The Poetics of the Elegiac Dream Vision in Middle English Literature

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

This dissertation examines how Middle English poets deployed the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode to explore the limitations of language and interrogate the art of poetry. Writing in the early decades of the vernacular literary tradition, these Ricardian and Lancastrian poets combine the ancient themes of mourning and the quest for consolation with the tropes of dream poetry developed throughout the late-antique and medieval periods. The elegist desires that language perform beyond its natural limits to transcend death and restore the lost beloved to the mourner. The flexibility of the dream allows the poet to probe the boundaries of language, and, in the best cases, to push his poetry beyond its usual constraints. In the first chapter, I demonstrate how the *Pearl*-poet uses the elegiac dream vision to investigate the constraints of poetic consolation and to imagine an elevated, celestial form of language that suffers from none of the failings of the mourner's mundane tongue. My analysis of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* shows the ways that the poem juxtaposes lyric and narrative forms of mourning and how the dreamer-narrator helps the sorrowful black knight move from the closed circle of repetitive grief to the vital progress of narrative. This shift, I argue, parallels the poet's own literary movement from courtly lyrics to sustained narrative poetry. My third chapter, which focusses on *Fortunes Stabilnes* by Charles of Orleans, reveals how the poet renovates the love vision traditions to chart his dreamer-narrator's journey through love, loss and sorrow, and the renewal of love following a successful process of mourning. The dissertation argues that the pairing of the elegiac mode and the dream vision genre was an important part of late-medieval poets' efforts to establish and expand an English vernacular literature.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la manière dont les poètes de l'anglais moyen utilisaient le genre onirique et le mode élégiaque pour analyser les limitations de la langue et s'interroge sur l'art poétique. Les poètes ricardiens et lancastriens, qui écrivaient durant les premières années de la tradition littéraire anglaise, combinaient les thèmes anciens du deuil et de la recherche de la consolation avec les tropes de la poésie onirique développés pendant la fin de l'antiquité et de la période médiévale. Les élégistes voulaient que la langue agisse à un niveau supérieur aux limites naturelles pour transcender la mort et ramener l'amant perdu au pleureur. La flexibilité des songes permet au poète de sonder les limites de la langue, et, dans des cas exceptionnels, d'amener sa poésie au-delà de ses contraintes habituelles. Dans le premier chapitre de ma thèse, j'expose comment le poète de *Pearl* utilise le songe élégiaque pour explorer les limites de la consolation poétique et pour imaginer une langue supérieure et céleste exempte des fautes de la langue terrestre, telle qu'utilisée par le pleureur. Dans le deuxième chapitre, j'analyse l'ouvrage *Book of the Duchess* de Chaucer, dans lequel je présente les façons avec lesquelles le poème juxtapose deuils lyriques et narratifs, et comment le rêveur-narrateur permet au chevalier triste de sortir de son chagrin pour solliciter la vitalité du récit. Je suppose que ce changement est parallèle au mouvement littéraire du poète lors de sa transition des poèmes lyriques aux récits poétiques. Mon troisième chapitre, qui concerne le poème *Fortunes Stabilnes* par Charles d'Orléans, présente comment le poète reconstitue la tradition des visions amoureuses pour examiner le progrès du rêveur-narrateur lors des expériences de l'amour, de la mort et du retour de l'amour après le processus du deuil. Ma thèse propose que l'appariement du mode élégiaque et du genre onirique fut une part importante des efforts des poètes pour l'instauration et l'élargissement de la littérature du moyen anglais.

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By the use of the language of sorrow I had for the time being obliterated my sorrow—so powerful is the charm of words, which for us reduces to manageable entities all the passions that would otherwise madden and destroy us.

Gene Wolfe, *The Book of the New Sun*

For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable chain
And dumb enchantment. Who alive can say,
"Thou art no Poet—may'st not tell thy dreams?"
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath vision, and would speak, if he had loved,
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.

John Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*

Introduction

Dream Vision, Elegy, and Late-Medieval English Poetry

Writing in the last quarter of the twelfth century, Matthew of Vendôme opens the second part of his *Ars versificatoria*, a manual for the composition of poetry, with a dream vision sequence.[1] The narrator of the vision, who is not distinguished from Matthew the schoolmaster, relays a fictional dream in which he visits a verdant bower where "[f]lowers of every sort abound" (II.2). In this springtime space, he sees Lady Philosophy accompanied by her attendants, allegorical figures for the four types of poetry (II.5-8). The scene serves as a transition from Matthew's lessons on description in Part I to the lessons on the "elegance of words" in Part II. The opening of the dream includes a verse description of the *locus amoenus*, a visionary landscape (II.3), and the narrator's accounts of the allegorical figures clearly follow the rules Matthew sets down in his earlier sections. The descriptions demonstrate a balance of well-chosen words, apt use of figurative language, and concision, three qualities on which Matthew expounds in the sections that follow.

Matthew's brief dream vision is typical of the genre: it begins on a spring morning when "Flora, the doorkeeper of Spring," raises "a variegated mantle of flowers" from the bosom of the earth and so begins to break "the bonds of wintry idleness" (II.2). The descriptions favourably contrast the otherworldly landscape and its denizens with the failures and shortcomings of human endeavours and behaviour. "Other gardeners", the narrator states, ostensibly referring to mortal horticulturalists but no doubt invoking an allegorical image of poets, "lose sleep over the charms of the place I have described, as they work their artifices as though envious of zealous Flora" (II.2).[2] Similarly, Lady Philosophy "is not painted with artificial charms"; rather, she radiates "an almost

[1] Matthew of Vendôme, *The Art of Versification*, trans. Aubrey E. Galyon, II.1-9. All citations from Matthew's work will be given according to the part and section numbering system Galyon adopts from Edmond Faral's edition of the Latin text. See Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques*, 109-93.

[2] The images of the poet as a gardener and, more commonly, of poems as flowers persist well beyond the medieval period. One need only reflect on the etymology of *anthology* to see how pervasive such images are.

divine aura" which is juxtaposed to "the weakness of human nature" (II.5). Her "everlasting" garments, "made of the finest threads, with the most subtle workmanship," outshine human craft. Indeed, the narrator admits, even as he attempts to set down Lady Philosophy's attributes, the poetic voice falls into the silence of inexpressibility: "Human ingenuity is too weak to set forth her disposition . . . . One must simply confess that to undertake such a description offends common sense" (II.5).

Matthew's use of the dream vision stands out from the rest of his text. Although he employs hundreds of quotations from classical and late-antique authors and supplies a great many of his own examples, the dream vision sequence is the only sustained use of a literary genre in the whole of the *Ars versificatoria*. Matthew makes clear his motives for using the dream vision. "To charm my audience," he explains, "I have introduced a dream-vision imagined as having occurred the night before and worth relating to make them more receptive to learning by means of a pleasant story; to sharpen the attention, foster goodwill, encourage a desire to listen, avert boredom; and to whet the appetite for instruction" (II.1). The dream vision, then, is a didactic tool. It entices Matthew's immediate audience—schoolboys at Orleans studying Latin composition—to engage with his lessons. The genre would likely have been known to many of his students, and so Matthew can use the familiar to introduce new concepts and reinforce guidelines or precepts.[3] The malleability of the fictional dream world also allows him more free play than a simple distich, short lyric, or a more realistic narrative: he can introduce paradisial splendours and allegorical figures without distracting too much from his didactic purpose. The dream vision example has a second educational function. It is an example of the rhetorical power of the dream vision. By showing his young students how it is done, and by doing so transparently, he encourages them to adopt the genre themselves.

[3] The medieval dream vision inherits many of its tropes from classical literature and Scripture, and texts from both traditions were used in the medieval classroom. Lady Philosophy, for instance, is adopted from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, a text widely available in schools and universities. I will address the history of the genre below.

Matthew's use of the dream vision is significant for he identifies a connection between the vision, especially the refreshment of the dreamscape, and the composition of poetry. Flora, he writes,

> had adorned the bosom of the earth with a variegated mantle of flowers and had poured forth her gracious favour on the citadels of learning more than elsewhere, so the subtle sweetness of its scent might bring to those eager for wisdom both a respite from old labors and strength for new work. (II.2)

According to Matthew, the "citadels of learning," institutions like the school at Orleans, are singled out for blessings.[4] The favour Flora gives to the schools, moreover, is expressly intended to spur the creation of (poetical) texts, to give "strength for new work." Matthew continues, glossing his description:

> Or to put it more plainly, the face of the earth was so gaily decked and sweet fragrances grew so strong, having been taken by the vehicle of smelling to the domicile of reason, that whatever might doze there, lulled into a slumber by the dying coals of oblivion, my tongue can with the aid of a faithful memory set forth most pleasingly. (II.2)

In this passage, Matthew makes more explicit the link between the *locus amoenus* seen in the vision and his ability to write. Indeed, he highlights the fragrances as quasi-physical, sensory prompts to unleash his tongue and relate his personal vision to a wider audience. The dream and its frame—the implied waking life of the schoolmaster before the dream and the post-dream waking period in which he divulges what he saw—function as a model in miniature for the process of inspiration, composition, and dissemination: internal, mental stimulus is carried beyond the mind (where the dream occurs) into the waking world where it is transformed into a text that circulates among other

[4] For what Galyon gives as "the citadels of learning," the Latin text reads "ariopagitis," which Parr maintains in his translation. Whereas the word can refer to a specific, historical site, I agree with Galyon that the *ariopagita* is used as a metonym for centres of learned discourse more generally, an interpretation that is all the more likely in an allegorical text such as this vision. See Parr, ed. and trans., *Ars Versificatoria*, 61.

works. The dream vision thus traces the writer's entry into, and engagement with, the world of discourse.[5]

This dissertation examines how fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English poets used the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode in combination to explore the intricacies, possibilities, and shortcomings of poetic language. In some respects, these insular poets are the inheritors of Matthew of Vendôme's treatise, but their historical and linguistic contexts differ considerably.[6] Whereas Matthew was working, writing, and teaching within the established tradition of Latin literature and poetics, the English poets, especially the Ricardians, were building an English vernacular literary tradition as they wrote.[7] From the late-eleventh century to the middle of the fourteenth century, the high-culture languages of England were Latin and French: Latin in the Church and universities, French in parliament and at the royal court. French was also the literary language of England, represented in the Anglo-Norman romances, fabliaux, and verse entertainments.[8] Owing in part to the growing conflict with France, by the second half of the fourteenth century English was on the rise not only as a literary language but also an official tongue of documentary and bureaucratic culture.[9] The project of vernacularisation was equally implicated in the translation efforts promoted

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[5] To my knowledge, no scholars have investigated the use of the dream vision in the *Ars versificatoria*. Judith Davidoff makes passing mention of the text when she discusses the influence of the *ars praedicandi* on late-medieval framing fictions. Even though Davidoff devotes a considerable portion of her study to the dream vision genre, she omits comment on Matthew of Vendôme's deployment of it. See Davidoff, *Beginning Well*, 30-34.

[6] I should make clear early on that this dissertation is not a study of the influence of Matthew of Vendôme—or any other medieval philosopher or rhetorician—on the English poets of later centuries. There is some evidence that several of the major Ricardian and Lancastrian poets read or were aware of the lessons in the *Ars versificatoria* and its neighbours in the rhetorical tradition, including Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*. My interest, however, lies beyond questions of sources, allusions, and echoes: this dissertation will investigate how late-medieval English poets employed the same genre Matthew highlights as a useful didactic and rhetorical tool to interrogate their own artistic endeavours. Rather than focus on a linear tradition or inheritance, I want to consider the poets' shared ways of thinking about and working through problems of language use, to offer a heuristic approach to the dream vision genre.

[7] See, for example, Baugh and Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 127-99.

[8] See Rothwell, "The Trilingual England of Chaucer;" and Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, especially chapters 1, 3, and 7-9.

[9] See Tout, "Literature and Learning;" Rothwell, "Language and Government;" Voigts, "What's the Word?;" Ingham, "Mixing Languages in the Manor;" Dodd, "Poetry and the 'Civil Service," and "The Rise of English;" Fisher, "Standard Written English;" Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*; and Steiner, *Documentary Culture*.

by the followers of John Wyclif.[10] The Wycliffite and other reformist endeavours carried through the final three decades of the century and into the fifteenth century with events such as the Oxford Translation Debate of 1401 attempting to mitigate the clashes. The Lancastrian rulers made efforts to combat vernacularisation of the Bible, including the Act of Parliament *De heretico comburendo* (1401), which censured and consequently led to the destruction of many works in English (and, in some cases, their readers), and Archibishop Arundel's *Constitutiones* (1407/9).[11] This Lancastrian suppression of the vernacular in religious matters was balanced, however, by a conscious and deliberate promotion of English as a language of high culture: John Lydgate counted Henry V and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, among his patrons and, some scholars argue, the Lancastrian ruling apparatus fostered the so-called "Cult of Chaucer" in the early decades of the fifteenth century.[12]

One consequence of the cultural surge of English in the fourteenth century was an amplification of anxieties about its position as a literary language compared to Latin and the Continental vernaculars: English poets fretted about their belatedness and the poor resources of their insular tongue. In the envoi to the *Complaint of Venus*, a masterfully ironic demonstration of poetic skill and inventiveness with language, Chaucer regrets that "ryme in Englissh hath such skarsete" (9). English poets nevertheless continued their project of establishing a vernacular literary tradition. Although Thomas Usk, in his Prologue to *The Testament of Love*, describes his English text as "dolven with rude wordes and boystous", he also maintains the appropriateness—the rightness, the naturalness—of writing in the vernacular: just as clerks write in Latin and Frenchmen compose in their vernacular, Usk states, then "let us shewe our fantasyes in suche wordes as we lerneden of our dames tonge" (30).[13] The nascent English literary tradition fostered by Chaucer, Usk, and their fellow poets, writers, and translators, informs and responds to the contemporary contention

[10] See Hudson, "John Wyclif and the English Language," and *The Premature Reformation*.
[11] See Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change."
[12] See Fisher, "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England;" Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers*, 15-18.
[13] Cf. Watson, "Politics," 335, which discusses the notion of the "naturalness" of linguistic expression.

surrounding the place and use of the vernacular in English society. Dream vision poetry constitutes a considerable portion of that tradition.

This dissertation begins by noting that an English interest in dream vision poetry coincides with the rise of a vernacular literary tradition in England. Dream visions represent some of the earliest Middle English texts. Similarly, a number of major English poets, Chaucer and Lydgate among them, include the dream vision among their earliest works. Why did the poets of a nascent, native literature adopt this genre so frequently? What opportunities did the dream vision afford? In what ways did writers of the Ricardian and Lancastrian periods accept the established tradition and in what ways did they alter it?

A second observation further informs the present study: of the many dream visions that have come down to us from late-medieval English literature, a considerable number—including many of the most powerfully moving and memorable poems—are also elegies or have a predominantly elegiac mood. Why are English dream vision poems so frequently elegiac? The elegist desires that poetry—that language—perform beyond its usual limitations: that it recall the mourned beloved from among the dead; or, failing that (as surely it must fail), the poet hopes to build an appropriate level of consolation through the performative act of mourning, to create order out of the disruption, the chaos, that death brings. Because the dream vision is a highly flexible genre, it affords an opportunity to probe boundaries and test limits. In my dissertation, I analyse how Middle English poets of a roughly seven-decade period stretching from 1368 to 1440 use the pairing of the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode to explore the limitations of their craft.[14]

[14] The dates given here represent the widest possible scope for the poems examined in this dissertation. The year 1368 is the *terminus a quo* for Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*: Blanche of Lancaster, for whom the poem serves as an elegy, died September 12, 1368. Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes* was written before the Duke of Orleans returned to France from his captivity in England, and so has a *terminus ad quem* of November 1440. For further discussion of the dating of the two poems, see chapters two and three.

The Genre: The History and Legacy of the Dream Vision

The dream vision was an immensely popular genre in the High and Late Middle Ages. Kathryn Lynch observes that more than 225 visionary texts—both literary, like the English dream poems, and religious, like the purgatorial *Apocalypse of St Paul*—were written in the thousand years between the fall of Rome and the advent of the printing press.[15] Lynch argues that the genre defined literature in the High and Late Middle Ages, going so far as to suggest that "the period from the twelfth century through the fourteenth was the Age of the Dream Vision."[16] Medieval poets deployed the dream vision poem to investigate scientific, philosophical, and theological matters. Stephen Kruger elucidates how Latin and vernacular poets used dream-poems and manuals for dream-interpretation to engage with developing ideas in the realms of medicine and psychology.[17] Lynch identifies the "parallel evolution of medieval poetry and philosophy" and emphasises the dream vision genre as a means of philosophical inquiry.[18] She convincingly demonstrates that twelfth- and thirteenth-century dream vision poetry was an important site of debate about the relationship of the physical and the metaphysical worlds and the tension between the increase of scientific knowledge and the religious journey toward God. Lynch's work establishes the literary significance of the dream vision within broader cultural discourse: she shows how dream poetry was used to interrogate issues of ontology and epistemology and how it offered novel solutions to stubborn issues. Lynch suggests that poetry more generally offers a unique opportunity for addressing difficult questions, highlighting "its capacity to *resolve* [philosophical conflicts] by exploiting the special strengths of metaphor and

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[15] Lynch arrives at these figures based upon data contained in Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionliteratur im Mittelalter*, 13-28. As Lynch points out, more than 70% of these texts were written after 1100, a period which accounts for 90% of the literary visions. See Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 1.
[16] Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 1. Lynch is correct that the genre gained prominence in these three centuries, but, as I will discuss in my third chapter, dream vision remained an important literary arena into the fifteenth-century.
[17] Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*.
[18] Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 11.

myth."[19] In a later study, Lynch addresses Chaucer's continuation of the philosophical dream-poem, examining, for instance, his interest in nominalist approaches to language and logic.[20] My study argues that, while late-medieval English poets indeed used the dream vision genre to engage with scientific, philosophical, and theological issues, they also used the genre to consider the matter of poetry. As Lois Ebin notes, there are no surviving poetics of English literature dating from before the end of the sixteenth century.[21] I posit that the poetics of the Middle English period are found in the poetical texts themselves, that English authors found in the first-person, self-reflexive dream visions an effective mirror in which to examine their literary production.

