden stresses the actions and attitudes inherent in the godhead, in the parables and in the narrative of the crucifixion, (Section XIV), or in the refrains such as "For the grace of God is gret innoghe," (Section XI), the dreamer is apparently interested in the physical manifestations of such actions and attitudes which constitute "þe grounde of alle "his" blysse," as in Section VI. Thus, the heavenly city, for better or worse, is the city which the jeweler looks upon:

> As John þise stone3 in writ con nemme,
> I knewe þe name after his tale:

Jasper hy3t þe fyrst gemme
þat I on þe fyrst basse con wale:
He glente grene in þe lowest hemme;
Saffer helde þe secounde stale;
þe calsydoyne þenne wythouten wemme
In þe þryd table con purly pale
þe emerade þe furþe so grene of scale;
þe sardonyse þe fyfþe ston;
þe sexte þe rybehe con hit wale
In the Apocalyppce, þe apostel John.
(11. 997-1008)

The section in which the stanza cited above is found has been treated primarily as a tour-de-force on the part of the poet. Indeed, that a complete lapidary should be found at the heart of a poem like Pearl has been accepted as a virtuoso's employment of a conventional form.[40] But this "vision" of the heavenly Jerusalem remains the vision of a human, at times all too human, being who cannot see without his senses; again, he has mistaken the work of God, God's manisfestation in objects, for the whole. The dreamer proceeds to enumerate the gems of the heavenly city with the diligence of a small boy reciting his catechism:

þe a3tþe þe beryl cler and quyt;
þe topasye twynne-hew þe nente endent;
þe crysopase þe tenþe is ty3t;
þe jacynght þe enleuenþe gent;
þe twelfþe, þe gentyleste in vch a plyt,
þe amatyst purpre wyth ynde blente;
(11. 1011-1014)

The repetition of the definite article and the regularity of the rhythm in this section serve to flatten out the tone, an effect of which the poet must have been conscious. Far from suggesting, however, any spirtual movement, the vision has an epicurean stillness and perfection of its own. Heaven has been invested with the matter of earth:

As John deuysed 3et sa3 I þare
þise twelue degres wern brode and stayre;
þe cyte stod abof ful sware,
As longe as brode as hy3e ful fayre;
þe strete3 of golde as glasse al bare,
þe wal of jasper þat glent as glayre;
þe wone3 wythinne enurned ware
Wyth alle kynne3 perre þat mo3t repayre.
þenne helde vch sware of þis manayre
Twelue forlonge space, er euer hit fon,
Of he3t, of brede, of lenþe to cayre,
For meten hit sy3 þe apostel John.
(11. 1021-1032)

If one looks to the key word, used in the refrain and headline of each stanza, in the passage immediately preceding the dreamer's description of the heavenly city, one observes that it is in some senses equivalent to the word "spotte" in the first group of stanzas, and is handled in similar fashion; the word in Section XVI is "mote," and variations such as "moteles" and "motele3," both of which Gordon thinks mean "spotless."[41] Once again, it is the dreamer who conceives the non-physical in spatial terms; and, again, it is the Maiden who can gain access to the non-physical world because whe herself is, of course, a beatified spirit:

'Motele3 may so meke and mylde,'
þen sayde I to þat lufly flor,
'Bryng me to þat bygly bylde
And let me se þy blysful bor.'
þat schene sayde: 'þat God wyl schylde;
þou may not enter wythinne hys tor,
Bot of þe Lombe I haue þe aquylde
For a sy3t þerof þur3 gret fauor.
Vtwyth to se þat clene cloyster
þou may, bot inwyth not a fote;
To strech in þe strete þou hat3 no vygour,
Bot þou wer clene wythouten mote.
(11. 961-972)

The dreamer initiates this segment of the discussion with a comic

attempt to locate both a spirit and a spiritual state-of-being:[42]

> Haf 3e wone3 in castel-walle,
> Ne manner þer 3e may mete and won?
> þou telle3 me of Jerusalem þe ryche ryalle,
> þer Dauid dere wat3 dy3t on trone,
> Bot by þyse holte3 hit con not hone,
> Bot in Judee hit is, þat noble note.
> As 3e ar maskele3 vnder mone,
> Your wone3 schulde be wythouten mote.
> (11. 917-924)

But when the Maiden replies, she does not give a description of the city but an account of certain spiritual events and processes:

> 'That mote þou mene3 in Judy londe,'
> þat specyal spyce þen to me spakk,
> 'þat is þe cyte þat þe Lombe con fonde
> To soffer inne sor for mane3 sake,
> þe olde Jerusalem to vnderstande;
> For þere þe olde gulte wat3 don to slake.
> Bot þe nwe, þat ly3t of Gode3 sonde,
> þe apostel in Apocalyppce in theme con take.
> þe Lompe þer wythouten spotte3 blake
> Hat3 feryed þyder hys fayre flote;
> And as hys flok is wythouten flake,
> So is hys mote wythouten moote.
> (11. 937-948)

In the passage above, the verbs are more particular and of greater importance than the nouns: Jerusalem signifies "to soffer," "to vnderstonde," "to slake,"[43] "feryed þyder." The imagery implied is that of Christ as both shepherd and lamb--the Pearl-maiden says nothing of jewels. The almost obsessive punning upon "spot/mote" as "blemish/location" recurs; the "as... So" construction in Lines 947-48 makes sense only if paraphrased with the double meaning in mind: i.e., Just as his flock (company) is without blemish (fault), so his dwelling is without place. Again, there seems to be an equation of fleshly mortality with specificity and both with human blemish or

fault. There is yet another meaning for "mote/moote" which comes about, for the dreamer, as the result of the first two, that third meaning being "dispute." Certainly, the dreamer's dispute with God is the result of his limited perception and his fixed position in time and space; but just as Christ and the beatified spirits are without human blemish, and without location in time and space, so Jerusalem is, the Maiden informs the dreamer, "'cete of God, 'oþer 'sy3t of pes,'" (l. 952). She specifies, however, that there are indeed two:

> Of motes two to carpe clene
> And Jerusalem hy3t boþe nawþeles--
> (ll. 949-950)

One is the worldly city where "Wyth payne to suffer þe Lombe hit chese" (l. 954); but, she continues:

> In þat oþer is no3t bot pes to glene
> þat ay schal laste wythouten reles.
> (ll. 955-956)

And there are conditions:

> þat is þe bor3 þat we to pres
> Fro þat oure flesch be layd to rote.
> þer glory and blysse schal euer encres
> To þe meyny þat is wythouten mote.
> (ll. 957-960)

The beautiful and substantial city which the dreamer beholds, however, is not qualitatively the same; yet one is informed by the Maiden that the dreamer's glimpse of heaven has been obtained "of þe Lombe," (l. 967) "þur3 gret fauor," (l. 968). It would appear that the beauty, the ordered beauty, of the phenomenal world is presented as the human face or aspect of the divine, and not precisely the correlative of

that divinity since its counterpart is considered the more perfect. The value of such beauty is not to be scorned; thus the continuous emphasis on jewels, those objects which, in this world, are most precious to men. The dreamer is able to sense or conceive of the divine for a moment, perhaps, and only after Section XVII when he is moved by the ornate splendour of his particular Jerusalem; only then can he briefly dispose of the phenomenal:

> Of sunne ne mone had þay no nede;
> þe self God wat3 her lombe-ly3t.
> þe Lombe her lantyrne, wythouten drede;
> þur3 hym blysned þe bor3 al bry3t.
> (ll. 1045-1048)

> Kyrk ne temple þerinne wat3 non 3ete,
> Chapel ne temple þat euer wat3 set;
> þe Almy3ty wat3 her mynster mete,
> þe Lombe þe sakerfyse þer to refet.
> (ll. 1061-1064)

The dreamer's intuition of the godhead is almost immediately obscured, however, by the omnipresence, for him, of phenomena:

> The mone may þerof acroche no my3te;
> To spotty ho is, of body to grym,
> And also þer ne is neuer ny3t.
> (ll. 1069-1071)

> An-vnder mone so great merwayle
> No fleschly hert ne my3t endeure,
> As quen I blusched vpon þat bayle,
> I stod as stylle as dased quayle
> For ferly of þat frelich fygure,
> þat felde I nawþer reste ne trauayle,
> So wat3 I rauyste wyth glymme pure.
> (ll. 1081-1088)

The poet again suggests the importance of the individual's plight by placing him in a cosmic scheme; the dreamer's sense of having to return to the physical world, to the world of creatures, is conveyed

in a set of images: the dreamer's attention moves from the "planete3" (l. 1075), to "þe self sunne" (l. 1076), from the "tres ful schym" (l. 1077), to their "twelue fryte3 of lyf" (l. 1078). In his condition "an-vnder mone" (l. 1081), he is then most conscious of his "fleschly hert" and of his connections with creatures below him in the chain of being; his intuition of the divine and purely spiritual makes him, by contrast "as stylle as dased quayle" (l. 1085). In the last sections of the poem, the dreamer is made to be well aware of his limitations:

> So wat3 I rauyste wyth glymme pure.
> For I dar say wyth conciens sure,
> Hade bodyly burne abiden þat bone,
> þa3 alle clerke3 hym hade in cure,
> His lyf were loste an-vnder mone.
> (11. 1087-1092)

The dreamer then is free to take "delyt," the key word in the following section, in the images brought forth by his imagination; one notes the emphasis, by repetition and variation, placed upon the sense of sight and the joy inherent in appearances in the dreamer's praise of the "Lombe":

> The Lombe delyt non lyste to wene
> þa3 he were hurt and wounde hade,
> In his sembelaunt wat3 neuer sene,
> So wern his glente3 gloryous glade.
> I loked among his meyny schene
> How þay wyth lyf wern laste and lade;
> þen sa3 I þer my lyttel quene
> þat I wende had standen by me in sclade.
> (11. 1141-1148)

This new enthusiasm also overwhelms the dreamer, since no human, the poet seems to be implying, seems to be able to remain in a continual state of resolution and perfection;[44] but the dreamer's despair has

been overcome, his sense of worship restored; in the final section, he can conclude that "He gef vus to be his homly hyne; Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay" (11. 1211-1212). His relation to the phenomenal and the beautiful, to that which is precious in human life, has been affected; at the end of the poem, when seeing the beautiful, he is humble and still as "dased quayle," (1. 1085); when he had first seen the Maiden, he relates, "I stod as hende as hawk in halle," (1. 184). What first appears to be a somewhat naive depiction of a beatified spirit begins to make more poetic sense when one takes the entire relationship of the narrator-dreamer to the world of phenomena into account. While the beautiful may not be true, and the dreamer expresses doubt at the end (11. 1182-1188), it is the medium of reconciliation to the existence of mortal creatures. Thus, the dreamer must imagine, make images of, his loved one; the pathos and charm of his description arise from the limitation of his mode of thought, its inherent insufficiency. He desires, of course, "more and more":

> The more I frayste hyr fayre face,
> Her fygure fyn quen I had fonte,
> Suche gladande glory con to me glace
> As lyttel byfore þerto wat3 wonte.
> To calle hyr lyste con me enchace,
> Bot baysment gef myn hert a brunt.
> I se3 hyr in so strange a place,
> Such a burre my3t make myn herte blunt.
> þenne vere3 ho vp her fayre frount,
> Hyr vysage whyt as playn yuore;
> þat stonge myn hert ful stray atount,
> And euer þe lenger, þe more and more.
> (11. 169-180)

The dreamer's emotional greediness, his dread "Lest ho me eschaped þat I þer chos" (1. 187), is not quieted by the "more and more" he

does receive, or that he is capable of imagining. The lost child becomes more and more of a decorated object, "A precios pyece in perle3 py3t" (l. 192): the dreamer is distracted from the meaning of the encounter, and the meaning of the pearl of great price, by the spectacle:

> Perle3 py3te of ryal prys
> þere mo3t mon by grace haf sene,
> Quen þat frech as flor-de-lys
> Doun þe bonke con bo3e bydene.
> Al blyshande whyt wat3 hir beau biys,
> Vpon at syde3, and bounden bene
> Wyth þe myryeste margarys, at my deuyse,
> þat euer I se3 3et with myn ene;
> Wyth lappe3 large, I wot and wene,
> Dubbed with double perle and dy3te;
> Her cortel of self sute schene,
> Wyth precios perle3 al vmbepy3te.
> (ll. 193-204)

Yet another twelve lines are given over to description of the Maiden's adornment and raiment; these are described, not, as one would expect, in mystic terms, but in terms of a man sensitive to the beauty of gemstones:[45]

> A py3t coroune 3et wer þat gyrle
> O mariorys and non oþer ston,
> Hi3e pynakled of cler quyt perle,
> Wyth flurted flowre3 perfet vpon.
> To hed hade ho non oþer werle;
> Her here leke, al hyr vmbegon,
> Her semblaunt sade for doc oþer erle,
> Her ble more bla3t þan whalle3 bon.
> As schorne golde schyr her fax þenne schon,
> On schyldere3 þat leghe vnlapped ly3te.
> Her depe colour 3et wonted non
> Of precios perle in porfyl py3te.
> (ll. 204-216)

The pearl of great price is itself presented as an extremely valuable gem; the dreamer perceives its beauty directly, rather than its truth:

Py3t wate poyned and vche a hemme
At honde, at syde3, at ouerture,
Wyth whyte perle and non oþer gemme,
And bornyste quyte wat3 hyr uesture.
Bot a wonder perle wythouten wemme
Inmydde3 hyr breste wat3 sette so sure;
A manne3 dom mo3t dry3ly demme,
Er mynde mo3t mo3t malte in hit mesure.
I hope no tong mo3t endure
No sauerly saghe say of þat sy3t,
So wat3 hit clene and cler and pure,
þat precios perle þer hit wat3 py3t.
(11. 217-228)

That cleanness, clearness and purity are used metaphorically to describe states of the soul indicates that their presence in this stanza is far from accidental. In the next chapter, the poet's mastery of another vocabulary to describe religious emotions will be presented, suggesting that, once more, the narrator-dreamer is not the poet and that the set of images which the dreamer-narrator uses stems not from an involuntary absorption by the poet of contemporary mystical diction and thought but from an attempt made by the poet to characterize, (and, in characterizing, one exaggerates) the religious sensibility of the intelligent and sensitive but limited human being. In his references to, and images of, the world of phenomena, in which gemstones and jewels seem most complete and perfect as objects, the Pearl-poet substantiates the claim of beauty to a place of honor in the cosmic scheme and in the life, emotional and spiritual, of man. Inherent in the language of Pearl is the argument that, in the words of George Santayana,

> Sensuous beauty is not the greatest or most important element of effect, but it is the most primitive and fundamental, and the most universal. There is no effect of form which an effect of material could not enhance,

and this effect of material, underlying that of form, raises the latter to a higher power and gives the beauty of the object a certain poignancy, thoroughness and infinity which it otherwise would have lacked. The Parthenon not in marble, the king's crown not of gold, and the stars not of fire, would be feeble and prosaic things. The greater hold which material beauty has upon the senses, stimulates us here, where the form is also sublime, and lifts and intensifies our emotions. We need this stimulus if our perceptions are to reach the highest pitch of strength and acuteness. Nothing can be ravishing that is not beautiful pervasively.[46]

Footnotes

[1]Purity, ed. R. J. Menner, 1921. See in particular the descriptions of the ornaments brought into the hall of Belshazzar, i.e., the "couered cowpes as casteles arayed," 11. 1401-1464.

[2]Patience, ed. H. Bateson, 1918. The sailors' expectations of fair weather are the poet's addition; see 11. 120-132.

[3]Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, 2nd edition by Norman Davis, 1967. See 11. 712-762 and 875-969; also, 2069-2090. First the poet presents the coldness of nature, then the warmth of human fellowship, and then another scene of natural hardship.

[4]J. Huizinga, in The Waning of the Middle Ages, 1924, discusses similar contrasts in the poetry of Villon where the inability to free oneself from the attachment to matter (p. 143) appears in comparisons of former beauty with present decline. See Chapter XI, "The Vision of Death."

[5]While Long Will does indeed begin with the World, and on earth, many characters inhabit their metaphors, i.e., the Barn of Unity or even the Tower of Truth. See C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 1936, pp. 158-163 for his comments on sacramentalism.

[6]According to the O.E.D. "sla3te" may mean "spell" or "stroke." P. M. Kean points out, however, that "stroke" is "more probable than 'spell' since 'slaught' in a non-figurative sense means 'slaughter.'" Pearl: An Interpretation, p. 27, n. 40.

[7]All quotations from Pearl, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the E. V. Gordon edition of 1953.

[8]The argument is essentially the same as that expressed by having the Lover, in The Romance of the Rose, smitten through the eye by the God of Love. For comment on "Luf-daungere," see the article on the same by W. R. Barron, listed in the bibliography.

[9]R. H. Robbins, of the mystical and devotional works in Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries, 1952, writes: "There are striking similarities between the mystical pieces in this group and the secular love lyrics." The lyrics, however, are certainly not erotic in the contemporary sense of the word but appreciative; see pp. 120-226, "Courtly Love Lyrics."

[10]As Gordon points out, pp. 45-46, this is indeed an image used in the courtly tradition to describe the beauty of the lady, i.e., in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, 1. 111 and 1. 1248.

[11]The pearl of great price is not explicitly discussed as such until Section XIII, in which the dreamer is instructed to "forsake þe worlde wode/ And porehase þy perle maskelles," (ll. 743-744).

[12]Bishop gives the final blow to the moribund issue of the Maiden's historical existence, in Pearl in its Setting, pp. 1-36. Also, cf. C. F. Brown and G. G. Coulton articles, listed in the Bibliography.

[13]The poet is evidently less concerned with homily in Pearl than he is in Purity; nor is his art one which "normally digresses in order to clear up some difficulty or argument," as Langland's is, according to A. C. Spearing, "The Art of Preaching and Piers Plowman," reprinted in Chaucer and His Contemporaries, pp. 270-271.

[14]E. Talbot Donaldson, in "Oysters, Forsooth: Two Readings in 'Pearl,'" Neophililogische Mitteilungen, LXXIII, (1972), 75-82 offers a reading of line 755 which increases the role of Nature; according to Donaldson, the dreamer asks the Maiden what kind of "ostriys" have brought forth such a beautiful pearl. Such a reference to the humble origins of the soul reveals the ambiguity of the poet towards the natural world. And perhaps, as Donaldson says, it is a "joke for the poet...on the limitations of artifice" as well. (p. 79)

[15]Dorothy Everett in Essays on Middle English Literature, 1955, pp. 85-96; C. A. Luttrell, "Pearl: Symbolism in a Garden Setting," Neophilologus, XLIX, (1965), 160-176.

[16]In the notes to his edition, p. 48.

[17]Gordon, p. 48.

[18]There is a difference, of course, between wilderness and garden as primal setting; one notes that the very form of as opposed to the varied length of the Gawain stanzas, despite their tight endings, more rambling, is much like a word-garden; the garden setting, then, is more appropriate to the circumscribed form, as well as the circumscribed situation. See Chapter V, on the stanza itself.

[19]It is interesting that Caliban, too, cannot accept the superiority of beings such as Prospero; on the link between grief and rebellion in Pearl, see Kean, pp. 234-237.

[20]Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, 1935, pp. 102-208, "Static Religion."

[21]A young child "nerre þen aunte or nece" (l. 233); see n. 11 above.

[22]Gordon is corroborated by I. Gollancz in this instance; see the latter's edition of 1921.

[23]Sister M. Madeleva, Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness, p. 28

[24]Madeleva, p. 29.

[25]Realism and the Dream Vision Tradition, p. 63.

[26]The resemblance is seized by Sister Madeleva who seems to confuse analogus language with source material; cf. pp. 32-36.

[27]Ian Bishop, p. 90: "Nothing emphasizes more strongly the fact that the poet thinks of the landscape as the work of an artist that the use of 'adubbemente' and 'dubbed' as the link-words throughout this stanza group."

[28]Saint Bonaventure, Itinerium Mentis in Deum, trans. Philotheus Boehner, O. F. M., 1956.

[29]His dream character surfaces when he first addresses the Maiden in Section V. Only then does he manifest distinctly child-like characteristics.

[30]E. G. Bishop's Chapter VI, pp. 73-96. This is by far the most comprehensive interpretation but the imitative aspect of creation is barely discussed except in its connection with the "game of art."

[31]Kean, Bishop and even R. J. Blanch, listed in the bibliography, in his article on gem symbolism; here, perhaps, we find an imagistic foreshadowing of ll. 745-756, investigated by Donaldson. Cf. n. 14 above.

[32]W. S. Johnson has commented upon the various images of water in the poem and on their significance; see "The Imagery and Diction of The Pearl: Toward an Interpretation," ELH, XX, (1953), 161-180.

[33]The crystals in the fountain of Narcissus are also enigmatic, and confuse the eye with what it sees; cf. Le roman de la rose, ed. E. Langlois, 1922, ll. 1439-1680.

[34]In that both Job and the persona in Pearl are duly impressed, in time, with the scope of God's creative power; and both learn to avoid a certain kind of question; Job, however, understands such avoidance.

[35]This phenomenon resolves the problem, sometimes, of describing God in negatives;--in Pearl, ll. 1045-1056.

[36]Whereas Guillaume de Lorris employs optical illusion, Jean de Meun endows it with religious significance. Cf. Frederick Goldin, The Mirror of Narcissus, 1967, pp. 59-63.

[37]Realism and the Dream Vision Tradition, p. 15.

[38]In the final section, after all, the dreamer refers to his condition as a "doel-doungeon," l. 1186.

[39]Gordon, p. 126; based on O. E. D. readings.

[40]Even the estimable Bishop evades the question of its awkwardness when taken whole as a tour-de-force; Pearl in its Setting, p. 84.

[41]Gordon, p. 144.

[42]Again, a primitive mode of thought; Bergson, see n. 20 above, writes, (p. 131): Nature "to the idea of inevitable death...opposes the image of a continuation of life after death...religion is a defensive reaction against the representation by intelligence of the inevitably of death."

[43]The complete phrase "don to slake" signifies "brought to an end" rather than merely "to abate"; Gordon, p. 153.

[44]The poet may have gained some knowledge of how key words function from the Psalms with which (see Pearl 11. 697-700) he was familiar; both the key-word technique and this specific attitude are to be found therein, according to Martin Buber; Good and Evil, 1952, pp. 52-56.

[45]Again, Bishop provides the best discussion, pp. 71-98; but he does not speculate on the description of the gems in jeweler's terms.

[46]In The Sense of Beauty, 1955 ed., p. 49.

CHAPTER II - PROCESS AND ACTIVITY: TWO ASPECTS OF THE DIVINE NATURE IN PEARL

Christianity's abandonment of the prohibition concerning the making of graven images influenced not only the graphic art and architecture of medieval Europe but its literary arts as well.[1] The iconographic and myth-making impulses, rare in early Hebrew commentaries on the scriptures, proliferate towards the end of the Middle Ages in Christian exegetical works.[2] According to Huizinga, such predominance of the visual imagination constitutes or, at least, indicates a certain falling-off in the quality of thought;[3] without going so far as to make judgments upon the ultimate value of different kinds of insight and imaginative perception, one may be fairly certain that an age in which the pictorial impulse prevails will produce a poetry which reflects that emphasis.[4] In reference to Christian devotional poetry and the accounts, in verse and prose, of miracles and mysteries, the stress upon iconography aggravated a problem peculiar to religious art, art, that is, in which the unseen is of more importance in the cosmic scheme than is the seen, and in which the nature of the deity is considered beyond, above or apart from the world of sense and sensory perceptions.[5] Thus, the problem for the creator, given a dichotomy such as the physical-spiritual one inherent in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and in the Platonic as well, is evocation of the spiritual by way of the senses--for art is simply not art if there is no expression in a physical medium.[6] In some cases, the artists succeeded in creating effective and moving works but, at the same time, by realizing the divine nature in human terms, created another earth in

the kingdom of heaven and humanized Christ and the Virgin Mary to such an extent that the very omniscience and omnipotence which Christianity requires of its godhead begin to be subsumed by an excess of fellow-felling.[7] The delicate equilibrium maintained in the Old English "The Dream of the Rood," for example, is not to be found in the beautiful but sensuous poetry of the mystics Hadewijch and Mechthild.[8] The Virgin Mother proved particularly susceptible to the humanizing of the artists and of the folk. On the other hand, the cool and distant Trinity of the schoolmen finds its best expression, perhaps, in the rigors of geometry and the elaborately constructed sermons of the time.[9]

Yet it is with just such a principle of construction that the Pearl-poet proceeds, in his own way, resolving the esthetic and theological dilemma of evoking the deity. Whereas the all too human if well-intentioned narrator-dreamer in Pearl envisions the Heavenly City and imagines that beholding the beauty of the site and of its Prince approaches the "delyt" (Section XX) of the beatified, one finds that the Pearl-maiden herself never describes or evokes Heaven or the Lord thereof in such terms. Indeed, as far as it is possible, poetically, the poet has, in the speeches of the Maiden, abandoned description of substance in his imagery and diction in favor of description of process. Objects are subordinate to actions, and the scene to the event; the human capacity for measuring and defining is not only avoided but confuted by the poet in the Maiden's paradoxical presentations of divine attributes such as grace. When the diligent dreamer finds

In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte

þat speke3 a poynt determynable:
'þou quyte3 vchon as hys desserte,
þou hy3e kyng ay pretermynable.
Now he þat stod þe long day stable,
And þou to payment com hym byfore,
þenne þe lasse in werke to take more able,
And euer þe lenger þe lasse, þe more.'
(11. 593-600)

the Pearl-maiden confutes not so much his arguments as his conceptual mode:

'Of more and lasse in Gode3 ryche,'
þat gentyl sayde, 'lys no joparde,
For þer is vch mon payed inlyche,
Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde;
For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche,
Queþer-so-euer he dele nesch oþer harde:
He laue3 hys gyfte3 as water of dyche,
Oþer gote3 of golf þat neuer charde.
Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard
To Hym þat mat3 in synne rescoghe;
No blysse bet3 fro hem reparde,
For þe grace of God is gret inoghe.
(11. 601-612)

The passage cited above is crucial for several reasons, not the least of which is its introduction of grace and "fraunchyse" in terms of paradox. The refrain in Section XI is not merely an attempt to circumvent limiting the nature of the diety by employing negative terms. In the person of the Maiden, the poet attempts to step outside the boundaries of quantitative thought. The dreamer himself is, as might be anticipated, extremely interested, throughout the poem, in measure;[10] the parable of the vineyard is the perfect foil since his intellect and imagination cannot cope with its denial of quantitative reality. Section VI has introduced the problem, the key-word, "date," in the sense of "limit," emphasizing that which is most important in the five stanzas following:

'That cortayse is to fre of dede,
3yf hyt be soth þat þou cone3 saye.
þou lyfed not two 3er in oure þede;
þou cowþe neuer God nauþer plese ne pray,
Ne neuer nawþer Pater ne Crede;
And quen mad on þe fyrst day!
(11. 481-486)

Once again, the Maiden does not respond to the dreamer's specific points but, instead, disqualifies his categories:

'þer is no date of hys godnesse,'
þen sayde to me þat worþy wy3te,
'For al is trawþe þat he con dresse,
And he may do noþynk bot ry3t.
(11. 493-496)

As John Burrow has pointed out, confrontation of dreamer and larger than life dream-figures, in what he calls Ricardian poetry, often results in the humbling of the dreamer and leads to his realization of his innate limitations;[11] that which sets Pearl apart from the other poems, however, is the degree of constant resistance to the infinite, the timeless and spaceless, which the narrator-dreamer exhibits in his exchange with the Maiden. The jeweller is never quite as self-abnegating as Sir Gawain, for example, when the peccable knight is chidden by Bercilak for his fault;[12] the Pearl narrator, stiff-necked to the end, hinges his final expression of faith upon a condition:

And rewfully þenne I con to reme:
'O perle,' quod I, 'of rych renoun,
So wat3 hit me dere þat þou con deme
In þys veray avysyoun!
If hit be ueray and soth sermoun
þat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,
So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun
þat þou art to þat Prynse3 paye.'
(11. 1181-1188)

The holy indeed includes that which is absurd to common intelligence;

to common sense, the beatification of the spirit of a two-year-old, just past the teething stage, is laughable, given the suffering and striving of those who would achieve innocence.[13] But such absurdity is just the point: the dreamer is not stupid--were he stupid there would scarcely be a reason for the Maiden's parables and exhortations--but his thinking is human:

> 'Iwyse,' quod I, 'my blysful beste,
> My grete dystresse þou al todrawe3.
> To be excused I make requeste;
> I trawed my perle don out of dawe3.
> Now haf I fonde hyt, I schal ma feste,
> And wony wyth hyt in schyr wod-schawe3,
> (11. 279-284)

The sight of his lost pearl, in other words, leads the dreamer to believe that he can possess her as one can possess an object. He conceives of his loss in similar terms. It is, to him, the result of a singular event and not an inseparable part in the process of motion or mutation. There is mention made of water flowing, in this section (V), and of thievery as well; the dreamer is, in a sense, endeavoring to capture that which, like water, is forever changing shape. The argument for process is made explicit in the Maiden's first speech:

> 'Bot, jueler gente, if þou schal lose
> þy ioy for a gemme þat þe wat3 lef,
> Me þynk þe put in a mad porpose,
> And busye3 þe aboute a raysoun bref;
> For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose
> þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef.
> Now þur3 kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close
> To a perle of prys hit is put in pref.
> And þou hat3 called þy wyrde a þef,
> þat o3t of no3t hat3 mad þe cler;
> (11. 265-276)

Yet the dreamer's question and his excitement at finding an end to his

sorrow in a reversal of fact does not, at first, appear mad. On the contrary, the dreamer's case would appear quite respectable in a law court:

> What wyrde hat3 hyder my iuel vayned
> And don me in þys del and gret daunger?
> (11. 249-250)

Certainly most men would agree that the deity who restores property lost is a just ruler. The dreamer, having found the pearl, announces his intention--he will, he promises,

> ...loue my Lorde and al his lawe3
> þat hat3 me bro3t þys blys ner.
> Now were I at yow by3onde þise wawe3,
> I were a ioyful jueler.'
> (11. 285-288)

The dreamer, in truth, simply cannot help dividing experience into neat parcels, conceiving questions for which there may be "a raysoun bref" (l. 268).[14] As Kean points out, implicit in the discussion of God's justice is theenotion that "no man could earn salvation in strict justice, excepting those who have preserved baptismal innocence in their short period of 'work' in the vineyard."[15] The problem cannot be worked out strictly according to weights and measures. The poet, Kean notes, "has much to say concerning degree throughout the argument, and sets God's plenitude of merciful love against man's limitations."[16] It is not so much the warmly didactic tone of the Pearl which convinces the reader of her rectitude, but, rather, the way in which the dreamer responds to the situation at hand. Even the initial discourse of the Maiden, on the nature of life-and-death, is classified and rendered harmless by the dreamer's substantiating intelligence:

A juel to me þen wat3 þys geste,
And iuele3 wern hyr gentyl sawe3.
(11. 277-278)

Such semi-comic deflation occurs at several points. His madness seems to be his adherence to the quotidian when the situation he is confronting bears no relation to ordinary reality. "þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle," (1. 294), the Maiden chides, and, indeed, while the jeweller's arguments do not lack logic or common sense, his basic assumptions about the nature of the whole are "vnavysed," (1. 292), a mental phenomenon which does constitute a kind of madness. The dreamer's logic is that of the "logical lunatic," i.e., his arguments are fine but his basic presupposition about the nature of reality is utterly incorrect. As in the section which contains as its key-word "maskelle3," (Section XIII), the dreamer endows that which is immeasurable and infinite with qualities such as degree that belong to the measurable and finite world. The Pearl-maiden relates that the Lamb addressed her in the following fashion:

'Cum hyder to me, my lemman swete,
For mote ne spot is non in þe.'
He gef me my3t and als bewte;
In hys blod he wesch my wede on dese,
And coronde clene in vergynte,
And py3t me in perle3 maskelle3.
(11. 764-769)

But metaphysical reality which is, in finite terms, absurd, completely escapes the dreamer, who is most pragmatic in such matters:

'Why maskelle3 bryd þat bry3t con flambe,
þat reiate3 hat3 so ryche and ryf,
Quat kyn þyng may be þat Lambe
þat þe wolde wedde vnto hys vyf?
Ouer alle oþer so hy3 þou clambe

To lede wyth hym so ladyly lyf.
So mony a comly on-vnder cambe
For Kryst han lyued in much stryf;
And þou con alle þo dere out dryf
And fro þat maryag al oþer depres,
Al only þyself so stout and styf,
A makele3 may and maskelle3.
(11. 769-780)

The point is that Christ is no "kyn þyng" at all; and the notion of hierarchy and degree,[17] which served the iconographers so well, is shattered by the Maiden's retort:

'Maskelles,' quod þat myry quene,
'Vnblemyst I am, wythouten blot,
And þat may I wyth mensk menteene;
Bot 'makele3 quene' þenne sade I not.
(11. 781-784)

To the Pearl-maiden herself, divine justice is a process, too, and does not involve the weighing and measuring of experience. In Section VI, the key-word, interestingly enough, is the verb "to deme," while the substantive of the verb is not used al all in this part of the poem.[18] When it is used, later, it is surrounded by negatives and does not occupy a position of importance in the lines. Section VI also introduces a number of legal terms, dispenses with images, and lightens the sound pattern considerably as its lines are highly vowelled:

3e setten hys worde3 ful westernays
þat leue3 noþynk bot 3e hit sy3e.
And þat is a poynt o sorquydry3e,
þat vche god mon may euel byseme,
To leue no tale be true to try3e
Bot þat hys one skyl may dem.
(11. 307-312)

One suggested reading of "westernays" is that of "west ernays" or "empty pledge." In that case, the meaning of Lines 307-308 would be "You account His words an empty pledge who believe in nothing unless

you see it,"[19] again testimony to the dreamer's desire for definition in time or space or faith. But, as he has been suggested by theologians before and after the time of the composition of Pearl, one is never continually or permanently in the way of righteousness, although one may be permanently away from it.[20] Thus, the test, the bringing to trial, the making "true to try3e" (l. 311) is re-enacted again and again:

> Deme now þyself if þou con dayly
> As man to God worde3 schulde heue.
> (11. 313-315)

Even death is presented as an integral part of the experience of life:

> þur3 drwy deth bo3 vch man dreue,
> Er ouer þys dam hym Dry3ten deme.
> (11. 323-324)

"Deme" itself gains in force throughout this passage until it seems to produce a physical effect, one in which the reader assimilates God's judging with Being, that is, co-extensive with it. The dreamer himself makes an attempt to "deme" but the faculty of judge is not that of human reason and common sense. First, he attempts to argue:

> 'Deme3 þou me,' quod I, 'my swete,
> To dol agayn, þenne I dowyne.
> Now haf I fonte þat I forlete,
> Schal I efte forgo hit euer I fyne?
> (11. 325-329)

He assumes the responsibility of judging in the name of man:

> When I am partle3 of perle myne,
> Bot durande doel what may men deme?
> (11. 335-336)

Of course, to the Maiden, his efforts seem not only presumptuous but ill-suited to his nature and therefore ludicrous as well:

'Thow deme3 no3t bot doel-dystresse,'
þenne sayde þat wy3t. 'Why dot3 þou so?
For dyne of doel of lure3 lesse
Ofte mony mon forgos þe mo.
þe o3te better þyseluen blesse,
And loue ay God, in wele and wo.
For anger gayne3 þe not a cresse
Who nede3 schal þole, be not so þre.
For þo3 þou daunce as any do,
Braundysch and bray þy braþe3 breme,
When þou no fyrre may, to ne fro,
þou moste abyde þat he schal deme.
(11. 337-348)

If innocence is presented in Pearl as a virtue, as one of the highest virtues, and it is, it is clearly not the particular kind of ignorance or blindness that has come to pass for innocence in men of anti-intellectual bias. Adam and Eve, that is, sin not because they eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil;[21] this kind of knowledge is for the Creator alone, not for man who is not truly creative since he can only make something from something, not something from nothing, "ex nihilo."[22] Judging implies absolute truth which is an aspect of the deity; man has, however, only the relative truth of his emotions. Therefore, the maiden urges the dreamer, at the very center of the stanza, to "loue ay God, in wele and wo" (l. 342). When man assumes the function, or, rather, one of the functions of the godhead, he is led, not into a state of godliness, but into meaningless, frantic activity, as a hunted animal.[23]

The rather harsh and intrusive earthiness of Line 343, "'For anger gayne3 þe not a cresse,'" appears harsher than it would in another context for, its proverbial diction aside, it is the only concrete noun in the entire section to occupy an important position in the stanza.

One notes, for example, the strength and number of verbs and verbal forms in the following verse:

> 'Deme Dry3ten, euer hym adyte,
> Of þe way a fote ne wyl he wryþe.
> þy mende3 mounte3 not a myte,
> þa3 þou for sor3e be neuer blyþe.
> Stynt of þy strot and fyne to flyte,
> And sech hys blþe ful swete and swyþe.
> þy prayer may hys pyte byte.
> þat mercy schal byr crafte3 kyþe.
> Hys comforte may þy langour lyþe
> And þy lure3 of ly3tly fleme;
> For, marre oþer madde, morne and myþe,
> Al lys in hym to dy3t and deme.
> (11. 349-360)

While the individual verbs in this stanza are of uncertain meaning, it is clear that there is a striking lack of substantives and an unusual number of verbs in the final position. Gordon translates Lines 349-350 in the following manner:[24] "Judge the Lord, ever arraign him (i.e. though you may judge, & c.) He will not turn aside from the path one foot"; Lines 359-360, according to Gordon, mean "For, though you may lament or rave, or mourn and conceal it, (yet) all lies in God's power to dispose and judge." Thus, man begins by assuming a godlike function, and ends by acting out human emotion.[25]

God's mercy and His justice are distinguished in this way: whereas His justice is beyond man and even beyond man's ethical and moral impulses, "'þy prayer may hys pyte byte,'" as the Maiden says, at the seventh line, that is, at the turning point in the stanza. Two divergent streams of imagery inherent in the parables and narratives of Pearl express the attributes of the godhead. One stream is that of the absolute and eternal rectitude of God's "deming," expressed in legal terms

having to do with rights of property, ownership, thievery, etc. As all law does not concern property, legal language does not of itself present a paradox. The "couenaunt" (l. 562) established in the parable of the penny refers basically to the other covenant and to such laws which of themselves are beyond human comprehension, if not assent. The second stream of imagery, expressed in the narrative of Christ's sacrifice and triumph, his arrival and death in Jerusalem, also couched in action, concerns the more accessible aspect of the deity, which the martyred son embodies, which is love.

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When the sympathetic but knowledgeable narrator of Chaucer's House of Fame informs his friend the eagle that he would prefer not to acquire first-hand knowledge of the stars, for;

> ..." hyt is no nede.
> I leve as wele, so God me spede,
> Hem that write of this matere,
> As though I knew her places here;
> And eke they shynen here so bryghte,
> Hyt shulde shenden al my syghte,
> To loke on hem,"...[26]

one becomes conscious of the peculiar modesty and mellowness which Mr. Burrow considers characteristic of the age.[27] The acceptance of human limitation seems more whole-hearted, however, in the works of Chaucer than in those of the Pearl poet whose protagonists, in their encounters with more-than-human figures, must confront, publicly, as it were, their own inability to transcend. In terms of Nietzsche's paradox, the personae of Chaucer not only become what they are, but appear to be having

a good time in the process. In Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Pearl, however, the alternative, absolute and/or transcendent vision is presented with force and conviction. The sense of human ineptitude is stronger; the sense of a reality beyond human comprehension is more immanent.

Thus Sir Bercilak's case against Gawain is impeccable in its argumentation, and, in like manner, the Pearl-maiden's presentation of the parable of the vineyard does not admit of any softening, for human consumption, of what is a difficult lesson. Like the use of legal terms, (and one cannot quite accept these terms as images but rather as references to relationships of various kinds), the parable in which the workers who "swange and swat for long 3ore" (Line 586), and who were not rewarded for their extra labor, has a slightly alienating effect. Some have held that the chill which settles over the poem throughout the Maiden's dialogues is either due to a failure of the poet to produce his desired effect or to a change in sensibility over the course of five centuries.[28] Yet coziness has not always been considered either a theological or a literary good, and it may be possible that such strangeness was the desired effect.

The dreamer, in another attempt at judging and evaluating the process of Heaven, lifts up his voice in praise not of heavenly but of earthly good, that is, endowing the Kingdom with a hierarchy much like that of the social order on earth:

> þyself in heuen ouer hy3 þou heue
> To make þe quen þat wat3 so 3onge.
> What more honour mo3te he acheue
> þat hade endured in worlde stronge,

And lyued in penaunce hys lyue3 longe
Wyth bodyly bale hym blysse to byye?
(11. 475-480)

I may not traw, so God me spede,
þat God wolde wryþe so wrange away.
Of countes, damysel, par ma fay,
Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate,
Oþer elle3 a lady of lasse aray;
Bot a quene! Hit is to dere a date.'
(11. 487-492)

The Maiden breaks through this paradox, that of the lack of reward for human suffering, as suggested before, first by destroying the dreamer's categories and secondly, by telling him a story, a parable. It is interesting to note that in the Areopagite tradition hierarchy was considered to have been an ordering of all life by the principle of the divine but an order of rank in which "'order' is conceived less as a static fact than as a dynamic action which must ever and again be accomplished in the life of the spirit."[29] This principle is exemplified by the Parable of the Vineyard as related by the Pearl-maiden:

"'þat date of 3ere wel knawe þys hyne.
þe lorde ful erly vp he ros
To hyre werkmen to hys vyne
And fynde3 þer summe to hys porpos.
Into acorde þay con declyne
For a pene on a day, and forth þat got3,
Wryþen and worchen and don gret pyne,
Keruen and caggen and man hit clos.
Aboute vnder þe lorde to marked tot3,
And ydel men stande he fynde3 þerate.
'Why stande 3e ydel? 'he sayde to þos.
'Ne knawe 3e of þis day no date?'
(11. 505-516)

Even in the original version of the parable, one's attention is not directed to the vine itself, nor to the crop, nor to the fruits of the season; instead, one's attention is directed to behaviour--not only of

men in relation to one another and in relation to the earth, but also to the interaction of the planets and the revolutions of the earth which create the very days and seasons. Nothing, in Section X, is seen as permanent; all is movement, but it is not the meaningless flux which the dreamer perceives in the growth and harvest. The poet here avoids the substantive except as the base of action: it is the story of the lord of the vineyard, as told by the apostle, as re-interpreted by the Maiden, as heard by the dreamer in a dream which he relates as narrator. As in much narrative which passes through various tellers, that which is less essential to the narrative fabric, i.e., detail and decoration, is permitted to fade. What remains is plot, that particular arrangement of actions without which the narrative would cease to exist as such.

The parable contains certain given conditions. In Lines 505-516, cited above, one is not informed how "'þat date of 3ere wel knowe þys hyne,'" nor how the lord "fynde3 þer summe to hys purpos." Like the actions of the planets and the movement of the natural year, not the calendar year, to which the Maiden refers throughout, action seems to include its own justification in its enactment, and, in a certain sense, proves explicable only in its own terms. Thus, the parable does not juxtapose good and evil, a harvest of sweet grapes with one of sour, but, instead, men who "Wryþen and worchen and don gret pyne,/ Keruen and caggen..." with those who as "ydel men stande." The relation between God's justice and human action here is not unlike that found in the Old Testament narrative of Abraham and Isaac. The Pearl-

poet's use of this New Testament parable seems in certain respects more "biblical" than the gospel itself, contrary to Spearing's assumption that, since the poet employs the apostles words, Pearl is entirely in the spirit of the New Testament.[30]

The workmen of the parable await the command of the lord to action:

'We haf standen her syn ros þe sunne,
And no man bydde3 vus do ry3t no3t.'
(11. 519-520)

The answer of the owner of the vineyard appears at first equally enigmatic:

'Gos into my vyne, dot3 þat 3e conne,'
So sayde þe lorde, and made hit to3t.
'What resonable hyre be na3t be runne
I yow pay in dede and þo3te.'
(11. 521-524)

The speech above becomes less mysterious when one considers that divine "reason" and "justice" are made manifest in the poem and, according to the thought of various theologians of the time, not in objects but in actions, as the imitation of Christ depends not upon being Christ-like but in leading a Christian life.[31] Divine motivation is withheld from man; Augustine repeats, "Si comprehendis, non est Deus."[32] One clarification of this statement is found in a commentary of Thomas: "It is therefore said of us that when we come to the end of our knowledge, we acknowledge God as the Unknown, because the mind has made most progress in understanding when it recognizes that God's essence lies beyond anything that the mind in its state of being-on-the-way can comprehend."[33] In the parable of the vineyard, the Pearl-poet seems to be stressing the necessity for the act itself, not for frenetic

action. It is the revelatory quality of action, of the act or sequence of acts, which is important to the notions of justice and grace.

Such emphasis would have been perfectly orthodox. As Kenneth Burke remarks of Augustine's use of language, "Just as the Word, in creating nature, thereby set up the distinction between natural and supernatural realms, so the Word is seen to function in the opposite direction, too, as Mediator between these realms."[34] This is, of course, in view of Christian thought positing a "triune God in which the first person is equatable with Power (which in turn is equatable with Authority), the second with Wisdom (the Word), and the third with Love (Spiritual union)." Looking again at the stanza in which the owner of the vineyard urges his workers to work, one finds the rhyme association in the second part of much interest:

> I yow pay in dede and þo3te.'
> þay wente into þe vyne and wro3te,
> And al day þe lorde þus 3ede his gate,
> And nw men to hys vyne he bro3te
> (11. 524-527)

The rhymes emphasize the association of intention, ("þo3te"), with working, fashioning or creating, ("wro3te"), and both with a verb of physical necessity ("bro3te"). Moreover, a glance back at the first six lines intensifies the impression that, intrinsic to the terms in which the poet presents the parable, a paradigm of the entire process of salvation is set forth:

> ""'Er date of daye hider arn we wonne,'
> So wat3 al samen her answar so3t.
> 'We haf standen her syn ros þe sunne,
> And no mon bydde3 vus do ry3t no3t.
> 'Gos into my vyne, dot3 þat 3e conne,'
> So sayde þe lorde, and made hit to3t.
> (11. 517-522)

The words echo the sense of the parable, the sense of the poem, and, in general, the essentially contractual nature of salvation. Seeking, the Christian himself can do nothing without the Covenant--which is, according to Gordon, what "made hit to3t" does indeed signify.[35] Kean, too, notes that "the idea of contract" is insisted upon at this point and in this term.[36] That this term appears in the final position of the pivotal sixth line spurs the turn in the stanza. The second part of the stanza involves a series of movements which satisfy the conditions set forth in the first part.

The juxtaposition of actions, or of action, doing, with non-action, doing "no3t," recurs. In the following stanza, when, one is informed, the sun is going down,

> He se3 þer ydel men ful stronge
> And sade to hem wyth sobre soun,
> 'Wy stonde 3e ydel þise daye3 longe?'
> Þay sayden her hyre wat3 nawhere boun.
> 'Got3 to my vyne, 3emen 3onge,
> And wyrke3 and dot3 þat at 3e moun.'
> (11. 531-536)

Here, the parable itself takes an unexpected turn, as stories sometimes do; that is, one does not accept a full-blown blue rose, for example, as readily as one might accept a rose which grows blue petals, for one seeks the generative force which has given rise to the object. The lord in the parable may reverse his conduct, paying each, even those who have not "swange and swat for long 3ore" (l. 586) without overly jeopardizing one's sense of credulity since the motives for behaviour are, in a basic way, unfathomable, intrinsic to being itself:

> ""'More, weþer louyly is my gyfte,
> To do wyth myn quat-so me lyke3?

> Oþer elle3 þyn y3e to lyþer is lyfte
> For I am goude and non byswyke3?'
> þus schal I, "quod Kryste," hit skyfte:
> þe laste schal be þe fyrst þat stryke3,
> And the fyrst þe laste, be he neuer so swyft;
> For mony ben called, þa3 fewe be myke3."
> (11. 565-572)

The poet, in his use of narrative, has created that which seems not merely idiosyncratic and absurd, (the pitfalls in the work of surrealistic poets, for example) but that which is mysterious and uncanny. The unfolding of the mystery of Christ's sacrificing himself for the love of his fellow man is also presented in narrative, but, in this case, instead of the allegorical tendency which perhaps could not be avoided in the use of the parable, there is a most skillful blending of lyric and narrative elements.

If, as R. W. Southern points out in The Making of the Middle Ages, there is a change taking place in twelfth century thought,[37] then it follows that such change will affect the literature of the period which succeeds it in a particular manner. In what he calls "the change from Epic to Romance,"[38] Southern remarks that, at some point in the period, men "begin to order their experience more consciously in accordance with a plan":[39]

> they think of themselves less as stationary objects of attack by spiritual foes, and more as pilgrims and seekers. Of course, the idea of pilgrimage had long held an important place in the Christian life, and some of the greatest exponents of the spiritual advantages of physical journeying were the English and Irish missionaries of the seventh and eigth centuries. But their spiritual idea was not movement, so much as exile: a removal from friends and homeland, rather than a search for new experiences and adventures. It was not until the twelfth century that the imagery of journeying became a popular expression of a

> spiritual quest. Then indeed it meets us on all sides--in the Arthurian Romances, in allegories of love, in descriptions of the ascent of the soul towards God.[40]

The "imagery of movement," Southern continues, "seemed at this time to lay hold on the imagination, and it invaded secular as well as religious literature." In Pearl, one finds not only the imagery descriptive of movement, but movement or sequential action itself:

> 'Of Jerusalem I in speche spelle.
> If þou wyl knaw what kyn he be,
> My Lombe, my Lorde, my dere juelle,
> My ioy, my blys, my lemman fre,
> þe profete Ysaye of hym con melle
> Pitously of hys debonerte:
> "þat gloryous gyltle3 þat mon con quelle
> Wythouten any sake of felonye,
> As schep to þe sla3t þer lad wat3 he;
> And, as lombe þat clypper in hande nem,
> So closed he hys mouth fro vch query,
> Quen Jue3 hym iugged in Jerusalem."
> (11. 793-804)

When the Maiden begins to "spelle" of Jerusalem, and of her "dere juelle," the reader expects a description, symbolic of a state or emotion, but a description nonetheless; "what kyn" Christ is, however, is made manifest to dreamer and reader both not through any depiction or portraiture, but through what is done to him, and in the verses following, through what he does:

> In Jerusalem wat3 my lemman slayn
> And rent on rode wyth boye3 bolde.
> Al oure bale3 to bere ful bayn,
> He toke on hymself oure care3 colde.
> (11. 805-809)

Part of what Christ does, also, is to accept the deeds, dreadful though they are, of men, thus converting acceptance, which is passive, into willed

acceptance:

> Wyth boffete3 wat3 hys face flayn
> þat wat3 so fayr on to byholde.
> For synne he set hymself in vayn,
> þat neuer hade non hymself to wolde.
> For vus he lette hym fly3e and folde
> And brede vpon a bostwys bem;
> As meke as lomp þat no playnt tolde
> For vus he swalt in Jerusalem.
> (11. 810-815)

The climax of the active-passive interaction between Christ and man is the irony inherent in the supreme action or deed, the sacrifice, that is, of life for the sake of mankind:

> "Lo, Gode3 Lombe as trwe as ston,
> þat dot3 away þe synne3 dry3e
> þat alle þys worlde hat3 wro3t vpon.
> Hymself ne wro3t neuer 3et non;
> Whefer on hymself he con al clem.
> Hys generacyoun quo recen con,
> þat dy3ed for vus in Jerusalem?"
> (11. 821-828)

Not only are these the sentiments of the Pearl-maiden, but are the words of "þe goude Saynt Jon" (1. 818) as well, and, therefore, the gospel truth. The process of redemption takes place with a kind of proto-Hegelian synthesis of opposites; the poet has in fact presented the essential Christian paradox of the will to sacrifice on the part of the suffering servant, and he here avoids the pitfall, theologically as well as esthetically, of a masochistic and self-pitying saviour by the vivid presentation of the behaviour of men, which justifies the sacrifice of the Christ. One notes that the poet, instead of shying away from the absurdity of the paradox, approaches it with a boldness of diction in accord with the dramatic necessity of the situation; the lamb, the victim, is he who "dot3 away þe synne3 dry3e" and

he whom "pys worlde hat3 wro3t vpon" is he who "wro3t neuer" in the sense that the world has, and yet it is he who "con al clem" by dint of what he finally does do.

Whereas the Parable of the Vineyard exemplified those processes in which the Lord's justice is made manifest, this narrative exemplifies the gospel of Christ which is love. Not that the poet completely abandons the Old Testament conception of the Law as that in which "God can do something which he himself has declared unjust...if he does it, it then becomes right; therefore the will of God is the first rule of all justice."[41] On the contrary, it is just this "concept of the absolute freedom of God with respect to man's moral standards and the human understanding of the distinction between good and evil "which renders the implicit or explicit relationship of the Pearl-maiden to the godhead so pathetic and touching.[42] In the fourteenth section, she speaks of the Christ as her "lemman," that is, her beloved one:

> 'In Jerusalem wat3 my lemman slayn
> And rent on rode wyth boye3 bolde.
> (11. 805-806)
>
> Wyth boffete3 wat3 hys face flayn
> þat wat3 so fayr on to byholde.
> (11. 809-810)
>
> "In Ierusalem þus my lemman swete
> Twye3 for lombe wat3 taken þare,
> (11. 829-830)

There is a most remarkable admixture, caught in the rhythmic movement between lines 794 and 840, of the lyric and the narrative. Perhaps the musical term of counterpoint best describes what is taking place: for, while the Christ is slowly and painfully progressing towards

Calvary throughout the section, the voice of the Pearl-maiden is heard lamenting this progress. Had the poet not included the dirge-like expression of a personal, not to say romantic grief, the immediacy of the sacrifice might have been lost in the inexorable force of the unfolding narrative. The events, that is, justify themselves; they are revelatory, and more likely to awaken awe than pity. But these events are also presented as taking place in the relationship of the Maiden to her lemman. And one encounters here yet another element making for the peculiar density of these stanzas: while the relationship is process, implying a past and a future, the outcome of that relationship, the moment of grief, the moment of holy pity for the suffering Christ, should not and does not, move through time. One notes that, whereas most of the Pearl-maiden's stanzas, those stanzas given over almost exclusively to the expression of her views and attitudes, begin and end with verbs or adverbs, the stanzas in this section begin and end with Jerusalem, a noun both abstract and concrete, subjective and objective, but a noun nonetheless. And it is of the utmost importance in the poem since both currents of activity by which the nature of the godhead is defined cross at this point. One observes the deity dealing out justice, a justice mysterious and therefore somewhat intimidating to man:

> þus schal I, "quod Kryste," hit skyfte:
> þe laste schal be þe fyrst þat stryke3,
> And þe fyrst þe laste, be he heuer so swyft;
> For mony ben called, þa3 fewe be myke3."
> (11. 569-572)

> 'Of more and lasse in Gode3 ryche,'
> þat gentyl sayde, 'lys no joparde,

For þer is vch mon payed inlyche,
Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde;
(ll. 601-604

'Ry3t þus I knaw wel in þis cas
Two men to saue is god by skylle:
þe ry3twys man schal se hys face,
þe harmle3 haþel schal com hym tylle.
þe Sauter hyt sat3 þus in a pace:
"Lorde, quo schal klymbe þy hy3 hylle,
Oþer rest wythinne þy holy place?"
(ll. 673-679)

But to temper and change the process of justice, there is the progress of love and mercy, culminating in the redeeming sacrifice:

Ino3e is knawen þat mankyn grete
Fyrste wat3 wro3t to blysse parfyt;
Oure forme fader hit con forfete
þur3 an apple þat he vpon con byte.
Al wer we dampned for þat mete
To dy3e in doel out of delyt
And syþen wende to helle hete,
þerinne to won wythoute respyt.
Bot þeron com a bote astyt.
Ryche blod ran on rode so roghe,
And wynne water þen at þat plyt:
þe grace of God wex grete innoghe.
(ll. 637-648)

The poet alternates the two processes: Section XI, a part of which is quoted above, emphasizes grace, while the following section returns to "ry3te":

Forþy to corte quen þou schal com
þer alle oure cause3 schal be tryed,
Alegge þe ry3t, þou may be innome,
(ll. 701-703)

There are various terms that may be employed in the description and qualification of the two processes; one bears the quality of Law, the other of Gospel. H. A. Oberman, in his discussion of the distinction between them, arrives at the essence of both:

> Moses' law required exterior acts and ceremonies, whereas Christ calls for interior acts which are not forced but voluntary. In both instances righteousness is intended, but the righteousness of Christians has to be more ample and sincere and therefore more perfect than the righteousness of the Jews.
>
> This imperfection of the Old Law... is intended by St. Paul when he writes in his letter to the Galatians: "... by works of the law shall no one be justified" (2:16). In short, the Law of Christ is the fulfillment of the Law of Moses inasmuch as it implies the interiorization of righteousness. The righteousness of the New Law is in the full sense of the word legal righteousness.[43]

The Pearl-poet intertwines the two until, at a given point in the narrative, what has formerly been external, the "deming" of God, becomes internalized in the passion of Christ, and what has formerly been internal, the love of Christ for man, becomes externalized in the act of sacrifice; the two processes resolve, at last, in an image, or, more properly, a symbol, both externally present, and yet definitive of a powerful inner reality: Christ becomes, in Section XV, "'Thys Jerusalem Lombe'":

> 'That mote þou mene3 in Judy londe,'
> Þat specyal spyce þen to me spakk,
> 'Þat is þe cyte Þat þe Lombe con fonde
> To soffer inne sor for mane3 sake,
> Þe olde Jerusalem to vnderstonde;
> For Þere þe olde gulte wat3 don to slake.
> Bot Þe nwe, Þat ly3t of Gode3 sonde,
> Þe apostel in Apocalyppce in theme con take.
> Þe Lompe Þer wythouten spotte3 blake
> Hat3 feryed Þyder hys fayre flote;
> And as hys flok is wyt outen flake,
> So is hys mote wythouten moote.
> (11. 937-948)

The sight is identified with the suffering of Christ; this the poet

emphasizes by repetition and elaboration of the idea in the stanza which follows immediately:

> 'Of motes two to carpe clene,
> And Jerusalem hy3t boþe nawþeles--
> þat nys to yow no more to mene
> Bot "cete of God," oþer "sy3t of pes":
> In þat on oure pes wat3 mad at ene;
> Wyth payne to suffer þe Lombe hit chese;
> In þat oþer is no3t bot pes to glene
> þat ay schal laste wythouten reles.
> þat is þe bor3 þat we to pres
> Fro þat oure flesch be layd to rote,
> þer glory and blysse schal euer encres
> To þe meyny þat is wythouten mote.'
> (11. 949-960)

The Pearl-poet is thus able to differentiate the poignant but hopelessly post-lapsarian vision of heaven and the godhead held by the poem's narrator-dreamer from that reality of which the Pearl-maiden seems a part. Although the Maiden, too, is but an emanation of the dreamer's mind, and one is never assured that she is indeed a vision sent from God, her speech and knowledge still may represent that within the mind of man which has some knowledge of the divine. The severity of her bearing and the activity of her speech, her emphasis upon both doing and feeling, contrast with and compensate for the rather cumbersome iconography of Sections XVII and XVIII which are, after all, only the imaginings of one "an-vnder mone" (l. 1081).

Footnotes

[1]J. Huizinga, "Religious Thought Crystalizing into Images," in The Waning of the Middle Ages, 1954, pp. 151-177.

[2]Emile Male, The Gothic Image, Chapter VI, pp. 355-389 discusses the elaborations of the artists upon Biblical writings; also, Louis Ginzberg, On Jewish Law and Lore, 1962, pp. 61-77 discusses the transposition and mythologizing of haggadic legends into the Christian tradition.

[3]Huizinga, p. 152: "For in assuming a definite figurative shape thought loses its etheral and vague qualities and pious feeling is apt to resolve itself in the image." Again, more forcefully, p. 284: "One of the fundamental traits of the mind of the declining Middle Ages is the predominance of the sense of sight, a predominance which is closely associated with the atrophy of thought."

[4]In the Middle Ages, sanctioned by the church fathers; i.e., the writings of Vincent of Beauvais and St. Bonaventura.

[5]Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey, 1923; pp. 143-144; "the interpretation of them (signs) as actual appearances of the holy itself in its own nature meant, we saw, a confounding of the category of holiness with something only outwardly resembling it... There is a precisely parallel process in another department of judgement, that of aesthetic taste."

[6]Roger Fry, "Sensibility" in Last Lectures, 1939, p. 39.

[7]As in fifteenth century mariolatry; see, for example, Johannes Herolt's collection, Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary in which the Virgin's kindness and mercy is presented as being almost at the command of those who worship her.

[8]Peter Dronke, The Medieval Lyric, 1968, pp. 78-85.

[9]Although in Owst, Spearing, and others listed in the bibliography, one observes that the distance between the scholastics, the preachers and certain poets, such as Langland, was by no means vast, as one group took up the other's tools.

[10]Here, "measurement" is meant, not "measure" in the sense of "le juste moyen."

[11]John Burrow, Ricardian Poetry, 1971; p. 112: these dream-figures are characters "of especial power and authority" who bring "a teasing humour to bear on a hero whose feelings and preoccupations he has no reason to share."

[12]The scene which takes place at the Green Chapel, GGK, 11. 2358-2478 in particular.