Many of the significant figures of medieval literature and learning wrote at least one dream vision, some of great length. Boethius, the late-antique author of tracts on politics, theology, and music, is best remembered for his *Consolation of Philosophy*, one of the most widely copied and distributed texts of the Middle Ages. In *De planctu naturae* (*The Plaint of Nature*), Alain de Lille, a prominent twelfth-century scholastic theologian, adapts the dream vision to explore the relationship between God and Nature and to condemn the fallen state of man. The *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun was extremely popular in France and England (where Chaucer translated a part of it) and influenced a large number of subsequent dream poems. Even Dante's *Commedia*, the cornerstone of Italian vernacular literature, adopts aspects of the genre.

In England from the later decades of the reign of Edward III to the end of the century, dream vision literature was widespread. According to Peter Brown, "[o]f the thirty or so major English poems composed between 1350 and 1400, no fewer than a third are dream visions".[22]

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[19] Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 15, original italics. Lynch invokes Wetherbee's analyses of Bernardus Silverstris' *Cosmographia* as well as the influence of philosophical issues in the dream poems of Alain de Lille and Jean de Meun. Cf. Silverstein, "Fabulous Cosmology."

[20] Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*. See especially her chapters on the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*.

[21] Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates*, xii.

[22] Brown, "On the Borders of the Middle English Dream Vision," 22. One wonders how Brown determines what qualifies as a 'major' poem, perhaps, but his point stands that the dream vision was immensely popular among Edwardian and Ricardian poets. Cf. Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 1.

Chaucer wrote four surviving dream visions, including the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*, and investigated oneiric interpretation in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Chaucer's contemporaries at court, the so-called Lollard knight Sir John Clanvowe and the ill-fated bureaucrat Thomas Usk, each wrote a dream vision.[23] The *Boke of Cupide* is one of two surviving works by Clanvowe, and Usk's *Testament of Love* is his only known poem. John Gower's expansive *Confessio Amantis* is not a dream vision for the whole of its 33,000 lines, but it contains several dream episodes, including the dream and punishment of Nebuchadnezzar and the night visions experienced by Amans himself. The alliterative revival, a movement which returned to the older, native English poetic tradition, also engaged with the genre. *Winner and Waster*, one of the earliest surviving Middle English dream-poems, comments on the economic and social states of England in the midst of war with France. In *Piers Plowman*, William Langland uses the dream vision—including several dream-within-dream episodes—to interrogate social unrest, ecclesiastical corruption, and the proper forms of faith and worship.[24] The anonymous Cheshire poet now best known for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* produced the astonishingly complex *Pearl*, in which a man mourning his daughter falls asleep in an arbour, meets the child in a fantastic dreamscape, and is granted a brief glimpse of the New Jerusalem before reawakening on the cold hillside.

Brown draws his line at 1400, but poets of the Lancastrian period continued working with the dream vision genre, responding to and renovating the new English tradition established by the earlier generation. John Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* and *Complaint of a Lover's Life* investigate the parallels of courtly love and the doubleness of language and, like their predecessor the *Book of the Duchess*, question the consoling power of speech and storytelling. The love-vision, a dominant form of the

[23] On Clanvowe's possible involvement with Wycliffite causes, see McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights*.
[24] Unless otherwise noted, all references to *Piers Plowman* refer to the B-Text (ed. Donaldson).

fourteenth-century French and English dream visions, came to the fore in the decades after Chaucer's death.[25]

Even foreigners in England could not escape the endemic influence of the dream vision in the early fifteenth century. Captured at the battle of Agincourt in 1415, Charles of Valois, Duke of Orleans, spent twenty-five years as an English prisoner during which time he wrote hundreds of poems in both French and English. His English *Fortunes Stabilnes* deploys recurring dream sequences to chart the emotional experience of the loss of one love and the beginning of a new affair. The *Kingis Quair*, a dream poem written in a Scottish dialect of Middle English, is likewise interested in the relationship between love and composition. Commonly attributed to the Scottish king James I, a Lancastrian hostage for nearly two decades, the *Quair* presents the making of poetry as the path by which to achieve both freedom and conjugal happiness. Other Scots poets took up the genre, including William Dunbar and Robert Henryson, and Gavin Douglas used dream frames in his prologues to his translation of the *Aeneid*. In England, too, the genre remained popular until the end of the Middle Ages. Richard Roos' translation and renovation of Alain Chartier's *Belle Dame Sans Merci*, the anonymous *Assembly of Ladies* and *The Flower and the Leaf*, and John Skelton's *The Bouge of Court* are representative of fifteenth-century developments of the dream vision tradition. By the middle of the Tudor period, the English dream-vision tradition began to wane.[26]

The late-medieval English dream vision is the product of several interwoven traditions.[27] Dream-poems have both classical and medieval predecessors in the realms of literature, biblical and

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[25] Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians," 207; cf. Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the 'Chaucer Tradition.'"

[26] Russell posits that the decline of dream vision genre was due, in part, to "poetry's new devotion to human emotion and Prostestantism's new suspicions about dreams" (*Dream Vision*, 19). Of course, dream-poetry and dream-vision frames have never totally disappeared from English literature and culture. We find them in works as varied as Keats' *The Fall of Hyperion*, Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Newhart*.

[27] The claim that the medieval dream vision constitutes a genre has been challenged from time to time. In an early study, Wimsatt insists the dream-poems are merely a subset of love narratives (*Chaucer and the French Love Poets*, 125-26). Lynch, marshalling the formalism of Fowler and the historicisation of Jauss, convincingly demonstrates that the literary vision is, in fact, a distinct genre with a long tradition (*The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 4-11; cf. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, and

patristic commentary, philosophy, and science, and the genre was already over a thousand years old by the time the English poets set pen to parchment. The traditions which inform the English instances of the genre are by no means distinct from one another. As Kruger has shown, the scientific and the literary are blended in medieval considerations of dreams, as are the explicitly Christian and the classical, pagan traditions.[28] My interests for the purpose of this study are chiefly literary, but a cursory examination of the philosophical, scientific, and biblical-patristic traditions is necessary, for these, too, informed the poems of the English writers.[29]

The Bible contains dream episodes in both the Old and New Testaments, episodes which emphasise the power of dreams for prognostication and for communication with the divine. The stories of Joseph in Genesis 37-41 and of Daniel show that the interpreter of dreams holds considerable power: he functions—like the skilled reader of texts—as an intermediary between the divine and the mundane, between God and man. Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:12-15) dramatizes the function of the dream as a medium of communication between the earthly and the celestial. In the New Testament, dreams are more closely linked with the coming of Christ. For instance, according to Matthew, Joseph was twice visited by an angel in a dream. Indeed, a dream is the first major narrative event of Matthew's gospel.[30]

Jauss, "Literary History," 11-41). Spearing emphasises that medieval poets were "conscious of writing in an ancient tradition", and cites the frequency with which dreamer-narrators (and the poets) invoke the authority of past dream-poems and commentaries (*Dream-poetry* 3-4). The late-medieval dream-poets thus respond to what Jauss calls "the horizon of expectations" associated with the genre and, in so doing, reshape the genre with each new poetic iteration (Jauss, "Literary History," 15-21). Cf. Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 1-3; Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 21.

[28] See Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, especially chapters 1, 2, and 5.

[29] Cf. Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 21-22. Although Russell cautions scholars not to confuse the philosophical influences on the dream vision genre with literary ones, it seems to me that the two cannot be so neatly separated. Lynch, for instance, demonstrates that contemporary philosophical debates influenced both the content and the form of dream-poems in the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries (*The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 21-45).

[30] When Joseph considers forsaking the pregnant Mary, the angel appears in a dream to explain the cause of the pregnancy (1:19-20). It is in this dream that the name of Jesus is given (1:21), which the awakened Joseph bestows upon the child once he is born (1:25). The flight into Egypt is likewise precipitated by a dream (2:13), and the holy family's return is prompted in the same manner (2:19-20). The Magi are similarly warned about Herod's intended vengeance in a dream sent by God (2:12).

Although the dreams of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Gospels have bearing on the late-medieval dream vision, certainly the most influential biblical text is the Apocalypse of St John.[31] The Book of Revelations, with its terrifying beasts, falling stars, trees of life, and displays of divine might, was firmly lodged in the medieval imagination.[32] The waking vision of the New Jerusalem and the *eschaton* is variously deployed in English dream poems. John's experience was used as an index against which to measure the authenticity of dreams and to make the strange sights of nocturnal journeys more accessible. In *Pearl*, for instance, much of the description of the heavenly city is a poetic translation from the Vulgate. The poem also invokes the scriptural authority of Revelations. The narrator refers to the corroborating text throughout Section XVII—"I knew hit by his deuvysment / In þe Apocalyppe3, þe apostel John. // As John deuysed 3et sa3 I þare" (1019-21)—and again at the opening of Section XVIII: "As John hym wryte3 3et more I sy3e" (1033).

Patristic writers and commentators also considered the nature and place of dreams in human life. These theologians frequently adopted a sceptical ambivalence toward dreams: they recognised the revelatory potential but also accepted the misleading character of many dreams. For example, in Book XII of *De Genesi ad litteram*, St Augustine parses the levels of meaning in dreams by linking each level to a type of vision—the corporeal, spiritual, and intellectual—which roughly correspond to physics and optics, imagination, and the abstraction of universals or a sort of intuition that yields an understanding of forms.[33] The spiritual vision (imagination) serves as a go-between for the body and the intellect, and it is this type of vision that Augustine identifies with dreaming, a position which accounts for the possibility of somatic and divine causes for dreams.[34] Gregory the Great was invested in determining the authenticity and validity of dreams. Gregory, like Tertullian and other

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[31] It is now accepted that Revelations is the work of St John of Patmos; however, for medieval readers the John who ascends to the heavenly kingdom is the apostle and the author of the gospel that bears his name.
[32] See, for instance, the essays in Emmerson and McGinn, eds., *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*.
[33] Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XII.6.15-7.16. There are many similarities between the types of vision Augustine presents in *De Genesi* and the levels of reading he articulates in *De doctrina christiana*.
[34] Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 38-39.

patristic and Neoplatonist writers before him, divides dreams into malevolent and benevolent categories. Malevolent dreams are those sent by demons to mislead or corrupt mankind. Benevolent dreams, by contrast, come from the God of angels and are indicative of grace. Gregory's theorisation, contained in his *Dialogues*, allows for these external causes to combine with internal ones, with human thoughts, emotions, and physiological conditions.[35]

The emphasis on physiological causes of dreams would be bolstered in the High Middle Ages with the reintroduction of Aristotelian texts through the Scholastic movement. This more medical and psychological approach to the study and interpretation of dreams was further developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and did much to undermine the authority of dreams, though it did not entirely displace the biblical and classical models that held sway for so long.[36] The classical, biblical, and Aristotelian traditions came together in the extremely popular dreambooks of the Middle Ages. These texts, which are comparable in many ways to the dictionaries of dream symbolism found in the New Age sections of modern bookshops, offered medieval readers the opportunity to understand their own nocturnal visions. Many of these dreambooks, especially the *Somniale Danielis* and the *Sompnile Joseph*, played on the authority of the biblical dream interpreters and often incorporated aspects of patristic theories. Dreambooks enjoyed a wide and sustained circulation: between 150 and 200 manuscripts of the *Somniale Danielis* survive in at least six languages. They are found in the inventories of Bury St. Edmunds and Reading Abbey, and it is believed that a presentation copy was made for Richard II.[37]

The *Somniale Danielis* and other such oneirocritical texts certainly had some bearing on the late-medieval dream visions, but one of their antecedents, the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* by

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[35] For more on the patristic dreams and dream theories, see Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 35-56; Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 63-72, 84-94.
[36] On the influence of Aristotelian texts on late-medieval concepts of dreaming, see Bodenham, "Dreams in Late Medieval French Literature;" Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 83-122.
[37] For further discussion of the dreambooks of the Middle Ages, see Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 7-16; Peden, "Macrobius," 59, 61.

Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, had a considerably greater influence.[38] Macrobius's late-fourth-century *Commentary* is an encyclopaedic work which uses Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, a short dream vision in the sixth book of *De re publica*, as a starting point.[39] In the Ciceronian tale, the Roman general Scipio Aemilianus arrives in Africa and speaks with a former ally of his adopted grandfather and namesake, Scipio Africanus. That night, the younger Scipio has a dream in which he is visited by his grandfather who transports the dreamer up into the sky and prophesies his heir's fortunes. Despite the hardships ahead, the grandfather insists, the honourable, pious, and just life serves as a "passport into the sky," and men who lead such lives are released from their bodies and dwell among the stars of the Milky Way.[40] Africanus enumerates the celestial spheres and explains the fundamental gap between the earth and the heavens, a lesson which persists in many medieval dream visions: "Below the moon all is mortal and transitory, with the exception of the souls bestowed upon the human race by the benevolence of the gods. Above the moon all things are eternal".[41] From his high vantage point, the younger Scipio comes to recognise the insignificance of mortal experience and the impermanence of fame. He dismisses the apparent grandeur of the Roman commonwealth once he considers it against the enormity of cosmic space and time. Africanus' conduct of his grandson through the celestial spheres would become an influential image for medieval literature.[42]

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[38] See Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl. This editions includes Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* in translation as well. Hundreds of complete manuscripts of the *Commentary* have survived, as well as many partial copies (Stahl, ed., "Introduction," 60).

[39] The *Commentary* stretches for hundreds of pages and addresses dozens of topics, including number theory, astronomy, a classification of virtue, treatises on the nature of the soul, man's place relative to the natural world, the ratios of music, and geography. The treatise on the different types of dreams appears in the third chapter of Book I, following a discussion of the value of fiction for exploring serious matters (I.i-ii).

[40] Cicero, *Scipio*, iii.5.

[41] Cicero, *Scipio*, iv.3.

[42] For example, the trajectory is adopted by Boethius in the *Consolation* and informs Troilus' post-mortem journey to the heavens at the end of Chaucer's tragedy.

Macrobius' *Commentary* was most influential for the five-level anatomy of dreams it provides in the discussion of the Ciceronian text.[43] In the broadest classification, Macrobius divides all dreams into two kinds, the reliable and the unreliable, dreams that are true and dreams that are false.[44] He lists five types of dreams in descending order of significance: the *oraculum*, *visio*, *somnium*, *visum*, and *insomnium*. The nightmare (*insomnium*) is caused by mental or physical distress, such as the tormented thoughts of an aspiring lover or, as Dickens' Scrooge would say fifteen hundred years later, a bad bit of undigested beef. The apparition (*visum*) occurs in the space between sleeping and waking, where a person imagines shapes and spectres. *Insomnia* and *visa* hold no prophetic bearing, but their presence in the hierarchy creates doubt about the reliability of dreams and complicates dream interpretation and readings of literary dream visions. Although Macrobius insists that Scipio's dream is a reliable one,[45] the dreamer-narrator troublingly mentions that he suspects his dream was in part the result of his conversation with the Carthaginian king, which suggest a source in the dreamer's quotidian experience.[46]

The three remaining types of dreams are grouped together in a prophetic hierarchy, each of them granting the dreamer knowledge to which he would otherwise have no access. The lowest of these types is the *somnium*, the enigmatic dream, which Macrobius states is the most prevalent form of dream. He divides the *somnium* into five sub-categories: the personal, alien, social, public, and universal.[47] Unlike the *insomnium* and the *visum*, the *somnium* imparts truth, but it "conceals with

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[43] Macrobius adapts significant parts of the anatomy from Artemidorus' *Onirocriticon*. For further discussion of the Macrobian schema, see: Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 19-24, 131-33; Peden, " Macrobius," 59-73; Raby, "Dante and Macrobius," 118-21; Russell, *English Dream Vision* 60-63, 94-102; and Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 8-11.

[44] The binary of true and false dreams in Western literature can be traced back to Book 19 of Homer's *Odyssey*, where Penelope explains the provenance of dreams to the disguised Odysseus (562-67). While Macrobius had access to Homeric texts, for medieval readers the tradition would seem to begin with Book 6 of Vergil's *Aeneid*, where Aeneas travels to the underworld and there receives a prophecy from his deceased father. Anchises tells his son that all dreams flow forth through one of the two gates, either the ivory gate or the horn (893-96). Cf. Macrobius, I.iii.17-20.

[45] Macrobius I.iii.12. Macrobius parses the dream in order to explain how it fulfils the criteria for each of the three types of reliable dream, the *somnium*, *visio*, and *oraculum*.