[13]As. H. A. Oberman expresses it in "Faith and Understanding" (The Harvest of Medieval Theology, 1963, p. 82), probably reasons are not the ultimate and conclusive reason for accepting certain articles of faith. To give an example: in the case of a repetition of the sacrament of baptism, one has to accept the fact that this has no efficaciousness whatsoever for the remission of sins, simply because this would go counter to the way God has decided to act. Once such a decision of God is accepted, one is in a position to offer probable reasons or explanations for this state of affairs.

[14]See Everett and Hurnard; Bishop, pp. 76-80; Kean, "Less and More," in Pearl: An Interpretation, pp. 175-202.

[15]Pearl: An Interpretation, 1967, p. 196.

[16]Ibid. 15, p. 177.

[17]Male, pp. 27-132.

[18]On the distinction between "'noun concepts' and 'verb concepts'": "language...is the very agency that produces the distinction between these forms, that introduces the great spiritual crises in which the permanent is opposed to the transient, and Being is made the contrary of Becoming. So the linguistic fundamental concepts must be realized as something prior to these distinctions, forms which lie between the sphere of noun conception and that of verb conception, between thinghood and eventually, in a state of indifference, a peculiar balance of feeling"; Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myths, trans. Susanne K. Langer, 1953, p. 12.

[19]Sister Mary V. Hillman, MLN, LVII, p. 42

[20]For an interesting discussion of this notion in the thought of Diony= sius Areopagiticus and its influence upon western theology, see Josef Pieper, Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy, trans. R. and C. Winston, 1964, pp. 50-54. The way of righteousness "is conceived less as a static fact than as a dynamic action which must ever and again be accomplished in the life of the spirit"; p. 51.

[21]Martin Buber, Good and Evil, 1952, p. 73.

[22]H. A. Wolfson, Medieval Studies in Honor of J. D. Ford, 1948, describes the subtleties of this concept for Christian thinkers; p. 355ff.

[23]One would not like to overemphasize this aspect of ll. 337-348, particularly ll. 345-46; nonetheless, the image is there, and its communication of animal helplessness contrasts splendidly with the maiden's dignified spirituality.

[24]Gordon, pp. 58-59; Osgood and Gollancz, however, hold that "adyte" is from "adihtan" not "aditer," and that it means, therefore, "arraign" or "dispose."

[25]Although, again, with reference to the impossibility of anything earthly and human achieving the perfection of the divine--St. Augustine, in "How Great is the Soul?" thus asks his foil "Do you expect men to turn out the same quality of products as God?" Reprinted in A Critique of Skepticism, trans. Wippel, Readings in Medieval Philosophy, 1969, p.45.

[26]Robinson, ed. ll. 1011-1017.

[27]Ricardian Poetry, p. 97; he remarks the "unheroic" quality of the period.

[28]Even Bishop admits to this; Pearl in Its Setting, pp. 35-36.

[29]Pieper, p. 51.

[30]In The Gawain Poet, 1970, p. 96.

[31]See, for example, Boethius of Dacia, "On the Supreme Good": "the supreme good accessible to man in terms of his practical intellect is the doing of good." Medieval Philosophy, p. 370-371; or see Nicolas Cusanus, Of Learned Ignorance, trans. G. Heron, 1954, especially Book II, Chap. 2, pp. 71-75.

[32]De Doctrina Christiana, I, 6; 6; De trinitate 5, I; 1; ibid., 7, 4; 7.

[33]From his commentary on Boethius' tractate on the Trinity; cited by Pieper, p. 53.

[34]The Rhetoric of Religion, 1961, p. 137.

[35]Gordon, p. 157; "to3t" itself, however, means only "firm" from the Anglo-Saxon "toht," to draw tight" O. E. D.

[36]Pearl: An Interpretation, p. 190.

[37]1953; especially Chapter V, "From Epic to Romance," pp. 219-257.

[38]Southern, pp. 221-222: "The change of emphasis from localism to universality , the emergence of systematic thought, the rise of logic--to these we may add a change which in a certain sense comprehends them

all...The contrast is not merely a literary one though it is in literature that it can be most clearly seen."

[39]Southern, p. 222.

[40]Ibid. 39, p. 222.

[41]Oberman, "God and Justice: God's freedom from the law," p. 96. This excellent book, the full title of which is The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism, provides succinct summation of the most important ideas in medieval theology yet with reference to their subtleties and flaws in particular, calling attention to details in these areas which might otherwise escape the notice of a secular reader.

[42]Oberman, p. 97.

[43]Oberman, pp. 112-113, "Moses and Christ: Law and Gospel, The fulfillment of the Old Law."

CHAPTER III - THE FUNCTION OF HUMOR IN PEARL-THE ANTI-SUBLIME

Given the will of man to comprehend the nature of the deity, and given also his limited capacity for such comprehension, a remarkable comic quality emerges in the central section of Pearl; this quality is closer to the humor of the Chaucerian persona in Chaucer's dream narratives than it is to the humor either of Langland or of the Pearl-poet's other works, Purity, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. It seems a humor native to the period for, given a similar view of man's nature and capacity, poets of other periods have not been able to depict the intelligent man humorously without making him appear either a wit or a buffoon, or both at once, as in Beckett.[1] There is, too, an essential difference between the situations in which the Chaucerian narrator of this type appears, and that in which the Pearl-poet has placed his dreamer; the search for the substance of poetry is not the same as the search for the human significance of death.[2] By the same token, the death of the duchess does not call for the same type of poem as the death of one's daughter, whether an actual daughter or an imagined one. Yet if the comic quality of the Chaucerian persona in the dream poems and the Pearl-poet's persona in Pearl is of the same kind, although not necessarily of the same intensity, the most obvious point of comparison is that both poets utilize the convention of the dream-vision.[3] Somewhat less obvious, however, judging from critical commentary,[4] is the relationship of the persona in the waking state to his personality within the dream itself; the shifts from consciousness to unconsciousness, and back, are responsible for much of the humor generated without detriment

to the moral or social qualities of the characters. Furthermore, the attention which both poets give to questions of decorum and civility, the quality of "cortaysye" is far from unimportant in regard to this humor.

Henri Bergson has written that to "understand laughter, we must put it back into its natural environment, which is society, and above all we must determine the utility of its function, which is a social one...Laughter must answer to certain requirements of life in common. It must have a social significance."[5] What could be farther removed from social ends and causes than the most personal and private grief of the Pearl's narrator? Indeed, grief itself and sympathy for the being afflicted by it, according to Bergson, precludes humor: "Laughter has no greater foe than emotion. I do not mean that we could not laugh at a person who inspires us with pity, for instance, or even with affection, but in such a case we must, for the moment, put our affection out of court and impose silence upon our pity."[6] Thus, in The House of Fame, one is able to laugh at or with the dreamer's prompt agreement to the eagle's proposals because the danger and fear inherent in such a situation, (which could, if treated differently, elicit the response of sympathetic terror or wonder in the reader), are absorbed into the context of the relationship. This is no natural eagle; between the dreamer and his winged counselor there exists a social bond:

> "A ha!" quod he, "lo, so I can
> Lewedly to a lewed man
> Speke, and shewe hym swyche skiles
> That he may shake hem be the biles,
> So palpable they shulden be.
> But telle me this, now praye y the,

How thinketh the my conclusyon?"
Quod he. "A good persuasion,"
Quod I, "hyt is; and lyk to be
Ryght so as thou has preved me."
(11. 865-874)

Even in so delicate and emotionally persuasive a work as The Book of the Duchess, there is much humor to be found which is related to the distinction in rank between the Black Knight and his would-be comforter; as has been pointed out, a certain tact and respect for the Black Knight prevents the dreamer from putting his questions more bluntly, thus enabling the reader to grasp the actual situation while setting him apart from the dreamer.[8] Fundamentally, before his belated recognition of non-human, non-social, non-negotiable circumstance, the dreamer approaches the grief of the knight as if such grief could be relieved by his human compassion and the bonds of human contact:

But at the last, to sayn ryght soth,
He was war of me, how y stood
Before hym, and did of myn hood,
And had ygret hym as I best koude,
Debonayrly, and nothyng lowde.
He sayde, "I prey the, be not wroth.
I herde the not, to seyn the soth,
Ne I sawgh the not, syr, trewely."
"A, goode sir, no fors," quod y,
"I am ryght sory yif I have ought
Destroubled yow out of your thought.
Foryive me, yif I have mistake."
"Yis, th'amendes is lyght to make,"
Quod he, "for ther lyeth noon therto;
There ys nothyng myssayd nor do."
(11. 514-528)

Attempting to engage the knight in conversation, the dreamer is anxious to avoid making a faux pas in the course of offering help:

For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool
I wol do al my power hool.

> And telleth me of your sorwes smerte;
> Paraunter hyt may ese your herte,
> That semeth ful sek under your syde."
> (11. 553-557)

The Black Knight is, naturally, rather skeptical about the usefulness as balm of such a proceeding:

> With that he loked on me asyde,
> As who sayth, "Nay, that wol not be."
> (11. 558-559)

Indeed, at the moment when the knight and the dreamer experience recognition both of the knight's loss and of the dreamer's helplessness in the face of that loss, the expression of that recognition and sympathy is in non-conventional terms. The ultimate reality of human life, Chaucer seems to be suggesting, cannot be dealt with in the forms provided by social use and custom. The dreamer at last becomes direct: to the knight's anguished outburst "She us ded!," he has no formulaic balm and can only respond "Is that youre los? Be God, hyt is routhe!" At this point, the dreamer ceases to be a quaint or comic figure.

The Pearl-poet, on the other hand, assigns a much more important role to social convention and "cortaysye," which is, of course, carried through in the form of the poem as well as its content.[9] A much sterner poet than Chaucer, in many ways, the Pearl-poet demands the restraints of "cortaysye" especially in the metaphysical situation. The dreamer, in Pearl, is more or less unequipped to assimilate the divine order into his knowledge of being since he is sense-oriented and earth-bound in the extreme. On the other hand, the admonitions of the Maiden remind him that, if he is to save his soul, his own pearl of great price, he is not to give in to himself and accept his limitations any more than is absolutely necessary.[10]

What mediates between the private despair of the dreamer and the perfection of the divine, which is beyond his conceptual grasp, is such restraint which forms impose and the release, for the reader, of laughter. In this sense, Pearl is a much more "comfortable" poem than Sir Gawain and the Green Knight for, in the latter, while Gawain returns to the court, thus to society, and while the court, or society itself, sees Gawain's existential desire for perfection as deserving of sympathetic laughter, the reader is indeed left in doubt. Is Gawain's self-reproachful attitude more righteous than the court's acceptance of his moral flaw? Gawain is not presented as one with an idee fixe, but as one perfectly in command of his faculties and able to give reasons for his remorse:

> "Lo! lorde,' quoþ þe leude, and þe lace hondeled,
> 'þis is þe bende of þis blame I bere in my nek,
> þis is þe laþe and þe losse þat I la3t haue
> Of couardise and couetyse þat I haf ca3t þare;
> þis is þe token of vntrawþe þat I ma tan inne,
> And I mot nedez hit were wyle I may last;
> For mon may hyden his harme, bot vnhap ne may hit,
> For þer hit onez is tachched twynne wil hit neuer.'
> (11. 2505-2512)[11]

And when one recalls that his "trawþe" is Gawain's most prized attribute, one doubts very much that the courtiers' playful solution will assuage either the knight's disappointment with himself or the reader's sense that the knot of virtues has indeed been unlaced. At the end of the poem, one's attention is directed back to the powerful image of the seasons and the rise and fall of civilizations; all of Gawain's "cortaysye" or "trawþe" cannot arrest the cycle nor change the content of earthly life.

In Pearl, however, the quality or attribute of "cortaysye" while basically a social image,[12] is given another function or direction in human thought and action. It becomes a way of dealing with the limitations of men; unlike God's justice, the social and external aspect of divine grace which is "cortaysye" seems to be of the same substance:

> 'Of courtaysye, as sayt3 Saynt Poule,
> Al arn we membre3 of Jesu Kryst:
> As heued and arme and legg and naule
> Temen to hys body ful trwe and tryste
> Ry3t so is vch a Krysten sawle
> A longande lym to þe Mayster of myste.
> 5penne loke what hate oþer any gawle
> Is tached oþer ty3ed þy lymme3 bytwyste.
> þy heued hat3 nauþer greme ne gryste,
> On arme oþer fynger þa3 þou ber by3e.
> So fare we alle wyth luf and lyste.
> To kyng and quene by cortaysye.
> (11. 457-468)

The manner of God's demonstration of grace to men is described as being one of dignity and proportion, nobility and restraint: the Maiden's teachings convey precisely that quality of harmony or accord which one misses in the emotional force of certain mystic raptures.[13] Furthermore, the first curb which the Maiden places upon the dreamer's grief is one neither of legality nor reason. A breach of decorum may seem trivial to modern readers; yet it was manifestly of great importance to the Pearl-poet. In Purity, for example, one finds the adverbial form of "cortaysye" applied to the manner in which, in W. O. Evans' words, "God repents that He drowned the world":[14]

> For quen þe swemande sor3e to his hert,
> He knyt a covenaunde cortaysly wyth monkynde þere,
> In þe mesure of his mode and meþe of his wylle,

Evans emphasizes that "cortaysye" did not simply imply the conduct suitable for courtly love, but that it "has contained some implication of conscious virtue or state of mind, that is, some reference to a spirit which moves one to please and help...and as with any other word concerned with human behaviour, cortaysye can be found with purely conventional reference to acquired patterns--the right thing to do."[15] It is that behavioural quality, certainly, which makes grace manifest; one cannot over-emphasize the association of the term with court life and conduct appropriate to it. Particularly, in reference to the naming of Mary as the "Quen of Cortaysye," in Pearl the quality of "cortaysye" serves as a bridge between the way of strict justice and the abundance of mercy and love. The heavenly court is modeled, for the dreamer's understanding, upon the earthly courts in which the kings and queens could willingly conduct themselves in a gentle and yielding manner. In other words, obedience, too, becomes a willing generosity of spirit. Measure and decorum inhabit the gestures of those who, like the God of the covenant, in Purity and Patience, can in actuality exercise great power.

When the Maiden chides the dreamer, in Sections V and VI, for a breach of decorum on his part, her reproaches are far from trivial:

> 'I halde þat iueler lyttel to prayse
> þat leue3 wel þat he se3 wyth y3e,
> And much to blame and vncortayse
> þat leue3 oure Lorde wolde make a ly3e,
> (11. 301-304)

The "mad porpose" (l. 267) of which she accuses him, is, like the classic literary and satiric madnesses of Orlando Furioso and Don Quixote,

albeit on a much smaller scale, basically an aberrant response. The dreamer's response is inappropriate to the situation for, as the Maiden informs him, with perfect sang-froid, "þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose/ þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef," (11. 269-270). The dreamer perceives his blunder, at first, as having been one of a "tale mysetente," (1. 257), or an error in superficial etiquette for which he must apologize in speech:

> A juel to me þen wat3 þys geste
> And iuele3 wern hyr gentyl sawe3.
> 'Iwyse,' quod I, 'my blysfol beste,
> My grete dystresse þou al todrawe3.
> To be excused I make requeste;
> (11. 277-281)

The Maiden, however, has perceived a deeper error in his attitude; what threatens to be a semantic quibble becomes symbolic of, or indicative of, his misguided self-centeredness. The dreamer is once again called "madde":

> 'Jueler,' sayde þat gemme clene,
> 'Wy borde 3e men? So madde 3e be!
> þre worde3 hat3 þou spoken at ene:
> Vnavysed, for soþe, wern alle þre.
> þou ne woste in worlde quat on dot3 mene;
> þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle.
> (11. 289-294)

Whereas wit does not as yet, in the fourteenth century, connote the various qualities and faculties that later accrue to it, it does indicate the ability to distinguish rather than the power to synthesize.[16] The Pearl-maiden proceeds to demonstrate her wit by enumerating the errors of the dreamer[17] who, throughout the vision, exhibits remarkably little wit. The humor which his character generates, then, stems from

his subjectivity and his refusal to distinguish the real from the desired. Much of the Maiden's sterness is presented as an attempt to shake the dreamer from his subjective, his miasmic, state in which his undue preoccupation with self obscures his perception of the relationship between events. His initial uncouthness is thus a matter of serious concern to her; she corrects his manner "soberly" (l. 256) whereas he, as might be expected, cannot see such an aberration as meaningful. The Maiden has indicated that, with his present attitude, he is neither a "kynde" (l. 276) nor a "gentyl" (l. 264) jeweler. Her concern with these matters he deems a "geste" (l. 277) and her reproaches to him merely "gentyl sawes" (l. 278).

From Section VI until the end of the poem, the tension between the dreamer's essentially anti-social concerns and the Maiden's insistence upon manner and form, courtliness and grace, is incessant. Indeed, the dreamer's attention to his own pleasure and pain becomes doubly comic in that such attention reverses the normal relation of father to child. Within the dream, it is the father, the adult, who at times seems infantile. The tragic poet, Bergson notes, is "careful to avoid anything calculated to attract attention to the physical side of his heroes. No sooner does anxiety about the body manifest itself than the intrusion of a comic element is to be feared...the transition from tragedy to comedy is effected simply by sitting down." An important element in comedy, he continues, is that of "the body taking precedence over the soul."[18] Such an element is central to the humor in Pearl as it is manifested in the literal-mindedness of the dreamer:

'Blysful,' quod I 'may þys be trwe?
Dysplese3 not if I speke errour.
Art þou þe quene of heuene3 blwe,
þat al þys worlde schal do honour?
(11. 421-424)

The dreamer has regressed to a state in which each entity other than himself is Other, and analogy becomes impossible. The Maiden, at this point, elaborates upon "'The court of þe kingdom of God alyue'" which "'Hat3 a property in hytself beyng.'" Her speech concerning the "cortayse Quen," (1. 433-444), rather than exemplifying hierarchical values of a chain of being, employs the notion in a symbolic fashion. The dreamer cannot cope with such symbolic meaning. Although he is ready to admit to the Maiden that "'Cortayse'" and "'charyte grete, be yow among,'" (1. 469 and 1. 470), what he is really interested in is the technicality of the situation. He wonders at the swift promotion in Heaven in which process the Maiden has been made "quen þat wat3 so 3onge," (1. 474). There is a certain rigidity in the thought process of the dreamer which generates a comic diction and syntax:

'That cortayse is to fre of dede,
3yf hyt be soth þat þou cone3 saye;
þou lyfed not two 3er in oure þede;
þou cowþe neuer God nauþer plese ne pray,
Ne neuer nawþer Pater ne Crede;
And quen mad on þe fyrst day!
I may not traw, so God me spede,
þat God wolde wryþe so wrange away.
Of countes, damysel, par ma fay,
Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate,
Oþer elle3 a lady of lasse aray;
Bot a quene! Hit is to dere a date.'
(11. 481-492)

While part of the humor derives from the reader's awareness, and is thus in part dramatic irony, it may be profitable to investigate what

other sources the poet taps in order that the reader should be able to sense the comic effect of the dreamer. The poet relies on the reader's sensitivity to levels of diction, to what is suitable, courteous language in the situation posited.[19] Again, one must bear in mind that the dreamer is incapable of speaking and thinking in terms that are not of this world but as he tries to do so, his lack of awareness becomes humorous. The rhyme scheme serves the poet's purpose very well, for he can juxtapose, within the rhymes, the totally colloquial and thoughtless use of theologically difficult concepts and the most prosaic and specific language. The following arrangement may demonstrate this technique:

1.	a	fre of dede	theological reference
2.	b	þou sone3 saye	colloquialism
3.	a	in oure þede	worldly reference
4.	b	plese ne pray	theological reference
5.	a	Pater ne Crede	theological reference
6.	b	þe fyrst day!	literalism
7.	a	so God me spede	theo. & colloquial
8.	b	so wrange away	literalism
9.	b	par ma fay	theo. & colloquial
10.	c	in heuen...asstate	theological reference
11.	b	lady of lasse aray	social & worldly
12.	c	to dere a date	colloquialism

Lines 1-3-5-7, then, all employing the rhyme of line 1, alternate theological terms with either colloquial expressions or simply descriptive terms such as "oure þede." References to the Creed, sandwiched in between such terms, reduces the high seriousness and dignity of the subject. The pattern recurs in the rhymes of lines 2-4-6-8-9-11, in which scheme "pray" in its full sense, is linked, eventually, with "par ma

fay," a mild expletive of colloquial tone. This kind of rhyming recurs in passages in which the dreamer attempts to work out a feasible version of the conduct of the heavenly kingdom. He becomes guilty of terribly gauche interpretations and remarks whenever the religious metaphor employed by the Maiden skirts the outer limits of the physical, as religious imagery, particularly of the mystical strain, tends to do.[20] In one such passage, the process of courtship and love is appropriated by the Maiden in the expression of Christ's love:

> 'My makele3 Lambe þat al may bete,'
> Quod scho, 'my dere destyné,--
> Me ches to hys make, alþa3 vnmete
> Sumtyme semed þat assemblé.
> When I wente fro yor worlde wete,
> He calde me to hys bonerté:
> "Cum hyder to me, my lemman swete,
> For mote ne spot is non in þe."
> He gef me my3t and als bewté;
> In hys blod he wesch my wede on dese,
> And coronde clene in vergynté,
> And py3t me in perle3 maskelle3.'
> (11. 757-768)

The conceits embedded in such expression rely upon the acceptance of convention, a tacit agreement between reader and poet that certain implications, physical in nature, of the situation in question will be overlooked by the reader, just as, in human society, normal social relations include and indeed are based upon reciprocal oversight. The comic poet cannot do his work in a society devoid of convention for he deals with the discrepancy between social and natural man, whereas the lyric poet relies upon the will of the reader to disregard discrepancies. In a medieval mystical lyric which Stephen Manning believes "typifies the general vernacular handling of the mystical experience,"[21]

a certain inattention to detail is needed for proper appreciation:

> Iesu, þou art so god a mon,
> þi loue y 3yrne al so y con;
> þare fore ne lette me nomon,
> þa3 ich for loue be blac ant won...
>
> þi loue me make3 so swyþe wod,
> þat y ne drede for no flod.
>
> Iesu, þy loue is suete & strong,
> my lif is al on þe ylong!

Yet those lyrics which are the most dangerous from the point of view of the poet and in reference to his maintenance of decorum, are those which are in the tradition of the Song of Songs and which successfully utilize metaphors of sense. The comic poet, or the poet working for a comic effect, would endeavor to shade the lyric with an element of character, and, since character is best manifested in behavior towards others, the context would, almost of necessity, be social. The Pearl-poet, however, makes great demands upon the reader, and upon the connotative power of the language, in that he is not content to evoke either a comic or a lyric response but both responses at once, with consequent stress upon the handling of the diction. In this regard, he differs from Langland whose humorous scenes do not border lyrical ones.[22] When the Maiden presents, in a straightforward manner, a line from the Song of Songs, "'Cum hyder to me, my lemman swete,'" (Pearl, l. 763), there is nothing jocular in her phrasing, for, as Scripture, it must be serious and reverent in the context of her personality. Yet, immediately following, the poet has the dreamer imitate, albeit unknowingly, the very convention which the poet has just employed so skillfully:

'Why, maskelle3 bryd þat bry3t con flambe,
þat reiate3 hat3 so ryche and ryf,
Quat kyn þyng may be þat Lambe
þat þe wolde wedde vnto hys vyf?
Ouer alle oþer so hy3 þou clambe
To lede wyth hym so ladly lyf.
So mony a comly on-vnder cambe
For Kryst han lyued in much stryf;
And þou con alle þo dere out dryf
And fro þat maryag al oþer depres,
Al only þyself so stout and styf,
A makele3 may and maskelle3.'
(11. 769-780)

Again, the rhymes demonstrate the poet's sensitivity to the levels of diction in discourse and to their ideational implications. The Pearl-poet is interested in linguistic precision: the "Lambe/clambe" and "depres/maskelle3" rhymes are particularly effective in that they provide an immediate clash of ideas. Nothing, one imagines, could be farther from the spirit of the Lamb and the grace of Heaven than such ruthless social climbing. Yet it is the juxtaposition of these precise words which leads the Pearl-maiden into the following section:

'Maskelles,' quod þat myry quene,
'Unblemyst I am, wythouten blot,
And þat may I wyth mensk menteene;
Bot "makele3 quene" þenne sade I not.
(11. 781-784)

From this we gather that the dreamer, intent upon his own problematical thoughts and their solutions, has not even listened to his heavenly mentor. The Maiden, having administered this corrective, proceeds with her orderly explanation:

þe Lambe3 vyue3 in blysse we bene,
A hondred and forty fowre þousande flot,
As in þe Apocalyppe3 hit is sene;
Sant John hem sy3 al in a knot.
(11. 785-788)

One notes, in passing, how decorous the rhyme-words are in the discourses of the Maiden: "quene/menteene," "flot/knot/clot," and "drem/Jerusalem." So, too, her conduct throughout what is called the debate, although such a term gives a false impression of the tone of the whole, is decorous, orderly, and, more importantly, responsive to the dreamer's concerns and fears. The movement of her ideas through Sections XV and XVI is from the lyrical statement of her empathy with Christ in his suffering to the promise of redemption which emanates from that event according to John:

> '"Nowþelese non wat3 neuer so quoynt,
> For alle þe crafte3 þat euer þay knewe,
> þat of þat songe my3t synge a poynt,
> Bot þat meyny þe Lombe þat swe;
> For þay arn bo3t fro þe vrþe aloynte
> As newe fryt to God ful due,
> And to þe gentyl Lombe hit arn anioyny,
> As lyk to hymself of lote and hwe;
> (11. 889-896)

The Pearl-maiden never hesitates to cite the authorities, which speaks well for her modesty and her wisdom. The dreamer seems, at first, to have responded to her teaching:

> 'Neuer þe les let be my þonc,'
> Quod I, 'My perle, þa3 I appose;
> I schulde not tempte þy wyt so wlonc,
> Te Kryste3 chambre þat art ichose.
> (11. 901-904)

His humility seems almost excessive:

> I am bot mokke and mul among,
> And þou so ryche a reken rose,
> And byde3 here by þys blysful bonc
> þer lyue3 lyste may neuer lose.
> (11. 905-908)

But he simply cannot give up his earth-bound questioning:

Now, hynde, þat sympelnesse cone3 enclose,
I wolde þe aske a þynge expresse,
And þa3 I be bustwys as a blose,
Let my bone vayl neuerþelese.
(11. 909-912)

Is this "bone" an answer to the question of how he and all other men may achieve salvation? Does it have to do with right conduct on the face of the earth?

Haf 3e no wone3 in castel-walle,
Ne maner þer 3e may mete and won?
(11. 917-918)

He seeks to know what is beyond him:

þou telle3 me of Jerusalem þe ryche ryalle,
þer David dere wat3 dy3t on trone,
Bot by þyse holte3 hit con not hone,
Bot in Judee hit is, þat noble note.
(11. 919-922)

His speech is marked by a predominance of the pronoun "I":

I se no bygyng nawhere aboute.
I trowe alone 3e lenge and loute
To loke on þe glory of þys gracious gote.
(11. 931-933)

He also has the comic inability to perceive the realistic difficulty of a situation and therefore he makes reversals: that which is most banal seems important to him and that which is most demanding, facile:

If þou hat3 oþer bygynge3 stoute,
Now tech me to þe myry mote.
(11. 935-936)

Here, again, the poetic transition is abrupt, the sense of diction taxed; and there seems to be some method to this artistic madness in that, the more inappropriate the statements and questions of the dreamer, the more sublime, gracious and informative the exposition of the Maiden, as

in her reply at this point:

> 'That mote þou mene3 in Judy londe,'
> þat specyal spyce þen to me spakk,
> 'þat is þe cyte þat þe Lombe con fonde
> To soffer inne sor for mane3 sake,
> (11. 937-940)

It is the Maiden who demonstrates the wit and playfulness of the divine, the "divine laughter" of the immortals. The extraordinary puns in these crucial lines testify to the honorable place of wit in the cosmic scheme of the Pearl-poet:

> For þere þe olde gulte wat3 don to slake.
> Bot þe nwe, þat ly3t of Gode3 sonde
> þe apostel in Apocalyppce in theme con take.
> þe Lompe þer wythouten spotte3 blake
> Hat3 feryed þyder hys fayre flote;
> And as hys flok is wythouten flake,
> So is hys mot wythouten moote.
> (11. 942-948

The dreamer himself would be incapable of making such connections between words, for making such connections implies an ability to make distinctions. Once more, the Maiden's mental and verbal agility falls short of its purpose in regard to the dreamer's awareness:

> 'Motele3 may so meke and mylde,'
> þen sayde I to þat lufly flor,
> 'Bryng me to þat bygly bylde
> And let me se þy blysful bor.'
> (11. 961-964)

It is quite obvious throughout that the dreamer's comic quality is far removed from that of the simpleton or fool, for example, that type of the "holy idiot" who, in comic unawareness, utters truths which spring from some unconscious pool of wisdom. The Pearl-poet is not an ecstatic. It is not reason itself which is to blame for the dreamer's misuse of it.[23] The dreamer's response to the parable of the vineyard is in

perfect accord with his initial responses, and follows the pattern of thought described by the Maiden in Section V:

> 'Jueler,' sayde þat gemme clene,
> 'Wy borde 3e mene? So madde 3e be!
> þre worde3 hat3 þou spoken at ene:
> Unavysed, for soþe, wern alle þre.
> þou ne woste in worlde quat on dot3 mene;
> þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle.
> (11. 289-294)

The harder the dreamer tries, the less reasonable he becomes. Naturally, he projects his own quality onto the Maiden:

> Then more I meled and sayde apert:
> 'Me þynk þy tale vnresounable.
> Godde3 ry3t is redy and euermore rert,
> Oþer Holy Writ is bot a fable.
> In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte
> þat speke3 a poynt determynable:
> "þou quyte3 vchon as hys desserte,
> þou hy3e kyng ay pretermynable."
> Now he þat stod þe long day stable,
> And þou to payment com hym byfore,
> þenne þe lasse in qerke to take more able,
> And euer þe lenger þe lasse, þe more.'
> (11. 589-600)

Under the dreamer's rhetorical disguise, he is still laboring to prove a point in his own interest. The effect of such sophistry is complex, and the esthetic satisfaction of the reader as he finds that, indeed, the argument has some validity, on one level, mutes considerable the laughter of censure. One's final rejection of what the speaker is saying becomes tempered by the way in which he is saying it. One approaches, here, the most perilous topic of "charm" which implies a sympathetic response. The dreamer's attempt to reason out the situation would be good, given a totally different context. Pleasure in the citations of authorities in <u>The Owl and the Nightingale</u> is analogous, discounting

the element of pathos in Pearl: the Owl excuses her inability to vocalize by invoking the injunction of Psalm cxxvi which enjoins weeping and lamentation in prayer (lines 856-878). The reason is agile, but the motivation is dubious. Yet one cannot call the mode satiric for the harm caused by the misapplication of reason, in both cases, that of the Owl and that of the dreamer in Pearl, is the harm of self-deception. The context in both works is not one which permits the reader to reflect upon the social consequences of such deception. In Pearl, the dream-framework serves as a buffer-state between the dreamer's misjudgments and their social consequences, as in The Owl and the Nightingale the fantastic element of fable arrests the implications of the birds' vanity. One must not assume, because the usefulness of art as an agent of instruction is currently out of fashion, that, when it was in fashion for such purposes, "teaching" in art was executed in an obvious and clumsy manner. And one must not assume that, in order to be instructive, humor must be caustic and misanthropic. The form of the debat, of which the most charming literary example in English is The Owl and the Nightingale, evolved from the contest of wit in Latin pastoral poetry and belongs, as such, to that sphere of endeavor which J. Huizinga has characterized as play;[24] yet the ideas therein are serious and the concern for right conduct pervasive, while direct criticism of human conduct is mediated by the transference of such behavior to the animal world.