[46] Cicero, *Scipio*, i.4.

[47] Macrobius, "Commentary," I.iii.10. He elaborates: "[A dream] is called personal when one dreams that he himself is doing or experiencing something; alien, when he dreams about someone else; social, when his dream involves others and

strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning." The information is obscured by integument and "requires an interpretation for its understanding."[48] The next type of dream is the prophetic dream, the *visio*. "We call a dream prophetic," Macrobius states, "if it actually comes true":

> For example, man dreams of the return of a friend who has been staying in a foreign land, thoughts of whom never enter his mind. [Upon waking, he] goes out and presently meets his friend and embraces him. Or in his dream he agrees to accept a deposit, and early the next day a man runs anxiously to him, charging him with the safekeeping of his money and committing secret to his trust.[49]

While the *visio* is more revelatory than the *somnium*, it is nonetheless born of ordinary experience: the friend and the deposit are things of this world and the dream reflects the dreamer's concern with mundane matters. By contrast, the *oraculum*, the most valued of the five dream types, is characterised by the appearance of a guide figure such as a parent or other relative, a revered historical or holy figure, even a god or other divine entity. In the oracular dream, the guide reveals future events and also gives counsel regarding actions and undertakings, and the information is free of obfuscation. The otherworldly origins of the guide—who is often presented as descending from the heavens or journeying from the afterlife, as in the *Somnium Scipionis*—give the *oraculum* an increased authority.[50]

The five-part anatomy of dreams contained in Macrobius' *Commentary* remained one of the touchstones for medieval dream prognostication, medicine, and psychology.[51] It is often invoked,

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himself; public, when he dreams that some misfortune or benefit has befallen his city, forum, theatre public walls, or other public enterprise; universal, when he dreams that some change has taken place in the sun, moon, planets, sky, or regions of the earth" (I.iii.11).

[48] Macrobius, "Commentary," I.iii.10.

[49] Macrobius, "Commentary," I.iii.9.

[50] Kruger (*Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 23) provides a useful chart of the Macrobian anatomy of dreams:

higher	*oraculum*	true (revelation by an ; authoritative, otherworldly figure)
	visio	true (revelation through a vision of mundane events)
	somnium	true, but couched in a fiction
	visum	false (spectral)
lower	*insomnium*	false (mundane)

[51] For more on the scientific and medical impacts of Macrobius' *Commentary*, see Kruger, "Authority in the Late Medieval Dream."

directly or indirectly, in dream vision literature.[52] For example, in the *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer provides a summary of the *Dream of Scipio* (29-84). Chaucer also opens the *House of Fame* with one long, meandering sentence interrogating the types of dreams:

> God turne us every drem to goode!
> For it is wonder, by the roode,
> To my wit what causeth swevenes
> Either on morwes or on evenes,
> And why the effect folweth of some
> And of some it shal never come;
> Why that is an avisioun
> And this a revelacioun,
> Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
> And nought to every man liche even;
> Why this a fantom, why these oracles
> I not. . . (1-12)[53]

He goes on (19-52) to examine the various causes of dreams, including spirits, physiology (temperament and humours), abstinence, lovesickness, distress (stress due to confinement is emphasised), fear, piety, illness, and even "[t]hat som man is too curious / In studie" (29-30). Chaucer acknowledges that while some dreams are prophetic—that they "forwot that is to come / And that it warneth alle and some / Of everiche of hir aventures" (45-47)—they are often obscure. Because dreams appear "[b]y avisiouns or by figures" (48), "our flesh ne hath no might / To understonde it aright, / For it is warned too darkly" (49-51). We must rely on interpretations such as those found in books of "grete clerkes" (53) like Macrobius and his medieval inheritors.

Macrobius' *Commentary* helped to establish a taxonomy of dreaming for medieval poets. However, it is Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* that can be credited with instituting many of the conventions and tropes of the genre. A prosperous Roman senator and former consul, Boethius (c. 480-524) ran afoul of Theodoric, the Ostrogothic ruler of the Western Empire, was stripped of his

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[52] Some scholars play down the contribution of Macrobius to medieval dream literature. Peden, for instance, suggests that older Macrbobian schema gave way to Aristotelian theories in the thirteenth centry (65-67). C.H.L. Bodenham goes further, insisting that for late-medieval French audiences, "Macrobius was little more than a name" ("Dream in Late Medieval French Literature," 75). In England, however, Macrobius remained more than a name, as my discussion of Chaucer and Charles of Orleans will show.

[53] All quotations of Chaucer's works are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd ed), ed. Larry D. Benson.

wealth and honours, and imprisoned; he wrote the *Consolation* at the end of his life while he was awaiting execution. A highly popular work throughout the Middle Ages, the text deals with human happiness and how to achieve it in the face of adversity and ill fortune.[54] It is at once philosophical, theological (though not explicitly Christian), and poetic. The *Consolation* takes the form of a dialogue between the imprisoned Boethius and Lady Philosophy, his "physician" who comes to the despairing senator in his cell. She finds Boethius surrounded by the muses, spending all his energies in the production of self-pitying and self-indulgent poetry. After driving off the muses, Philosophy begins to instruct Boethius, explaining that what we call bad luck is due to a limitation of human perspective. The Lady Fortune, she says, is mutable by nature, and her only reliable characteristic is her changeability. Philosophy reminds him that earthly boons and trials are transitory; she teaches Boethius the difference between providence and fate, as well as how free will can exist alongside divine foresight. Boethius and his teacher do not ascend through the heavenly spheres as Scipio and Africanus do in Cicero's *Somnium*; Boethius' journey is an intellectual one. Like Africanus, Philosophy encourages Boethius to forsake the fleeting, mortal world and concentrate on higher, lasting things: "When you overcome the earth, the stars will be yours."[55]

The *Consolation of Philosophy* is not a dream vision per se: at no point does the Boethian narrator fall asleep nor is there a coda or denouement in which the narrator awakens as a reformed man. Nevertheless, Boethius' *Consolation* looms large in the dream vision tradition. Indeed, Michael Cherniss positions the *Consolation* as the founding text of the sub-genre of visionary literature that he calls "Boethian apocalypse." Cherniss explains that the Boethian apocalypse is not characterised by

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[54] The importance of Boethius' *Consolation* should not be underestimated. As Green states in his introduction, "Its doctrine was a cornerstone of medieval humanism, its style a model of much important philosophical poetry in the late Middle Ages" (vii). The text survives in hundreds of manuscripts and circulated widely, from Ireland to the Holy Land. It was translated into many European vernaculars, including Alfred the Great's Old English translation, Jean de Meun's Old French one, and the Middle English translation carried out by Chaucer. See Patch, *The Tradition of Boethius*.
[55] Boethius, *Consolation*, 4.m.7.

"a particular ideological content . . . but rather it is the way in which that content is presented to the reader."[56]

Like the *Consolation* and the *Somnium Scipionis* before it, a majority of medieval dream visions begin with a waking scene in which the narrator is in a troubled state of mind. Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* begins with the speaker bemoaning a mysterious eight-year illness (36-37) and reading a book to combat his insomnia. In *Pearl*, the narrator enters an arbour where he laments his lost pearl (1-60). The use of a prologue or frame narrative serves several purposes. A frame allows poets to root the dream in familiar, lived experience, a move which increases the poem's accessibility and can add to its apparent authenticity. It also permits poets and readers to chart the progress of the central figure, to examine how the man who wakes up (and who then recounts the dream vision as presented) is different from the man who fell asleep. At the same time, however, the potential for a causal link between the narrator's waking (often troubled) state of mind and his subsequent dream—like Scipio wondering if his conversation with Masinissa inspired his sleeping encounter with Africanus—can call into question the validity of the dream, the lessons it imparts, and the truths it claims to reveal.

The other most frequent Boethian device used in later dream visions is the guide-instructor figure. Poets deploy one or more of these figures throughout the dreamscape, and each instructs and aids—or sometimes challenges and waylays—the dreamer to varying degrees. In *The Kingis Quair*, for example, the lover-dreamer journeys to the court of Venus and the hall of Minerva, locations where he is prepared for his encounter with Lady Fortune (herself a typically Boethian figure, of course). Like the ladies Philosophy and Fortune in Boethius, many dream guides are allegorical figures. In *Piers Plowman*, Will meets no fewer than a dozen such personae, including Holy Chirche, Lady Mede, Conscience, Fair Speech, and False Seeming. The inclusion of guides emphasises the dream vision's

[56] Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse*, 6. This is not to say that all dream visions of this type adopt the prosimetric form of the *Consolation*. Some of the romances and Usk's *Testament* are prose dream vision works.

focus on correction, improvement, cure, and education. This trajectory is often read as a quest narrative or a mental pilgrimage, whether religious or secular.[57]

In medieval dream vision literature, no text makes more use of allegorical figures than the thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose*. This sprawling, Old French poem is generally accepted as "the single most important work in the history of the dream vision in the later Middle Ages."[58] C.S. Lewis called it a "germinal book", a key source text for medieval poetry in general.[59] Indeed, with approximately 300 surviving manuscripts, including a number of extremely ornate presentation copies, it is counted among the most prominent books of the late Middle Ages; only the Bible and Boethius' *Consolation* enjoyed a wider reputation.[60] The *Rose* is, in fact, two works. Guillaume de Lorris, an obscure scholar, composed the first 4,000 lines in the late 1220s. Writing some 40 years later, Jean de Meun expanded the tale by nearly 18,000 lines. The plot is, in its most basic form, straightforward. A young man falls asleep and dreams of a May morning when all the earth is in bloom. He comes to the enclosed Garden of Pleasure where he encounters Joy, Courtesy, Pleasure, and many other figures besides. In the *locus amoenus*, as he tarries near the spring of Narcissus, he chances upon a beautiful rose-bud. Falling madly in love with the rose, he swears himself a liegeman of Love and promises to uphold the Code of Love with a religious fervour. Helped by Fair Welcome and later by Friend and others, the dreamer-narrator courts the rose until she is imprisoned in the castle of Jealousy. (Guillaume's part of the poem ends at this point.) The rest of the poem concerns the lover's travels and his encounters with various figures—Reason, Friend, and the Old Woman—in his efforts to regain the rose. He eventually is admitted to the rose's shrine where, after some fumbling, he plucks it. He then awakes.

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[57] Spearing acknowledges a tendency for "spiritual adventure" (*Dream-poetry* 6-7; cf. 20). Cf. Nolan, *The Gothic Literary Perspective*, 158; Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 1.
[58] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 16.
[59] Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 157.
[60] Cf.Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse*, 78; Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 157; Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 24.

Although the two parts of the *Roman de la Rose* share a basic plot, protagonist, and many of the allegorical characters, they are in many ways distinct poems. Guillaume's section is an allegory of an amorous affair. In many respects, Guillaume's text is part of the broad tradition of courtly love (or *fin' amor*) popularised in the ballades of the troubadours and in chivalric romance. Jean's part of the *Rose*, by contrast, tends simultaneously toward the encyclopaedic and the satirical. Guillaume's part has aspects of parody, such as the religion of love, but Jean's lines contain a far more wide-ranging mockery. His targets include everyone and everything from lecherous friars to prudish colloquialisms, from jealous husbands to the deceptiveness of courtesans. Whereas Guillaume's poem has clear connexions with Scipio's Dream and the Macrobian dream schematic (Guillaume invokes this authority in the opening lines), Jean's *Rose*, rich in classical allusion and learned discourse, is the inheritor of Macrobius' vast compendium that makes up the bulk of the *Commentary*. The longest of Jean's encyclopaedic digressions, the advice given by Reason, by Friend, and by the Old Woman, include meditations on the fallen state of the world, the arbitrariness of signs, the duress of age, and the nature of good and evil.

The *Roman de la Rose* contributes to the trajectory of the medieval dream vision in several ways. First, it transports the genre from the province of Latin literature into the vernacular. (There were, of course, previous poems in European vernaculars, such as the Old English *Dream of the Rood*, but the *Rose* is the first "major" poem—in length, popularity, and subject matter—to make a significant impact.) The move into the vernacular simultaneously moves the dream vision beyond the walls of the medieval schools and cloisters.[61] Poems like Guillaume's and Jean's *Rose* gained a wider audience not only by virtue of the engaging subjects and the entertainment they offered but also by simply being accessible to a greater number of people. While it is true that many nobles and

[61] Scholars, clerks, and other religious men remained a source of dream poems through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including Guillaume de Deguileville, John Lydgate, and, in all likelihood, the *Pearl*-poet.

members of the court would have read some Latin, this was not universally the case.[62] By writing in Old French, Guillaume and Jean set the dream vision in the cultural milieu of courtly love tales, the fantastic Breton *lais*, and the chivalric romances of the Arthurian world. In so doing, they ensured that the *Rose* marks the firm establishment of a secular dream vision tradition.

The second significant influence of the *Rose* on later dream-poems is its shift of attention from the world of outside influence to the inner world of the dreamer and the poet, a development that Russell highlights as Guillaume de Lorris' largest contribution to the genre. According to Russell, this new, inward focus parallels the movement of the genre beyond the spheres of education and theology. He writes: "By grafting the moribund doctrinal form onto the mischief and vigor of courtly love, the *Roman* brought new life to the poetic form and turned it, once more, inward, focusing its energies not on messages from beyond but on tensions within."[63] The emphasis on introspection, which accompanies a troubling of the origins of dreams, informs the tendency of late-medieval poets to use the genre to interrogate the craft of poetry and the meaning of poetic language.[64]

The influence of the *Roman de la Rose* carried through the fourteenth century in French and English literature. In France, dream visions constitute a significant part of fourteenth-century courtly literature. Two French poets in particular wrote poems that circulated widely in England and are immediate precursors to the first English dream visions. Only slightly older than many of the Ricardian poets, Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart exerted considerable influence over the early English dream visions due, in part, to proximity in time and place: Froissart was in England for

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[62] See Green, *Poets and Prince-pleasers*, 11, 71-80.
[63] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 16.
[64] See, for instance, Huot, *Dreams of Lovers and Lies of Poets*, which shows how Guillaume and Jean paradoxically play upon the inexpressibility of love in their poem in which *l'art d'Amors est tot enclose*.

several years as part of the retinue of Phillipa Hainault, queen to Edward III; Machaut may have had contact with some the Ricardian poets as well.[65]

Like the *Rose*, the poems of Machaut and Froissart are concerned with the trials and tribulations of lovers and develop the themes and devices of the genre. In some cases, these developments are little more than cementing tropes such as the spring morning opening to the dream and the earthly paradises in which dreamers so frequently find themselves. In other instances, the fourteenth-century dream poems alter the genre in important ways. One chief contribution is a tendency to forsake explicit allegory, replacing it with what Spearing characterises as "a kind of realism, at least of surface".[66] Similarly, the French inheritors of the *Rose* increase the personalisation of the dreamer-narrator. The dreamer-narrator in the *Rose* shares his thoughts, pains, and feelings, but he remains a type, a sort of everyman figure easily adapted to a number of different readers.[67] The narrators of Machaut and Froissart, by contrast, are more fully imagined, distinct personae. Often, these personae share traits with the authors, including their social status and personal history. Some Ricardian poets would further compound the identity of poet and narrator. Both Chaucer and Langland give their own names to their dreamers, for example. The *Pearl*-poet gives no clear indications of his identity, but modern scholars, perhaps too accustomed to what became the standard blurring of author and dreamer, persist in reading the poem as an autobiography.[68]

The dream vision tradition that the Ricardian and Lancastrian poets inherit is one of significant breadth, variation, and complexity, but it is also defined by several familiar and commonplace tropes, many of which we have already seen in Matthew of Vendôme's brief dream vision and the other examples. The typical late-medieval dream vision follows a standard pattern.

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[65] See, for instance, Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, chapters 2, 5, and 6.
[66] Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 42. Cf. Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 24.
[67] Spearing argues that Guillaume and Jean initiate this process in the *Rose* by blurring the lines between the dreamer-narrator and their own personae (*Dream-poetry*, 39-40).
[68] See the comments by Morris and Gollancz in their early editions, as well as Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl*, Vantuono, "John de Mascy of Sale and the *Pearl* Poems," and Peterson, "The *Pearl*-poet and John Massey."

The poem begins with the narrator in a troubled state of mind. He falls asleep and 'awakens' in a dream set on a bright, spring morning in an enclosed garden filled with otherworldly splendours. There he encounters a guide or instructor figure who, through the course of their dialogue or debate, leads him toward greater understanding and, in some instances, a (partial) solution to the issue that troubled him at the outset of the poem. In religious visions, this may include a short glimpse or tour of heaven, hell, or purgatory (Dante's pilgrim, of course, visits all three). The end of the dream coincides with some stimulus within the dream, be it a tolling bell, a dash into a river, or a sudden cry. The narrator finds himself in bed and reflects on the dream experience, introducing the process of composition that led to the poem.[69]

For all its predictability, the dream vision genre provides enormous possibilities for medieval poets. Dreams are innately flexible—almost anything can happen without precedent or explanation—and the genre thus allows writers considerable creative freedom: we find journeys into the heavens, conversations with the deceased, and other unlikely or fabulous occurrences. Nevertheless, the experience of dreaming is rooted in reality and familiar to all readers; thus, no matter the fantastic events that occur in the dream-poem, it maintains an element of realism.[70] Moreover, the dream-tale grounds itself in the first-person experience of the narrator, who, while not necessarily identified with the poet, grants the account further authenticity.

The necessarily first-person narration of the dream vision is one of the sources of the genre's intense self-awareness and self-reflexivity. Due also to the framing narratives that contain the dream, the dream-poem, its narrator, and its author are conscious that it is a work of art.[71] The narrator in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, for example, concludes the poem by explaining how he decided to put

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[69] For further discussion of the most common tropes and images in dream vision poetry, see: Curtius, *Latin Middle Ages*, 102-4,193-200; Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 16-47; Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 71-76; and Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape*.
[70] Cf. Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 24; Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 11-18.
[71] Cf. Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 4-6.

his *sweven* into rhyme. This narratorial gesture calls attention to the poem as a composition, an experience mediated by the narrator who recounts it. The frame narratives and central dream experiences of late-medieval dream visions often blur the boundaries of dreams and texts. The dreamer-narrators who populate the literature are, like the poets who stand behind them, ardent readers. Many, like the *Consolation*'s Boethius or the lover in Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes*, compose verse. Some, such as the *Duchess*-dreamer mentioned above, gradually migrate from the role of reader to the role of writer—a movement which is enacted through the unfolding of the dream. This movement is often linked to the process of learning or discovery that characterises dream vision narratives. The trope of the inexperienced, unsure, and bumbling dreamer-narrator is a common one in the dream-poems: the protagonist-narrators frequently struggle to express themselves, whether in matters of love, grief, or other concerns; the composition of the dream-poem shown or alluded to at the end of the poem suggests lessons learned and obstacles overcome.

The poetic self-awareness of the difficulties inherent in the medium of language and the poet's own struggles to express himself can be observed at every level of the dream vision poem. In the context of Middle English literature in the later Middle Ages, the genre provides poets with a highly adaptable arena in which to interrogate the making of verbal art. As I will show in each of the three chapters that follow, elegiac poetry is also acutely self-reflexive.[72] It is a custom of the elegiac mode "to scrutinise the whole nature and value of poetic art in general and as it is, or will be, practiced by the spokesman himself", that is, by the elegiac speaker.[73] The pairing of the dream vision genre with the elegiac mode—with poetry invested in pushing language to its limits—permits the late-medieval English poets to probe deeper into the working of poetic language, to better understand their craft as they shape a vernacular literary tradition.

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[72] While I elaborate upon my theorisation of elegy in the next section, much of my analysis of the mode will occur in the context of the three elegiac dream-poems I examine.

[73] Smith, *By Mourning Tongues*, 11. Sacks likewise comments on the "unusual degree of self-consciousness regarding the actual performance of the work at hand" (*The English Elegy*, 2).

The Mode: Elegiac Poetry and the Dream Vision

I conceive of elegy not as a narrow poetic genre—the pastoral elegy, for example—but as a poetic mode because, while many elegiac poems share a number of tropes (indicative of a genre), these works of art are characterised by broader themes: death, transience, the compulsion or need for an artistic or poetic response to loss, and, in nearly every case I have come across, an underlying doubt that the poet's efforts will be successful.[74] My approach builds upon the work of Abbie Findlay Potts, who takes pains "to distinguish genuine elegy from the mortuary idyll and lyric melancholia" that became so closely associated with the term following the "woebegone flood of verse" of the eighteenth century. Elegy is more than a collection of "minor sorrows"; it is "the poetry of skeptical vision and . . . its most characteristic form is revelation."[75] Elegy, for Findlay Potts, "engages in skeptical and revelatory vision for its own sake, satisfying the hunger of man to see, to know, to understand."[76] She characterises the speculative tendency of elegy as poetry of discovery.[77] The general trajectory of poetry in the elegiac mode, then, is from a state of ignorance, confusion, or misunderstanding to one of knowledge and comprehension, and the poem can be read as a dramatization of the process of discovery.[78]

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[74] Cf. Abbie Findlay Potts, *The Elegiac Mode*. Alastair Fowler draws a clear and useful distinction between genre and mode, but also maintains that the two can and do influence each other. First, Fowler explains that whereas genres "can always be put in noun form . . . modal terms tend to be adjectival" (*Kinds of Literature*, 106). Modes, he adds, are applied more widely than genre. If we follow Fowler's argument strictly, "elegy" connotes a genre, probably the pastoral elegy most readily, and (the) "elegiac" connotes the broader mode. In my discussion, I use the two terms interchangeably and always to refer to the mode. Cf. Schenck, *Mourning and Panegyric*, 13-16.

[75] Findlay Potts, *The Elegiac Mode*, 1-2. She pushes her claim further by identifying what she calls the "elegiac imagination", which "looks toward and then looks beyond gnomic and didactic poetry. Restless and challenging, it makes and unmakes ethical codes, ritual, and liturgy. It rearranges even as it disturbs the patterns of civil government and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Although its themes are the puzzles of life and the riddle of death, it settles down neither in the tavern nor in the churchyard" (2).

[76] Findlay Potts, *The Elegiac Mode*, 37. In her formulation, Findlay Potts adopts and adapts the classical understanding of elegy rather than a Restoration, Georgian, or Romantic one, and it is safe to say that, while as a poet and a student of words the *Pearl*-poet saw deeper into things than most, the former model was infinitely more accessible to him than the latter, anachronistic models which are not infrequently applied to medieval texts.

[77] Findlay Potts, *The Elegiac Mode*, 37-66. Borrowing a term from Northrop Frye, she terms this kind of discovery *anagnorisis*. (She identifies three key discoveries that comprise *anagnorisis* as she conceives it: the discovery of likeness or unlikeness, the discovery of idea (abstraction, noumenon), and the discovery of identity or community (38-39).

[78] I should note here, following Jamie Fumo, that the concept of elegy was obscure in the late-medieval literature: "Elegy as a 'pure' or self-articulated form," writes Fumo, "did not exist in medieval England" ("Later Medieval Elegy," 120).

An elegy is what Freud punningly calls "a work of mourning":[79] it is both the finished artefact and the process of mourning, what Peter Sacks casts as "the working through of an impulse or experience".[80] Sacks identifies a series of conventions of the elegy, including direct address or invocation, "traditional images of resurrection," "the movement from grief to consolation" (both figurative and physically represented), "the use of repetition and refrains", and "the dramatic relation between loss and figuration".[81] Each of the conventions of elegy contributes to the poem's project of consolation. According to Eric Smith, elegiac poetry seeks to achieve consolation in three ways: the apotheosis of the beloved, the (desired) action of "jumping the hateful barrier between life and death", and the annual remembrance and celebration of the deceased.[82] Apotheosis can take several forms, from stellification (as in Vergil's fifth eclogue) or elevation in the Christian afterlife. In *Pearl*, for instance, the mourner-narrator's deceased daughter is a queen of heaven. The removal of the gap between the quick and the dead manifests a mourner's desire for reunion with the departed, an opportunity for one more meeting.

The annual commemoration of the deceased exemplifies the ritualistic character of the elegy. Elegiac poetry is commonly highly formal, depending on clear patterns of symbolism, diction, and imagery. Celeste Schenck calls elegy "the ceremonial mode", and argues that elegists deploy the structures of the mode to create poetic rituals.[83] As I will show in each of the chapters that follow,

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Nevertheless, as Fumo acknowledges, Middle English literature contains a significant number of "poems of human loss" (121) as well as "a rich medieval culture of mortality . . . that fostered an extensive industry of *artes moriendi*, mortality lyrics and laments, Masses for the dead, effigial tombs, and prayer guilds" (120).

[79] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 246.

[80] Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 1. Although Sacks is concerned with poetry from the Renaissance to the modernist period, his discussion in his preface and introduction is insightful for its identification of the major concerns and common tropes of elegy. It should be acknowledged that Sacks calls elegy a genre throughout his study; however, the aspects of elegy on which he focuses more of his attention are, I believe, constants indicative of a mode, and so I adapt Sacks' theorisation to my discussion of the late-medieval elegiac dream vision.

[81] Sacks, *English Elegy*, 2-4. See also his detailed examination of the conventions 18-31.

[82] Smith, *By Mourning Tongues*, 2, 13.

[83] Schenck, *Mourning and Panegyric*, 177-78. Schenck is concerned primarily with poets' use of the elegy as a form of poetic initiation, consciously deployed as part of a literary careerism. This aspect of her argument is not readily applicable to *Pearl* or to *Fortunes Stabilnes* (discussed in chapters one and three, respectively), but it has bearing on Chaucer's use of the mode in the *Book of the Duchess*, his first major, narrative poem. Cf. Smith, *By Mourning Tongues*, 19.

the Middle English makers of elegiac dream visions rely on ritual forms to find consolation for their dreamer-protagonists. The order and control asserted by ceremonial structure stand in opposition to the chaos that arises from traumatic loss, and the repetition of ritual is set against the finality of death.

Repetition is one of the most prevalent formal features of elegy and may be, according to Sacks, its defining convention. Elegies are frequently "presented as being repetitions in themselves", and this temporal repetition, which often approaches the systematisation of ritual, becomes the first source of the order. Repetition structures time and familiarises content. It exerts an element of control over the unexpectedness of, and sudden, drastic changes brought on by, the event of death. Similarly, "the repetition of words and refrains and the creation of a certain rhythm of lament have the effect of controlling the expression of grief while also keeping that expression in motion."[84] Repetition serves a double duty: it responds to and counters the perceived finality of death and also seems to erase the interruption that death creates.

The bitter irony of the elegiac project is that it is never wholly successful. Elegies, like all poems, must end: the illusory recovery they conjure lasts only as long as the words the elegist utters. There follows what Sacks terms a "subsequent second loss," another parting which, the mourner fears, will be more painful and more difficult to overcome. Elegiac poems wish for and try to will a certain reality: at one extreme, elegies seek to undo past events—the death of the loved one—and so to change the present, to erase the state of grief.[85] Failing that (as they must fail), elegies strive to displace the grief caused by death, to use the emotional force of poetry to transform unruly sorrow

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[84] Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 23. Sacks sets the continuity of repetition in opposition to "the extreme discontinuity of death." Weisman likewise states that a major concern for elegy is the instilling of order: it "marks a passage from the inchoate gasp to the formalized utterance, from the chaos of the mind to the ordered presentation of a publicly available expression" ("Introduction," 1).

[85] It seems to me that the mood of elegiac poetry is decidedly the subjunctive. Elegy is a form of poetry that repeatedly says "would it were yesterday" and its optative stance likewise skews the relationship of the speaker to the present and to the future, as when the *Pearl*-dreamer says to the Maiden "*Now were I* at yow by3onde þise wawe3, / *I were* a ioyful jueler" (287-88, emphasis mine).

into reserved acceptance, if not placid joy. Each poet who enters into the elegiac tradition is aware of this parallel tradition of failure. (We label elegies songs of mourning not songs of consolation, after all.) This awareness and the anxiety that accompanies it often manifest in the structure, imagery, and language of the poem, unintentionally undermining the mourner's work, so that the very conventions and forms which should contribute to the elegist's recovery become further sites of loss. The mourner is haunted not only by the memory of the beloved but by the spectre of impending failure. At every turn, the elegiac speaker is confronted by questions and doubts about the efficacy of his words. Working through grief is also a coming to terms with the limitations of language.[86]

As I argue in this dissertation, the pairing of the dream vision genre with the elegiac mode is more than a simple coincidence in a nascent literary tradition. Inherently self-reflexive, both the genre and the mode permitted Middle English poets to reflect on their craft. The elegiac poem, like the dream vision, is acutely aware of its status as a work of art, and the elegiac speaker worries about the faults and shortcomings of any artificial form. Previous studies of the Middle English dream poems acknowledge that these texts interrogate the veracity of dreams and of fictions, the philosophical or theological potentials of poetry, and the capacities of language. Other studies observe the elegiac tendencies in particular dream vision texts, especially in *Pearl* and the *Book of the Duchess*. This dissertation is the first extended study to consider explicitly the interaction of the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode. In so doing, I elucidate how poets of the Ricardian and Lancastrian periods adopted and adapted the Latin and Continental vernacular traditions in the forging of Middle English literature. I thus demonstrate that the English poets were interested not

[86] Sacks calls this the elegist's "reluctant resubmission to the constraints of language" (*The English Elegy*, xiii). I agree with Sacks that the elegist cannot transcend language, but I would stress that the constraints to which the elegist resigns himself at the conclusion of the elegy are not precisely the same limitations that confronted him at the outset.

only in the creation of a new literature in their vernacular language, but in understanding how that literature and language functioned and how they could refine it.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I examine the West Midlands *Pearl*, in which the mourner-dreamer struggles with the inability of his words to end his sorrow. I show how, in the course of the dream, the poet establishes a clear division between the limited, mundane language of the dreamer-narrator and the capacious and powerful language of the Pearl-Maiden and the Lamb. Whereas the former is characterised by mutability and imprecision, the latter is a "fixed" language, both in the sense that it corrects the failures of the mourner's language and that it suffers from none of the slipperiness of that language. Through an examination of the dreamer-narrator's use of apostrophe, the dialogue between the dreamer and the maiden, the climactic vision of the New Jerusalem, and the closing image of the Eucharist, I demonstrate how the *Pearl*-poet explores the parameters of poetic consolation, imagines an idealised form of language, and, in so doing, imbues his imperfect material with some of the transcendental quality to which he aspires.

Whereas my discussion of *Pearl* is predicated upon parental loss and longing, the mourner-dreamer's grief over the death of his daughter, my second chapter examines Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, in which the dreamer-narrator addresses the grief of a third party. This chapter investigates how the poet paired elegy with dream vision to dramatize an important moment in his poetic career, the production of his first sustained narrative poem. I argue that Chaucer positions the relationship of his dreamer-narrator and the Man in Black as a means of exploring the constraints of lyric mourning: although it may offer some short-lived relief, lyric is too strictly cyclical to enact a clear and lasting movement from grief to consolation. The fretful mind of the insomniac narrator, like the sorrowful complaints of the Black Knight, spins in a tight circuit. The process of the dream, in which the dreamer-narrator helps the bereaved Man in Black to overcome his grief, traces the

narrator's move from the vicious repetition of the opening frame's lyricality to the narrative trajectory with which the poem ends.

The third chapter shifts the focus of my study from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century and so to the matter of how subsequent generations of English poets adapted the Middle English elegiac dream vision established by their Ricardian and Lancastrian predecessors. The work of a Valois prince held in England for a quarter of a century, Charles of Orleans' dream-poem brings together the French and the English dream vision traditions, introducing several formal and structural features of the earlier, Continental genre that had been omitted by the English poets. *Fortunes Stabilnes* plays with and inverts many of the tropes and images of the inherited traditions, especially the framing fiction structure. The nesting of dreams, narrative, and lyric that the Duke of Orleans creates serves both his exploration of the poetry of courtly love and the poetic work of mourning that plays out through the latter two thirds of the text. The careful structuring of levels of dreams and mourning and the theme of enclosure allow the dreamer-narrator to journey through grief and re-enter the service of Love. In my discussion of this hybrid work, I show how a later generation of English poets continued to use the combination of the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode to question the form and function of their craft.

Chapter One

The Doel-doungoun: *Pearl*, Elegy, and the Constraints of Poetic Consolation

Pearl is a poem about loss. The speaker begins by lamenting the loss of a precious gemstone, the perfect pearl he prized above all others. He enters into the garden in which he lost the pearl and, overwhelmed by grief, falls asleep on the flowery mound in which the pearl lies buried. In the dream that ensues, his spirit enters an earthly paradise of artificial splendour: ink-blue trees with leaves of burnished silver, pearly gravel on the ground, a river as fine as golden thread and filled with jewels. The Dreamer encounters a young maiden he identifies as the pearl he has lost, but whom he cannot join on the other side of the river. Despite his joy at this unexpected meeting, he cannot help but fear another parting, and his grief and angst quickly return. There follows a long conversation in which the Pearl-maiden seeks to explain away the Dreamer's sorrow through an elucidation of heavenly reward. The Dreamer, too attached to the things of this world, struggles to understand her lessons on grace, innocence, and the space-time of the celestial realm. In the final episode of the vision, the Dreamer ascends a hilltop where he is permitted a sight of the New Jerusalem and the glorious reign of the Lamb. The Dreamer, moved by the sight of his pearl in the heavenly procession, attempts to cross the dividing stream and is consequently ejected from the dream world. After awakening in the garden, he commits his pearl to the heavenly Prince's keeping and turns from the funereal arbour to the consolation of the scripture and the ceremony of the Mass.

The impetus for the poem is the speaker's longing for his absent pearl, the literal gem implied by the opening stanzas and the deceased daughter that the pearl is later shown to represent. As I will discuss below, the poem is rightly labelled an elegy (in the broad definition of the term), and both the form and content of the dream vision contribute to its identification as such. The unfolding of the dream explores the Mourner's attempts to achieve an adequate solace. His words

and deeds dramatize the wishes and anxieties of the elegising voice. By so doing, the poet displays his own questions about the elegy's ability to provide consolation.