Every time the dreamer presumes to defend his limited and mortal point of view, every time he wishes to gain the kingdom of heaven in

an impertinently facile manner, every time he blunders into action or stumbles into social offense, the reader may behold, in the mirror such humor provides, himself, that is, everyman; not institutions but the individual is the target. Granted that it would be difficult to claim for a poem of Pearl's scope a comprehensive treatment of human folly, one might put forth, as the quality most under fire, man's ultimate "unteachability," his resistance to learning moral lessons from his experience in the world. Social conventions are never criticized in Pearl; the more rarefied, the better they are as models of religious decorum. The dreamer, since he resists learning moral lessons, his resistance being more or less constitutional, also resists revelation. He witnesses a vision of the kingdom of God complete with saints but his reaction to this sight, or vision, is exactly the same as his reaction to empirical learning; once he finds his "lyttel quene" among the throng of 144,000, all the Maiden's instruction seems to have been for nought:

> Lorde, much of mirþe wat3 þat ho made
> Among her fere3 þat wat3 so quyt!
> þat sy3t me gart to þenk to wade
> For luf-longyng in gret delyt.
> (11. 1149-1152)

The final section of the poem, however, finds the dreamer waking, and his consciousness of his dream-folly predominates. In the several lines which bridge the two states, of awareness and unawareness, the tone and intent change from humor to pathos. One can no longer feel superior in knowledge to the narrator who describes his experience in these terms:

Delyt me drof in y3e and ere,
My mane3 mynde to maddyng malte;
Quen I se3 my frely, I wolde be þere,
By3onde þe water þa3 ho were walte.
(11. 1153-1156)

He is also able, at the very end, to generalize his condition. Although the narrator, at the beginning of the work, in verses containing the same key phrase, "Prynce3 paye," cannot understand that his plight is the human one, and not only his, in the final section such realization dawns upon him:

To þat Prynce3 paye hade I ay bente,
And 3erned no more þen wat3 me gyuen,
And halden me þer in trwe entent,
As þe perle me prayed þat wat3 so þryuen,
As helde, drawen to Godde3 present,
To mo of his mysterys I hade ben dryuen;
Bot ay wolde man of happe more hente
þen mo3te by ry3t vpon hem clyuen.
þerfore my ioye wat3 sone toriuen,
And I kaste of kyþe3 þat laste3 aye.
Lorde, mad hit arn þat agayn þe stryuen,
Oþer proferen þe o3t agayn þy paye.
(11. 1189-1200)

Having reconciled his narrator to his estate among men, the poet can then have him turn his attention to God. It is not enough for the Pearl-poet to have his persona achieve a certain sublimity in a pious vacuum, however. In The Idea of the Holy, Rudolf Otto suggests that art has no more than "an indirect means of representing the numinous," and that Western art has only two ways of more directly creating numinous effects which are "in a noteworthy way negative, vis. darkness and silence."[25] What is more important about Otto's conception is his grasp of the principle of contrast: "Besides silence and darkness oriental art knows a third direct means for producing a strongly numinous impression, to

wit, emptiness and empty distances."[26] The special quality of the sublime finally achieved by the Pearl-poet is as rich as it is because it is reached through its opposite, or what one might call the anti-sublime in its several forms, the chief manifestation of which is the comic element. The comic element is also the social element, having to do, not with the relationship, private and unobservable, of man to God, but of man to other men.

Thus, the humor in Pearl has little to do with the modern conception of comic relief, and little in common with the way in which Shakespeare and other Elizabethans employed comedy in their plays although it is significant that the central section of Pearl is in the form of a dialogue. In the central section, too, the poet is creating what the sociologists would call "observed behavior," the only behavior which can be humorous. In the opening and closing sections, the narrator is engaged in actions which, had they not been placed in a private context, would seem exaggerated:

> Bifore þat spote my honde I spenned
> For care ful colde þat to me ca3t;
> (11. 49-50)

> þen wakned I in þat erber wlonk;
> My hede vpon þat hylle wat3 layde
> þer as my perle to grounde strayd.
> I raxled, and fel in gret affray,
> (11. 1171-1174)

The virtual autonomy of the dreamer in the phenomenal world insures against over-emphasis of the comic element within the poem. The repetition of the key-phrase at the end is a sharp reminder to the reader that the condition of the dreamer-narrator on the earth has not changed.

It is his solitude and "luf-longyng" which have brought about his anguish in the first place. This suffering appears unduly great only in the strange, inverted world of the dream and the dreamer's misconduct indecorous only in the light of divine and omniscient wisdom.

Footnotes

[1]The humor and "unheroic" quality of Ricardian Poetry in general is developed at length by John Burrow who sees such a quality as characteristic of the period; pp. 97-102. Curtius, in Exkurse IV of Europaische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter deals with "Scherz und Ernst" in medieval works, a tradition derived from Latin literature. Curtius distinguishes carefully between "Kuchenhumor," (pp. 431-434) and a more fully integrated "Hagiographische Komik," (pp. 425-429), the point in discussion of the latter being that the medieval sense of decorum was not as nice as ours! The examples Curtius gives, however, are primarily from popular literature, i.e., legends of the saints. On p. 426: "Die Martyrerdichtung des Prudentius verdient nun gerade in unserem Zusammenhang eine genauere Betrachtung. Denn sie bietet ein Beispiel grotesken Humors innerhalb einer sakralen Dichtgattung... Man wundert sich, bei einem so ernsten und von seinen Stoff so ergriffenen Dichter derartiges zu finden."

[2]The House of Fame's "matere for to wryte" in contrast to the Pearl-dreamer's concerns.

[3]Burrow, p. 112; C. Hieatt, "Pearl and the Dream Vision Tradition," Studia Neophilologica, XXXVII, (1965), 139-145; Kean, pp. 28-30.

[4]See Bronson's "In and Out of Dreams," originally published in In Search of Chaucer; reprinted in Chaucer and His Contemporaries, ed. H. Newstead, 1968, pp. 126-142.

[5]"Laughter," 1956 edition, p. 65.

[6]Ibid. 5, p. 63.

[7]All quotations from Chaucer, unless otherwise noted, are from Robinson's 2nd edition, 1957.

[8]Although Constance Hieatt points out that such avoidance and repetition is characteristic of dreams; Realism and the Dream Vision Tradition, 1967, p. 132.

[9]This is developed in Chapter IV; cf., also, Bishop, pp. 27-39 on the formal structure and its implications.

[10]John Conley, "Pearl and a Lost Tradition," JEGP, LIV, (1955), 332-347, stresses the propriety of the dreamer's concern for the "summum bonum."

[11]From the Gordon edition, 1936.

[12]D. S. Brewer, "Courtesy and the Gawain Poet," originally published in Patterns of Love and Courtesy, ed. J. Lawlor, 1966, p. 54. Reprinted by Newstead, see n. 4 above, pp. 310-335.

[13]Evelyn Underhill, The Mystics of the Church, 1964 edition, pp. 74-79; cf. also P. Pourrat, Christian Spirituality, vol. II, 1923, pp. 114-128.

[14]W. O. Evans, "'Cortaysye' in Middle English," MS, XXIX, (1970), 143-157. Evans also points out that Jonah, in Patience, "complains to God because he has pardoned Ninevah...he says, accusingly: 'Wel knew I þi cortaysye, þi quoynt soffraunce,'" (p. 153).

[15]Evans, p. 145.

[16]Stephen Manning, Wisdom and Number, 1962, p. 142: "some of the medieval poetsssuccessfully employed wit to analyze either the speaker's emotions or his insight into the subject which he presents."

[17]Burrow, pp. 110-112.

[18]Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, p. 94.

[19]As Geoffrey of Vinsauf warns, poets should avoid mixed diction and incoherent structure:

> Da pondera verbis
> Aequa suis humeris et pro re verba loquaris.
> Cum doceas artes, sit sermo domesticus arti:
> Quaelibet ars gaudet propriis. Sed sint sua verba
> Limitibus contenta suis: cum veneris extra
> In commune forum, placeat communibus uti.
> In re communi communis, in appropriatis
> Sit sermo proprius. Sic rerum cuique geratur
> Mos suus. In verbis est iste probatior usus.

Poetria Nova, ll. 1085-1093; printed by E. Faral in Les Arts Poetiques du XII et du XIII Siecle, 1962, pp. 230-231.

[20]Manning, pp. 138-140.

[21]Manning, p. 39.

[22]The lyrical tone of the opening of Piers Plowman does not recur in the poem with the possible exception of the passage on the honest poor, in the C-text, Passus XIII, 88--XIV, 128.

[23]This corresponds to the attitude towards the human misuse of Reason which one finds in both parts of the "clene Rose."

[24]Homo Ludens, 1955, pp. 158-172, "Play-Forms in Art."

[25]Edition of 1950, trans. John Harvey, p. 68.

[26]The Idea of the Holy, p. 69.

PART II

THE RESOLUTION IN FORM

CHAPTER IV - ALLITERATION IN THE SERVICE OF THEOLOGY

There is, according to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, "within a given linguistic system, something like a 'physiognomy' of words, a sound symbolism far more pervasive than mere onomatopoeia." The results of acoustic experiments have been surprisingly definitive in the matter of sound associations: "between front vowels (e and i) and thin, quick, clear and bright objects and, again, between back vowels (o and u) and clumsy, slow, dull and dark objects." Consonants are "divided into dark (labials and velars) and bright (dentals and palatals). Such divisions of sound are "by no means mere metaphors but associations based on indubitable similarities between sound and colour observable especially in the structure of the respective systems "of language." Thus, the "general linguistic problem of 'sound and meaning'" exists as a very explicit one, although, these two critics add, "the separate problem of its exploitation and organization in a work of literature...has been studied only inadequately."[1]

In reference to Pearl, one cannot even speak of the inadequacy of treatment of the alliteration, and its accompanying assonance, in the critical literature; there simply is no such treatment. Although several writers hint that the alliterative line is of some importance in the work, to this day there is not a single essay or chapter of a critical work dealing with the effects and usage of this special sound patterning.[2] One does not know precisely why the situation is as it is; perhaps because the best work on the alliterative tradition in Anglo-Saxon and in medieval literature deals almost exclusively with its historic rather than its poetic significance.[3] The Pearl-poet's line belongs to that body of work known as the Alliterative Revival; it is thus a late, and, some would have it, decadent use of the Anglo-

Saxon form.[4] The Pearl-poet certainly uses his line to suit his own purposes and to further his own ends--whether such use constitutes decadence or not does not seem relevant to whether the alliteration is used effectively. Consequently, the exact position of the Pearl-poet's craft in what seems the chronological decline of the tradition will not be discussed in these pages.

Noting that the poet does indeed make use of a complicated and difficult set of conventions does not explain the freshness and originality which appear in the lines of Pearl; what one tends to forget is that within such stringent rules for poesis, the poet still has an enormous amount of liberty, not the infinity of choices of a modern poet who must then evolve rules of his own, but, in terms of alliteration alone, as many possibilities as letters of the alphabet multiplied by the number of words beginning with each letter in his lexicon, and divided by the number of alliterations in each line. It is a strict but variable form.

Gordon remarks, in passing, that the verse form, as it appears in Pearl, "with lines packed with significant words, and often heaviliy alliterated, gathers as it is repeated over and over again a great weight of feeling."[5] There are two points worth noting here, the first of which is that not all lines are equally alliterative, and the second of which is that the alliterative device, as well as the stanza-linking device, produces an effect cumulatively. The degree to which the lines are alliterative depends, in this poem, upon who is speaking and what is being spoken of. While the descriptive passages, at the opening of the poem, are densely consonantal, and have a suitably dark color, in a later portion of the poem, alliteration is used in the Maiden's speeches as well.[6] This time, the echoing consonants do not describe but emphasize; when the Maiden insists, for example, that she is not a "'makele3 quene,'" (l. 781-784), she stresses being "'maskelles'" with yet another line based upon m: "And

þat may I wyth mensk menteene." When she speaks of the Day of Judgment and the absolute necessity of undergoing death in order to achieve everlasting life, the poet provides her with a set of lines in which the alliteration is pronounced:

> Alþa3 oure corses in clotte3 clynge,
> And 3e remen for rauþe wythouten reste,
> (11. 857-858)

But alliteration can be used for emphasis in the central and final portions of the poem because lines with three words beginning with the same letter are the exception rather than the rule. At the opening of the poem, lines with less than three words alliterating are rare, and have an unusual and tremulous quality by contrast:

> þat spot of spyse3 mot nede3 sprede,
> þer such ryche3 to rot is runne;
> Blome3 blayke and blwe and rede
> þer schyne3 ful schyr agayn þe sunne.
> Flor and fryte may not be fede
> þer hit doun drof in molde3 dunne;
> For vch gresse mot grow of grayne3 dede;
> No whete were elle3 to wone3 wonne.
> Of goud vche goude is ay bygonne;
> So semly a sede mo3t fayly not,
> þat spryngande spyce3 vp ne sponne
> Of þat precios perle wythouten spotte.
> (11. 25-36)

Such doubling and tripling of consonants at the beginning of words naturally affect the thrust of the line and the kinds of vowels which the heavy beginnings necessitate. In order for the lines to be pronounceable, and in order for the poet to maintain his meter, the heavy consonants must be balanced by equally forceful vowels; in the stanza cited above, these tend to be long and plaintive: "nede3 sprede," "Blome3 blayke and blwe and rede," "Of goud vche goude," "So semly a sede." But more will be said concerning the assonance at another point. What must be noted at this point is that even the speeches of the dreamer become progressively lighter in their consonants--actually, it is not the kind of

consonant employed in his speeches but the number of alliterations per line that changes as the work evolves:

> An-vnder mone so great merwayle
> No fleschly hert ne my3t endeure
> As quen I blusched vpon þat bayle
> So ferly þerof wat3 þe fasure.
> I stod as stylle as dased quayle
> For ferly of þat frelich fygure,
> þat felde I nawþer reste ne trauayle,
> So wat3 I rauyste wyth glymme pure.
> For I dar say wyth conciens sure,
> Hade bodyly burne abiden þat bone,
> þa3 alle clerke3 hym hade in cure,
> His lyf were loste an-vnder mone.
> (11. 1081-1092)

Only two lines above contain three first-letter alliterations; syllabic alliteration, as in "For I dar say wyth conciens sure," because its effect is not one of deliberate artificiality, although it very well may be deliberate, will be considered as a device or repetition and variation.[7] Both fully alliterated lines, then, in contrast with those of the opening passage, are lines used to emphasize and/or contrast; the first, line 1084, has to do with amazement, that kind of amazement which, according to the OED, concerns that which is strange. By employing the device, the poet is able to link the "frelich" or "noble" figure with a quality of feeling not usually associated with nobility or spirit; the alliteration emphasizes the somewhat paradoxical notion which the line contains. In the second instance, the poet has the task of convincing the reader of his dreamer's "conciens sure"; moreover, what the dreamer is certain of is a negative conditional. Line 1090 creates a double effect and serves, as it were, two masters: its heavy consonants, particularly the b which occurs four times in all in the line, substantiate the dreamer's certainty and creat the positive condition which the dreamer can then negate. These various uses of alliteration typify the stanzas from Section V on, as in the following from Section VIII:

'Cortayse Quen," þenne sayde þat gaye,
Knelande to grounde, folde vp hyr face,
'Makele3 Moder and myryest May,
Blessed bygynner of vch a grace!
þenne rose ho vp and con restay,
And speke me towards in þat space:
'Sir, fele here porchase3 and fonge3 pray,
Bot supplantore3 none wythinne þys place,
þat emperise al heuen hat3.
And vrþe and helle, in her bayly;
Of erytage 3et non wyl ho chace,
For ho is Quen of cortaysye.
(11. 433-444)

Attention is directed to the Virgin: the m, as in Milton's line, is highly evocative and of very soft timbre, suggesting the qualities of Mary and suggested by her name. In the medieval period, m alliteraiton in the head-lines of prayers to the Virgin was quite common.[8] While the Pearl-poet does not dwell upon it at this point, by employing the conventional alliterative letter associated with Mary, he can devote the rest of his lines in the stanza to different feelings and ideas. Line 435 also sets up a strong base of four beats to the line. The equilibrium which the even number provides functions well in Line 439, "Sir, fele here porchase3 and fonge3 pray,'" the symmetry of which creates a sense of balance corresponding to the legal referent in the line's ideational content.

The matter of alliteration in Pearl, then is far from being a simple one. Northrop Frye remarks, in his essay on "The Rhythm of Recurrence," that a "four-stress line seems to be inherent in the structure of the English language. It is the prevailing rhythm of the earlier poetry, though it changes its scheme from alliteration to rhyme in Middle English."[9] This remark, despite the carelessness of the generalization, raises questions in reference to the scheme of Pearl, which is both alliterative and rhymed. Why, for example, did the poet also choose the more archaic form? If alliterative language was the basic vehicle of his creative thought, which it seems to have been in view of the other

poems attributed to him, what is the influence of the rhyme scheme upon the degree and function of the alliteration? What is the significance of the shift, from the highly alliterative lines and stanzas at the beginnings of the poem to those later used for emphasis? What does the alliteration signify in formal terms and in terms of rhyme? Purity and Patience are unrhymed; Sir Gawain is also, for the most part, unrhymed, the bob-and-wheel endings of each stanza creating special effects in contrast to the looseness of the stanzaic organization. These poems provide an ideal "control-group" against which to measure the effects of rhyme upon the alliterative line in Pearl.

The alliteration is more dense in the unrhymed poems, as one might expect, and less discriminatingly employed. In Patience, for example, not only the storm at sea but the calm of Jonah's ultimate realization of his failure is presented in a strictly alliterative line:

> Tha3 I be gulty of gyle, as gaule of prophetes,
> þou art God, and alle gowde as graythely þyn owen;
> Haf now mercy of þy mon and his mys-dedes,
> And preue þe ly3tly a lord in londe and in water."
> (11. 285-288) 10

The pagen sailors aboard the vessel, as they pray to their pagan gods, are described in much the same way as Jonah is:

> Summe to Vernagru þer vouched vowes solemne,
> Summe to Diana deuout and derf Neptune,
> To Mahoun and to Mergot, þe mone and þe sunne,
> And vche lede as he loued and layde had his hert.
> (11. 165-168)

As a matter of fact, those passages which describe the nature of Jonah's God are somewhat denser in their alliteration:

> þat wy3e I worchyp, wysse, þat wroght all thyng,
> Alle þe worlde with þe welkyn, þe wynde and þe stormes,
> And alle at wone3, þer with-inne, at a worde one.
> (11. 206-208)

One recalls, at such lines reminiscent of Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry, that Jonah, albeit a figure respected by the Christian thinkers of the time as pre-

figuring the Christ, was still a pre-Christian sinner. The echoes and reverberations of pagan codes and sentiments linger on in the oral-formulaic utterances transmitted in the poetry itself. The old ethic which appears in Layamon's Brut, for example, clings to the very phrases. While the Pearl-poet is never guilty of using large chunks of alliterative phraseology,[11] the alliteration in and of itself would call forth an older vocabulary than that taken up in the reading and studying of French and Latin works in rhyme. And while the Pearl-poet could not have had as much leeway in his re-interpretation of the Jonah story as Layamon with Arthur, an Old Testament figure had not to be as judiciously handled as one from the New Testament--to this, even the windows of Gothic churches testify.[12]

In terms of the Pearl poem, what this would mean is that the poet is actually creating a new form in order to do justice to a Christian theme. The other poems attributed to the poet are, after all, not as intimately concerned with a specific Christian liturgy and specifically Christian notions concerning innocence, baptism, etc. Various forms were available but, from a listing of Bible paraphrases and translations, and their forms, one can discern a certain amount of confusion in the matter of formalistic and contextual propriety; only the "pety Iob" maintains the rhyme scheme which one finds in Pearl,[13] and that is, of course, derived from the Old Testament. None of the liturgical works, written for specific holidays in the church's calendar, synthesize alliteration and intricate rhyme. Bishop's theory in regard to the corona-like structure of the poem as a whole, whether it can be conclusively proved or not, is essentially correct in that it assumes the model objet to be an instrument or vessel of significance in the Church.[14]

Whereas there is no particular objet upon which the rhyme scheme itself is modeled, the very presence of such constraints seems to inhibit the "epic-heroic" impulse which in turn would inhibit the alliterative style. Purity,

in contrast, is written in the alliterative long line and has a quality which Marie Hamilton quite rightly calls "epic scope."[15] And, although there is nothing heretical in the poet's homilies from a New Testament text, much of the poem might just as well have been written by a righteous pagan; even those portions of the text, then, which are indeed of Christian significance become less so as they are expressed in that older meter in which one can still hear, in Robert Graves' words "the slow pull and push of the oar."[16] One wonders, as one reads, whether some descriptions of the events could have been written in rhymed stanzas, or whether the density of alliteration would have rendered such verses ridiculously bombastic:

> Sturnen trumpen strake steven in halle
> (l. 1402)
>
> þenne ran þay in on a res on rowtes ful grete
> (l. 1782) 17

The addition of rhyme, or, rather, the priming of the line for a rhymed ending, would tend to destroy the integrity of the phrase and place emphasis upon an unalliterated word; if one considers, for example, the wonderful sense of immediate action communicated by line 1209:

> Hard hattes þay hent and on hors lepes

the uniqueness and completedness of the action presented therein would forbid the taming of the line by a rhyme. Oakden criticizes the "direct moralizing and great stress...laid upon the severity and justness of God, the poet displaying the same harshness of spirit."[18] That is precisely the point; Purity does have a severer quality which not even the parable of the pearl (l.1113 et. seq.) can ameliorate. There has been some discussion of the quatrains, which one should refer to as mock-quatrains since they are not established through rhyme or syllable-count or patterning but simply at intervals of four lines; one can only speculate about the purpose of such divisions, which, according

to Gollancz, crop up in St. Erkenwald and The Sege of Jerusalem, and which, that editor declares, "renders a poem altogether more vivid, and lighter in structure."[19] Perhaps so, but it does not seem to alter the inner structure of the line, nor, although an innovation of the Revival, to inhibit the degree of alliteration.

The religiosity of Purity is, like that of Judith, for example, or like that of Genesis A, a religiosity which takes place and has meaning in the world, rather than in heaven or within the human soul. The lyric mode, that which, in Pearl, is a very powerful pull towards the internal aspect of the situation, and the subjective nature of the religious experience, attempts to arrest the movement of time and hold it captive in form. In Pearl, attention is directed away from events taking place in the real world, even when that world is within the sphere of Biblical reference. Historical truth, the truth proved or disproved by men's actions on terra firma, occupies very little space in Pearl. Even that section of the poem which deals with the Crucifixion is presented primarily in emotional and psychological terms:

> 'Of Jerusalem I in speche spelle.
> If þou wyl knaw what kyn he be,
> My Lombe, my Lorde, my dere juelle,
> My ioy, my blys, my lemman fre,
> þe profete Ysaye of hym con melle
> Pitously of hys debonerte:
> "þat gloryous gyltle3 þat mon con quelle
> Wythouten any sake of felonye,
> As a schep to þe sla3t þer lad wat3 he;
> And, as lombe þat clypper in hande nem,
> So closed he hys mouth fro vch query,
> Quen Jue3 hym iugged in Jerusalem."
> (11. 793-804)

The miracles which take place in Purity need not occur in Pearl, for miracles too, change the shape and sometimes the nature of matter and are of this world.

In Purity, in Patience, and in Sir Gawain, Oakden writes, "we meet with lines having excessive alliteration of a purely ornamental type" except in the

bob-and-wheel endings.[20] Since the settings and plots of those works are so dissimilar, one seeks a thread of likeness other than the author's rectitude. Pearl stands apart from the other poems in its turning away from history. In Sir Gawain, the thrust of the story is not directed heavenward; the test of Gawain's virtue, that is, is his moral conduct in this world. The emphasis is upon the action:

> Wylde waye3 in þe worlde Wowen now rydez
> On Gryngolet, þet þe grace hade geten of his lyue;
> (11. 2479-2480)

When the characters are not actively engaged, they speak about activity:

> þenne watz Gawan ful glad, and gomenly he la3ed:
> 'Now I þonk yow þryuandely þur3 alle oþer þynge,
> Now acheued is my chaunce, I schal at your wykle
> Dowelle, and ellez do quat 3e demen.'
> (11. 1079-1082)

> þe lorde let for luf lotez so myry,
> As wy3 þat wolde of his wyte, ne wyst quat he my3t.
> þenne he carped to þe kny3t, criande loude,
> '3e had demed to do þe dede þat I bidde;
> Wyl 3e halde þis hes here at þys onez'
> (11. 1086-1090)

How secular a poem Sir Gawain is can be seen in the use, above, of the verb "deme" which, in Pearl, describes one of the faculties of the Deity. The secularity of the poem is associated with its cyclical theme and the unceasing motion of the characters presented in it. Whenever the action stops, whenever the emphasis is placed upon being and not doing, one finds the hero in danger of losing his sense of integrity:

> 'Nay for soþe, beau sir,' sayd þat swete,
> '3e schal not rise of your bedde, I rych yow better,
> I schal happe yow here þat oþer half als,
> And syþen karp wyth my kny3t þat I ka3t haue;
> For I wene wel, iwysse, Sir Wowen 3e are,
> þat alle þe worlde worchipez quere-so 3e ride;
> (11. 1222-1227)

What Sir Gawain is matters less than what he does; action, or, as in the lady's speech, negation of action, is very well suited to the alliterative long line

which, while it does not actually create circularity in a poem, provides a suitable form for cyclical content. The alliterative long line calls attention to the line itself rather than to the stanza and would impede the thrust, the vertical, as it were, of a poem whose intent and content were progressive or linear. This is why the tail-rhyme works so effectively in Sir Gawain: the form itself threatens to arrest the action and, at various intervals, the reader is brought up short. Since the greater part of the verse is really organized not in terms of sound but in terms of meaning, in what A. C. Bartlett quite rightly insists are verse paragraphs and not strophes,[21] renewed emphasis at varying intervals upon the technicality of the tail-rhyme must have a comic effect. The alliteration either thins out or reinforces the premature line-endings. Gawain's first encounter with Bercilak's lady, for example, should surprise the reader as much as the sleeping knight himself:

'My lorde and his ledez ar on lenþe faren,
Oþer burnez in her bedde, and my burdez als,
þe dor drawen and dit with a derf haspe;
And syþen I haue in þis hous hym þat al lykez,
I schal ware my whyle wel, quyl hit lastez,
with tale.
3e ar welcum to my cors,
Yowre awen won to wale,
Me behouez of fyne force
Your seruaunt be, and schale.'
(11. 1231-1240)

Whereas in the alliterative long line, one's attention is drawn to a series of words, i.e. "burnez-bedde-burdez," "dor-drawen-dit-derf," and therefore one can assimilate the poet's associations, in the bob-and-wheel there is neither the time nor the space to anticipate the end-rhymes. Even in those stanzas whose endings have been called dramatic, it is the anticipation provoked by the alliterative pattern which is dramatic and the unanticipated fullfillment in the rhymes which is anti-dramatic, or comic. The poet employs conventional terms of description at certain moments in the narrative:

Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene,
And þat þe myriest in his muckel þat my3t ride;
For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,
Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,
And alle his fetures fol3ande, in forme þat he hade,
ful clene; (11. 141-146)

These conventional terms are distributed rather evenly in the lines above. The poet, it seems, is setting up a situation of chivalric credibility, for what follows upsets all expectations, both through its content and through the sound values and associations of its phrasing. As Borroff notes, "In Gawain the traditional features of style do not serve traditional purposes":[22]

For wonder of his hwe men bade,
Set in his semblaunt sene;
He ferde as freke were fade,
And oueral enker-grene.
(11. 147-150)

If expanded alliterative lines suggest of connote exaltation, as passages in Anglo-Saxon poems such as Judith or Genesis B seem to suggest, then the alliterative line when it is collapsed, as in the verse above, should have the opposite effect, that of deflation. And, since the rhyme speeds up the lines in any case, the effect of so much alliteration, particularly the consonantal variety, is like that of a bear dancing--the conventions themselves appear droll in view of the performer.

Comic effects of so broad a nature would be out of place in Pearl. While there is humor in the poem, it is a humor subdued by the metaphysical concerns of the poet. Another possible use of the alliterative short line is in passages or poems of wit where the juxtapositions are calculated for ironic effects as in "Wen þe turuf is þi tuur," cited by Rosemary Woolf as a poem which has "its ancestry in the literary no-man's land of the twelfth century, when the metre used was still the alliterative line with its length and leisure, but when the style already showed the ironic edge and colloquial directness that

are characteristics of the death lyrics of the Middle Ages":[23]

> Wen þe turuf is þi tuur,
> and þi put is þi bour,
> þi wel and þi wite þrote
> ssulen wormes to note.
> Wat helpit þe þenne
> al þe worilde wnne?

Certainly, no poem could be farther in spirit from the Pearl-poet's work; the intent of the succinct couplets is to aggravate the reader into moral awareness; the sound associations are meant to jar: "wel-wite-wormes." It is very seldom that one finds ironic statement in Pearl or, for that matter, in the other poems; there is irony in the larger sense, but it is an irony of situation rather than of statement.

Turning back to the alliteration in Pearl itself, one observes that, as in the long lines of Sir Gawain, the words associated through their initial letters are not associated in order to shock but to appeal to common sense and/or traditional acceptance; moreover, one finds that the stronger the alliteration within the line, the more muted the end-rhyme becomes:

> The dubbement dere of doun and dale3,
> Of wod and water and wlonk playne3,
> Bylde in my blys, abated my bale3,
> Fordidden my stresse, dystyed my payne3.
> Doun after a strem þat dry3ly hale3,
> I bowed in blys, bredful my brayne3;
> þe fyrre I fol3ed þose floty vale3,
> þe more strenghþe of ioye myn herte strayne3.
> As fortune fares þer as ho frayne3,
> Wheþer solace ho sende oþer elle3 sore,
> þe wy3 to sham her wykle ho wayne3
> Hytte3 to haue ay more and more.
> (11. 121-132)

Even at the beginning of the poem when the alliteration is still dense and the content by no means expressing equilibrium, the poet can still maintain a kind of esthetic cohesion although his speaker is distraught. In the passage above, for example, one finds the following words linked by their initial letters: "dubbement-dere-doun-dale3," "wod-water-wlonk," "bylde-blys-bale3,"

"fyrre-fol3ed-floty," "strenghþe-strayne3," "fortune-fares-frayne3," "solace-sende-sore." Not only do these words demand attention by dint of their initial consonants but also because the repeated letter in alliterative verse tends to fall into or create the stress-position.[24] What is most interesting here is that once the metaphoric implications of "dubbement" have been accepted, one finds that the narrator's words are in line with objective reality; "wod" and "water" would tend to be "wlonk," and one does not wonder that the dreamer "fol3ed" what was "floty." The linking of the more abstract words, instead of being commonsensical, is quite logical in that the concepts so presented are antithetical as in "solace-sore" or "strenghþe-strayne3," the latter pair placed at opposite ends of the line in which they appear. As the dreamer is in a state of extreme emotion, and yet not out of his senses completely, the very words of the poem reflect that condition. These word-choices do not appear to be dictated by convention for, in the first place, as Bartlett puts it, "it is absurd to suppose that a genuine Anglo-Saxon poet was hampered by alliteration otherwise than as a modern English writer is hampered by a scarcity of good rhymes in English...or by the exigencies of imabic pentamenter."[25] Secondly, the Pearl-poet was able to do otherwise, that is, was able to emphasize different values through the device of alliteration at different moments in the poem.

To return to a point made earlier, the thinning out of the alliteration, in the greater part of the poem, permits the poet to employ the device for effects of strangeness, suitable in descriptions of the nature of God and Heaven. The most astounding examples appear in Sections XVI and XVIII, both of which, although in different voices, instead of modifying or attempting to conceal the artificiality of the alliteration, purposefully call attention to the use of the words themselves as words. In Section XVI, it is the Maiden

who plays upon words in absolute theological earnestness:

'That mote þou mene3 in Judy londe,'
þat specyal spyce þen to me spakk,
'þat is þe cyte þat þe Lombe con fonde
To soffer inne sor for mane3 sake,
þe olde Jerusalem to vnderstonde;
For þer þe olde gulte wat3 don to slake.
Bot þe nwe, þat ly3t of Gode3 sonde,
þe apostel in Apocalyppce in theme con take.
þe Lompe þer wythouten spotte3 blake
Hat3 feryed þyder hys fayre flote;
And as hys flok is wythouten flake,
So is hys mote wythouten moote.'
(11. 937-948)

The dreamer, in Section XVIII, during his vision of the "tor" of God, continues with one of the strands one finds in the Maiden's speech and proceeds to elaborate upon it in a still more daring fashion:

Of sunne ne mone had þay no nede;
þe self God wat3 her lombe-ly3t,
þe Lombe her lantyrne, wythouten drede;
þur3 hym blysned þe bor3 al bry3t.
þur3 wo3e and won my lokyng 3ede,
For sotyle cler no3t lette no ly3t.
þe hy3e trone þer mo3t 3e hede
Wyth alle þe apparaylmente vmbepy3te,
As John þe appostel in terme3 ty3te;
þe hy3e Gode3 self hit set vpone.
(11. 1045-1054)

Not only does the Pearl-poet begin to extricate the device of alliteration from its association with the poetry of action and pagan belief, but has transformed it into a vehicle suitable for the conveyance of Christian dogma. In these verses one finds the more logical word associations, as in Line 938, "specyal-spyce-spakk," or Line 940, "soffer-sor-sake," or Line 946, "feryed-fayre-flote," these being alliterations across the line--horizontal alliterations, as it were. But the elaborate punning on initial sounds calls for a sequence of alliteration within the thought sequence, that is, not only for the duration of the line but operative throughout several lines:

1. 937 mote mene3 londe
1. 938 specyal spyce spakk

1. 939 Lombe
1. 940 mane3
1. 941
1. 942
1. 943 ly3t
1. 944
1. 945 Lompe spotte3
1. 946
1. 947
1. 948

In the stanza from Section XVIII, much the same phenomenon occurs or is created by the poet:

1. 1045 sunne
1. 1046 sself lombe-ly3t
1. 1047 Lombe lantyrne
1. 1048
1. 1049 lokyng
1. 1050 sotyle lette ly3t
1. 1051 trone
1. 1052
1. 1053 terme3 ty3te
1. 1054 self

The associations and reverberations of words linked in this way are much less commonsensical but appear to be of metaphoric significance with reference to church liturgy, i.e., as in "sunne-self-sotyle-self," or "lombe-ly3t-lantyrne-lokyng-lette...ly3t." Examples from Section XVI are "mote-mene3-mane3" and "londe-Lombe-ly3t-Lompe." Now, the question which arises is, of course, whether or not, given a particular topic and a lexicon more or less circumscribed, such linking of terms and concepts through their initial letters is not a matter of numerical probability. While the only way of ascertaining such information would involve a computer-analysis, stanzas taken from different sections of the poem, on the following page, offer some evidence although not of the electronic variety.[26] Moreover, given a response of incredulity on the part of a reader that a poet would be able to dominate his material to such an extent, one can only respond with the assertion that very little is beyond that poet who can terminate a

poem concerning the 144,000 innocents on line 1212. One must consider, also, that acrostics may very well have been familiar to the Pearl-poet as that jeu d'art is employed in the Psalms.

There is the possibility, too, that a dense horizontal alliteration would forbid the repetition of the same sound in different lines on purely technical grounds; that is, repetition to such a degree would tend to numb the ear, as it were, and negate all effects of emphasis or contrast. In the verses where a discernible chain of sound is not observable throughout the stanza, the divergent alliterations across individual lines are clearly separated:

> Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space;
> My body on balke þer bod in sweuen.
> My goste is gon in Gode3 grace
> In auenture þer meruayle3 meuen.
> I ne wyste in þis worlde quere þat hit wace,
> Bot I knew me keste þer klyfe3 cleuen;
> Towarde a foreste I bere þe face,
> Where rych rokke3 wer to dyscreuen.
> þe ly3t of hem my3t no mon leuen,
> þe glemande glory þat of hem glent;
> For wern neuer webbe3 þat wy3e3 weuen
> Of half so dere adubbement
> (11. 61-72)

One sees, for example, in the stanza above, that the hard g in line 63 is not repeated until line 70; that the two lines alliterating on w are separated by five lines; that words beginning with the letter k are present only in line 66. The closer to the poem's opening, when the speaker is most "earth-bound," the heavier the alliteration across the line, and the fewer the linkings down the stanza:

> þat spot of spyse3 mot nede3 sprede,
> þer such ryche3 to rot is runne;
> Blome3 blayke and blwe and rede
> þer schyne3 ful schyr agayn þe sunne.
> Flor and fryte may not be fede
> þer hit doun drof in molde3 dunne;
> For vch gresse mot grow of grayne3 dede;
> No whete were elle3 to wone3 wonne.

Of goud vche goude is ay bygonne;
So semly a sede mo3t fayly not.
þat spryngande spyce3 vp ne sponne
Of þat precios perle wythouten spotte.
(11. 25-36)

The three lines terminating the stanza seem to present a problem before one realizes that the poet is treating the "sp" cluster, like the "sch" cluster in line 28, as a separate and distinct unit of sound (Oakden, p. 164-165). One notes how careful the poet is in handling similarities and contrasts in his verse, as this alternation of heavy consonant and light shows:

For vch gresse mot grow of grayne3 dede;
No whete were elle3 to wone3 wonne.
Of goud vche goude is ay bygonne;
(11. 31-33)

By its very nature, rhyme draws attention to line-endings; although most of this discussion has been concerned with consonantal recurrence, much of the strength and suggestivity of the rhyme scheme in Pearl depends also on the poet's use of, and sensitivity to, the power of the vowel, or assonance. The horizontal emphasis of alliteration within the line is balanced by 1) alliteration down the stanza, and 2) the vertical pull of the rhyming vowels. Since only three vowels occur in each stanza, given this particular scheme and the poet's perfect adherence to it, much depends on the suitable nature of those vowels in reference to the manifest content of the stanza. Just as the heavier consonants recur more frequently in the speeches of the dream-narrator, whose characteristic consonant seems to be b, the lower and more plaintive vowels mark line-endings of the stanzas in which he mourns, pleade, begs or cajoles. Section VII, in which both characters speak, presents several examples of the modulation of vowels in the stanzas of the Maiden and dreamer; here, the dreamer is comparing his past happiness in the world and his past sense of harmony with his present grief:

'My blysse, my bale, 3e han ben bo̧e,

Bot much þe bygger 3et wat3 my mon;
Fro þou wat3 wroken fro vch a woþe,
I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon.
Now I hit se, now leþe3 my loþe.
And, quen we departed, we wern at on,
God forbede we be now wroþe,
We meten so selden by stok oþer ston.
þa3 cortaysly 3e carp con,
I am bot mol and manere3 mysse.
Bot Crystes mersy and Mary and Jon,
þise arn þe grounde of alle my blisse.
(11. 372-384)

The dreamer has, of course, been well chidden by the Maiden for his complaining and such righteous chastisement has led to his curiously moving understatement in the stanza above; the use of the heavy o at the end of all lines with the exception of 382 and 384 lends a slightly despairing quality to the whole, and even releases the inherent suggestivity of a cliche, "by stok oþer ston." If one rearranges certain words in lines 381 and 383, the difference such line-endings make is easily discernible:

þa3 3e con carp cortaysly,
I am bot mol and manere3 mysse.
Bot Crystes mersy and Jon and Mary,
þise arn þe grounde of alle my blisse.

The dreamer continues to argue his cause with a reduced number of syllables per line and an identical consonant in the first two rhymes of the stanza:

'In blysse I se þe blyþely blent,
And I a man al mornyf mate;
3e take þeron ful lyttel tente,
þa3 I hente ofte harme3 hate.
Bot now I am here in your presente,
I wolde bysech, wythouten debate,
3e wolde me say in sobre asente
What lyf 3e lede erly and late.
(11. 385-392)

What the effect of such doubling was when heard or read by a fourteenth century audience is difficult to discover; a certain fondness for anaphora shows itself and an admiration for repetitious devices--as late as Chaucer, identical rhymes were evidence of technical virtuosity. Whether or not the

duplication and repetition of one of the rhyme consonants in the manner of the verse above is broad enough to constitute a feat of rhetoric, it causes an accentual shift in the direction of the line-ending and thus carries the consistently end-stopped syntax into the next line.

The line-endings of the Maiden's speeches are in general much more integral to the fabric of her discourse; as in this example, the poet has alloted her a good share of broad vowels and not as many purely consonantal endings. Furthermore, and as indicated before, her words tend to reverberate not only through the line but down the stanza and the rhyme words, too, are stronger in their associations:

> 'A blysful lyf þou says I lede;
> þou wolde3 knaw þerof þe stage.
> þow wost wel when þy perle con schede
> I wat3 ful 3ong and tender of age;
> Bot my Lorde þe Lombe þur3 hys godhede,
> He toke myself to hys maryage,
> Corounde me quene in blysse to brede
> In lenghe of daye3 þat euer schal wage;
> And sesed in alle hys herytage
> Hys lef is. I am holy hysse:
> Hys prese, hys prys, and hys parage
> Is rote and grounde of alle my blysse.'
> (11. 409-420)

The kind of equilibrium which is established is the end product not only of the thoughts contained in the lines but of the subtle balancing of line-endings and their antecedents in the line:

> þou wolde3 knaw þerof þe stage.
> þow wost wel when þy perle con schede
> I wat3 ful 3onge and tender of age;
>
> Corounde me quene in blysse to brede
>
> Hys lef is. I am holy hysse:

Especially problematic in terms of the alliterative line, one would imagine, for a poet who did not wish to transform a biblical text and exemplus into a neo-Anglo-Saxon poem, would be just those portions of the Maiden's narrative

which touch upon situations and ideals not exclusively Christian in origin. At several points in a stanza from Section XI, for example, one feels that the words of the Maiden threaten the carefully maintained diction and balance of the poem by their roots in an older and fiercer tradition:[27]

'Ino3e is knawen þat mankyn grete
Fyrste wat3 wro3t to blysse parfyt;
Oure forme fader hit con forfete
þur3 an apple þat he vpon con byte.
Al wer we dampned for þat mete
To dy3e in doel out of delyt
And syþen wende to helle hete,
þerinne to won wythoute respyt.
Bot þeron com a bote astyt.
Ryche blod ran on rode so roghe
And wynne water þen at þat plyt:
þe grace of God wex gret innoghe.
(11. 637-649)

The preponderance of words French and Latin in origin at the poem's very center, lines 601-612, neutralizes the ground, as it were, somewhat:

'Of more and lasse in Gode3 ryche,'
þat gentyl sayde,' lys no joparde,
For þer is vch mon payed inlyche,
Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde;
For ne gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche,
Queþer-so-euer he dele nesch oþer harde:
He laue3 hys gyfte3 as water of dyche
Oþer gote3 of golf þat neuer charde.
Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard
To Hym þat mat3 in synne rescoghe;
No blysse bet3 fro hem reparde,
For þe grace of God is gret inoghe.
(11. 601-612)

That eight out of twelve lines at such a juncture are written with minimum alliteration indicates that the poet has found other devices more suitable; the skilful employment of varied antitheses, "more and lasse," "lyttel oþer much," "nesch oþer harde," and the conceptually significant rhymes, "ryche-inlyche," "joparde-rewarde," "rescoghe-inoghe" replace the older form as connective tissue within the stanza. The antithetical and suspense-provoking impulse which the poet very carefully cultivates here--and it is well he does

for the poem must sustain its own plot for another six hundred lines--finds its momentary resolution in the alliterative phrases which have the finality of the resolving chord in a piece of music: "For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche," and "For þe grace of God is gret inoghe" sound definite while being statements of ambiguous meaning.

One of the reasons that the poet can end the poem as he does without easy solutions and without risk of the anti-climactic or too-abrupt ending which marks other dream visions in his handling of the alliterative line and his use of its inherent qualities. The dreamer's awakening and his physical reaction to the world of reality takes an elaborately alliterative form:

> Hit payed hym not þat I so flonc
> Ouer meruelous mere3, so mad arayde.
> Of raas þa3 I were rasch and ronk.
> 3et rapely þerinne I wat3 restayed.
> For, ry3t as I sparred vnto þe bonc,
> þat brathþe out of my drem me brayde.
> þen wakned I in þat erber wlonk;
> (11. 1165-1171)

Just as it is his physical nature which prevents the dreamer from accepting the unbodied or disembodied condition of the dream state, it is that particular moment of rushing sensation, inappropriate sensation, one might add, which is presented in the most heavily alliterated lines: "Ouer meruelous mere3, so mad arayde./ Of raas þa3 I were rasch and ronk." These sensations are, after all, what has made the dreamer's "mane3 mynde to maddyng malte" (1. 1154); his last actions, which propel him out of the dream state, have also been expressed in a swirl of consonants:

> And to start in þe strem schulde non me stere,
> To swymme þe remnaunt, þa3 I þer swalte.
> (11. 1159-1160)

> When I schulde start in þe strem astraye,
> (1. 1162)

All this undifferentiated movement comes to a halt at line 1174; the dreamer

finds himself in the same spot that he had occupied before the vision began:

> I raxled, and fel in gret affray,
> And, sykyng, to myself I sayd,
> 'Now al be to þat Prynce3 paye.'
> (11. 1174-1176)

From this point until the last line in the poem, the degree and kind of alliteration resembles that of the Maiden's speeches; the dreamer, that is, has reached a kind of linguistic peace. In the stanza following that in which he "raxled," there is an abundance of open o sounds:

> Me payed ful ille to be outfleme
> So sodenly of þat fayre regious,
> Fro alleþo sy3te3 so quyke and queme.
> (11. 1177-1179)

The rhyme endings of these lines are much softer than those that appear in the last stanza which presents the dreamer in his typically agitated state; while lines 1165-1176 end, for the most part, with heavy or sharp consonants, i.e., "flonc-ronk-bonc-wlonk," "arayde-restayed-brayde-layde-strayd-sayd," beyond line 1176 the line-endings are all much softer, i.e., from line 1176 -1183, "outfleme-queme-reme-deme" and "regious-swone-renoun-avysyoun." The heaviest line-ending in the penultimate stanza is t; even lighter is the alternate te; and the n of the uen in the second rhyme is so soft as to be almost inaudible when spoken. That such line-endings are not accidental seems clear from their consistent appearance in the course of the final three stanzas of the poem, that is, over a poetic period of thirty-six lines; the final stanza itself varies the scheme of the penultimate only in its constant use of the te form and a substitution of i or y as the terminating vowel in those lines that end in n. The latter defines the line-ending more clearly and provides a subtle contrast to the continuous final e:

> To pay þe Prince oþer sete sa3te
> Hit is ful eþe to þe god Krystin;

For I haf founden hym, hoþe day and na3te,
A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin.
Ouer þis hyul þis lote I la3te,
For pyty of my perle enclyin,
And syþen to God I hit byta3te
In Kryste3 dere blessyng and myn,
þat in þe forme of bred and wyn
þe preste vus schewe3 vch a daye.
He gef vus to be his homly hyne
Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay.
(11. 1201-1212)

As in the more numinous disquisitions of the Maiden, one finds words linked by their initial letter throughout the stanza:

1. 1201 pay Prince
1. 1202 ful
1. 1203 For founden
1. 1204 frende ful fyin.
1. 1205
1. 1206 For pyty perle
1. 1207
1. 1208
1. 1209 forme
1. 1210 preste
1. 1211
1. 1212 precious perle3 pay

Moreover, the alliteration occurs here in sets or phrases of two or three words; sometimes the line is balanced by two such phrases, one at either end of the line:

To pay þe Prince oþer sete sa3te

In this case, movement down the stanza occurs through the use of other pairs in lines following upon the balanced line:

1. 1201 To pay þe Prince sete sa3te
1. 1203 day and na3te,
1. 1205 lote I la3te,

The same pattern prevails in the second half of the stanza:

1. 1206 pyty of my perle
1. 1209 bred and wyn
1. 1211 his homly hyne

The final line establishes a balance on the classic alliterative model; even the less important words have their precedents, however, in lines close enough

to the last to be discernible both to ear and eye:[28]

1. 1210 vus vch
1. 1211 vus his
1. 1212 vnto his

Thus, the balance established by the last line is far from arbitrary--the opening motif is not reintroduced without reinforcement throughout the final verses, and, as one would assume, especially in the final stanza.

Finally, the tension between rhymed verse and alliterative verse is one between the line as the most important unit in an individual poetics and the stanza as that unit; the Pearl-poet employs both devices with such expertise that the excesses of each one are curbed. Whereas the alliterative long-line has a tendency to extend itself and is as irregular in length as its number of unstressed and non-alliterated syllables, those lines which rhyme governs extend vertically rather than across the page. Such tension seems to me a structural correlative of the poem's thematic material; the emotional excesses of the dreamer, his individual grief and passion, are curbed by an ongoing pattern which, at the last, reveals itself to be part of a circle.

Footnotes

[1]"Euphony, Rhythm, and Metre" from Theory of Literature, reprinted in The Structure of Verse, ed. Harvey Gross, 1966, p. 27.

[2]Almost everybody mentions the alliteration; some attempt to describe the phenomenon may be seen in Menner's introduction to Purity, p. liii; D. Everett, Essays on Medieval Literature, 1955, pp. 73, 93. There are allusions to Pearl in various treatises on alliteration and end-rhyme in Middle English: G. Saintsbury, A History of English Prosody, 1906, v. I, p. 106; J. B. Reese, "Alliterative Verse in the York Cycle," SP, v. xlviii, pp. 639, 646, 659, 661, 666; and, giving the most help, J. P. Oakden, Alliterative Poetry in Middle English, 1930, v. I, pp. 235, 240, 241; v. II, pp. 67-78. Also, A. Brink, Stab und Wort imsGawain, 1920.

[3]Oakden, that is; and K. Sisam, Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose has excellent introductory remarks, p. xviiiff. A notable exception to the general neglect of stylistic elements is Marie Borroff's Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: A Stylistic and Metrical Study, 1962

[4]Oakden, pp. 177-181, examines the differences between O. E. and M. E. alliterative rules; although he does not denigrate M. E. alliterative works, he does emphasize the lessening of constraints, such as the formerly prohibited alliteration of vowels, in the Alliterative Revival.

[5]In his edition of Pearl, p. xl.

[6]As would befit the dreamer's despairing state; Sections I and II include an inordinate number of g and r sounds. For other examples of heavy alliterative effects, see Appendix I.

[7]In a chapter on scansion in Structural Principles in Old English Poetry, N. Isaacs remarks, pp. 169-170: "The alliteration that counts, is what holde the line together...It is the pair of alliterating syllables around which the rest of the line forms. Other alliterations, when they occur, (and they sometimes occur in profusion) should not be allowed to influence or alter the natural and necessary rhythmic structure. They are incidental or accidental." Oakden on Revival scansion, v. II, pp. 177-180, does not exempt fourteenth century lines from this condition.

[8]See R. H. Robbins, "Popular Prayers in Middle English Verse," MP, v. xxxvi, p. 345ff. Also, Richard Greene, Early English Carols, 1935, nos. 154, 220.

[9]From Anatomy of Criticism, 1957, reprinted by Gross, see1, pp. 168-180, especially, p. 169.

[10]All quotations from Patience are from the edition of Bateson, 1918.

[11]Alliterative tags occurring in Sir Gawain, however, are listed by Oakden, v. I, pp. 190-191; Borroff, p. 128, points out that such mannerisms are limited by the poet's style in this work which, having "a large admixture of the circumstantial, X avoids overdue use of descriptive tags.

[12]Male, p. 172, writes of liberty taken with OT figures.

[13]Other poems employ the same rhyme scheme, (see Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript, ed. Kail, 1901, p. 672), the "pety Iob" is the only alliterative poem to do so.

[14]Pearl in its Setting, pp. 29-30.

[15]In the intro. to her bibliography of Pearl, Patience and Purity: A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1970, ed. J. B. Severs, p. 351.

[16]In "Harp, Anvil, Oar" from The Crowning Privilege, 1955; reprinted by Gross, pp. 52-71. Prosody is presented as inseparable from tradition.

[17]All quotations are from the edition of 1920, ed. R. J. Menner.

[18]Alliterative Poetry, v. I, p. 177.

[19]Alliterative Poetry, v. I, p. 178.

[20]Alliterative Poetry, v. i, p. 192.

[21]This being the older method of grouping found in OE manuscripts; The Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry, 1966, p. 16, calls the paragraph marker the envelope pattern.

[22]Borroff, p. 129.

[23]The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages, 1968, p. 82.

[24]Structural Principles, pp. 168-169: a method of scanning by "alliteration, natural accent, rhetorical emphasis, and syntactical priority (in that order)." This order I, in general, attempt to follow.

[25]Larger Rhetorical Patterns, p. 17, n. 3. And in ME alliterative verse, there were also acceptable breaches of rule; Oakden, v. I, pp. 176-181.

[26]There is, in fact, a computer Concordance to Five Middle English Poems, these being the works attributed to the Gawain- or Pearl-poet, including St. Erkenwald. B. Kottler and A. Markman, the scholars who engineered the project, published in 1966, were not, however, interested in the probability of metaphoric distribution. Yet Marie Borroff also remarks that, in GGK, there is "a pronounced" tendency to avoid juxtaposition of chief syllables except where compensation follows to form a 'reverse foot'" GGK: A Stylistic and Metrical Analysis, p. 148.

[27]Oakden, p. 180: "It is probable that in Worcs. there was considerable literary activity, and the thirteenth century may not have been so great a blank as we are apt to imagine." He also points out that "the tradition lingered in the west, as the dialectical evidence goes to show," referring to "the development of OE rhythms and use of alliteration" in ME alliterative verse.

[28]The interlinear effects described here have been noted as a principal element in verse scansion by Oakden, p. 179: "part of a larger tendency... for the alliteration to make its appeal to the eye as well as the ear."

CHAPTER V - THE TWELVE-LINE STANZA: NUMBER AND RHYME

That a well-thought-out and purposeful numerical scheme is clearly operative in Pearl no one who can count to twelve can deny; that the interplay of line number and stanzaic group demands an extraordinary degree of virtuosity, few would be foolish enough to dispute. That which remains debatable, then, does not touch upon either the technical dexterity with which the poet handles these devices or the symbolic role of number in the theology and philosophy of the medieval period;[1] the mystery of number in Pearl concerns the manner and the purpose in the use of such divisions as are employed within the poem's boundaries, and the esthetic effect achieved by the poet through his numerical devices. It appears that the ordering of lines into stanzas of twelve and the stanzaic groupings of five, and the working-out of these two systems in a scheme whereby the fives and the sixes eventually mesh to form an objet, (a corona most probably), is of more significance esthetically than metaphorically.[2] While one must be rather wary of pat analogies across the limits of various art forms, the use of numerical division in Pearl is musical in that music, according to Northrop Frye, and in relation to poetry, "is concerned not with beauty of sound but with organization of sound, and beauty has to do with the form of the organization."[3] This aspect of the organization of Pearl is as yet undiscovered territory; at its edges are other questions, beyond the scope and purpose of this chapter but to be borne in mind; the relationship of successful creation and the difficulties set by the poet for himself contrasts sharply with the descriptions of music and song in the poem, suggesting some modification of the correlation in Boethius: it is only in the dream-segment of the poem that the "brydde3" "songen wyth a swete

asent," (ll. 92 and 93). For man, the transposition of musica mundana into musica instrumentalis constituta involves, it seems, more rigorous struggle, perhaps because harmony in the microcosmos, in man, (that is, musica humana)[4], for the Pearl-poet, is certainly not a constant factor.

Should one attempt to interpret the various references in the work to number, or, rather, to interpret the poem in the light of those numerical allusions, one would end, as Chapman does, by forcing the issue.[5] On the simplest level, there are references to several different sets; unlike the same poet's use of the number five in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the number twelve, in Pearl, is used primarily as allusion, that is, the specificity of its symbolism goes unclarified. In Sir Gawain, five is associated with the pentangle, the knot of virtues intertwined; there, the violation of one virtue undoes the whole. But what, precisely, does twelve represent in Pearl? The greatest cluster of references to this number, in relation to biblical numerology, is to be found in Section XVII, in the poet's transposition of the verse Lapidary, which means that the content of this passage was, to a large extent, predetermined. One is informed that the dreamer's vision of Jerusalem corresponds to that described by John:

> Wyth gentyl gemme3 an-vnder py3t
> Wyth bantelle3 twelue on basyng boun,
> þe foundemente3 twelue of riche tenoun;
> (ll. 991-993)

Everything that the dreamer reports seeing is "As John deuysed" (l. 1021):

> þise twelue degres wern brode and stayre;
> þe cyte stod abof ful sware,
> As longe as brode as hy3e ful fayre;
> (ll. 1022-1023)

> þenne helde vch sware of þis manayre
> Twelue forlonge space, er euer hit fon,
> Of he3t, of brede, of lenþe to cayre,
> For meten hit sy3 þe apostel John.
> (ll. 1029-1032)

This kind of description goes on, spills over, as it were, into the first stanza of Section XVIII; the dreamer here manifests all the enthusiasm of a traveler in this world, and records all details without dwelling upon their significance. The regularity and exactness of the sight is the impression created by the poet in this stanza, with intent to demonstrate the actuality of the sight:

> As John hym wryte3 3et more I sy3e
> Vch pane of þat place had þre 3ate3;
> So twelue in poursent I con asspye,
> þ portale3 pyked of rych plate3,
> And vch 3ate of a margyre,
> A parfyt perle þat neuer fate3.
> Vchon in scrypture a name con plye
> Of Israel barne3, folewande her date3.
> þat is to say, as her byrþ-whate3:
> þe aldest ay fyrst þeron wat3 done.
> (11. 1033-1042)

If the poet meant to imply correspondences here with the number of lines in the stanza and with a mystical decodification of the will of God, then such implication is extremely well-guarded. In each of the citations of the number twelve, there is no overt connection made, no revelation of the final significance of that number in the cosmis scheme; again, in Section XVIII, the number crops up, and again with no specific connection made with the dreamer's plight:

> Aboute þat water arn tres ful schym,
> þat twelue fryte3 of lyf con bere ful sone;
> Twelue syþe3 on 3er þay beren ful frym,
> (11. 1077-1079)

Of course, mystification may be its own end and numbers in and of themselves did hold some fascination as one can see in a piece of work such as Guillaume de Machaut's three-part rondeau "Ma fin est mon commencement" in which the properties of the number three create the "musico-poetic enigma."[6] The poet seems to be playing with the connotative potentialities of number rather than

with absolute symbolic equivalences; the other numbers, which appear also do not fit nicely into an ideational pattern: "Vch pane" of the heavenly Jerusalem "had þre 3ates," (l. 1034); "Ry3t byfore Gode3 chayere," (l. 885), there are "þe fowre beste3 þat hym obes," (l. 886); and, in case one makes the mistake of thinking he has found something definite in this use of three and four, even if at scattered intervals, one finds "þe Lombe byfore con proudly passe/ Wyth horne3 seuen of red golde cler," (ll. 1110-1111), and has "seuen syngnette3...sette in seme," (l. 838).

There is, of course, the perfectly amazing correlation of the number of lines in the poem, 1212, and its multiple, although in thousands, of the number of "vyues" of the Lamb: "A hondred and forty fowre þowsande flot," (l. 786). One is confronted here by great temptation to invoke the pathetic fallacy; one would venture to assume that a poet, in the writing of a poem about the beatification and salvation of innocents would be aware from the beginning that the number 144 was available for poetic use. However, finding the correlation causes more discomfort, for, once again, even if the correlation exists, and it does, what does it mean? One peruses the lines in search of a clue; instead, one finds only reiteration of the number itself, in accord with the Church liturgy:

> 'Lest les þou leue my tale farande,
> In Appocalyppece is wryten in wro:
> "I seghe," says John, "þe Loumbe hym stande
> On þe mount of Syon ful þryuen and þro,
> And wyth hym maydenne3 an hundreþe þowsande,
> And fowre and forty þowsande mo.
> On alle her forhede3 wryten I fande
> þe Lombe3 nome, hys Fadere3 also.
> (ll. 865-872)

In a very general way, the poet may be demonstrating the underlying harmony in God's plan--but such a suggestion is, like the statement of Cusanus that "everything is everything," far too general; one admits that it is true, and

moves on. Yet to equate the number of innocents and the number of lines becomes absurd; lines are not innocents, and it would be presumptuous indeed to deny the difference or imply the similarity between words, no matter how beautiful, and a human soul. In contrast, the emulation of the corona's shape in what Bishop refers to as the "geometric" structure of the poem makes more sense;[7] the corona is to the liturgy as the shape of the poem to its purpose, its material shaped for spiritual ends.