Pearl, then, is as much a poem about language as it is about loss. The speaker's impassioned cries to and praise for his absent pearl, his efforts to commune with the lost beloved, and indeed the poem itself as an elegiac undertaking all occur within the bounds of language. The perceived reunion of the elegy's invocation and conjuring of the departed is "dependent on the verbal art which creates it."[1] The magic of the elegy lasts only as long as the poetic performance: the cessation of the utterance, like the end of a dream, sees the beloved fade back into the world of the dead in a subsequent second loss that underscores, even doubles, the pain of the original. The Dreamer shows himself to be aware of the potential for a second parting early in his encounter with the Pearl-maiden. A deep fear of loss accompanies the "gladande glory" (171) of recognizing the Maiden as his lost pearl (167-68): "I dred onende quat schulde byfalle / Lest ho me eschaped that I ther chos" (186-87). As the Dreamer explains, now that he has found her and thus has had his grief assuaged, he perishes the thought of experiencing another, worse loss:

> Now haf I fonte that I forlete,
> Schal I efte forgo hit er euer I fyne?
> Why schal I hit bothe mysse and mete?
> . . .
> What serue3 tresor, bot gare3 men grete
> When he hit schal efte wyth tene3 tyne?
> . . .
> When I am partle3 of perle myne,
> Bot durande doel what may men deme? (327-29, 331-32, 335-36)

The Dreamer interrogates the paradox, for he is troubled by the simultaneity of immanent consummation and the possibility of separation: "Why shal I hit bothe mysse and mete?" His anxiety centres on the thought that this meeting is a one-time experience, that the second death of his pearl will be lasting, and that he will for ever pine away in "durande doel."

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[1] Smith, *By Mourning Tongues*, 3.

His spoken words are meant to deliver him from sorrow, yet language is the chief obstacle for the Mourner-Dreamer as he attempts to overcome his grief and to understand the logic of divine symbols, grace, and temporality. He finds his calls go unanswered and the venting of his emotional build-up is likewise unproductive. Indeed, these frustrated efforts lead only to further efforts, which, in turn, are doubly unsettling. The Mourner-Dreamer becomes a speaker who distrusts speech. His words, with which he tries to order the chaos that results from the loss of the pearl, prove to be slippery material, shifting from one meaning to another. The dream vision as elegy thus becomes a work in which the Mourner-Dreamer labours not only to achieve consolation but to come to terms with the vicissitudes of earthly language.

In this chapter, I want to explore the ways in which the *Pearl*-poet, through the agent of the Mourner-Dreamer, probes the shortcomings and failures of language specifically in the work of mourning, but also with an eye to more general commentary on human language. I also want to suggest that, if neither the Mourner-Dreamer nor the poet behind him can fully recover fallen human language, they can nonetheless imagine and propose satisfactory alternatives which can mitigate the most dire issues that threaten the possibility of poetic consolation. I will first address the identification of *Pearl* as an elegy. I will then examine how *Pearl* manifests multiple elegiac failures—in its content and its form—and how the poet and his grieving Narrator respond. Next, I will argue that the central episode of the poem, the long dialogue between the Dreamer and the Maiden, attempts to reform and recast the man's language: she works to teach him a new way of using and reading signs, if only with limited success. Finally, I will propose that, through the figures of the Pearl-maiden and the Lamb and the image of the Eucharist with which the poem concludes, the *Pearl*-poet offers a means of recuperating the multivalence and slipperiness of language in a manner which recasts and revalorises poetry as an effective vehicle for the journey to consolation.

Pearl as Elegy

The issue of classifying *Pearl* as an elegy is as old as *Pearl* criticism itself. In his 1864 edition, the inaugural publication of the Early English Text Society, Richard Morris read the poem as an elegy, specifically an elegy for the poet's daughter.[2] Sir Israel Gollancz likewise pushed for an autobiographical and elegiac reading in his revised edition of 1891. Gollancz's reading became one of the major poles in the debate that would characterise early twentieth-century criticism of *Pearl*. For while the poem is now generally accepted as an elegy—whether biographical or not—there arose in the early decades of the last century a contentious interpretation of the poem that insisted the dream vision was not an elegy but an elaborate allegory. W.H. Schofield first posited that the daughter in the vision is an allegorical figure of "clean maidenhood".[3] As Gordon notes, Schofield's reading did not come to dominate the literature surrounding the poem, but its departure from the accepted view opened the door for other interpretations and theorisations.[4] More recently, for instance, Theodore Bogdanos has suggested that the dream is an allegorical quest, "a dramatization of man's encounter with the divine."[5] I will not categorically deny the existence of allegory or allegorical imagery in the poem, but, because I find loss and longing to be at the heart of *Pearl*, I shall treat the poem as an elegy.[6]

Even among scholars who accept *Pearl* as an elegy, controversy persists. Some interpretations try to fuse the two major strands of the Gollancz-Schofield debate, insisting upon allegorical elegies or elegiac allegories. Sister Mary Madaleva reads the lost pearl as the poet's soul, while Sister Mary Vincent Hillman suggests the pearl represents the eternal happiness of Christian

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[2] Morris, ed., *Early English Alliterative Poetry*, xi.
[3] Schofield, "Symbolism, Allegory, and Autobiography in *The Pearl*," 638.
[4] Cf. Gordon, xi-xix.
[5] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 1. Other interpretations include Ian Bishop's reading of the poem as an allegory of a newly baptized Christian and Lynn Staley's argument, echoed by Susan Powell, that the poem commemorates a young woman's entry into a cloistered religious life.
[6] Cf. Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet*,130-31, which argues that the poet shows "little tendency towards allegory" and that the *Pearl*-poet's deft use, and explication of, allegory—where it serves—suggests that other parts of the poem are not concealing allegorical meaning.

belief and knowledge. Mother Angela Carson posits that the maiden is indeed a person, a deceased lover of the poet from "[o]ute of Oryent" (3)—that is, eastern Europe—by way of York![7] I agree with the majority of commentators that the poem is an elegy for the Mourner-Dreamer's daughter and that the Pearl-maiden the Dreamer encounters is the divine manifestation of that lost beloved.[8] When first the Dreamer sees the Maiden, he states "Ho wat3 me nerre þen aunte or nece" (233).[9] In answer to the Dreamer's question, "Art þou my perle that I haf playned, / Regretted by myn one on nyght?" (242-43), the Maiden draws a direct link between herself and the Dreamer's lost pearl (411-12). Moreover, she acknowledges that when the pearl was lost she "was ful yong and tender of age" (412), having recently been baptised: "I wente fro yor worlde wete" (761).[10] This admission corroborates the dreamer's subsequent claim that the child "lyfed not two yer in oure þede" and was so young that she knew "neuer God nauþer plese ne pray, / Ne neuer nawther Pater ne Crede" (483-85). The discussion that follows below is founded on the premise that this poem is indeed an elegy. I shall not, however, enter into the debate as to the historical truth (if any) behind the mourning poem. For my purposes, it does not matter whether the lamented child belongs to the poet or one of his patrons, be it the Earl of Pembroke or Thomas of Woodstock, or to no one in particular. The poem is, first and foremost, a poem of mourning, and, as J.R.R. Tolkien put it in the introduction to his translation of the poem, "Even a feigned elegy remains an elegy."[11]

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[7] Madaleva, *Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness*; Hillman, "Some Debatable Words," 12; Carson, "Aspects of Elegy in *Pearl*," 9-21.

[8] Cf. Hoffman, "The *Pearl*: Notes for an Interpretation," 101.

[9] Spearing and other scholars locate a further indication of a parent-child bond between Mourner and Maiden in the closing stanza of the poem when the man commits the pearl to the Prince's keeping "[i]n Kryste3 dere blessyng and myn" (1208), a phrase which echoes a standard salutation from parents to children in late-medieval epistolary documents. See Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 125.

[10] Gordon reads this line as a comment on the difference between the earthly and heavenly spheres: "the Pearl has in mind the contrast between the rough and rainy climate of this world and the eternally bright and serene atmosphere of Heaven" (*Pearl*, 73). I believe the line contains an alternate meaning, that the child died shortly after undergoing the rite of baptism: that is, she was wet when she left the world. It is even possible that the sacrament was performed in haste due to the child's imminent demise and so was blurred with the last rites. It should be noted that both these rites were among those that could be performed by laypersons in times of crisis or pressing need.

[11] Tolkien, trans., *Sir Gawain, Pearl, and Sir Orfeo*, 10. Gordon's introduction—parts of which were undoubtedly written by Tolkien, who initially undertook the edition as a joint project with Gordon following upon their successful edition of *Sir*

Pearl accords with many of the characteristics of elegy outlined in my introduction. The poem exemplifies the dual nature of the elegy as both an artefact and a process. It does so through the split times of the vision: what we read in Cotton Nero A.x., the poem written by the anonymous West Midlands poet and delivered in the voice of the Narrator who has already undergone the experience of the vision, is the work, the artefact; the experience narrated—the grief in the garden, the dream, and the final waking scenes—shows the elegy as process, the Mourner-Dreamer's attempts to achieve consolation. *Pearl* likewise deploys many of the elegiac conventions that Sacks lists.[12] The poem begins with an apostrophe to the pearl and, as I shall discuss at length below, the device of direct address reappears throughout the dream. In the proem, the Mourner grapples with the traditional image of blooming flowers and the cycles of the natural world. In the dream, he traverses the earthly paradise, moving first deeper into the otherworldly forest and downstream toward the Pearl-maiden and then, after the dialogue concludes, uphill toward the heavenly vision of the New Jerusalem. The importance of figuration for the work of mourning is demonstrated in both the form and content of the poem. The transformation of the vegetation of the *erber* into the lapidary world of the dream, for instance, suggests a privileging of the artificial over the natural. The elaborately woven structure of the poem—its alliterative lines, rhyme scheme, stanza grouping, concatenation, and seeming circularity—similarly speaks to the need to impose order in the wake of traumatic personal loss.

Gawain and who, many years later, provided Gordon's widow Ida significant assistance in readying the edition for posthumous publication—contains a strikingly similar assertion: "And yes to the particular criticism of the poem decision on this point [the autobiographical reading] is not of the first importance. A feigned elegy remains an elegy; and feigned or unfeigned, it must stand or fall by its art" (*Pearl*, xvi).
On the theories of authorship, see Ann R. Meyer, "The Despensers and the *Gawain* Poet," 413-16; Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 31-33; Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl*, 9-13, 15-18, 58-64; Vantuono, "John de Mascy of Sale and the *Pearl* Poems," 78-88; Oscar Cargill and Margaret Schlauch, "The *Pearl* and its Jeweller," 105-23; and Clifford J. Peterson, "The *Pearl*-poet and John Massey," 257-66.

[12] Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 2-4. These conventions include a direct address or invocation, "traditional images of resurrection," "the movement from grief to consolation" (both figurative and physically represented), "the use of repetition and refrains", and "the dramatic relation between loss and figuration". Cf. pp. 26-29 above.

Moreover, *Pearl* contains each of the three means of consolation that Smith discusses: the apotheosis of the beloved, the bridging of the gulf between life and death, and the ceremonial commemoration of the deceased.[13] The Maiden's identification as a bride of the Lamb and one of the blessed innocents in the heavenly procession constitutes the first. The Mourner's sorrowful displays in the *erber*, including his initial cries to his lost beloved, suggest the wish to transcend "the hateful barrier", and the dream encounter serves as a partial realisation of this desire; the Dreamer's final plunge into the river, the clear symbol of that barrier, reveals the limit of his efforts. An observance of an anniversary is suggested by the Mourner's entry into the *erber* in the fourth stanza of the proem (37-39): it is possible that his daughter died and was laid to rest in August and that the events of the poem coincide with his ritual return to that site.[14]

One of the chief purposes of elegy is to reassert order, to control the emotional, mental, and social chaos that is released by death. Similarly, when a mourner recognises the impermanence of the practices of grief and the imperfect, fleeting solace they provide, he further desires stability. There is no clearer example of this imposition of order in *Pearl*—perhaps in all of late-medieval English literature—than the shape of the poem. *Pearl* is a highly structured poem. It subscribes to a "double discipline," a combination of the Germanic alliterative long line tradition and the Continental rhyming tradition.[15] Its basic unit is a twelve-line stanza, *abababababcbc* with the final *c*-rhyme as a concatenating link-word. Gordon explains that "[t]his special stanza form was probably chosen because it was felt to be a fitting vehicle for a poem of sorrow and reflection: extant examples of it

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[13] Smith, *By Mourning Tongues*, 2, 13.
[14] *Pearl* also exemplifies Finlay Potts' three key discoveries that comprise *anagnorisis* in the elegy: the discovery of likeness or unlikeness, the discovery of idea (abstraction, noumenon), and the discovery of identity or community (*The Elegiac Mode*, 38-39). We can locate each of the discoveries in the Mourner-Dreamer's coming to terms with the word-play and slipperiness of language, his deferral of meaning and of authority to an elevated sign (the Lamb, the Word), and in his final turn to the Eucharistic community at the end of the poem, respectively.
[15] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, xxxvi-xli.

are all moral laments, and deal mostly with death."[16] The poem's 101 stanzas are (almost) equally divided into twenty five-stanza sections (Section XV contains six stanzas), each identified by a link-word or refrain-line.

John V. Fleming locates the poem's "external, almost calligraphic" form within a numerological tradition of Christian consolation.[17] Fleming's analysis draws parallels between the significant numbers in *Pearl*—five, twelve, and 101—and their presence in other traditional, contemporary, or near-contemporary exegetical texts including St. Augustine's *Confessions*, pseudo-Bonaventure*'s Meditations on the Life of Christ*, and the *Santa Maria Maddalena*. He identifies "the persistence of the number twelve" in the stanza's structure and notes the prevalence of that number in the biblical tradition: the tribes of Israel, the apostles, the gates of the New Jerusalem (1034-35), to name just a few. The duodecimal symbolism occurs again in the total of lines in *Pearl*. The number 1212 can be read as 12 and 12, or 12 times 12: 144.[18] We see this sacred number in the 144,000 virginal brides of the heavenly procession (*Pearl* 869-70; Rev. 14:1-4). Fleming addresses the significance of the number five as well, emphasising its worldly and human connotations. He points to the five senses and the five fingers and five toes per hand and per foot, and suggests connections to the external, carnal man, his "taming, . . . edification, and . . . reformation".[19] He also highlights the five spillings of blood in the Passion and Christ's five wounds at the Crucifixion. Fleming does not draw a connection to *Pearl*'s five-stanza sections, but the parallel is pertinent. The number twelve is a celestial or holy number associated with the boons of faith, and five represents the physical

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[16] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, xl. For a further discussion of the history of the stanza form and its uses, see Gordon, *Pearl*, 87-89, and Susanna Greer Fein, "Twelve-Line Stanza Forms in Middle English and the Date of *Pearl*."
[17] Fleming, "The Centuple Structure of the *Pearl*," 83. For further discussion of the numerological import of the poem, see P.M. Kean, "Numerical Composition in 'Pearl,'" and Barbara Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective*, 175-76. For a more general discussion of numerological composition, see E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 501-9.
[18] Fleming, "Centuple Structure," 85.
[19] Fleming, "Centuple Structure," 94.

world into which Christ was born and in which the Mourner suffers sorrows.[20] Each stanza group—sixty lines comprised of five stanzas of twelve lines—thus yokes together the mundane and the heavenly spheres, just as the Mourner and the Maiden, representatives of those two realms, meet in the space of the dream.

For Fleming the number most prevalently linked to consolation is 101, the number of stanzas in the poem.[21] He bases his argument on Matt. 19:29: "And everyone who has left houses or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life." The centuplum is the biblical term "of financial and agricultural increase" as in Isaac's act of sowing (Gen. 26:12) and the parable of the sower (Luke 8:8). However, as Fleming notes with an accountant's keen eye, the sum is not an even one hundred, but 101: the original that was given up is also restored.[22] Whereas five "points to a theme of loss so painful to the 'exterior man,'" 101 "points to the theme of reward, of compensation or consolation . . . the wages of the 'interior man'".[23] Moreover, the number 101 suggests new beginnings following the end of a cycle.[24]

The rhyme scheme further emphasizes the rigid structure and order of the poem. Its regular pattern of repetition of sounds and certain key words "creates a sense of continuity, of an unbroken

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[20] Fleming bases much of his argument, especially the focus on the number five as a carnal number, on Umbertino of Casale's *Arbor vitae crucifixae Jesu* (early 14th century).

[21] It is worth noting that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is also divided into 101 stanzas albeit in a different form and perhaps to a different end.

[22] Fleming, "Centuple Structure," 87-88.

[23] Fleming, "Centuple Structure," 94.

[24] It occurs to me that there may be further significance behind the 101 stanzas of *Pearl*. The name of Jesus stands out at certain instances in the poem, especially at line 721 where it replaces the concatenating word, *ry3t*, which is meant to join Sections XII and XIII. Gordon and other editors ascribe the substitution to scribal error, but other interpretations exist. It has been suggested that the replacement of *ry3t* with *Iesus* is meant to solidify the identification of divine grace with the figure of Christ. (Andrew and Waldron, for instance, replace MS *Iesu* with *Ryght*, arguing that Justice is a personification of Jesus.) If we extrapolate from this single instance of substitution, it is possible—given Christ's identification as the Word, the transcendental signified to which, ultimately, all signs point—that, in the most extreme example, all words in the poem could conceivably be replaced by *Iesu*—even, and perhaps most importantly, *perle*. Christ is, of course, at the centre of the poem, just as the Lamb sits enthroned in the middle of the heavenly procession at the climax of the vision (1110ff). I propose that one of the factors contributing to the poet's decision to make a poem of 101 stanzas is that to do so permits him to inscribe the initials of Christos Iesu across the surface of the poem, for, when 101 is written out in roman numerals—as it almost certainly would have been in the late fourteenth century—it appears as CI. (See further discussion below.)

pattern such as one may oppose to the extreme discontinuity of death."[25] The arrangement of the poem is also tightened through the use of concatenation: the refrain word of a given stanza is repeated or echoed in the first line of the following stanza. This technique connects stanza to stanza and group to group lending the appearance of a braided garland or string of pearls.[26] The concatenation doubles back on itself; the refrain word of the final section, "pay" (1212) is found in the poem's opening line. The result is a circular poem that is in turn likened to a pearl, the central image of (structural) perfection. The chaos of death and dissolution is symbolically controlled by the strict order of the poem: form is used as a mean of consolation.

The cyclical nature of the poem is often cited as evidence of the poet's attention to detail and the perfection of his creation. A closer reading, however, reveals that his poem is not without spot. David Carlson draws attention to three imperfections in the structure of *Pearl*, one in each aspect of its well-wrought form. The pattern of concatenation is not executed seamlessly; it stumbles at line 721. The first line of Section XIII fails to pick up the link-word "ryght" (720). Instead, the poet substitutes "Jesu" (721).[27] As I have suggested above, the failure in the form of the poem at line 721 is a matter of debate. The mere suggestion of imperfection here demonstrates that questions remain in the poet's (and his Mourner's) mind. Moreover, it may well be the case that the perceived failure in the poem is intended to identify a potential shortcoming in the reader. The slip in concatenation at line 721 is precisely the type of feature that the Mourner-Dreamer, the jeweller so concerned with appearances and physical details, would note. It is an error on the surface of the poem, but not in terms of the deeper meaning: in the logic of the poem, the heavenly reason that the Maiden tries to teach the Dreamer, Jesu, the Word, stands behind each and every word, and is (or

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[25] Sacks, *English Elegy*, 23.

[26] We should also note that concatenation suggests an image of weaving and of woven artefacts, an important set of images in the poetry of mourning.

[27] Following on Fleming's numerological interpretation of the poem, it may be no accident that the concatenation stumbles in the space between line 720 and 721. The first number (720) suggests a certain combination of celestial perfection and worldly being: it is the product of 12 times 12—an exponential increase of the heavenly number—times 5, the earthly number. In numerological thinking, 720 announces the arrival of Christ, and 721 sees him appear.

should be) easily perceived in words semantically linked to divine rule, justice, and grace. The gap in the regular concatenation reveals the Mourner-Dreamer's short-sightedness, and, by extension, our own potential to fall into this trap.

We must also take into account the matter of the conspicuous absence of line 472. Carlson explains that the standard editorial consensus has been to assume a line once existed which was omitted due to a copyist's blunder, and to either represent it by a placeholder series of dots or an invented line.[28] This omission, if left uncorrected, mars the perfect, 1212-line count of the poem. This does not necessarily mean it is an error, however. Carlson proposes that, as with the failure of concatenation, the poet "deliberately fall[s] just short of such formal perfection in his own poetic edifice, a formally magnificent edifice but still a human construction." The poet thus underscores the separation between the perfection of divine creation—the New Jerusalem "of Godes sonde" (943)—and the doomed gesture of human utterance.[29] Carlson's reading corroborates another of the poet's perceived slips, the inclusion of a sixth stanza in Section XV. This manufactured error is particularly cunning because it both is and is not an aberration. The extra stanza allows the poet to "allude to the more perfect total of 1212 and then fall significantly just short of it".[30] The superfluous stanza is also a departure from the otherwise uniform five-stanza section division of the poem. In this respect, the additional stanza becomes a mote (the link-word of the next section) upon the face of the poem.

The rhyme scheme of the poem also carries subtle reminders of the elegy's inevitable failure. As I have already discussed, it helps to create a precise and strict order through which the poem unfolds. Concatenation aside, the rhyme scheme does not itself offer any consolation. Rather, it

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[28] Carlson, "*Pearl*'s Imperfections," 57-58. Gollancz suggests "Me þink þou speke3 now ful wronge," whereas William Vantuono substitutes "To speke of a new note I long" (cf. Stanbury, ed., *Pearl,* note to line 472; Carlson, "*Pearl*'s Imperfections," 60).
[29] Carlson, "*Pearl*'s Imperfections," 59.
[30] Carlson, "*Pearl*'s Imperfections," 63.

emphasizes the gulf between the Mourner and his deceased daughter. Like the dreamer and the Pearl-maiden on either side of the river, the rhyme words are separated by an intervening line: *abab* and so on. There is one exception per stanza, of course: lines eight and nine are both *b* rhymes. These lines enact the paradox of elegy that the Dreamer finds so troubling (327-36): the eighth and ninth lines are "poised between the joyful remembrance and the dread of loss to come".[31] Indeed, while these lines look both ways, they fall toward the latter. Lines eight and nine *appear* to form a couplet, but this, like the consolation of elegy, is an illusion. The eighth line is paired with the sixth line; the ninth belongs with the eleventh as part of the quatrain. Thus, even while it seems to work toward consolation, the form of the poem betrays the poet's anxieties and doubts concerning his elegiac endeavour; the form misspeaks itself and becomes a site of imperfection and loss.

Language and the Failures of Elegy

Whereas form proves to be an unreliable source of reassurance and consolation, the language of the poem is even more unsettling for the Mourner-Dreamer. He frequently wrestles with his words, in the *erber* scene in the proem and then repeatedly throughout the dream. He fails first to express his grief and its source clearly and later stutters and stumbles in his dialogue with the Pearl-maiden. The poet uses these missteps to make clear the limitations of the language available to achieve solace. There are two chief ways in which words fail the speaker: inexpressibility and the shifting semantic and symbolic meanings. Inexpressibility delineates the boundaries of what (poetic) language is capable of conveying, and shifting signs exemplify the problems of expression within those bounds.

The inexpressibility topos is a major feature of medieval poetry, where it is often deployed in conjunction with modesty and *occupatio* topoi. The trope frequently appears in dream vision poetry, often as a means of heightening the otherworldly aspects of the dreamscape or the veiled nature of

[31] Shaw, *Elegy & Paradox*, 53.

oneiric sight.[32] Similarly, in apocalyptic literature, as in works from the religious visionary tradition on which *Pearl* draws, inexpressibility is tied to the ineffability of God.[33] Inexpressibility takes on a particular poignancy in poems of mourning such as *Pearl*. The topos is unsettling for the poetic voice because it "explicitly calls into being the gap between language and all that is not language".[34] It undermines the griever's hope that his words about his lost beloved will not reach their goal, that they will fall short. Ann Chalmers Watts succinctly explains the paradox at the heart of inexpressibility: "words say what words cannot say".[35]

Watts identifies four instances of inexpressibility in the poem. Each occurs in the dream, and three of the four occur in the space of about 130 lines as the Dreamer explores the earthly paradise and meets the Maiden.[36] Although Chalmers Watts maintains that there is a relatively few instances of inexpressibility in the poem, the Dreamer's account of the *fayre londe* is characterised by repeated reminders of the ineffability of the landscape. At the outset of his *auenture*, the Dreamer contemplates the shining "rych rokke3" (68) and, blurring the line between the figure in the dream and the poetic voice recounting it, offers the first of several caveats to his narration:

> 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 adubbemente. (69-72)

This announcement highlights the gap between lived (dreamt) experience and linguistic representation and also suggests a link between the poem at hand and the storied tapestries of

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[32] The topos is not limited to the dream vision genre, of course. Chaucer frequently deploys it through his more garrulous characters, as in the *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.
[33] See, for example, Davis, "Words Beyond Meaning," and Machan, "Writing the Failure of Speech in *Pearl*."
[34] Watts, "Inexpressibility," 27.
[35] Watts, "Inexpressibility," 26. Or, as Stanbury puts it in her introduction, "[l]anguage itself tells us all we need to know about loss" (*Pearl,* 5).
[36] The final occasion of inexpressibility appears very near to the end of the dream when the Dreamer states that the scene of joy as the heavenly procession orbits the Lamb is beyond the capabilities of language: "Delyt þay hys come encroached / To much hit were of for to melle" (116-17).

medieval courts.[37] Similarly, of the sweet flowers and the songs of the birds of paradise, the Dreamer states "So gracios gle couþe no mon gete / As here and see her adubbement" (95-96). He reiterates the splendour of the land in what Watts identifies as the first of the four inexpressibility passages:

> So al wat3 dubbet on dere asyse
> Þat fryth þer fortwne forth me fere3.
> Þe derþe þerof for to deuyse
> Nis no wy3 worþé þat tonge bere3. (97-100)

Like the passage quoted above (69-72), the Dreamer-Narrator here draws a connection between efforts to capture the aesthetics and the figuration of art, specifically the linguistic arts. The passage also insists on the inadequacies of all human language: it is not only the *Pearl*-speaker who comes up short here, but any "wy3", any person, would be equally incapable.

A similar speechlessness, born of a similar failure, settles upon the Narrator when he appraises the "perle wythouten wemme" (221) affixed to the maiden's breast:

> A manne3 dom mo3t dry3ly demme,
> Er mynde mo3t malte in hit mesure.
> I hope no tong mo3t endure
> No sauerly saghe say þat sy3t (223-26).

We are again told that tongues, organs of speech in a physical body, are unable to represent adequately the wonder of the Maiden's appearance. Indeed, he says, no matter how sweet the utterance, it would not suffice. The Dreamer ties the possibilities and impossibilities of language to the limits of human reason: a mortal mind will dissolve in its efforts to comprehend the ineffable pearl.[38] In each instance, the Dreamer insists that the failure is not an individual fault, but a universal

[37] The poet may be drawing on the familiar *textus-textere* association.

[38] The diction in these lines looks forward to the climax of the poem and the end of the dream. In the final moment of visionary ecstasy, the Dreamer states "Delyt me drof in y3e and ere, / My mane3 mynde to madding malte" (1153-54). His reason fails him, and, wishing to cross the water against all assurances that this cannot be achieved, he dives in, breaks the spell of the dream, and wakes on the cold *huyle*-side.

shortcoming of the human mind, mouth, and the making of poetry. As Watts notes, "the point is not that the speaker fails . . . but that any tongue fails."[39]

Inexpressibility is just one of several manners in which the Mourner-Dreamer confronts the limits of his language. More troubling than the inability to say what he sees and feels is the unstable system of signs with which he tries to work. The multivalence of words in *Pearl* is often read as an indicator of the poet's mastery and of his interest in language and word-play. This is certainly true, but here, if anywhere, we must be careful not to associate the poet too closely with the Narrator.[40] As James Milroy observes, the *Pearl*-poet is a "subtle and gifted user of words", but his Narrator is rather careless.[41] For the Mourner-Dreamer, the instability of language is a great source of anxiety for it means that he can never be certain that he has successfully said what he means or indeed if he knows what he means when he speaks.

Word-play is a dominant feature of *Pearl* and one of the main vehicles of the poem's meaning and lessons. O.D. Macrae-Gibson, expanding the work of Dorothy Everett, argues that the link-words hold "a key to the whole [thematic] structure" of the poem.[42] Macrae-Gibson shows that, as Gordon affirms, the refrain-lines and the link-words that create the concatenation joining stanza to stanza and section to section serve to trace the "particular stage of thought with which that group is primarily concerned."[43] Edward Wilson insists that complex word play functions as an index of the Mourner-Dreamer's development as senses shift from the man's limited, mundane usage to the

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[39] Watts, "Inexpressibility," 27. Watts makes the important observation that only the Dreamer commits inexpressibilities; the Maiden does not (29).

[40] While this conflation is most likely due to readings of the poem that insist on its autobiographical character, it is not a necessary consequence. Also, even if we accept the fiction of the narratorial voice and take the poet and the Mourner-Dreamer to be the same human figure, we do well to recall that the man who wakes up and writes the elaborate poem is not exactly the same man who frets in the garden and falls asleep: he has received the lessons from the Pearl-maiden (however imperfectly) and has given the pearl (however reluctantly) over to the Prince. See Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 206.

[41] Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 195-97.

[42] Macrae-Gibson, "Link-Words," 64. See also Dorothy Everett, "The Alliterative Revival."

[43] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, xl.

clear use of the Maiden.[44] Although Morton Donner rejects a reading of word play as strictly indicative of the poet's interest in form, he argues that word play does two things: it demonstrates the gap between the Dreamer and the Pearl-Maiden (the gap Wilson insists is gradually closed); it is also a sign of the poet's desire for completeness.[45]

The most obvious instance of the polysemous signifier is the pearl itself. It refers variously to an actual gemstone (1-8, 779), the deceased daughter (242) and the maiden (192), the gravel of the earthly paradise (81-82), the talisman of heavenly marriage which the Maiden bears on her breast (221-28, 740-44), the parabolic Pearl of Great Price (729-39), and the gates of the New Jerusalem (1034-38; cf. Rev. 21:21).[46] For readers, as I have discussed above, the poem itself takes on aspects of the pearl as well in its roundness, its surface seemingly devoid of blemish, and its beauty. In its two main aspects, as the lost gemstone and as the deceased daughter-cum-Maiden, the pearl resonates most strongly. If, as many scholars contend, the identification of the precious jewel with the child stems from a pun on the name Margaret, the poem becomes what Jonathan Culler terms the "punning exfoliation of the proper name."[47] Nonetheless, the splintering of the symbol unsettles the Narrator; he cannot find solid footing in the elusive, illusive, and allusive language of the poem. Three oft-repeated words, which are also deployed as link-words throughout the poem—*spot*, *mote*, and *mone*— exemplify the Mourner-Dreamer's anxieties about unfixed language, and I want to investigate each of these words in turn to demonstrate how they both reveal and influence the mind of the Mourner-Dreamer and even suggest the possible futility of his elegiac project.

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[44] Wilson, "Word Play and the Interpretation of 'Pearl.'"
[45] Donner, "Word Play," 168. Lynn Staley Johnson likewise suggests that the poet uses the flexibility and creativity of language "to suggest the interrelation of all things in God" (*The Voice of the "Gawain"-Poet*, 203).
[46] For further discussion of the meanings of the pearl, see the essays by Hoffman, Johnson, and Roberston, all reprinted in Conley, ed.
[47] Culler, "The Call of the Phoneme: Introduction," 10. Culler is summarising Frederick Ahl's argument that Latin poetry depended on a concentrated interplay of repeated and inverted syllables. For example, Vergil's *Aeneid* is, in one respect, an exploration of anagrammatic puns on the name Latium. See Ahl, "Ars Est Caelare Artem (Art in Puns and Anagrams Engraved)."

Spot is, with the exception of the ubiquitous pearl, the first polysemous word in the text and the first explicitly shown as such. *Spot*, in its first and most frequent iteration, signifies "stain" or "blemish." The pearl is precious because it is "wythouten spot" (12). In its second guise (one line later), *spot* (or *spote*) designates a specific place, a small patch of land; the Narrator uses the word to denote the area in the *erber* in which he lost his pearl, where his daughter lies buried (13). The multivalence of this word is the first hint of a complex personal semantic matrix, a window into the mind of the Mourner. The conflation of the two meanings of *spot(e)* suggests a mind that perceives a given place—here the grave mound—as stained. The spot of earth where he lost his pearl is a marked spot; by extension, the world in which he lives is blemished by his loss. The *erber* itself is a place where the contamination of grief is heightened, a focal point of the sorrows that imbue the sublunary world. Moreover, the place-spot itself becomes an agent of stain: "O moul, þou marre3 a myry iuele" (23). It follows that "if the pearl is to be rediscovered it must, then, be by leaving the spot to which the poet's human mourning would confine him." Macrae-Gibson further argues that this is precisely what happens in the dream: "fro spot my spryt þer sprang in space" (61).[48]

Conversely, reading backward from the second meaning of *spote* to the first reveals the Mourner's uneasiness with not being able to situate the object of his sorrow. His precious pearl grieves him more because he cannot accurately locate it: it is *wythouten spote*, without place. We see the Mourner trying to address this issue at the heart of the proem. As I will discuss in detail in the next section, much of the Mourner's pain and anxiety derive from his unanswered calls to the pearl and his fruitless efforts to reunite with her. In the third stanza, this anxiety increases as he contemplates what happens to the pearl now that it is enclosed in the ground. He worries that the

[48] Macrae-Gibson, "Link-words," 55. Although he asserts that "[t]he question whether the poet was literally the father of a dead child or whether this apparent state of affairs is a literary contrivance does not concern the present article"—a stance which I share—throughout his discussion, Macrae-Gibson conflates the poet and his narrator. The argument holds, however, if we read "Dreamer" for "poet."

pearl, "[s]o semly a sede" (34), will dissolve into the earth, that it will feed the flowers and so fade from the physical world.[49]

The poet's use of *mote* functions in a similar fashion to *spot(e)*.[50] Within Section XVI (where it is the link-word), *mote* signifies a fortified dwelling, city, or castle (936-37, 949, 973),[51] a court (948). The word *mote* can also refer to a man-made mound or hill, usually with the sense of a raised turf on which a fortification is built.[52] In the context of *Pearl*, this sense reaches out to the other man-made mound, the grave of the dead child. Early in the poem, the mourner speaks of the pearl as inhabiting the spot in the *erber*: "There wonys that worthily, I wot and wene" (47). In the garden, the barrow is thus the corpse's dwelling space, or so the Mourner in the garden believes (and, to some extent, hopes). A comparison with the first section of the poem as discussed above further suggests the Narrator's subconscious inability to either grasp or properly express the realities of death and the afterlife as well as his tendency to dwell on the spot where his daughter was buried, whether she remains there or not.