That which seems far more profitable as an area to be explored is the unit of twelve as a lowly matter of versification. Each stanza utilizes the same complex rhyme scheme: abababbcbc; one would like to know, quite simply, what the poet gains in using such an intricate form instead of, for example, rhymed couplets, and, also, what is the esthetic effect of breaking each stanza at the twelfth line, that is, the effect of twelve as a boundary.

The first element in that complex scheme is the alternation of rhymes for the first eight lines of the stanza; not only does rhyme serve a "metrical function signalling the conclusion of a line of verse or as the organizer, sometimes the sole organizer, of stanzaic patterns, Wellek notes "rhyme has meaning and it thus deeply involved in the whole character of a work of poetry. Words are brought together by rhyme, linked up or contrasted."[8] The alternating end-rhymes of the first eight lines in each stanza afford the poet greater scope in association or linking of rhyme words than the couplet form would have afforded. Gordon has remarked a tendency towards quatrains in approximately two-thirds of the stanzas;[9] since he does not specify what his criteria are for such divisions, one can only assume that they are syntactical or ideational boundaries. But these suggested quatrains can also be extended as the alternating rhymes provide the basis for an octave; such an extension proves particularly effective in the debate section of the poem; the maiden

can cite authority without stint, and then add what amounts to an explication of her text:

' " 'More, weþer louyly is me gyfte,
To do wyth myn quat-so me lyke3?
Oþer elle3 þyn y3e to lyþer is lyfte
For I am goude and non byswyke3?'
þus schal I "quod Kryste," hit skyfte:
þelaste schal be fyrst þat stryke3,
And þe fyrst þe laste, be he neuer so swyft;
For mony ben called, þa3 fewe be myke3."
þus pore men her part ay pyke3,
þa3 þay come late and lyttel wore;
And þa3 her sweng wyth lyttel atslyke3,
þe merci of God is much þe more.
(11. 565-576)

The eight-line boundary is also useful in the division of dialogue which otherwise might have become quite confusing since the central section of the poem contains so many different voices:

' "The date of þe daye þe lorde con knaw,
Called to þe reue: 'Lede, pay þe meyny.
Gyf hem þe hyre þat I hem owe,
And fyrre, þat non me may reprene,
Set hem alle vpon a rawe
And gyf vchon inlyche a peny.
Bygyn at þe laste þat stande3 lowe.
Tyl to þe fyrste þat þou atteny.'
(11. 541-548)

Sometimes, in the section containing the parable, the eight line unit is broken up into two quatrains, but here the break is caused by the exchange between different speakers:

' " 'Er date of daye hider arn we wonne,'
So wat3 al samen her answar so3t.
' We haf standen her syn ros þe sunne,
And no mon bydde3 vus do ry3t no3t.'
' Gos into my vyne, dot3 þat 3e conne,'
So sayde þe lorde, and made hit to3t.
' What resonabele hyre be na3t be runne
I yow pay in dede and þo3te.'
(11. 517-524)

The division into four and four takes place in the stanza following, also, but this time the order of modes is narrative-dramatic-narrative:

' "At þe date of day of euen songe,
On oure byfore þe sonne go doun,
He se3 þer ydel men ful stronge
And sade to hem wyth sobre soun,
'Wy stonde 3e ydel þise daye3 longe?'
þay sayden her hyre wat3 nawhere boun.
'Got3 to my vyne, 3emen 3onge,
And wyrke3 and dot3 þat at 3e moun.'
(11. 529-536)

The return to narrative, after the four-line span of dialogue, is sharper for its symmetry or corresponding duration:

Sone þe worlde bycom wel broun;
þe sunne wat3 doun and hit wex late.
To take her hyre he mad sumoun;
þe day wat3 al apassed date.
(11. 537-540)

When the Pearl-maiden quotes Scripture throughout Sections IX and X, the quotations, and the dialogue within these quotations, break into four or eight line units, the four-line unit depending upon the content, change of character, mode, etc. for its boundary, and the eight-line unit depending on the rhyme as its close; even when the first unit is eight lines, the change of modes can occur when the rhyme scheme takes a different turn; as in the first stanza to present a direct citation of the gospel:

'þer is no date of hys godnesse,'
þen sayde to me þat worþy wy3te,
'For al is trawþe þat he con dresse,
And he may do noþynk bot ry3t.
As Mathew mele3 in your messe
In sothful gospel of God almy3t,
In sample he can ful grayþely gesse
And lykne3 hit to heuen ly3te.
"My regne," he sayt3, "is lyk on hy3t
To a lorde þat hade a uyne, I wate.
Of tyme of 3ere þe terme wat3 ty3t,
To labor vyne wat3 dere þe date.
(11. 493-504)

While the stanza above does have a syntactical break in its fourth line, or, more properly, a break occurring between its fourth and fifth, there is here a very clear and marked separation between the octave and the last quatrain;

such a separation makes perfect poetic sense in the light of the context in that, here, the poet must be certain that his readers perceive the change from dream-speaker and dream-figure to New Testament citation. Moreover, since the Pearl-maiden is presented as divine, and in complete control of her faculty of reasoning, the smoothness and regularity of such divisions on the basis of eight, or half-eight, in conjunction with the smoothly alternating rhymes of the first eight lines in each stanza, lends to her narration and polemic a unity which the introduction of different and opposing speakers threatens to fracture. The reader or listener, that is, must be able to distinguish Matthew from the owner of the vineyard, and the workers in the vineyard from the Pearl-maiden herself, yet the poem, Pearl, cannot be allowed to disintegrate into a playlet on the model of the Quem quaeritus trope. By matching the conceptual and syntactical breaks with the flexible rhyme-scheme breaks, the poet is able to keep the quotations within quotations from breaking away altogether. The very smoothness of this match reflects the Pearl-maiden herself; when the dreamer attempts such citation, the change in the distribution of quotations is remarkable:

> Then more I meled and sayde apart:
> 'Me þynk þy tale vnresounable.
> Godde3 ry3t is redy and euermore rert,
> Oþer Holy Wryt is bot a fable.
> In Sauter is sayd a verce ouerte
> þat speke3 a poynt determynable:
> "þou quyte3 vchon as hys desserte,
> þou hy3e kyng ay pretermynable."
> Now he þat stod þe long day stable
> And þou to payment com hym byfore,
> þenne þe lasse in werke to take more able,
> And euer þe lenger þe lasse, þe more.'
> (11. 589-600)

The narrator, in what amounts to a parody in miniature of the maiden's manner of presenting the parable, first quotes himself, and then splits his stanza down the center by opening his citation of authority in the seventh line. His

"verce ouerte," the dreamer's term, must then rhyme with a word from the scriptural passage cited, "desserte," and his second phrase in support of his own theories, a "poynt determynable"[10] must then rhyme with the scriptural "pretermynable." The situation in this verse is one of "Who said what?" an apt reflexion of the dreamer's somewhat muddled state of mind. It is not only the fact that the quote begins in line 7 of the stanza, but that the first six lines build up to the quote; the order becomes six-two-four which destroys, as it should, given the poetic situation, the balance created by the nine preceding stanzas of parable.

For the greater portion of the poem, however, the alternating rhymes of the first eight lines propel the narrative and facilitate the movement of the work from one mode to the next and the speaker from one condition, i.e., the waking state, into the next, the dream, and back.[11] The alternation of rhymes in a poem of this length creates its own suspense in the form itself for, unlike the couplet form, the reader or listener is forced to go on to the next line in order to satisfy the ear; on the other hand, the content or connotation of the rhyming words need not be as closely associated or antithetical as in the couplet form, again facilitating movement in the poem in general:

> 'Blysful,' quod I, 'may þys be trwe?
> Dyspleȝ not if I speke errour.
> Art þou þe quene of heuene3 blwe,
> þat al þys worlde schal do honour?
> We leun on Marye þat grace of grewe,
> þat ber a barne of vyrgyn flour;
> þe croune fro hyr quo moȝt remwe
> Bot ho hir passed in sum fauour?
> (11. 421-428)

Had some of these rhymes been incorporated in couplets, their closeness would not only impede the movement, but trivialize the content as well:

> 'Blysful,' quod I, 'may þys be trwe?
> Art þou þe quene of heuene3 blwe,
> þat al þys worlde schal do honour?
> Dyspleȝ not if I speke errour.

We leuen on Marye þat grace of grewe,
þe croune fro hyr quo mo3t remwe
þat ber a barne of vyrgyn flour;
Bot ho hir passed in sum fauour?

The alternating rhyme scheme permits a greater range of associations, that is, permits associations of all those words linked by the same rhyme, "trwe-blwe-grewe-remwe" and "errour-honour-flour-fauour." Here, one is not forced to equate or contrast abstract and concrete terms simplistically. Moreover, even if the same rhymes were used, but in couplet form, one would lose the sense of the stanza's continuity. John Crowe Ransom, in puzzling over rhyme-linkage in a Spenserian sonnet, observes that the repetition of a rhyme in two separate and distinct quatrains functions "as a mnemonic device," and unifies the quatrains against the end-couplet.[12] The alternation in Pearl holds the eight-line span together in that way, and lessens the possibility of an even-numbered group dividing into sub-stanzaic verses.

The movement induced by the first eight lines of the stanza is of particular importance in reference to the number of passages in which no action, in terms of the plot, or narrative, is taking place. The most difficult of these, from the point of view of the craftsman, would be the versification, within the framework of a long poem, of the verse lapidary. What the narrator is made to describe is essentially what he can "sy3 wyth sy3t," that is, a backdrop for the tableau of the Lamb surrounded by innocents; the problem is to keep the props from impeding the entrance of the players, so to speak. The poet forestalls such an impasse by reducing the significance of the rhyme-words, thus making them as light and transparent as possible:

As John þise stone3 in writ con nemme,
I knew þe name after his take:
Jasper hy3t þe fyrst gemme
þat I on þe fyrst basse con wale:
He glente grene in þe lowest hemme;
Saffer helde þe secounde stale;

þe calsydoyne þenne wythouten wemme
In þe þryd table con purly pale;
(11. 998-1004)

The stanza following also presents rhymes the content of which do not astound in their associations: "crysolyt-quyt-ty3t-plyt" and "fundament-endent-gent-blente," (11. 1009-1016). And the stanza which introduces the listing includes such unobtrusive rhymes as "sy3t-dy3t-bry3t-py3t," (11. 985-991). In the final stanza of this group, the two initial rhymes are almost alike, each line-ending blending into the next:

As John deuysed 3et sa3 I þare:
þise twelue degres wern brode and stayre;
þe cyte stod abof ful sware,
As longe as brode as hy3e ful fayre;
þe strete3 of golde as glasse al bare,
þe wal of jasper þat glent as glayre;
þe wone3 wythinne enurned ware
Wyth alle kynne3 perre þat mo3t repayre.
(11. 1021-1028)

While one tends to agree with those who recognize this passage for its impressiveness as a poetic tour-de force,[13] simply in terms of the assimilation of so much given material to the verse form, one would be loath to cite it as one of the more exciting or profound moments. But this passage functions as a kind of imagistic tunnel on the other side of which is the vision of the Lamb, and to arrest reader or listener at this point would indeed slow down the poem where all its events accelerate and the climactic moment is near.

At moments of emotional intensity, the alternating rhymes of the octave can be resuscitated, as it were, and are used for emphasis and suggestion in the course of their fairly lengthy poetic periods. Section VII, for example, includes a stanza in which each word in the final position of the octave has significance in the light of what the narrator is relating at that point; he is remembering his past happiness and sense of harmony, and regretting his separation from the pearl:

'My blysse, my bale, 3e han ben boþe,
Bot much þe bygger 3et wat3 my mon;
Fro þou wat3 wroken fro vch a woþe,
I wyste neuer quere my perle wat3 gon.
Now I hit se, now leþe3 my loþe.
And, quen we departed, we wern at on;
God forbede we be now wroþe,
We meten so selden by stok oþer ston.
(11. 373-380)

This stanza has already been quoted in reference to the revitalizing of the stock phrase in line 380. The very heavy vowel at the line-endings underlines the despondency of the dreamer, slows down the rapidly flowing rhyme and, in these ways, one's attention comes to rest on last words. Here are the contrasts between unity, "at on," and separation, "wat3 gon"; the alternation of the dreamer's love for, and fear for, the Pearl, "woþe," his grief, "loþe," and their being at odds, in a metaphysical sense as well as a temperamental, "wroþe." In eight lines one moves from inclusiveness, "boþe," to exclusion, "wroþe,"; from the living creature's expression of feeling, "mon," to the silent unfeelingness of "ston."

The Pearl-maiden, too, has her share of speeches in which the movement of the first eight lines is arrested; either the theological points made therein are of particular importance in context or the movement of that section is, in general, meant to be slow and lyrical. An example of the former is the initial stanza of Section XI, in which each of the first pair of rhymes is of seminal importance in the poem as a whole, and in which each rhyme word modifies or clarifies the meaning of its alternate:

'Of more and lasse in Gode3 ryche,'
þat gentyl sayde, 'lys no joparde,
For þer is vch mon payed inlyche,
Wheþer lyttel oþer much be hys rewarde;
For þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche,
Queþer-so-euer he dele nesch oþer harde:
He laue3 hys gyfte3 as water of dyche,
Oþer gote3 of golf þat neuer charde.
(11. 601-608)

God's kingdom, "ryche," is, in the highest sense, "inlyche," that which is suiting to one's selfhood; that same divine decorum, or justice, constitutes the generosity of the deity, here defined in proper negative fashion, "no chyche." And the generosity of God is "as water of dyche" in its interminable flowing, the point being "that the source is inexhaustible."[14] Here, the rhyme form actually begins to function as a metaphoric device, the close but not overly close placements of the words working the words together instead of or in addition to "as." The second set of rhyming words also constitute a kind of metaphoric statement; the "rewarde" is that there is "no joparde," and, most interestingly in view of the exorbitant number of difficulties which the poet has set for himself within the poem, such water as "neuer charde" takes on the quality of strenuous exertion from the modifying "harde" which is interposed between "rewarde" and "neuer charde."

In Section XIV, the maiden's lament for her "lemman" is a most intense passage with a diction all its own; the alternating rhymes from line 805 to 812 provide a description of the scene in vivid terms, active and passive, the Christ and the crowd:

> 'In Jerusalem wat3 my lemman slayn
> And rent on rode wyth boye3 bolde.
> Al oure bale3 to bere ful bayn,
> He toke on hymself oure care3 colde.
> Wyth boffete3 wat3 hys face flayn
> Þat wat3 so fayr on to byholde.
> For synne he set hymself in vayn,
> Þat neuer hade non hymself to wolde.
> (ll. 805-812

While the syntax, as in much of the poem, is quite straight-forward, and has a two-line span, the rhymes themselves elaborate upon a most complicated idea, the paradox of the crucified god who suffers willingly. The poet is able to present the physical aspects of this event: "slayn," "flayn," and "colde," refer to the actual body, that which suffers as a man; whereas the last of

these, "colde," relates syntactically to the "care3" of the crowd, by dint of its position in the line and its association through rhyme with "bolde," it also suggests the lifeless corpse which is central to the mystery. One does not lose the spirituality of the event either, for "slayn relates closely to "bayn," an attitude or feeling, and "flayn" links both to "in vayn," which give the verse its poignant irony. Just as the syntactical arrangement designating the crowd of humanity the subject of the thought can yield a suggestion or image pertaining to the Christ, the process can be reversed: thus, the last line of those cited above, which, given the sense of the statement, refers to Christ and his lack of debt or guilt, emphasizes the owing; one is reminded that those who "byholde" do indeed have something "to wolde," and that not only are their "care3" "colde" but they themselves partake of that coldness in both their beholding and their owing.

Since the opening octave of each stanza with its alternating rhyme does seem in and of itself a verse-form flexible and adaptable to the poet's many purposes, for lyrical statement, for separation of dialogue, for the clarification and elaboration of dogma, the next step of inquiry into the mystery of this particular form must be how those eight lines relate to the next four. Why, for example, should the poet not have continued with a quatrain or why should he not have continued to alternate the same rhymes for the next four lines of each stanza? Why, indeed, does the twelve-line stanza, regardless of its numinous suggestivity, work?

In the first place, one cannot call too much atttention to the variety of voices within the work; from the first suggestion of "so swete a sange" which the dreamer hears in the second stanza, and whose origin is ambiguous, what the narrator-dreamer hears is of equal importance with what he sees, and, in those sections in which the maiden instructs him, of greater importance.

All these voices, plus the voice of the narrator and the dream-figure himself, must be differentiated if they are to evoke that sense of drama or conflict which marks the confrontation between the human and the divine. The distinguishing feature of this particular stanza-form, given the flexibility and length of the first octave, is the doubling of the b rhyme in the ninth line, and its reappearance in the eleventh between the c rhymes of ten and twelve. Whereas the octave, with its even number of alternating rhymes, can be used to create and substantiate situations, frames of mind, and sides of arguments, the last four lines, while being in and of themselves even and symmetrical, provide the opportunity for contrast and variety and create the necessary surprise and asymmetry in the form. The earliest and most obvious example of the way in which the form works is in the vivid break occurring between line eight and nine of the first stanza in the poem; here, one's attention is called to the shift in verse form by the double stress on the exclamation "Allas!":

> Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye
> To clanly clos in golde so clere,
> Oute of oryent, I hardyly saye,
> Ne proued I neuer her precios pere.
> So rounde, so reken in vche araye,
> So smal, so sompe her syde3 were,
> Quere-so-euer I jugged gemme3 gaye,
> I sette hyr sengely in synglere.
> Allas! I leste hyr in on erbere;
> (11. 1-9)

The first eight lines are concerned with, and recreate imagistically, the object itself or herself; as the narrator here is lost in contemplation, in memory, of his beloved pearl, the expectation of the reader or listener, by the eighth line, is of a continuation, both of the contemplative mood, and of the alternating rhymes. One notes, too, the smoothness of the opening, and the series of long vowels: "To...clos in golde," "So rounde.../ So smal,

so smoþe"; there is, besides, a preponderance of sibilants conveying the idea of that smoothness. The staccato accents of the ninth line emphasize the narrator's turn away from the object, whose loss he recalls suddenly, or, more properly, whose recall seems sudden as it appears in the last third of the stanza and after so many smoothly flowing rhymes. Lines eight and nine constitute a couplet; by doubling the rhyme at this point, the poet prevents the contrasting or exclamatory unit from forming its own stanza. It is extremely important that such contradictions in the narrative voice do not appear unrelated. The doubling of the rhyme secures, as it were, or, quite simply, ties the disparate thoughts or responses together. The ninth line also creates movement in that the unit of eight cannot stand by itself, entire unto itself. The second stanza makes use of the ninth line and the doubled b rhyme in the same way, setting a model for its use in most of the narrator's speeches:

> Ofte haf I wayted, wyschande þat wele,
> þat wont wat3 whyle deuoyde my wrange
> And heuen my happe and al my hele.
> þat dot3 bot þrych my hert þrange
> My breste in bale bot bolne and bele;
> 3et þo3t me neuer so swete a sange
> As stylle stounde let to me stele.
> For soþe þer fleten to me fele,
> To þenke hir color so clad in clot.
> (11. 13-22)

Again, the ideational content of the initial eight lines is one of contemplation, this time of the dream-narrator's plight, and the sounds he has heard in this "spote"; once more, in line nine, or, rather, at the commencement of the ninth line, the poet emphasizes the turn in the narrator's thought. One observes, also, that in upsetting the balance achieved by the end of the eighth line, the poet necessitates satisfaction of the imbalance in the tenth line; there are twelve lines to work with, not fourteen; besides, the sonnet form works best when a unit to itself, not as one of the units in a longer

poem with a narrative element. What that implies in terms of versification is that, by the latter third of the stanza, one must feel that some kind of resolution is in sight, but not too much or too definite a resolution since there must be movement into the next verse; there will have to be enough movement, or asymmetry, in fact, to offset the finality inherent in the refrain, at least, until reader or listener is conditioned to that refrain. Each doubled rhyme, in each stanza, is like a small climax, or surprise, perfectly in keeping with the narrator's characteristic astonishments and contradictions.

One finds the couplet used for this purpose in a poem such as "Adam lay I-bowndyn" whose speaker is a naive persona:

> Adam lay I-bowndyn, bowndyn in a bond,
> fowre þowsand wynter þowt he not to long;
> And al was for an appil, an appil þat he tok,
> As clerkis fyndyn wretyn in here book.
> Ne hadde þe appil take ben, þe appil taken ben,
> me hadde never our lady a ben hevene qwen;
> Blyssid be þe tyme þat appil take was,
> þer-fore we mown syngyn, "deo gracias!"[15]

This little poem functions through its central paradox, and the couplet form, usually rather primitive in short works, allows the speaker to seem startled by his own realizations; yet if one looks closely, the couplets in themselves do not create antitheses--the antitheses are, rather, embedded in the lines: "ben/qwen" is not antithetical, but the idea of the apple having been taken and the result, "our lady...hevene qwen" are juxtaposed. In Pearl, in those stanzas wholly occupied by the voice of the narrator, the couplet which eight and nine form also surprises because of its contrasting content and not because the rhyme is antithetical. The double rhyme does not create the contradiction or clash, but underscores it. Thus, at line ten, one finds the beginning of a resolution in miniature, not so much a solution of the contradiction in thought, as the statement in full of the problem and the be-

ginning of another move in a different direction. Another couplet would be most unsuitable, not only because it would create a stanza of basically eleven lines, but also because a second couplet would not permit the modulated closing of the stanza. The lyric cited above has an abrupt ending which is suitable to the content, the solution of the poem's single problem. The narrative structure in Pearl needs the third rhyme but not all at once, at it were. This will be discussed shortly but one may observe here that the doubling of the rhyme in eight and nine furnishes the poet with a three-line period, an asymmetric period, which precludes a self-contained unit in view of the octave.

The function of the double rhyme in the speeches of the Maiden is somewhat different and reflects the integrity of the character's concerns. As explained in Chapter IV, the rhyme words in those stanzas devoted to the Maiden's voice are more important in content, and take the place, formally, of the thicker alliteration in the narrator's passages. Because these rhymes have a sharper focus, they can be used by the poet to summarize or encapsulate the arguments of the Maiden, as in the following examples:

Line 5 For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose
þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef.
Now þur3 kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close
To a perle of prys hit is put in pref.
And þou hat3 called þy wyrde a þef,
(11. 269-273)

Line 1 'Jueler,' sayde þat gemme clene,
'Wy borde 3e men? So madde 3e be!
þre worde3 hat3 þou spoken at ene:
Vnavysed, for soþe wern alle þre.
þou ne woste in worlde quat on dot3 mene;
þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle.
þou says þou trawe3 me in þis dene,
Bycawse þou may wyth y3en me se;
Anoþer þou says, in þys countre
þyself schal won wyth me ry3t here;
þe þrydde, to passe þys water fre-
þat may no ioyful jueler.
(11. 289-300)

In the first example cited above, the single words themselves embody the concepts; there is what one might call a delayed antithesis in the rhyming of "gef" and "thef," since being a "thef" of course involves taking away, the opposite of the truth, or of what is "put in pref." The second example associates phrases through its rhymes so that lines eight and nine draw one's attention to the stanza's central thought--that "in þys countre," where, that is, a beatified spirit dwells, the "madde" dreamer cannot perceive the truth "wyth y3en." The modulation to a conclusion continues the forceful rhyme association, and there is no turn. The narrator, by contrast, in the same stanzaic group, provides an example of a shift between lines eight and nine with a corresponding looseness in the rhyme associations:

> Line 2 'Iwyse, 'quod I,' my blysful beste,
> My grete dystresse þou al todrawe3.
> To be excused I make requeste;
> I trawed my perle don out of dawe3.
> Now haf I fonde hyt, I schal ma feste,
> And wony wyth hyt in schyr wod-schawe3.
> And loue my Lorde and al his lawe3
> þat hat3 me bro3t þys blys ner.
> Now were I at yow by3onde þise wawe3,
> I were a ioyful jueler.'
> (11. 279-288)

Association between "wod-schawe3" and the "lawe3" of the deity is not exactly orthodox--the dreamer's thought process is indeed "vnavysed" as he skips lightly from his own pleasure at the sight of his beloved pearl to love of God and back to his own hopes and happiness. One recalls, too, that "wod-schawe3," or groves, are the place of pagan worship in the Old Testament and suspects that the poet is playing upon that meaning here, since these groves would have been the most unlawful of all places. One notes, too, the conditional nature of the statement at the turn: I will love God, and his laws, if I can join my beloved. Such a condition is quite a change from his seemingly unadulterated pleasure at the opening of the stanza. At

the turn in the stanza, then, one finds the dreamer about to bargain with the Maiden, which contradicts his opening declaration of respect for her: "A juel to me þen wat3 þys geste,/ And iuele3 wern hyr gentyl sawe3," (11. 277-278).

Examples of the succinctness of the doubled rhyme in the Maiden's speeches abound, and, at times, have the quality of epigrammatic statement:

> þy corse in clot mot calder keue.
> For hit wat3 forgarte at Paradys greue;
> (11. 320-321)

> Tyt schal hem men þe eat3 vnpynne.
> þer is þe blyssþat con not blynne
> (11. 728-729)

> Among vus comme3 nouþer strot ne stryf;
> Bot vchon enle we wolde were fyf--
> (11. 848-849)

> Of on dethe ful oure hope is drest.
> þe Lombe vus glade3, oure care is kest;
> (11. 860-861)

This epigrammatic quality seems, at first, as though it could cause serious problems in the fulfillment of the twelve-line stanza since the epigrammatic statement is one of the devices for closure. As Barbara H. Smith remarks, in Poetic Closure, "Epigrammatic verse (and utterance) is...more or less hyperdetermined; that is, structural and nonstructural forces of closure are so strong that expectation is not only fulfilled but exceeded. This excess, combined with the economy of its means, is probably what we experience as pointedness."[16] Now, one begins to recognize the poet's skill in employing a rhyme scheme which includes a doubled rhyme not in the last two lines of the stanza nor in the center of the stanza; had he done so, at either of these points or at both, one would experience premature closure, which would have made an onerous task of reading the poem since each stanza would have been a new poem. Happily, the poet does not do this but employs a form which utilizes a third rhyme that upsets the balance enough to signal, if not, in-

deed, to signify, that the stanza is not quite over at the ninth line. But the matter of closure of each individual stanza and of each stanza group is complicated by the presence of a refrain repeated throughout the stanza group. The key word for each group dictates the rhyme for line ten in every single stanza, so there is no possibility of any verse "escaping" from its group; the verse form, however, also forbids the breaking away of the last three lines from the first nine while providing enough tension to keep the basic eight and four interesting. The introduction of a third rhyme in the tenth line, that is, presents the possibility of an arrangement in nine and three--a different symmetry altogether. In many cases, the division into nine and three is de-emphasized, and the link of line ten to the body of the stanza reinforced, by syntactical connectives, logical sequence or, more rarely, by true enjambement; all three devices are present in this stanza from Section VI:

'Deme Dry3ten, euer hym adyte,
Of þe way a fote ne wyl he wryþe.
þe mende3 mounte3 not a myte,
þa3 þou for sor3e be neuer blyþe.
Stynt of þ strot and fyne to flyte,
And sech hys blyþe ful swefte and swyþe..
þy prayer may hys pyte byte,
þat mercy schal hyr crafte3 kyþe.
Hys comforte may þy langour lyþe
And þy lure3 of ly3tly fleme;
For, marre oþer madde, morne and myþe,
Al lys in hym to dy3t and deme.'
(11. 349-360)

Alliteration across two lines, in the passage cited above, also connects the last rhyme of the stanza with the first pair; line ten does not contrast with the dominant tone or sense of the stanza but sums up and drives home the points that the maiden has been making from the first line: that only the acceptance of God's will will banish or dispel his "lure3," his sorrow. The rhymes emphasize both the state of the dreamer and the mercy of God, and these two factors are presented in the doubled rhyme of lines eight and nine.

There is some sense of finality in many of the stanzas at the tenth line for the simple reason that the rhyme word of the tenth line, except in the initial stanzas of each group, rhymes with or reflects the key word in line one of each stanza. In the stanza above, in fact, a wonderful tension is created by the positioning of "Deme" in the first line and "fleme" in line ten--two aspects of God, his jusgment and his mercy, presented on a diagonal across the stanza and linked by an interior, or, rather, transverse, rhyme. Other remarkable juxtapositions on this order are to be found in Section XI: "'Ino3e is knawen'"--"'on rode so roghe,'" (l. 637 and l. 646); "'This makelle3 perle'"-- "'in token of pes,'" (l. 733 and l. 742); "'In Jerusalem'"--"'he con al clem,'" (l. 817 and l. 826); "'The ry3twys man'"--"iif þou be wy3te,'" (l. 685 and l. 694). These rhymes are much wittier in the Maiden's speeches because, as one would suspect, the jeweller himself is more concerned with particulars, with things, throughout the poem, and the rhyme words are much more descriptive in the narrator's or dreamer's voice; Nonetheless, there are some interesting effects: one is invited to link "adubbemente," the key word in Section II, with "a swete asent," (l. 94) and "gemme gente," (l. 118); "'Cortayse,'" (l. 469) with "'blysse to byye,'" (l. 478); and "An-vnder mone," (l. 1081) with "abiden þat bone," (l. 1090). The last Section, XX, in which the narrator demonstrates a somewhat fuller awareness of non-sensory qualities or attributes, includes these interesting and revealing associations "þat Prynce3 pay3"--"þat laste3 aye," (l. 1189 and l. 1198), and "To pay þe Prince" (l. 1201) precedes "vch a daye" (l. 1210). In this way, the rhyme on the key word helps to justify its presence at the beginning and at the end of the stanza; the extra rhyme word, that is, can fill out the sense or suggestion inherent in the key-word. At the same time, to return to the question of closure, while the tenth line is not the last,

it introduces the rhyme of the last line in the end position, thereby reducing the possibility of a sudden drop in the refrain. The c rhyme also integrates the refrain, which belongs to the group or section rather than to the stanza, with the content of the stanza. Lastly, it permits, when the poet chooses, a kind of coda to be formed, given the repitition of the b rhyme in line eleven.

That aspect of the poetic coda which is emphasized by Barbara Smith is its functioning as an "independent structure with the same characteristics, only more concentrated, as any integral piece or movement"; she is not writing, however, of verses in a narrative sequence.[17] The points she makes in regard to poetic markers do, nonetheless, apply to the stanzaic scheme in Pearl. In noting the "'cutting-words'" present in haiku, words which mean "'this poem ends here,'" and constitute a linguistic element "not in the language of ordinary discourse," she notes, too, that in European literature, "the terminal modification of formal principles arrests the reader's expectations of further development and thus prepares him for cessation."[18] At the very end of Pearl, one does, of course, find a marker akin to the "cutting word," that being the term "Amen." In the individual stanzas, as suggested above, the doubled rhyme marks the climax or turning point of greatest stress in the stanza, and the c rhyme, because it rhymes with the last word in each stanza--in many stanzas the key-word--signals its termination. The poet's use of the b rhyme once more in line eleven of each stanza draws the eye and the ear, and, one assumes, the mind, back; line eleven actually serves as an anti-closural device which prevents a too final determination of rhyme and sense as well. As long as the narrator-dreamer's doubts, fears, jealously and anguish have not been resolved, such finality in form would ill befit a certain lack of resolution in theme, except in the Maiden's speeches.