Like *spot*, *mote* is also a word for a stain or blemish, as in the echoing phrase "wythouten mote" (924, 948, 960, and 972). In Section XVI, the Dreamer and the Maiden are discussing the necessary purity of the heavenly city. The dwelling place of the Innocents, says the Dreamer at the end of the first stanza, should be as pure as the maidens that reside there: "Your wone3 schulde be wythouten mote" (924). His comment unwittingly touches on the insubstantiality of the heavenly

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[49] For more the function of *spot*, see: Bogdanos *Image of the Ineffable*, 54-5; Donner, "Word Play," 167-68, 174; Tomasch, "A *Pearl* Punnology," 11-12.

[50] As Sylvia Tomasch points out, *mote* is noteworthy "because [the poet] rarely uses a link word before the stanza-group of which it is the key", but, in so doing, his use of puns "subtly persuades us of the rightness of his thematic connections" ("A *Pearl* Punnology," 12).

[51] Cf. line 142, where the word refers explicitly to "Paradyse" (137).

[52] *MED*, s.v. *mote* n.1, 1a.

city. The New Jerusalem is beyond the corruption of this world. It is pure and not of the physical world. It is, in truth, a dwelling without a place, a mote-less mote (cf. 948).[53]

The poet's use of *mone* is also closely connected to the matrix of mourning and sorrow in which the Narrator is caught, but its link is more subtle and complicated. Throughout Section XVIII, the word *mone* refers directly (and only) to the celestial orb. Here the moon is primarily a stained symbol of the mortal world. It is spotty and "of body to grym" (1070). Its light is secondary, easily eclipsed by the heavenly brilliance of God and the City (1043-47). As a marker of terrestrial time, the moon is also a symbol of mutability and thus of the fallen world of man and his imperfect systems of signs. So too is it a synonym for grief. The poet makes this connection explicit through the use of homonyms. The word *mon* (374) means grief. The world "anunder mone" (1092) is also a world under grief.[54] *Mon* is also linked to the modern word "moan" and carries connotations of lamentation, weeping, complaint, and states of anxiety and concern.[55] Those who dwell under the moon are therefore doomed to these states and actions. And who is one who dwells under the moon but a *mon*, a man (*Pearl* 69; 95).[56]

The poet thus presents us with a tightly woven web of ideas that equates change, death, mourning, and crying with the limitations of humanity and of human language. This semantic field exemplifies the Mourner-Dreamer's sorrowful mind: he sees life in this world bounded in misery (he calls it a *doel-doungoun*, a grief-prison), and he distrusts the slipperiness of shifting signs. The words that he tries to use to call to his pearl, to praise her, and to establish consolation come to typify his

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[53] The complex relationship of these two senses of *mote* is emphasized by the inclusion of a third homonym, *mote* as debate, argument, or dispute: "For þay of mote couþe neuer mynge / Of spotle3 perle3 þat beren þe creste" (855-56). Gordon identifies the blurring of these sentences in his note: "In spite of the temptation to take *mote* here as 'spot, blemish', in contrast with *spotle3* in the following line, *mote* 'dispute' gives a better meaning in the context."

[54] On the symbolism of the moon in medieval literature, see, for example, Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 3-4, 108-9. For the importance of lunar symbolism in *Pearl*, see Marie Borroff, "*Pearl*'s 'Maynful Mone.'"

[55] *MED*, s.v. *mon* n.1, 1a, 1b.

[56] Tomasch makes the point that the moon serves as symbol for the Mourner-Dreamer himself. As the moon is excluded from the brilliance of the New Jerusalem, the terrestrial man is excluded from the blessed many of the procession for "he too is spotted, like the moon" ("A *Pearl* Punnology," 18).

plight. The gaps between words and things that allow *spot* to mean both place and stain threaten the success of the elegy: his words may miss their marks, or, worse yet, may prove empty and all his efforts fruitless. In the course of the dream, the Mourner-Dreamer will encounter an alternative and improved form of language, one that not only removes the failures of human language that trouble him but that also promise consolation.

So far in this discussion, I have examined how *Pearl* functions as a poem in the elegiac mode, how the poet uses the context of mourning to interrogate how poetic language helps in the project of consolation. I have also examined some of the ways in which language fails in the face of death and of grief, such as the breakdown of poetic form and the uncertainty of signs and signification. In the next section, I will examine closely one of the exemplary problems that confronts the Mourner-Dreamer, the urge to apostrophise and the issue of misdirected communication. Following that section, I will explore the ways in which the Pearl-maiden seeks to correct and re-educate the Dreamer about the proper use of language. In the last section of this chapter, I will address the importance of the Eucharist as the final symbol of the poem.

Apostrophe and the Struggle of Elegy

The use of apostrophe is the first and perhaps the best example of the Mourner-Dreamer's struggle with language. The device opens the poem and returns at intervals in the proem, in the dream that follows, and twice more in the final scene after the Dreamer wakes. While few critics have overlooked the importance of the opening line—"Perle, plesaunte to prynce3 paye" (1)—no one, to my knowledge, has examined the significance of the poet's use of apostrophe. In this section, I want to investigate the poet's use of apostrophe as a means of exploring the challenges that both the *Pearl*-mourner and the elegist face. I will suggest that apostrophe stands at the crux between the successful elegy and the depressing failure of the incomplete work of mourning. Apostrophe appears

throughout the dream vision as a gauge of the Dreamer's progress as the Maiden attempts to teach him a new way of speaking and thus leads him toward consolation.

The definition of apostrophe is deceptively simple. In its broadest sense, it refers to any poetic address, but is generally understood to mean a direct address to unhearing and unresponsive entities—insentient objects, natural forces, animals, abstract emotions or concepts, or absent persons. Apostrophe comes from the Greek ἀποστροφή, "turning away," and was borrowed directly into Latin.[57] In the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian broadly defines apostrophe as "whatever draws away the hearer from the subject in question." More specifically, he explains it as "the figure by which the orator's address is turned from the judge" in order to attack an opponent, to make an invocation, or to implore aid.[58] In Book Four of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, pseudo-Cicero writes that the apostrophe allows the writer or speaker to express either a sentiment of pain and suffering or of indignation toward a man, a city, a place, or an object.[59] Both classical authors acknowledge the power of the apostrophe, even as they caution against its use. Quintilian says that apostrophe "has an extraordinary effect," but also notes that it can prove to be a flaw and a distraction.[60]

Some medieval theories of rhetoric and poetics treat the apostrophe as a powerful tool and give it a more prominent place than it had in the classical period. In his *Ars versificatoria* (c. 1175), Matthew of Vendôme merely mentions apostrophe (*exclamatio*) in passing.[61] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, whose *Poetria nova* (c. 1200-1215) was a dominant influence on late-medieval poetry and poetics, includes apostrophe as one of the eight types of *amplificatio*. Apostrophe, writes Geoffrey, allows one

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[57] See *OED*, s.v. "apostrophe" n.1. See also M.H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*; Culler, "Apostrophe," 135.
[58] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX.2.38-39 and IV.1.63.
[59] IV.21. Exclamatio est quae conflicit significationem doloris aut indignationis alicuius per hominis aut urbis aut loci aut rei cuiuspiam conpellationem.
[60] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX.2.38, IV.1.63. In each of Quintilian's short discussions of the figure, he stresses the important aspect of turning away from the main subject of discourse. He repeatedly highlights the term's etymological meaning, even punning on it at one point. In the most effective instances of apostrophe, writes Quintilian, *vere aversa videatur oratio* (IV.1.67), "the address would seem really turned away."
[61] Matthew of Vendôme, *Ars Versificatoria*, III.47. Matthew encourages students to investigate apostrophe and other rhetorical colours. See also the translations by Roger G. Parr and Aubrey E. Gaylon.

to travel the more leisurely and spacious route in his poetic endeavours. He encourages the poet to "[t]ake delight in apostrophe", for "[b]y it you may cause the subject to linger on its way, and in it you may stroll for an hour."[62] For Geoffrey, apostrophe is not only a "leisured delay" at the poetic feast, but an opportunity for opulent display: his discussion of the device's merits reiterates its sumptuousness. He extends the metaphor of the lavish feast, praising the "splendour of dishes arriving in rich profusion", and calling the apostrophe "food for the ear" which is "delicious and fragrant and costly."[63] (We can already see some of the appeal for the *Pearl*-poet and his Narrator.)

We cannot be entirely certain that the *Pearl*-poet knew Geoffrey's *Poetria Nova*, but it seems likely that the *Pearl*-poet, a man of such high learning and breadth of knowledge would have encountered the text or commentaries on it in the course of his education. The *Poetria nova* was, after all, "[t]he most popular of the medieval arts of poetry" and survives in over 200 manuscripts.[64] Geoffrey's text was one of the chief instructional manuals in medieval schools, and his advice for the *ars poetriae* overlaps significantly with the *ars praedicandi*.[65] I do not presume to claim that the *Pearl*-poet is directly imitating Geoffrey's examples in the *Poetria Nova* (though Chaucer did so in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*). I do, however, want to suggest that both Geoffrey of Vinsauf and the *Pearl*-poet are similarly interested in the function of apostrophe, the opportunities it affords and the pitfalls it contains for the mourning tongue. By investigating Geoffrey's presentation of apostrophe, we will better understand the intellectual and poetic contexts in which the *Pearl*-poet approaches apostrophe.

Geoffrey's fourth and fifth examples of the appropriate occasions, objects, and forms for apostrophe may have held particular significance for the *Pearl*-poet as he pondered the power of

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[62] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, trans. Margaret F. Nims, 25-26. See also the translation in Ernest Gallo, *The* Poetria Nova *and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine*.
[63] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 26.
[64] Ernest Gallo, "The *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf," 68. See also: Marjorie Curry Woods, *An Early Commentary on the* Poetria nova *of Geoffrey of Vinsauf*, xv; and Nims, trans., *Poetria nova*, 12.
[65] Chance, "Allegory and Structure in *Pearl*," 33.

words and the project of elegy. The fourth example, in which the speaker addresses England, "Queen of kingdoms while King Richard lives," is, according to the introductory passage, intended for a "time of success, [a] time of auspicious fortune," but also is intended "as presage of grief to come".[66] The passage focuses on the transience of earthly boons: mirrors will shatter, bright stars will be eclipsed, strong pillars will "shudder and crash," and "the shadows of twilight will usher in night." The address to England also includes a lesson on the difference between human and divine knowledge and perspective: "To know present things is permitted to man; God alone knows the future." Geoffrey stresses that only one piece of foreknowledge is granted to man: "that no power can be lasting; that fortune ordains short life for prosperity."[67] A similar *transit gloria mundi* message is at the heart of the Pearl-maiden's first lesson for the Dreamer when she explains to him "þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose / Þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef" (268-69).

Geoffrey's fifth example is more closely aligned with the central concerns of *Pearl*. This passage is meant for a "time of grief" and demonstrates the manner in which one may express sorrow. The prompt for this model exercise is the death of Richard I, the "grief to come" foretold in the previous passage. The speaker begins by addressing England, and calls the mourner to "bear witness to your woe in the gestures of sorrow": "Let your eyes flood with tears . . . . Let writhing anguish twist your fingers . . . . Let your cry strike the heavens."[68] He moves from the figure of the mourner to apostrophise the cruel days of Richard's wounding and death, and then, moving from event to actor, he curses and questions the treacherous soldier who shot the king.[69] Still seeking some solace in locating the cause of and placing the blame for Richard's death, the speaker telescopes his apostrophes speaking first to Death, then to Nature, which is the source of both life

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[66] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 28.
[67] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 28-29.
[68] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 29. Chaucer mocks the hyperbole of this passage in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* (VII.3347-51).
[69] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 29-30.

and death, and finally he moves beyond the worldly sphere to chide the ultimate source of all being, God.[70] The passage concludes with a reminder of the transience of mundane joy: through Richard's death God has "made us know how brief is the laughter of earth, how long are its tears."[71] The *Pearl*-mourner likewise seeks to locate the cause of his loss and his grief. He begins by calling out to the pearl itself, and later twice attaches agency to it, making it the active source of his loss (13, 245-50). He castigates Nature, represented in the flowers that grow on the *huyle* (25-36) and the *moul* that "marre[st] a myry iuele" (23). The Mourner similarly doubts the power of God in the wake of personal loss. Whereas Geoffrey's speaker asks, "O God, most excellent of beings, why do you fail in your nature here?", the grieving man in the *erber* gains no solace from the "kynde of Kryst" (55).[72]

In both his theoretical discussion and his practical examples, Geoffrey demonstrates one of the defining characteristics of the device, apostrophe as diversionary tactic. As a form of amplification, apostrophe is "a mode of delay."[73] Although he does not invoke Quintilian directly, Geoffrey seems to draw on the same etymological awareness for his interpretation and presentation of the device: as I mentioned above, he introduces apostrophe using the metaphor of travel, the pleasant wayside and the scenic route. The notion of "turning away" contains within it an implicit criticism, however, that the speaker is somehow neglecting or rejecting his point of focus or his obligations. In the *ad Herennium*, pseudo-Cicero cautions the rhetor against overuse of apostrophe. Although Geoffrey is generally positive about the opportunities apostrophe affords, one of his concluding remarks likewise suggests an element of caution. Summing up the various countenances of apostrophe, he writes that, in some instances, the device "languishes in tearful complaint against all that is harsh" [ad omnia dura / In lacrimis panctuque jacet (ll. 456-57)].[74] Geoffrey does not

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[70] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 30-31.
[71] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 31.
[72] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 31.
[73] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 25.
[74] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, 32. Nims' translation perhaps overemphasises the stultifying effects of the grieving apostrophe. Gallo offers the more literal "it lies in tears and lamentations for any difficult lot" (*Poetria nova*, 39).

explicitly condemn apostrophe, of course, but the warning is there nonetheless in the verb *jacet* ("lies"). The three other types of apostrophe Geoffrey enumerates in this concluding passage—the didactic, the accusatory or prosecutorial, and the mocking—are active and assertive, if not outright aggressive. Corrective apostrophe "rebukes" (*corripit*) "depraved error, after the manner of a teacher." The apostrophe used for mockery adopts a ridiculous attitude (*fertur*) to take up arms against buffoonery. The prosecutorial apostrophe, which responds to "a great crime" "rises up in anger" (*surgit in iram*).[75] Apostrophe in lamentation, however, is not active in the same sense. Whether we translate Geoffrey's *jacet* literally, "lies," or adopt Nims' more dramatic "languishes," we see that the apostrophes of a grieving speaker have a stationary or stalled character. They are the most potentially dangerous type of apostrophe, a "turning away" from which one might not be able to turn back.

In *Pearl*, the opening apostrophe marks the Mourner's turning away from the social world to dwell in his grief. When he enters into the *erber*, he effectively turns his back on the active and lively community of harvesters who labour in the fields in "Augoste . . . / Quen corne is coruen wyth croke3 kene" (39-40). He instead returns to the site of his sorrow, the small garden in which he lost his precious pearl. Rather than speak with his fellows among the living, he elects to call out to the absent, inanimate, and mute pearl, and so isolates himself further. He becomes a sad and lonely voice crying in the garden, addressing an object (or a person) that cannot respond and thus cannot offer consolation. This first instance of apostrophe in *Pearl* announces and encapsulates the Mourner's quandary: he longs for contact with that which is not present, seeks a response from that which cannot answer, and, in the frustration born of his failures, becomes suspicious of the medium in which he operates. He doubts the power of words.

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[75] Gallo, trans., *Poetria nova*, 39.

Apostrophe, according to Jonathan Culler, is much closer to the heart of poetry and poetic language than modern criticism might otherwise suggest.[76] Apostrophes function most often—as Quintilian, pseudo-Cicero, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf all note—"as intensifiers, as images of invested passion."[77] Culler draws on the work of Pierre Fournier, who claims that apostrophe arises from "feeling stirred up within the heart until it breaks out and spreads itself about on the outside".[78] Apostrophe is like Wordsworth's concept of poetry itself, the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling. Building on Fournier's comments, Culler suggests that apostrophes can function as metonymic signs of that passion. Culler is reluctant to accept that this characterisation of the apostrophe is universally true: he reminds us that apostrophe can also have a more measured and controlled tone and delivery and that, in some instances, the intense feeling which spurs the apostrophiser is not sentiment for the object or person addressed, but "an intense feeling for the act of addressing".[79] The poetic speaker can love the apostrophised object, yes, but he can also be half in love with apostrophe itself. Culler's reading identifies one of the possible traps in apostrophe, one into which the Jeweller figure in *Pearl* would be likely to fall: the apostrophising speaker must avoid being caught—dazzled or glamoured—by what Geoffrey of Vinsauf identifies as the "delicious and fragrant and costly" splendour of poetic ornament. Indeed, the overflowing passion of which Fournier writes can easily become a confused mixture of intense feelings for the object of the address and for reaching out verbally to that object, just as the apostrophe itself is at once an effect of heightened emotion and an intensifier of that same emotion.[80] The Mourner's cries in the *erber*

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[76] Culler, "Apostrophe," 135-37.
[77] Culler, "Apostrophe," 138.
[78] Fontanier, *Les Figures du discours* (1830; Paris: Flammarion, 1968). Culler translates from 372.
[79] Culler, "Apostrophe," 139.
[80] What Culler's discussion emphasises, though he does not explicitly say so, is that if the apostrophe is indeed born of intensified and intensifying passion, then the nature of that passion is an important factor. If the passion is problematic, the apostrophe is also a problem. In *Pearl*, much of the Mourner's grief is the result of misplaced value and misdirected affection. He is, as the Maiden repeatedly points out, too attached to the things of this world. According to the Maiden's lesson—"þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose" (268)—even his opening address is off the mark: he cannot hope for his

stem from his sorrow at the loss of the pearl, but they increase that sorrow rather than assuage it. As Bogdanos notes, "The hero's initial lamentation is charged with powerful, even self-luxuriating emotion", and his "emotional violence is made to suggest a corresponding degree of impotence."[81] The Mourner risks perpetuating a cycle of impassioned calling without response. The consequent frustration reinforces that passion until he comes to lament his own limitations rather than his lost loved one.