On the other hand, line eleven does seem like a chord "constructed apart from the rigorous rules" since it is the only unmatched line in the stanza, without a partner, as it were, and in that sense provides the unexpected turn which one needs in order to feel that the stanza is coming to an end.[19] The last three lines, taken as a unit, are of particular interest in the speeches o the Maiden where their apparent function is modification of the point emphasized in the couplet:

> 'Bot innoghe of grace hat3 innocent.
> As sone as þay arn borne, by lyne
> In þe water of babtem þay dyssente:
> þen arne þay boro3t into þe vyne.
> Anon þe day, wyth derk endente,
> þe ni3t of deth dot3 to enclyne:
> þat wro3t neuer wrang er þenne þay wente,
> þe gentyle Lorde þenne paye3 hys hyne,
> þay dyden hys heste, þay wern þereine;
> Why schulde he not her labour alow,
> 3ys, and pay hem at þe fyrst fyne?
> For þe grace of God is gret innoghe.
> (11. 625-636)

The point of the stanza, summed up in the eighth and ninth lines, is that the Lord of the vineyard, or, non-allegorically, the Lord in heaven, rewards those, simply, that "dyden hys heste"; the tenth line signals the return to the major theme of the entire section, but the rhetorical question refers back to the particular situation as presented in this stanza. Whereas "alow" links both with "innoghe" in the headline and "innoghe" in the refrain, "fyne," rhyming, of course, with "vyne" and "hyne," interposes that element of particularity which, in poetry, creates movement; the line being unmatched, therefore assymmetrical, also creates the illusion of spontaneity, an illusion which the poet cultivates by the emphatic exclamation "3ys" beginning the line, and the thought added as an afterthought would be. E.M. Wright's reading of line 635 seems to be the best: she suggests that "at þe fyrst" is an adverbial phrase and "fyne" an adverb so that the general sense of the line is that the

labourers should be paid first and in full.[20] Precisely what "in full" would mean is, naturally, beyond the descriptive powers of the poet, so that the stanza closes with an enigmatic reply to a rhetorical question!

The more dogmatic and didactic the Maiden's speech, the more declamatory the refrain, the more enigmatic line eleven becomes; in Section XII, for example, the refrain is a variant of "þe innosent is ay saue by ry3te" which, while not being terribly specific, is certainly judgemental. The last three lines in each stanza of Section XII provide the mystification in those stanzas that approach the overly dogmatic or which have the ring of finality about them; sometimes, this sense of finality is generated by the rhythmic structure of the stanza, and the connotations of the words employed. In instances where the rhythms are very definite, if not strident, and the syntax of the enclosing lines end-stopped, it is enough for line eleven to take on the function of a rest in the musical sense:

> Of þys ry3twys sa3 Salamon playn
> How Koyntise onoure con aquyly;
> By waye3 ful stre3t ho con hym strayn,
> And scheued hym þe rengne of God awhyle,
> As quo says, "Lo, 3on louely yle!
> þou may hit wynne if þou be wy3te."
> Bot, hardyly, wythoute peryle,
> þe innosent is ay saue by ry3te.
> (ll. 689-696)

The delayed subject in the last sentence of the lines cited above is indicative of the suspense-provoking potential of the unmatched rhyme whose syntax may be completed in the refrain; this is an inordinately difficult task to fulfill in stanza after stanza, which even the Pearl-poet does not accomplish consistently. When the sense of line eleven is completed in the twelfth line, or refrain, the effect can be extremely satisfying, dangerously so for a narrative which must, unlike a short lyric, unfold gradually; the poet at times avoids this danger by using other suspense-provoking devices as well

so that the suspense created in line eleven is not completely resolved in line twelve. In one of the dreamer's speeches, he turns the refrain into a question:

> 'Þy colour passe3 Þe flour-de-lys;
> Þyn angel-hauyng so clene corte3.
> Breue me, bry3t, quat kyn offys
> Bere3 Þe perle so maskelle3?'
> (11. 753-756)

The poet cannot use the question in the Maiden's speeches, except if the question be rhetorical, because she is certain in her thoughts and is not likely to ask her mortal parent to solve anything for her; thus, true enjambements in her speeches are more likely to appear just before another series of doubting or questioning remarks from the dreamer. At the end of Section VII, the maiden explains how the Lamb has crowned her queen, and closes her lecture on this topic with a more general comment:

> And sesed in alle hys herytage
> Hys lyf is. I am holy hysse:
> Hys prese, hys prys, and hys parage
> Is rote and grounde of alle my blysse.
> (11. 417-420)

This ends the section, and threatens to end the poem, except that, immediately following, in the next section, the dreamer poses enough questions to keep the poem going, and the Maiden answering, for quite a few stanzas beyond that point:

> 'Blysful,' quod I, 'may Þys be trwe?
> Dysplese3 not if I speke errour.
> Art Þou Þe quene of heuene3 blwe,
> Þat al Þys worlde schal do honour?
> We leuen on Mary3 Þat grace of grewe,
> Þat ber a barne of vyrgyn flour;
> Þe croune fro hyr quo mo3t remwe
> Bot ho hir passed in sum fauer?
> (11. 421-428)

In Section XVI, an enjambed eleventh line in the maiden's final sermon calls forth not a question from the dreamer but an entreaty; the maiden is speaking

of Jerusalem:

> 'Þat is Þe bor3 Þat we to pres
> Fro Þat oure flesch be layd to rote,
> Þer glory and blysse schal euer encres
> To Þe meyny Þat is wythouten mote.'
> (11. 957-960)

The poet compensates for the finality of this dictum not by having the dreamer reply--there is no reply one could make--but by his asking a "bone":

> 'Motele3 may so meke and mylde,'
> Þen sayde I to Þat lufly flor,
> 'Bryng me to Þat bygly bylde
> And let me se Þy blysful bor.
> (11. 961-964)

More often, however, the degree of suspense created in line eleven is not as extreme; that part of the sentence which is enclosed by the last b rhyme, while frequently not the subject, does tend to be a grammatical unit to be set off by commas, and the refrain primarily a refrain and not the poem's closure; for, while a refrain can be and has been used as a closing device, its purpose and function in Pearl are different and more intricate, given the length of the poem and its circular rhetorical form.

The refrain which the Pearl-poet employs is a modified or varied line so that, while it functions formally throughout the poem as a marker for the group or section, it is an integral part of the stanza as well; if refrain lines are "repeated exactly from stanza to stanza, they would ultimately have more the effect of formal than thematic repetition, which is to say that their moral significance would gradually fade," Barbara Smith notes, "even though each refrain is never wholly a surprise, the variations prevent us from predicting its exact form."[21] Its position within the stanza is secured by rhyme in that its rhyme-word is paired with the rhyme-word in the tenth line and the key-word in the first line of every stanza except the first in each group. The function of the refrain as refrain will be considered in the next chapter;

at this point, however, because the refrain is so well-adapted to the stanza, perhaps one should say so well-integrated with the content, thematic and formal, it will be considered as the twelfth and concluding line in each stanza.

The poetic potential of twelve is its multiple divisibility as seen in the use of the first eight lines as octave or two quatrains, and, more rarely, the division of the poem at odd lines or in the center. The multiple tensions created by the pull of syntax across line boundaries and rhyme clusters are at last determined by the last line in the stanza; in other words, the twelfth line as used in Pearl does not so much conclude what has come before as it indicates where the breaks and emphases are in the eleven lines above it. Many of the twelfth lines, in fact, would seriously misfire as end-lines,[22] while others, as cited, must be made more ambiguous or less determinate by the b rhyme in line eleven; it seems that ambivalence is cultivated in the twelfth lines, even to the punning that takes place within them.[23] This ambivalence is anti-closural and refers the reader back, first to the tenth line, then to the appearance of the key-word in the first line, and then, perhaps in search of definition, to the reappearance of the key-word in the headline of the following verse:

'Lasse of blysse may non vus bryng
þat beren þys perle vpon oure bereste,
For þay of mote couþe neuer mynge
Of spotle3 perle3 þat beren þe creste.
Alþa3 oure corses in clotte3 clynge,
And 3e remen for rauþe wythouten reste,
We þur3outly hauen cnawyng;
Of on dethe ful oure hope is drest.
þe Lombe vus glade3, oure care is kest;
He myrþe vus alle at vch a mes.
Vchone3 blysse is breme and beste,
And neuer one3 honour 3et neuer þe les.
(11. 853-864)

D. H. Hymes has suggested that in the concluding line of a poem, a word will

occur which bears a "summative" relation to the poem, or octave or sestet, and which will also contain the sounds which are dominant throughout.[24] This particular condition, however, does not prevail in the stanza cited above; instead, some of the dominant sounds in the stanza, "bl(y)," "b(e)r(e)," recur in the penultimate line, and the hard "c" or "k" sounds cluster about the center. Even on the level of sound, then, "neuer þe les" is more indicative than summative, and one is propelled into the next stanza in search of such summation which is, of course, not to be found, for much the same linguistic and ideational ambivalence occurs or is created once more:

'Lest les þou leue my tale farande,
In Appocalyppece is wryten in wro:
"I seghe," says John, "þe Loumbe hym stande
On þe mount of Syon ful þryuen and þro,
And wyth hym maydenne3 an hundreþe þowsande,
Anf fowre and forty þowsande mo.
On alle her forhede3 wryten I fande
þe Lombe3 nome, hys Fadere3 also.
A hue from heuen I herde þoo,
Lyk flode3 fele laden runnen on resse,
And as þunder þrowe in torre3 blo,
þat lote, I leue, wat3 neuer þe les.
(ll. 865-876)

The dominant sounds in the stanza above form what Kenneth Burke refers to as an "involuntary acrostic";[25] these sounds are the alliterations on "h," "þ," and "f," supplemented by some "r" sounds, the latter endowing the whole with the rushing feeling of a flood. The last line, however, is clearly not summative in that its important words do not begin with the dominating sounds. One must note, also, that the closer the stanza is to the end of the stanzaic group, the more dominant sounds are to be found in greater number in the twelfth line:

'Neuer þe les let be my þonc,'
Quod I, 'My perle, þa3 I appose;
I schulde nottempte þy wyt so wlonc,
To Kryste3 chambre þattart ichose.
I am bot mokke and mul among,
And þou so ryche a reken rose,

And byde3 here by þys blysful bonc
þer lyue3 lyste may neuer lose.
Now, hynde, þat sympelnesse cone3 enclose,
I wolde þe aske a þynge expresse,
And þa3 I be bustwys as a blose,
Let my bond vayl neuerþelese.
(11. 901-912)

The alliteration on b which is found in the seventh line recurs in the eleventh and continues into the twelfth; furthermore, there is the assonantal cluster "wolde-blose-bone" in the last three lines which, in turn, carries out the vowel of both of the dominating a and b rhymes. Even in those stanzas concluding groups, however, the syntactical division need not be the same as the division of rhymes. In the speeches of both Maiden and dreamer, one is prohibited from regarding the c rhyme as one part or segment of a different stanza while the possibility of the break remains:

For þo3 þou daunce as any do,
Braundysch and bray þy braþe3 breme,
When þou no fyrre may, to ne fro,
þou moste abyde þat he schal deme.
(11. 346-349)

Now, for synglerty o hyr dousour,
We calle hyr Fenyx of Arraby,
þat freles fle3e of hyr fasor,
Lyk to þe Quen of cortaysye.'
(11. 429-432)

In other cases, the structure of the sentence does not take up four lines but the more common two; even in the latter instances, however, the syntactical structure does not coincide, in the last four lines of each stanza, with the rhyme breaks. At certain points, for example, the sentence which begins in the eighth line, on the b rhyme as one half of the couplet in mid-stanza, is carried over into the c rhyme of line nine:

Aboute þat water arn tres ful schym,
þat twelue fryte3 of lyf con bere ful sone;
Twelue syþe3 on 3er þay beren ful frym,
And renowle3 nwe in vche a mone.
(11. 1077-1080)

Vtwyth to se þat clene cloyster
þou may, bot inwyth not a fote;
To strech in þe strete þou hat3 no vygour,
Bot þou wer clene wythouten mote.
(11. 969-972)

þe Lompe þer wythouten spotte3 blake
Hat3 feryed þyder hys fayre flote;
And as hys flote is wythouten flake,
So is hys mote wythouten moote.
(11. 945-948)

The poet is apparently striving for a tension between the two factors, syntax and rhyme, the syntax being most important as a check against the possible autonomy of rhyming pairs. The assemblage of this stanza has a double implication. While this stanza form is extremely flexible, allowing for different voices, moods and characters, for a narrative voice earthbound enough to rhyme "merwayle (1. 1081) with "quayle" (1. 1085) and a beatified spirit severe enough to rhyme "deth vus drounde" (1. 656) with "þe worlde rounde," (1. 657), it also contains within itself the potential for splitting up into its component parts. In the words of Schlegel, "If a medium is to be suitable for imitation, it must possess that quality in respect to which I intend to imitate the original. In addition, it must be able to reproduce the same relations among its parts that exist among those of the original."[26] Thus, the Pearl-poet, in writing a poem which deals with disintegration, in both the literal and spiritual senses of the word, uses a form which emphasizes the precarious and intricate nature of temporal constructs and in which even the number twelve cannot escape such tension.

Footnotes

[1]And, one might add, in popular thought as well; see Honorius of Autun, a popularizer of ideas, "A Picture of the World," reprinted by Wippel.

[2]The corona idea originates from Bishop, pp. 28-31.

[3]In his introduction to Sound and Poetry (English Institute Essays, 1956), p. xiii.

[4]Gustave Reese, "Medieval Classifications of Music," in Music in the Middle Ages, 1940, pp. 118-119.

[5]C.O. Chapman, 'Numerical Symbolism in Dante and the Pearl, MLN, IIV (1929), 256-259; he is intent upon associating the form of Pearl and the rosary.

[6]Pearl in its Setting, p. 31.

[7]Reese, pp. 349-350.

[8]Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, "Euphony, Rhythm and Metre" in The Structure of Verse, ed. Gross, 1966, p. 28.

[9]In Appendix I of his edition of Pearl, pp. 87-88.

[10]The various forms and meanings of "per-par-pre-termynable" have not yet been resolved in a final and satisfactory single reading. Kean's reference to the original Latin of the sixty-first Psalm, which this stanza paraphrases, and which would fix the meaning as being "partermynable" "who above all others givest just judgement," ("quia potestas Dei est, et tibi, Domine, misericordia"; seems much more logical in the context of the stanza than a reading derived from "per-" or "pre-," as the editors have it. The latter, as Kean notes, (p. 191), "would presumably mean 'preordaining' and would refer to an idea, that of predestination, which is not present in the passage, and which does not fit."

[11]Frye comments, p. xiii: "A musical discord is not an unpleasant sound; it is a sound which throws the ear forward to the next beat: it is a sign of musical energy, not musical incompetence."

[12]"Shakespeare at Sonnets" in The World's Body, 1965 edition, p. 174.

[13]It is interesting to note, however, that A. C. Spearing, while mentioning the passage in "Symbolic and Dramatic Development in Pearl," reprinted in Sir Gawain and Pearl, Critical Essays, ed. Blanch, 1967, pp. 98-119, does not merely explain it away as poetic exuberance but finds the lack of exegesis therein puzzling; this is on page 99--he does not, however, return to the troublesome nine stanzas.

[14]E. V. Gordon and C. T. Onions, Medium Aevum, II, 3, (1933), 165.

[15]Index of Middle English Verse 117, MS. Sloane 2593, reprinted in One Hundred Middle English Lyrics, ed. R. Stevick, p. 98, in sixteen split lines; Carleton Brown, in Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century, 1939, no. 83, prints it in the couplet form.

[16]Subtitled A Study of How Poems End, 1968, p. 197ff.

[17]Ibid. 15, pp. 260-271, especially 265.

[18]Ibid. 15, p. 187.

[19]C. Hubart Parry, "Coda" in Grove's Dictionary of Music,eed. Eric Blom, II, 1954, p. 362.

[20]JEGP, XXXIX, (1940), 315.

[21]Ibid. 15, p. 60.

[22]See pp. 150-151; this is not meant as a critical remark but is simply a comment on elements of closure.

[23]For example, "spotte" in the first section; "date" in Section IX; "moote" and "mote" in Section XVI.

[24]"Phonological Aspects of Style" in Style and Language, ed. T. Sebeok, 1960, pp. 109-131.

[25]"On Musicality in Verse" in The Philosophy of Literary Form, 1957, pp. 369-378.

[26]On Imitations, trans. Edward McCormick, 1965, pp. 13-14.

CHAPTER VI - THE REFRAIN: MUSIC AND LITURGY

Does the dreamer in Pearl finally prove receptive to the teachings of the Maiden? One finds him, in the last section, and in those verses descriptive of the "avysyoun" itself, as headstrong and as uncomprehending of the absolute as he appeared at the opening of the dream:

> I þo3t þat noþyng my3t me dere
> To fech me bur and take me halte,
> And to start in þe strem schulde non me stere,
> To swymme þe remnaunt, þa3 I þer swalte.
> (11. 1157-1160)

This metaphysical gaucherie takes place after his having witnessed Christ in His glory surrounded by the innocents. Clearly, this dreamer is an unteachable who no sooner learns than forgets his lesson. Then, one might ask, what is the point, or, more properly, what is the center of this circular poem?

First of all, the dreamer is not the narrator, just as the narrator is not the poet himself; the narrator as narrator is as skilled, it appears, as an adept novelist, for the dream is reported in straight first-person limited fashion with no discrepancy in point-of-view. The exclamations of despair in the opening section are not those of an actual present but of a vivid, literary present; the narrator, soon after those exclamations, reports the time and place of his vision and even hints at the eventual succor gleaned from the vision. As an extraordinarily sensitive craftsman, the Pearl-poet apparantly recognized the necessity for an opening fortissimo. A recollection of the scene of his anguish summons forth a reproduction of that state:

> Syþen in þat spote hit fro me sprange,
> Ofte haf I wayted, wyschande þat wele,
> þat wont wat3 whyle deuoyde my wrange

And heuen my happe and al my hele.
ƥat dot3 bot ƥrych my hert ƥrange
My breste in bale bot bolne and bele;
3et ƥo3t me neuer so swete a sange
As stylle stounde let to me stele.
For soƥe ƥer fleten to me fele,
To ƥenke hir color so clad in clot.
O moul, ƥou marre3 a myry iule,
My priuy perle wythouten spotte.
(11. 13-24)

The apostrophe to the earth in the last two lines represents the narrator's state at the time immediately before the dream takes place for, one stanza later, one is informed of the precise details of the experience in a tone which, if not exactly buoyant, is one of relative calm:

To ƥat spot ƥat I in speche expoun
I entred in ƥat erber grene,
In Augoste in a hy3 seysoun,
Quen corne is couen wyth croke3 kene.
(11. 37-40)

The past tense is maintained from this point until the last section of the poem except, of course, when the narrator is reporting his own words in the dialogue of the dream. Thus, the very last segment of the poem, after the report of how the persona "raxled, and fel in gret affray," (l. 1174), and the very last segment alone, enlightens the reader or listener as to the narrator's state of mind in the present. While the dreamer, in the dream, learns virtually nothing, so unreceptive is he to the Maiden's precepts, the narrator, on the contrary, has learned a great deal--all a mortal being can learn, that is, to accept the unfathomable and incomprehensible will of God. How he learns this, and what effect such resolution has upon the reader, is a problem in which the relation of revelation to poetry and poetry to experience manifests its multi-faceted self. The narrator is presented as learning, not from the teachings of the Maiden, nor from empirical experience in the "real" world, but from the

revelation of the dream. So, too, the reader gains knowledge from the revelation which is none other than the poem--its being, its effects of rhythm and sound, its workings on levels or with a scope far greater than that of rational thought or cognition.

Among all the devices which the poet employs, and there are few which he does not employ in one way or another, none is as allusive in its effects, nor as significant, as the refrain. It is referred to by commentators as a stanza-linking device but it is much more than that.[1] As the twelfth line in each stanza, it is subject to the demands of that stanza, in terms of rhythm and syntax, while, from the appearance of the key-word in the first line of every stanza, it exerts its own influence upon the stanza and is indeed the dominant factor in the stanzaic group. It might well be called a stanza-shaping device, rather than merely a link among disparate twelve-line poems. In terms of prosody, then, it is a far from negligible force since it dictates the rhymes of lines twelve and ten over a five-stanza span. The refrain binds each group together and, through the introduction of the key-word of one group in the first stanza of the next, permits the narrative to move on, enforcing a thematic connection between groups. On a rhetorical level, the modified refrain is the perfect vehicle for conceptual stress, reiterating, should the poet choose to employ it to this end, important ideas.

Lastly, the problem of how the refrain functions within the work leads to the esthetic issue of expectation and surprise and to the consideration of repetition as an esthetic principle. Max Wertheimer, for one, in "Laws of Organization in Perceptual Forms," has defined the qualities binding objects of perception as similarity, proximity, and contiguity.[2]

The refrain satisfies all three conditions, yet there is sufficient variation to prevent the onset of dullness and to fulfill constant expectation. It is the very strength of the expectation, however, that contributes power to a poem whose size is like a miniature painting. As in the painting of small canvases, and as in the writing of short, lyric poems, power is the result of emotion constrained by form, and the creation of rhythmic necessity thereby. In the satisfaction of this rhythmic necessity lies the illusion of peace. The Pearl-poet creates and fulfills this kind of expectation, and in the course of 101 twelve-line stanzas, is able to build up a formidable amount of suspense. The question of whether or not the poem has a climax remains. One suspects, however, that the poem's circular content and form, reinforced by the refrain lines, eliminates the necessity for such a moment; but more of that at another point.

In that continual tension between the beauty of sound and the beauty of sense which is poetry,[3] the refrain, if it is to be successfully employed, is basically on the side of sound. Its meaning is secondary. Sound, of course, has meanings of its own. One does not mean to imply that the refrain loses dignity as a device when it serves sound first but, on the contrary, brings the dignity of the abstract, of music, into the work.[4] Perhaps it is this musical element of poetry which the narrator refers to in the first section of Pearl. In the middle of his plaint, while overcome with grief, he can yet remark the sweetness of certain mysterious sounds:

> 3et þo3t me neuer so swete a sange
> As stylle stounde let to me stele.
> (11. 19-20)

Such a "songe" is not referred to again in the course of the poem; could this not be a suggestion of what F. W. Sternfeld, in "Poetry and Music--Joyce's Ulysses," has called "wandering melodies":

> that is to say, the tunes that hover in a poet's ear before he feels impelled to create a new text to an old song. There may exist a mood, an atmosphere that is impatient for expression, but its crystallization into verbal form has not taken place. Not until the poet hears a tune, one that is exactly right, its lilt and sing-song the inevitable carrier for what needs saying, does the poem take definite shape. The melody which brings it to life has "wandered" from its old text and its past associations into a new context to which it conveys not only its properties of rhythm and pitch but also some aspects of its original mood and content. Inevitably, the new creation is haunted by elements of the poetic model: it may be a single word or, more likely, a phrase--sometimes an entire refrain, a feeling, an emotion, a passion;...a thought or an action.5

In the transposition of these "tunes," which need not be tunes, into words, the "use of repetition in poetic creation is till another exercise of musical procedure--repetition that frequently does not make much sense but that does make superb sound."[6] Happily, much of the musical repetition does indeed make sense as well, in Pearl, but that is not its primary function and purpose. Its primary function is to create and then to resolve a problem in sound and form, in such a way as to construct an esthetic solution to an esthetic dilemma. Thus, the closing of the ideational circle in the final stanzas becomes a manifestation of harmony rather than futility and frustation.

Simple "word-repetition, found in Old English, Welsh, Irish, and many other poetic traditions repeats the same unvaried word as a primary structural factor with the same detonational semantic spectrum but with connotational spectra forced on it by its contextual environment."[7] When

this word-repetition takes place, not in lines adjoining but where "incept and coda reiterate their word-repetitions," this will "produce an orbicular structure."[7a] In terms of structure, then, each stanza is a miniature of the whole, opening and closing on the same word, sometimes on the same phrase. Its context, however, changes, and the use of each key-word or phrase at least nine times in each stanzaic group begins to have an effect upon the words themselves as if, like a pearl, their tints should be various. In those passages in which the dreamer or narrator dominates the diction and vocabulary, the key word pertains more clearly to a sensory reality, as we saw in Chapter II, and thus colors or suggests the entire stanzaic group. But in those passages in which the voice of the Maiden dominates the diction and vocabulary, and which have, therefore, a much more abstract, mystical, legal or liturgical refrain, the reverse occurs; in the refrains of Sections IX, X, and XI, for example, the key-words are virtually meaningless, in terms of human perception, or perhaps one should call these words, and the phrases which are made from them, transparent. The first uses of each refrain, and its key-word, are as follows:

Sec.	Key-word	First Refrain
IX	date	Bot a quene! Hit is to dere a date.
X	more	vus þynk vus o3e to take more
XI	gret innoghe	For þe grace of God is gret inoghe.

At first, one would assume that for a poet to extract poetic meaning from words as abstract as these key-words would be like getting water from a stone. Even when first seen in their lines, they are distinct only in that these lines seem unremarkable in connotative value although, one might note, especially in view of the refrain in Section XI, they are

rhythmically definite with a minimum number of unstressed syllables. The process is one in which each key-word gathers connotative force through its uses in the stanzaic group. To begin with Section IX, in which, as Gordon points out, the key-word is used at no less than ten points in the stanza and with the poet, according to him, "straining" the meaning at times, the refrain is introduced in a jest.[8] The dreamer speaks here:

> Of countes, damysel, par ma fay,
> Wer fayr in heuen to halde asstate,
> Oþer elle3 a lady of lasse aray;
> Bot a quene! Hit is to dere a date.'
> (11. 489-492)

Before this point, the reader does not know which of these words is to be the key-word, since the stanza is the first in its group and thus its first line contains the key-word of Section VII, "cortaysye." In this stanza, then, there has been a metaphoric deflation of the Maiden's terms--perfectly in keeping with the dreamer's condition--but a deflation nonetheless, for, in Line 492, "date" cannot evoke much. It has a colloquial meaning on the order of "Well, isn't that the limit!" but, in the same sense, "limit," also, in the equivalent expression is truly unrealized. Poetic meaning begins to accrue to it when the Maiden places the word in the context of a speech on the goodness of God:

> 'Þer is no date of hys godnesse,'
> Þen sayde to me Þat worÞy wy3te,
> 'For al is trawÞe Þat he con dresse,
> And he may do noÞynk bot ry3t.
> (11. 493-496)

While there is no definition of either term in line 493, there is an association of "no date" with "hys godnesse." A series of suggestions commences here. Since the repetition of the key-word or the refrain is never separated by more than eleven lines, their proximity facilitates

association; and, since the refrains resemble each other, the effect of such repetition on a passage which involves distinct voices is unification:

HD 1. 493	'þer is no date of hys godnesse,'	--Maiden
RFN 1. 504	To labor vyne wat3 dere þe date.	--Matthew
HD 1. 505	'"þat date of 3ere wel knawe þys hyne.	--Matthew
RFN 1. 516	'Ne knawe 3e of þis day no date?'	--Lord of Vineyard
HD 1. 517	'"Er date of daye hider arn we wonne,'	--Workers
RFN 1. 528	Welne3 wyl day wat3 passed date.	--Matthew
HD 1. 529	'"At þe date of day of euensonge,	--Matthew
RFN 1. 540	þe day wat3 al apassed date.	--Matthew

The first stanza in the group concludes with a comment by the dreamer which brings the number of voices in the one stanzaic group to five. While the proximity of the repetition binds all the uses of "date" together, the disparate voices qualify the term, modify it and employ it to indicate different kinds of time. The effect is not unlike that of a consort of instruments whose different tonalities bring a score to life. The stanzaic group ends; the reader has received no clear definition of "date," for example, but is impressed with its multifold meanings instead. Such multiple meanings of words point toward the infinite; in early exegesis, for example, this use of language supports the exegetical process itself, indicating that while words have myriad implications, the truth is one.

On the other hand, one leaves these stanzas with a sense of how important limitations in themselves are in human life, how all-pervasive; searching for clarification on an ideational plane, one is propelled into the next section:

Sec. IX, l. 540:
þe day wat3 al apassed date.
Sec. X, ll. 541-552:
'"The date of þe day þe lorde con knaw,
Called to þe reue: 'Lede, pay þe meyny.
Gyf hem þe hyre þat I hem owe,
And fyrre, þat non me may reprene,

Set hem alle vpon a rawe
And gyf vchon inlyche a peny.
Bygyn at þe laste þat stande3 lowe,
Tyl to þe fyrste þat þou atteny.'
And þenne þe fyrste bygonne to pleny
And sayden þat þay hade trauayled sore:
'Þese bot on oure hem con streny;
vus þynk vus o3e to take more.

One moves from Section IX to Section X on the impetus generated by the various associations of "date" -- the poet, that is, utilizes the potential of words for mystery, for ambiguity. On a literal level, the significance of "date" within the context of the narrative is rather clear; in terms of the parable, it is that day on which each shall be judged and rewarded according to his worth. But because the word has been used by so many speakers or voices, in so many different contexts, one feels that there is more to it than the orthodox theological allegory when paraphrased. A deliberate creation of mystery or ambiguity is not unknown as a poetic technique. Mallarme, for example, in a more self-conscious age, erased all exposition, indeed, all logical connectives, in order to achieve his effects of veiled truths and undiscovered realities.[9] And, while the Maiden is clear enough in her specific directives, of medicinal sharpness, to the dreamer, the poem must remain a poem and not become overly exegetical. Thus, in the first stanza of Section XI, cited above, the immediate expectation is of some sort of final reading or interpretation of the symbolic significance, rather than the liturgical significance, of "date which final reading never, of course, occurs. The poem must continue.

A certain amount of suspense is generated by sheer technique in addition to that which comes from the search for clarification of a symbolic word or phrase. At Section X, for example, the forty-sixth

stanza of the poem begins; by this time, the reader or listener has gleaned what the formal pattern must be, and also has some sense of the manner of resolution. It is like watching a famous magician perform a complicated trick or observing a skilled athlete accomplish a feat of physical prowess; one expects success, and yet there remains a certain amount of surprise in the conclusion or accomplishment of the act as well as a satisfaction in seeing it done, time and again, with the variations of the moment. Unlike a romance, or a completely schematized and consistent allegory, Pearl does not have "natural" movement based upon the actions of characters in the external world or on an allegorical plane resembling the world in the confrontation, by the characters, of obstacles existent in space or in time. The internal movement of the poem is subtle. The work takes the microcosm as its proper subject, and the processes which take place do not affect the universe or even the natural world. When the dreamer wakes, in other words, the natural world has not changed at all. All movement in the actual sphere has been, in reality, but the illusion of a dream. The narrator even makes the point of having left his body by the grave before he commences the "avysyoun":

> Fro spot my spyryt þer sprange in space;
> My body on balke þer bod in sweuen.
> My goste is gon in Gode3 grace
> In auenture þer meruayle3 meuen.
> (11. 61-64)

Such "auenture," in the framework of the dream vision, contrasts strongly with the narrator's immobility and passivity after he has "slode vpon a slepyng sla3te." The technical feats which are accomplished in every stanza and, again, from stanzaic group to stanzaic group, creat and maintain a suspense of their own which, to some degree, substitutes for the suspense inherent in deeds. When the reader arrives at line 10 of the

first stanza in each section, the expectation of the key-word in that section arises, since the rhyme of line 10 matches that of 12. The next four stanzas will also have to present like resolutions, and the aural satisfaction provided by successful craftsmanship restores the necessary element of externality in the medium. Huizinga notes that

> the close connections between poetry and the riddle are never lost. In the Icelandic skalds too much clarity is considered a technical fault. The Greeks also required the poet's word to be dark. Among the troubadours, in whose art the play function is more in evidence than in any other, special merit was attributed to the trobarclus--the making of recondite poetry.[10]

Not only does the deliberate mystification which Huizinga speaks of show itself in the refrains of Pearl, but, also, that one element of the riddle which Huizinga does not emphasize: a riddle is a puzzle, and involves the energies and effort of the reader or the listener. Unlike an invariable refrain, the modified refrain of Pearl, while providing an incantatory effect, also exerts an effect, perhaps subliminal, of a challenge to the reader as well as to the poet. The poet's graceful solutions then may become a cause for wonder, as in Section X:

> 1. 552: Vus þynk vus o3e to take more.
> 1. 553: '"More haf we serued, vus þynk so,

The very vagueness of the term, "more," in and of itself, facilitates the solutions while it admits of various associations, good and bad, of earth and heaven. When the workers in the vineyard employ it, as they do above, the term reflects the dilemma of the dreamer who is intent upon measuring the immeasurable. One wonders how the poet will make the term connote anything but the human desire for acquisition. It is seen next in the reply of the owner of the vineyard who is still using the word in the same sense as his workers:

Quy bygynne3 þou now to þrete?
Wat3 not a pene þy couenaunt þore?
Fyrre þen couenaunde is no3t to plete.
Wy schalte þou þenne ask more?
(11. 561-564)

What more, as it were, can the poet do with "more"? Its first meaning is already plain. Will the poet reiterate? No; in Line 565, it is used as a technical pivot by which the poet can make a transition from the language of men to that of non-quantitative beings. Tension is cultivated first:

'"More, weþer louyly is me my gyfte,
To do wyth myn quat-so me lyke3?
Oþer elle3 þyn y3e to lyþer is lyfte
For I am goude and non beswyke3?'
(11. 565-568)

The sense of riddle is reinforced in this stanza because the identity of the speaker is revealed only in line 5:

Þus schal I, "quod Kryste," hit skyfte:
Þe laste schal be þe fyrst þat stryke3,
(11. 569-570)

It is the "More," signifying "moreover," in line 565 which one assumes Gordon is referring to when he cites some straining of the key-word; one must bear in mind that Pearl is a poem, not a tract, and that, as a poem, and not a topical one like Piers Plowman, Pearl sustains a good deal of playfulness--indeed, the rigors of its form, play in the highest sense, are necessary because of the inherent seriousness of its concerns. The lesson in this section, stripped of the beauty of its language, the working out of the rhyme scheme, and the resolution of the refrains, is, indeed, a harsh one, for, while Christ reveals that

Þus pore men her part ay phye3,
Þa3 þay com late and lyttel wore,
And þa3 her sweng wyth lyttel atslyke3,
Þe merci of God is much þe more,
(11. 573-576)

this has always seemed a little peculiar in human terms. Moreover, one is never permitted to forget the emotional validity of what is human--the last two stanzas of Section X present the Maiden's "more" with the "more" of the dreamer, or, rather, in contrast to it; one moves from the absolute yet mystifying statement of the Christ, line 576, to that of the Maiden, a more qualified statement, somewhat narrower, yet only slightly less strange:

> 'More haf I of ioye and blysse hereinne,
> Of ladyschyp gret and lyue3 blom,
> þen alle þe wy3e3 in þe worlde my3t wynne
> By þe way of ry3t to aske dome.
> Whe þer welnygh now I con bygonne--
> In euentyde into þe vyne come--
> Fyrst of my hyre my Lorde con mynne:
> I wat3 þayed anon of al and sum.
> 3et o þer þer werne þat toke more tom,
> þat swang and swat for long 3ore,
> þat 3et of hyre no þynk þay nom,
> Paraunter no3t schal to-3ere more.'
> (11. 577-588)

The poet does not gloss over that issue which, one would assume, has turned many a just man away from orthodox questions and answers: Why do the just suffer without recompense? The verbs "swange" and "swat," in the stanza above, convey in brief, and with force, the heavy toll of the laborers in the vineyard, that is, of all men on earth. These are not the words of a poet indifferent to human hardship--in addition, the presentation of the parable in terms of the day and the on-coming "euentyde" reinforce the more melancholy aspect of the Maiden's truth-telling. Her final "more," rhyming with "long 3ore" is, then, a note of sadness which the dreamer turns into one signifying his exasperation and irritation:

> Then more I meled and sayde apert:
> 'My þynk þy tale vnresounable.
> (11. 589-590)

Finally, one returns to the human "more" of quantity and measurement:

> Now he þat stod þe long day stable,
> And þou to payment com hym byfore
> þenne þe lasse in werke to take more able,
> And euer þe lenger þe lasse, þe more.'
> (11. 593-600)

In her excellent discussion of the central portion of the poem, the so-called debate, or, as she refers to it, the encounter, Kean remarks that the "whole passage is full of terms of comparison and degree. The actual words 'less' and 'more' are twice used in a refrain phrase so carefully placed and balanced as to suggest very deliberate planning. In section x 'more' is the refrain word, combined with 'less' in the last verse of the stanza. In section xv 'less' is used for the refrain, and is combined with 'more' in the first stanza. In a scheme of twenty sections the positioning of key-words is significant."[11] She notes, moreover, that the "ideas associated with law in action, of the trial of a cause, the weighing up of right and wrong and the passing of judgment between parties, are necessarily not far from the ideas of comparison and degree":[12]

> It is not, therefore, surprising that the poet works out his argument in legal terms, as well as in terms of 'less and more.' Moreover, in doing so, he is able to develop the same paradox: just as degree vanishes in the superabundance of heavan, so the emphasis on exact measurement of merit, which is an inescapable part of human justice, vanishes in the plenitude of God's justice and mercy.[13]

The poet evokes this sense of "plenitude" and "superabundance" in the refrains; in presenting the key-words variously colored by their speakers, and by their contexts, these yield the illusion of being, while remaining undefined, therefore, numinous. One of the most remarkable refrains in the poem is that of Section XI: "For þe grace of God is gret inoghe."

The inherent ambiguity of this statement is utilized by the poet in the evocation of the infinite; the qualifying "inno3e" tempers each statement concerning the nature of the deity. Had the poet withheld the qualifying word, God's nature would have been limited by its attributes. The "greatness" of God would have seemed manageable, whereas the addition of "innoghe" reminds the reader of the impossibility of measurement when the numinous is the object of discussion. This use of the qualifying word differs from its use in Sir Gawain in which Marie Borroff notes "frequent use of adjectives implying larger-than-life qualities--of excellence and splendor, joy and grief, courtesy and prowess," etc. Moreover, in the adjectival lists Borroff reproduces from Brink, "gret" appear as an "adjective of low rank." In describing human excellence, then, the poet might have felt freer to engage in hyperbole than in praising the Creator. The very non-assertiveness of such praise stimulates the religious imagination or faculty. As in the instances of water-imagery, in Section XI, the poet shuns one-to-one equations. The words are used primarily to create an aura of mystery and limitlessness, not necessarily through the high style.

The Maiden does not equate God's grace with water, but merely suggests that it is, in certain ways, like water. The terms of the analogy work against complete identification of one with the other. First, she informs the dreamer that "þe gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche":

> He laue3 hys gyfte3 as water of dyche,
> Oþer gote3 of golf þat neuer charde.
> (11. 607-608)

The poet is, however, careful about the verb "to be," using it only in negative or ambiguous lines. The ambiguity in this section of the poem and in the work in general, seems not so much Empson's much-heralded

multiples of meaning,[14] but a device which exists to one side of meaning, as it were. The second stanza, for example, in whose initial line one expects some variant on the concept of "innoghe," plays upon the sound of "innoghe" rather than its meaning:

> 'Bot now þou mote3 me for to mate,
> Þat I my peny haf wrang tan here;
> (ll. 613-614)

Gordon, who is, in general, rather conservative on the subject of the poet's word-play, remarks in his note to line 613 that "'now' echoes 'inoghe' of the preceeding stanza, showing that the poet in linking his stanzas aimed primarily at an echo of sound, not necessarily a repetition of the same word. It is evident also that the syllable '-nogh-' was equivalent in sound to 'now' (then pronounced 'nu:')."[15] And even of the legal language employed, Miss Kean notes that "some of these words, it is true, are ambiguous: they can have a general as well as a more technical meaning, and the poet certainly plays on more than one sense. Nevertheless, the idea of law, in the widest sense, has been invoked, and the idea of right and legal limitation is being gradually strengthened."[16] So, too, the idea of God's generosity and grace is strengthened while the reiteration of the key phrases superimpose a pattern upon the whole. The kind of ambiguity which works its effects so well in this section resembles that of liturgical refrains, and particularly those intoned in a language other than the language of daily life. For, as several religions have found the separations of the spheres of common life and speech and religious life and expression conducive to the religious sentiment,[17] so, too, the poet employs the refrain to create a separate sphere, and at times to make sure that one does not "understand" in a cerebral, logical, or

commonsensical fashion. Of esthetic contemplation, Sartre writes that he is, for example, "confronted by the Seventh Symphony but on the express condition of understanding nothing about it, that I do not think of the event as an actuality and dated, and on condition that I listen to the succession of themes as an absolute succession and not as a real succession."[18] The work of art is completely beyond the real. It has its own time, that is, it possesses an inner time, which runs from the first tone of the allegro to the last tone of the finale."[19] Yet this unreal time "can manifest itself only through analogues which are dated and which unroll in our time...the real sounds must be apprehended as analogues."[20] The dream frame, also, in Pearl, is conducive to this necessary removal from one sphere, the real, into that of the imagination whether that imagination is applied to esthetic or religious contemplation; one enters a church and it is there that one is free to intone phrases of a liturgy in a special language. The dream-frame facilitates the removal in that the conditions of ordinary reality are abrogated: "Esthetic contemplation is an induced dream and the passing into the real is an actual waking up."[21]

Except for the headlines in each stanzaic group, the framing effect, from first to last, is constant. It is, however, intensified in those passages which paraphrase a particular portion of Scripture or which repeat a liturgically important word in the first line of each stanza and in the last line. In the earlier part of the poem, the narrator's return to the refrain word has a somewhat obsessed quality, as in Section III:

1. 132 Hytte3 to haue ay more and more.
1. 144 And euer me longed ay more and more.
1. 156 þat meued my mynde ay more and more.
1. 188 þe lenger, I knew hyr more and more.
1. 180 And euer þe lenger, þe more and more.

Once the dialogue between Maiden and dreamer is fully underway, however, the repetition of certain key-words is as significant as a chant or the tolling or a church bell:

Sec. VI
1. 312 Bot þat hys one skyl may dem.
1. 313 'Deme now þyself if þou con dayly
1. 324 Er ouer þys dam hym Dry3ten deme,
1. 325 'Deme3 þou me, 'quod I,' my swete,
1. 336 Bot durande doel what may men deme?'
1. 337 'Thow dme3 no3t bot doel-dystresse
1. 348 þou moste abyde þat he schal deme.
1. 349 'Deme Dry3ten, euer hym adyte,
1. 360 Al lys in hym to dy3t and deme.'

Sec. XIV
1. 792 þe nwe cyte o Jerusalem.
1. 793 'Of Jerusalem I in speche spelle.
1. 804 Quen Jue3 hym iugged in Jerusalem."
1. 805 In Jerusalem wat3 my lemman slayn
1. 816 For vus he swalt in Jerusalem.
1. 817 'In Jerusalem, Jordan, and Galalye,
1. 828 þat dy3ed for vus in Jerusalem?"
1. 829 'In Ierusalem þus my lemman swete
1. 840 In helle, in erþe, and Jerusalem.

The all-encompassing genre of the Pearl is a consolation.[22] But what can this mean? It is, after all, a work which is based upon the assumption that Judgment Day, the theological consolation for mankind, has not yet come. The Maiden informs the dreamer that, although he dearly wishes "ouer þys water to weue," (l. 318), he must "ceuer to oþer counsayle," (l. 319):

> þy corse in clot mot calder keue.
> For hit wat3 forgarte at Paradys greue;
> Oure 3orefader hit con mysse3eme.
> þur3 drwry deth bo3 vch man dreue
> Er ouer þys dam hym Dry3ten deme.
> (ll. 320-324)

Her instructions are:

> 'Deme Dry3ten, euer hym adyte,
> Of þe way a fote ne wyl he wryþe,
> þe mende3 mounte3 not a myte,
> þa3 þou for sor3e be neuer blyþe.
> Stynt of þy strot and fyne to flyte
> And sech hys blyþe ful swefte and swyþe.

þy prayer may hys pyte byte,
þat mercy schal hyr crafte3 kyþe.
Hys comforte may þy langour lyþe
And þy lure3 of ly3tly fleme;
(11. 349-358)

This is cold comfort indeed; but with the addition of the last two lines, the "message" changes:

For, marre oþer madde, morne and myþe,
Al lys in hym to dy3t and deme.'
(11. 359-360)

The Maiden's descriptions of actual process in Section XI are also comfortless:

Anon þe day, wyth derk endente,
þe niy3t of deth dot3 to enclyne;
þat wro3t neuer wrang er þenne þay wente,
(11. 629-631)

Al wer we dampned for þat mete
To dy3e in doel out of delyt
And syþen wende to helle hete,
þerinne to won wythoute respyt.
(11. 641-643)

Nor could the literal solutions to these human dilemmas console any but the least skeptical to whom, obviously, the Maiden's speeches are not addressed. The consolation which does evolve in the course of these stanzas has to do with the nature of beauty, "a value," says Sartre applicable only to the imaginary and which means the negation of the world in its essential structure":

'Innoghe þer wex out of þat welle,
Blod and water of brode wounde.
þe blod vus bo3t fro bale of helle
And delyuered vus of þe deth secounde;
þe water is baptem, þe soþe to telle,
þat fol3ed þe glayue so grymly grounde
þat wasche3 away þe gylte3 felle
þat Adam wyth inne deth vus drounde
Now is þer no3t in þe worlde rounde
Bytwene vus and blysse bot þat he wythdro3,
And þat is restored in sely stounde;
And þe grace of God is gret innogh.
(11. 649-660)

The information conveyed in the stanza cited above would not have surprised a medieval reader belonging to the laity or the priesthood. Nor does the poem seem to be a catechism in the more limited sense of the word; in a broader sense, however, it is indeed, for, in view of the dogmatic content, the ever-present resource of the stability and satisfaction of form, as in the unquestionable return to the refrain, proves the ideas despite or aside from the ideas themselves. The refrain severs the poem from reality, encloses it finally and securely in poetic time, and so enables the poet to avoid resolving issues which exist in reality, and to create a work which even in the skeptical context of the twentieth century, remains sublime.

The curious doubling of conjunctions in the stanza above is rhetorically effective; one percieves, however, that while such statements sound "right," lines eleven and twelve really do not explain much, even if one assumes that for believers there are no questions. Why the lines sound conclusive has to do with the poet's rhythmic sensitivity. This is a difficult, perhaps an impossible, subject to address without what would become an undue dependence upon pre-established criteria. The recurrence, however, at definite intervals, of phrases similar enough to each other to be remembered by the ear, sets up rhythms of its own, and therefore establishes an emotional pull all to itself. The tension between meaning and sound is increased and, as the refrain words and phrases are repeated, the effect is akin to that of the Latin refrains or phrases in medieval macaronic verse, prayer in a language reserved for ritual purposes, religious artifacts such as rosaries, and the corona. This setting aside for special purposes, this deliberate marking of material for ritual use only,

is more important when the material so used is language--no material is, and, one may assume, was, so commonly used for purposes outside of art or religion. Notes, or musical tones, and instruments are reserved for musical use, paints for the painter, and so forth, but words are employed for various purposes by everyone, daily, and are, consequently, demeaned as a medium of expression, artistic or religious.[24] The poet knows how to rescue these words from their enslavement to utility, necessity and the urgencies of everyday communication. The Pearl-poet, in particular, by employing such artifice as he does, is able to dissociate the words in the refrains from their utilitarian associations, and is able, then, to use them in the creation of a mystery; the dialect of the North-West Midlands becomes a "holy" tongue.

No less a figure than St. Bernard could use this device in sermons:

> Magnificat anima mea Dominum. Magnificat voce magnificat opere, magnificat affectu. Magnificat laudando, amando, praedicando. Magnificat, laudandi, amandi et magnificandi formam simul et materiam dando. Magnificat anima mea Dominum: quia magnifice a magnifico Domino magnifica est. In primis ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei anima mea mirabiliter a Domino creata est; sed postea in Adam miserabiliter deformate, nunc mirabilius, gloriosius et magnificentius a Domino renovata est. Magnificat anima mea Dominum. etc.[25]

Of this passage, Charles Baldwin writes that the "very insistence exhibits strikingly the value of cumulative progress for charging exposition with emotion."[26] Similarly, even the most dogmatic portions of Pearl partake of the emotional tenor generated by the iteration. The refrains are finally not used so much to convey meaning as to express, in sound, and emphasize, by repetition, a certain kind of experience. Just as, in Pearl, the dream-narrator is made to undergo a dream experience which proves circular in content, the reader must follow him into his special world

and experience the cycle. What the reader takes pleasure in, however, is the fact that a human artificer is in control of the materials. One's sense of finality, completion or satisfaction is based upon a linguistic harmony and order, the linguistic completion of a circle existent in words. The experience which the dreamer undergoes is one of "revelation," that is, an experience justified by its very existence in time; yet it is an experience outside of ordinary experience, outside of ordinary time and outside of one's common criteria for the perception of truth and falsehood. There can be no argument against revelation, for it is beyond logic; when the dreamer wakes, he leaves argument and justification of belief behind him in the dream-world where he had indeed not been himself, yet where he had found himself:

> þen wakned I in þat erber wlonk;
> My hede vpon þat hylle wat3 layde
> þer as my perle to grounde strayd,
> I raxled, and fel in gret affray,
> And, sykyng, to myself I sayd,
> 'Now al be to þat Prynce3 paye.'
> (11. 1170-1176)

In the final action of the poem, that is, one completes a circle, but it is the manner of completion which reflects what has come before. The narrator's dungeon has not dissolved into air--on the contrary, the narrator first realizes its nature after the revelation:

> If hit be ueray and soth sermoun
> þat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,
> So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun
> þat þou art to þat Prynce3 paye.'
> (11. 1185-1188)

Having left the "real" temporarily and through the grace of God, the narrator is capable of accepting, not completely, but to a greater degree than before:

To þat Prynce3 paye hade I ay bente,
And 3erned no more þen wat3 me gyuen,
And halden me þer in trwe entent,
As þe perle me prayed þat wat3 so þryuen,
(11. 1189-1192)

What is perhaps more important than complete acceptance, which is beyond the earthly man, is his awareness of himself and a sense of porportion in contemplation of his own desires:

As helde, drawen to Gode3 present,
To mo of his mysterys I hade ben dryuen;
Bot ay wolde man of happe more hente
þen mo3te by ry3t vpon hem clyuen.
þerfore my ioye wat3 sone toriuen,
And I kast of kythe3 þat laste3 aye.
Lorde, mad hit arn þat agayn þe styuen,
Oþer proferen þe o3t agayn þy paye.
(11. 1193-1200)

The narrator, expressing his gratitude in the poem's present, is not thankful so much for any particular point of logic, nor for any particular insight which stays with him after the dream but is instead thankful for the revelation itself as a manifestation of God's love. Liturgy as such is a kind of daily revelation; thus, the poem ends with a reference to the daily miracle which, while not necessarily mutating one particle of matter, changes the world as a symbolic and revelatory action:

To pay þe Prince oþer sete sa3te
Hit is ful fyn to þe god Krystyin;
For I haf founden hym, boþe day and na3te,
A God, a Lorde, a frende ful fyin.
Ouer þis byul þis lote I la3te,
For pyty of my perle enclyin,
And syþen to God I hit byta3te
In Kryste3 dere blessyng and myn,
þat in þe forme of bred and wyn
þe preste vus schewe3 vch a daye.
He gef vus to be his homly hyne
Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay.
(11. 1200-1212)

So, too, the specialized language of the poem, and its uncommon form, made final, as it were, by the refrains, symbolizes or ritualizes, on a poetic

level, "þe forme of bred and wyn" and which "vus schewe3" how the circular concatenation of experience does not preclude such revelation as the poet brings in his mastery over the content of that experience through his use of forms.

Footnotes

[1]For example, Bishop, Gordon, Kean and Wellek all make note of it, with Bishop dwelling upon the links at length but viewing them only as part of the concatenation of stanzas and only in regard to their numerical resemblance to the corona: Pearl in its Setting, pp. 27-31.

[2]In "A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology," ed. Willis D. Ellis, New York, 1939, pp. 71-88.

[3]Paul Valéry, The Art of Poetry, pp. 291-292; perhaps in medieval terms this would work out to the struggle between the didactic (ideational) aspect of verse and its pleasurable one: Faral, pp. 167-180, reprints Matthieu de Vendome's Ars Versificatoria of which Part III, "De la qualite de l' expression" deals totally with the poetic elements "in rebus materialibus," that is, the physical aspects of poetry.

[4]Northrop Frye, "Lexis and Melos" in Sound and Poetry, New York, 1956, pp. ix-xxvii; p. x relates such association of the two to the Aristotelian tradition.

[5]In Sound and Poetry, pp. 16-54; this is on pp. 16-17.

[6]See note 5, p. 38.

[7]Harold Whitehall, "From Linguistics to Poetry," in Sound and Poetry, p. 138.

[7a]Ibid. 7.

[8]Gordon, in his edition of Pearl, p. 63.

[9]Valéry, on the need for "mystery," recalls Mallarme erasing every line in l' Apres midi d'un efaune" which he considered too clear; The Art of Poetry, p. 125.

[10]J. Huizinga, Homo Ludens, Boston, 1955, p. 135.

[11]P. M. Kean, The Pearl: An Interpretation, New York, 1967, p. 178.

[12]Ibid. 11, p. 185.

[13]Ibid. 11, p. 185.

[14]Borroff, p. 193; pp. 77-78.

[15]Notes to Pearl, p. 68.

[16]Ibid. 11, p. 187.

[17]Huizinga, "Nature and Significance of Play" in Homo Ludens.

[18]Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination, New York, 1966, p. 280.

[19]Ibid. 18, p. 280.

[20]Ibid. 18, p. 280.

[21]Ibid. 18, p. 281.

[22]Pearl in its Setting, pp. 13-26; Bishop sums up the arguments for his case.

[23]Ibid. 18, p. 180.

[24]Valéry, pp. 189-192.

[25]From In Canticum Beatae Virginis Mariae; cited by Charles Baldwin in Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic. Gloucester, Mass. 1914, pp. 256-257.

[26]Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic, p. 256.

Conclusion

In literary terms, the poem, Pearl, is an enigma; in the course of its stanzas, much happens, and nothing happens. It is a poem about human grief, among other things, and yet its colors are not the browns and grays of sorrow or mourning--the work is as luminous as its Pearl-maiden. It stands as one of the most highly wrought and arduously crafted creations in the English language; yet its continual surprises lend a quality of spontaneity to the whole. It raises questions, and refuses to answer them. Relying on concepts of God's justice and goodness, the poet avoids the facile definitions of these. Set in one "spot," the poem nevertheless employs the processes of physical labor, law, government and history without, even for a moment, slipping into over-statement or conceit. While the limitations, thematic and formal, in language and in metaphor, are numerous, one never feels that the concerns of its maker are narrow or constricted. Depending upon the Bible as much as any poet of the period, the Pearl-poet is neither parochial nor evangelical. How have these things come to pass?

The Pearl-poet, while, of course, a Christian poet, is above all, intensely humanistic; the final success of all the devices depends upon this. For where does the poem occur? From first to last, in a "mane3 mynde," in the first person limited of the purest lyric forms. The Maiden is a part of the narrator and dreamer; and the pearl of great price is none other than the human soul which the Maiden describes in the most glowing and generous of terms:

> 'This makelle3 perle, þat bo3t is dere,
> Þe joueler gef fore all hys god,
> Is lyke þe reme of heuenesse clere:
> So sayde þe Fader of folde and flode;

For hit is wemle3, clene, and clere,
And endele3 rounde, and blyþe of mode,
And commune to alle þat ry3twys were.
Lo, euen inmydde3 my breste hit stode.
My Lorde þe Lombe, þat schede hys blode,
He py3t hit þere in token of pes.
I rede þe forsake þe worlde wode
And porchace þy perle maskelle3.
(11. 733-744)

Pearl possesses characteristics which are derived from the lyric impulse and which it shares with shorter lyric works. The first of these characteristics is the poem's final assertion of individuality, the poetic occasion being the only time, it has been said, in which to say "I" does not posit crass egotism.[1] Pearl is a celebration of life even in the despair and suffering which it describes. The references to, and quotations from, the Psalms are thus of its essence: The Psalmist, too, affirms by calling "de profundis." The poetic "I" is purified by its being made "commune to alle þat ry3twys were." Through language and meter, the individual being conquers time by creating his own; in this sense, the consolation is the form of the poem itself.

In relation to such consolation, and to what would otherwise be the hubris of a pervasive first-person narration, the ideas of courtesy and grace become doubly important. While courtesy, in Pearl, does indeed have "wide connotations," as Kean puts it, and can stand "for nobility and generosity of conduct," courtesy should not be subsumed in "generosity--freedom from limitation, abundance in goodness and in loving-kindness." Dissociation of courtesy from its roots not in feeling but in behavior blurs the distinction between courtesy and grace, the two being related but not by any means the same. Moreover, there is a definite relationship between deliberate social conduct, or manners, and deliberate poetic "con-

duct," or form. Manners and form, in life and art, are simply not the same as fellow feeling is, in the one case, nor as self-expression is in the other. John Crowe Ransom emphasizes the artifice involved in the creation of both manners and poetic form, the connection of each with religious values and, eventually, with religion itself: ;

> It is in the esthetic effects, if secured in those experiences that record themselves publicly as "art," or for that matter as manners and religion, that the given forms are both more and less than they seem...The esthetic forms are a technique of restraint, not of efficiency. They do not butter our bread, and they delay the eating of it. They stand between the individual and his natural object and impose a check upon his action;...To the concept of direct action the old society--the directed and hierarchical one--opposed the concept of esthetic experience, as a true opposite, and checked the one in order to induce the other.[3]

Courtesy is deliberate and behavioural; as Brewer writes for the Pearl-poet, this "quality can only be realized in benevolent <u>actions</u> or at least speech towards other people."[4] These actions may emanate from the Christ, from the Queen of Heaven or from man himself:

> Bot my Lady of quom Jesu con spryng,
> Ho halde3 þe empyre ouer vus ful hy3e;
> And þat dysplese3 non of oure gyng,
> For ho is Quene of cortaysye.
> (11. 453-456)

> 'Of courtaysye, as sayt3 Saynt Poule,
> Al arn we membre3 of Jesu Kryst:
> As heued and arme and legg and naule
> Temen to hys body ful trwe and tryste,
> Ry3t so is vch a Krysten sawle
> A longande lym to þe Mayster of myste.
> (11. 457-462)

Courtesy is, then, the physical manifestation of grace. Like the feelings and attitudes of the individual, grace itself is an inner quality, and is made manifest only through the imposition of demands of a certain kind:

> Bot innoghe of grace hat3 innocent.
> As sone as þay arn borne, by lyne
> In þe water of babtem þay dyssente:
> þen arne þay boro3t into þe vyne.
> (11. 625-628)

Grace is an inherent quality:

> 'Grace innogh þe mon may haue
> þat synne3 þenne new, 3if hym repente,
> Bot wyth sor3 and syt he mot hit craue,
> And byde þe payne þerto is bent.
> (11. 661-664)

In Pearl, it is only the transmutation of grace through the sacrifice, or, as it is called, the "courtaysye" of Christ (l. 457) which redeems humanity. The notion of courtesy involves not only action on behalf of the Other, but of sacrifice, the giving up of a certain kind of freedom, whether in behaviour or in poetry. Therefore, should the individual wish to emulate the deity, the direction of his efforts must be towards courtesy and restraint, rather than towards grace, over which he has no control.

For the poet behind the narrative persona, the constraints of his form, the sacrifice of absolute freedom in his choice of words, the voluntary labors imposed upon the self, provide a formal correlative of courteous action. The employment of words in the poem is symbolic action; there is an aspect of covenant involved in the completion of the work, a covenant in which the voluntary submission of the poet to his form becomes a gesture signifying his freedom. Kean has remarked that, at the end of the poem,

> the poet refocuses attention on the basic moral problem--that of the individual will in conflict with reason...These lines, too, eliminate the Dreamer's rebelliousness; the compulsion of 'Lorde, mad hit arn þat agayn þe stryuen,' becomes a free submission in a

> treaty of peace (sete sa3te). This implies the consent of both parties, and it is, moreover, a treaty made with a friend as well as with an all-powerful lord.[6]

There is nothing, of course, intrinsically reasonable about Pearl's rhyme scheme or stanzaic grouping. The narrator does not return to reason as much as to submission to the will of God. It is the submission itself which, in context, defines reason since any other attitude is seen as madness. The poet has demonstrated, in Pearl, that art, too, and the celebration of life inherent in it, is at once sacrifice and victory, closely related to prayer. The poet can therefore close his poem on the note of "Amen."

Footnotes

[1]Jose Garcia Villa, July 11, 1968.

[2]Pearl: An Interpretation, p. 189.

[3]"Forms and Citizens," The World's Body, 1968, p. 31.

[4]D. S. Brewer, "Courtesy and the Gawain Poet," in Chaucer and His Contemporaries, p. 334.

[5]Paul Valéry, "Notes on Tragedy and a Tragedy," The Art of Poetry, p. 235.

[6]Pearl: An Interpretation, p. 231.

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