Barbara Nolan posits that this lapse has already happened, or begun to happen, in the first stanzas of the poem. She argues that "the 'I,' not the 'pearl,' is the real subject of the jeweler's grief" and that the Mourner-Dreamer is "full of self-importance and self-pity". Citing the prevalence of first-person singular pronouns in the proem and throughout the dream, Nolan states: "Syntax works to intensify our impression of the jeweler's self-absorption. Concentrating attention on his loss, he allows the pearl, as well as the garden setting, to slip into prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses."[82] Despite his efforts to set the pearl front-and-centre by naming it first, the Mourner himself quickly eclipses both pearl and garden: his grief, here represented by his need to hail the pearl and the agents of his loss, obscures the original point of interest and shifts the focus to him as a speaker. The whirlpool effect of the apostrophe thus reveals the isolationist and even solipsistic tendencies of grief and of the elegy.

Apostrophe is particularly important to the elegist. The core principle behind the apostrophe, to give voice to and converse with an otherwise silent (either because of natural qualities or absence) entity, is remarkably similar to one of the idealised goals of the elegy, to conjure the deceased, to have her turn back from the grave and toward the speaker. Both apostrophe and elegy

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address to succeed if he has not called upon the right referent. Similarly, although he admires the pearl for its extreme beauty and perfect qualities, he hails the pearl primarily out of a jealous self-interest.

[81] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 21.

[82] Nolan, *Gothic Visionary Perspective*, 160-61. Spearing likewise notes that the Mourner's "grief is really for himself, not for her" (*Dream-poetry*, 121).

depend on an element of invocation, a hope, if not a belief, that the poet can do things with words. "[T]o apostrophize," writes Culler, "is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call it into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire."[83] The apostrophising poet seeks to erase the gap between subject and object, and the elegising poet aims to overcome the distance between the quick and the dead. It should be no surprise, then, that so many elegies make frequent use of the device.[84]

In elegy, the wish for colloquy is particularly poignant and affective for it mobilises the metonymic qualities of the human voice: the spoken words of the deceased addressee are desired not only because of a longing for renewed sensory contact, the familiar sound of the voice, nor simply because they are 'put for' the lost beloved, but because they signify the living voice of the beloved. The stream of speech, the unfolding of words and sentences and the building of meaning takes time. The prosopopoeia of apostrophe is a revitalising agent, one which restores the addressee from the silent no-time of death to the temporal operation of human language. The restoration of temporality to the deceased is double-edged: time is necessary for language—for words and sentences to unfold—but it is precisely this unfolding of things in time which lead to death, separation, dissolution, and loss. The elegist's ambivalences to time and to language are again underscored: they are respectively the dimension and medium in which he operates, through which he hopes to access his beloved, but which also limit and even undermine his efforts. The elegist thus wants to use language (in time) to move beyond language, to break out of time.

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[83] Culler, "Apostrophe," 139. Culler explains that the invocation of apostrophe is also "a figure of vocation" (142). The apostrophizing poet announces himself as one to whom the hailed objects might be expected to respond. As Paul de Man notes, apostrophe is closely linked to "the figure of prosopopoeia, the fiction . . . which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech" ("Autobiography as De-Facement," 75).

[84] Examples from later periods are almost innumerable, of course. In the medieval period the direct address or would-be invocation of the deceased appears in elegies or elegiac passages, both in the dream vision genre and beyond. In Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, for example, the second half of the Man in Black's first lament is an address to Death (481-86). Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes* includes the writing of a lengthy apostrophic passage bewailing Fortune's "chaunge and mutabilite" (4681). Early in his dream, the narrator of *The Quare of Jelusy* overhears the lady's cries to the goddesses Hymen and Diane (59-92).

Apostrophe resists time. It is a decidedly lyric device, dependent on an internalising focus of the poem and of the speaker. The shift to internalization "is important", writes Culler, "because it works against narrative and its accompaniments: sequentiality, causality, time, and teleological meaning."[85] Apostrophe has its own special temporality, a sort of "timeless present", which, according to Culler, is more closely identified with discourse than with story.[86] In predominantly narrative poems such as dream visions, the apostrophe intrudes upon the organised series of events that make up the story: like ekphrasis, apostrophe diverts the flow of narrative into the eddying backwaters of lyrical meditation. In elegiac poetry, apostrophe allows for a circumventing of temporality by manipulating the relationship between presence and absence: "Apostrophes displace this irreversible structure [e.g. the temporal sequence of loss] by removing the opposition between presence and absence from empirical time [narrative] and locating it in discursive time. The temporal movement from A to B, internalized by apostrophe, becomes a reversible alternation between A´ and B´: a play of presence and absence governed not by time but by poetic power."[87]

Apostrophe can thus offer the elegist the best aspects of temporality and timelessness. It allows the speaker to call to the lost beloved and (seemingly) to call her back from the dead. Its anti-temporal properties also provide the mourner with the opportunity to negate the sequence of events that led to his loss. Apostrophe is a powerful tool, yes, but it must be wielded deftly. It is with these issues in mind that we will now turn to specific instances of apostrophe in *Pearl*, beginning with the opening word of the poem.

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[85] Culler, "Apostrophe," 148.
[86] Culler, "Apostrophe," 149.
[87] Culler, "Apostrophe," 150. Culler cites elegy as the "clearest example of this structure", for the elegiac poem "replaces an irreversible temporal disjunction, the move from life to death, with a dialectical alternation between attitudes of mourning and consolation, evocations of absence and presence" (150).

The Trajectory of Apostrophe in *Pearl*

While I believe that the first word of *Pearl* constitutes an apostrophe (on which, more below), there is no clear consensus about the designation. Some critics simply disregard the question altogether. For instance, J.J. Anderson observes that "[t]he poem's first word is its focal point", but does not elaborate on the manner in which the word (*Perle*) is brought into focus.[88] Other scholars are more direct in their denial of apostrophe. Robert Blanch dismisses outright the possibility of a rhetorical opening. He insists that these lines are written in imitation of "the phraseology and formulae of medieval lapidaries".[89] Less decisively, Gordon writes that "The first two lines are probably not an apostrophe."[90] Nonetheless, several editors do read the lines as apostrophe. Schofield sets the opening word apart by the insertion of a long dash (a second dash appears at the end of the line). Gollancz, Osgood, and, most recently, Stanbury all punctuate the first line as an apostrophe by inserting a comma after "Perle".[91]

Still others openly embrace the first word as an apostrophe. Theodore Bogdanos, for instance, argues that the "dramatic force" of the apostrophic opening immediately drives home the importance of the central image.[92] Patricia Kean labels the opening lines using the Latin term *exclamatio*, whereby she highlights the rhetorical nature of the condensed and economic structure of the proem.[93] The two-line *exclamatio*, writes Kean, provides the *propositio* with concise, almost proverbial force. She situates the *Pearl*-poet's use of this topos in an enduring European tradition,

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[88] J.J. Anderson, *Language and Imagination in the Gawain-poems*, 20. Lynn Staley notes that, like the *Book of the Duchess* or Dante's *Vita nuova*, *Pearl* shares in the strategies of the elegiac mode, but she does not cite the apostrophe as one of these strategies (*The Voice of the* Gawain-*poet*, 146).
[89] Robert J. Blanch, "Precious Metal and Gem Symbolism in *Pearl*," 86.
[90] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, 45.
[91] Interestingly, Gordon does the same: his discussion of the line's syntax serves to explain this choice, but the addition of the comma certainly opens up the possibility of alternate, apostrophic readings. Andrew and Waldron place a comma after the second word, "Perle plesaunte, to prynces paye", and their gloss also leaves open the possibility of an apostrophic reading: "Lovely pearl, which it pleases a prince to set radiantly (*or* chastely) in gold so bright".
[92] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 13.
[93] Kean, *The Pearl*, 8. Given the "economy of organization and a condensation of meaning" in the opening section, Kean insists that the "best way to understand the poet's purpose will be to study the rhetorical structure of the opening." She points out, too, that the "devices of formal rhetoric were the natural tools of a poet of this period." Cf. Chance, "*Ars Praedicandi*," 33; Davidoff, *Beginning Well*, 30-35.

citing both Tertullian and Milo of St Armand, whose Latin poem in *De sobrietate* includes an address to the *margarita micans*, the "shining pearl".[94] The effect of Kean's reading is two-fold. First, it clearly identifies the opening as an apostrophe and, as I have said, invests it with the authority of participation in a long tradition. Second, it reconciles other dismissive readings to the apostrophic interpretation. Here, she acts upon the possibility Gordon leaves open even as he tries to deny the apostrophe. As I noted above, Blanch insists that the lines are drawn strictly from "the phraseology and formulae of medieval lapidaries". Kean shows that the lines can be both an adoption of lapidary material and an apostrophe. Her readings of Tertullian and Milo make clear that the texts which explicitly link fine pearls with gold mounting also include direct addresses to the gemstone. Kean's assessment strikes me as the correct one. After all, why should we doubt that the *Pearl*-poet, a devotee of word games, doubled meanings, and semantic slipperiness would not look upon the lapidary material and read the description as an apostrophe? Such a gesture fits with the dynamic nature of the pearl symbol throughout the poem: in the twelve lines of the first stanza, for example, the pearl shifts from the object closed in gold to the lost "her."[95]

Bogdanos follows Kean's assertion that the poem begins with an apostrophe, one which initiates an "emphatic confrontation" with the poem's chief image and yet "transfixes us with its total arbitrariness as 'the beginning'".[96] The word thus functions, according to Eugene Vance, as incipit, both title and opening.[97] It simultaneously introduces the cause, the subject, and the central image of the poem, all of which are, of course, the pearl. Just as the opening section troubles the

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[94] Kean, *The Pearl*, 8-9. For Milo of St Armand, see *De Sobrietate*, II, 44-46, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Poetae Latini Aevi Carolini*, 646. Kean quotes from Tertullian's *De resurrection carnis* wherein he explains that the only appropriate setting for pearl is "choice gold." Milo apologises to his pearl, explaining that, while "thrice-fired gold" is the proper setting for the gem, he has "only harsher bronze for your enclosing" (Kean's translation).

[95] Vance accounts for the hyr-hit flux. The I-her axis, he explains, is "fraught with self-pity", the survivor's sorrow which must be spoken and gradually overcome. The I-it axis, by contrast, is a distancing gesture, one meant to protect the speaker from feelings of guilt if not of helplessness. It allows the Mourner to claim, as Vance puts it, "'I' did not lose 'her'; rather, 'it' slipped from me into the grass" ("Poetics of Participation," 134.) Cf. Nolan's comments regarding the Mourner's precise use of prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses.

[96] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 13.

[97] Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 131.

significance of the pearl, the first invocation ushers in a flood of associations. Precisely because the referent remains unfixed, the speaker's utterance invokes what Bogdanos terms the "cumulative tradition", the "overwhelm[ing] . . . wealth of associations that the pearl came to possess . . . in the Middle Ages": the properties described in the lapidaries, the Gospel imagery and patristic commentaries on them, and secular literary references, as well as contemporary social, mercantile, and sartorial associations.[98] Schofield notes that "a learned man of the fourteenth century was so used to interpretation of the pearl that the word could hardly be mentioned without a great many rising to his memory instantly."[99] One of the Mourner's tasks here, then, is to try to embrace the fullness of the word "pearl" without losing his focus on the desired referents. The possible (and likely) slippage is an issue against which he will struggle throughout the poem and that struggle is metonymically represented by the pearl itself.

The indeterminacy of the referent in the opening stanzas is troubling for the Mourner—and for readers of the poem. Vance argues that this indeterminacy leads to an important, semiotic question about poetic language itself: "what inherent claims are made for poetic discourse," he asks, "when 'perle' is employed both as the sign of an inanimate jewel to represent the perfection of a deceased maiden, and as a proper noun to address or call her into memory?"[100] Part of the Mourner's problem stems from the issues that arise when the pearl becomes a sign as well as a thing (or series of things): "pearl as sign is now a written poetic word, now a lovely sound, now a proper name, now a gem that is not a gem because the pearl is a trope. Thus, Pearl is the name of an open-

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[98] For a more full discussion of the manifold meanings of pearls in late-medieval Europe, see Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 14-19; Schofield, *Pearl*; Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet*, 135; P.J. Heather, "Precious Stones in the Middle English Verse of the Fourteenth Century."

[99] Schofield, "*Pearl*," 639. Cf. Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 135.

[100] Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 131. It is worth noting that, for much of his discussion, Vance focuses on a bifurcation of the sematic fields of the pearl—as either one particular, perfect gemstone or as a name for the person—but his argument holds even if we accept the wider refraction of meanings for the pearl posited by Spearing, Bogdanos, and others.

ended semantic process, hence, on all these scores a token of the poetic."[101] Again, we see the apostrophe as a trope for the poetic endeavour. The device is also a means to interrogate the poetic practice.

The semantic flux of the pearl is reflected, according to Vance, in the "syntactic indeterminacy" of the first two lines. He wonders if, as Gordon and Blanch maintain, "this an inanimate jewel", or "is it an exclamation? Is it the name of a person whom we are addressing or invoking—calling *into* ourselves?"[102] Although Vance approaches the question of an opening apostrophe with a tentativeness similar to Gordon's careful posturing, it is important to note that each time he examines the pearl as a sign for a human being, his interpretations instantly turn to invocation and address. His comments likewise identify one of the key impulses for apostrophe and for elegy, the desire to call the addressees "*into* ourselves", to restore the lost object—human or thing—and even to move beyond a simple encounter to a more thorough union.

Bogdanos, who accepts the apostrophe more readily than most other critics, states that the initial instance of *perle* is "[i]solated by a caesura" from which it gains its dramatic force.[103] Although his interpretation appears to depend largely on an acceptance of the editorial comma, this is not wholly the case. The first word is set off from the rest of the line by the simple necessities of pronunciation. Vance points out that it is impossible to pronounce the word *perle* in haste: it is "a word sweet to the English ear, and languorous to utter".[104] Vance suggests that the pleasant sonic qualities are visually fetishized in the (albeit rough) illumination of the initial P, but he does not elaborate on the phonetic features that contribute to the sweet effect. The word sounds longer than its two syllables. The burst of the [p] begins the poem with dramatic force and likewise captures the sudden outpouring of emotion through the apostrophe. Just as the rubricated capital startles and

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[101] Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 132.
[102] Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 131.
[103] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 13.
[104] Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 131.

captivates the eye, the plosive consonant announces itself to the ear.[105] Immediately the tongue is slowed, however, as it encounters the adjacent rhotic and lateral liquids. This tongue-twisting pair, sandwiched between a short middle vowel and the pronounced final –e, combined with the thrust of the unvoiced plosive creates a mellifluous luxury which the speaker relishes even as he utters it. The alliteration through the end of the line refracts and recombines these sounds, "*pl*esaunt to *pr*ynces", without again achieving the full richness or pacing of the first word.

In its combination of sudden sound and slow, perhaps difficult pronunciation, the word verbalises the challenges the Mourner-Dreamer faces in both his plaint in the *erber* and his encounter with the Maiden in the dreamscape: he frequently stumbles, tripping over his hasty words while trying to rein in his unthinking outbursts. Similarly, the pleasantness of the word itself, with its implicit invitation to relish and repeat it, represents the peril of the apostrophe, the chance that the speaker will become obsessed with the repetition of the utterance—whether successful or not—and lose sight of the cause and the goal of the address. As we will see in the discussion below, this possibility arises several times in the course of the dream and threatens to derail the Mourner's attempts at consolation.

The first apostrophe establishes an important tone for the rest of the poem: from the first sound he makes, the Mourner in the garden identifies himself as a troubled speaker grappling with the intricacies of the apostrophe. Indeed, because of the prominent placement of the address to the pearl, it is possible to read the whole poem as one long apostrophe, or, perhaps less drastically, as an effort to resolve the speaker's (and by extension the poet's) issues with apostrophe. From this stance, we can use the other instances of apostrophe to plot the Mourner-Dreamer's progress from the anxiety and futility of grief to the settled and controlled utterances with which the poem concludes.

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[105] Vance adds no disclaimer, but we should be cautious not to conflate the composition of the poem with the work of the scribe or rubricator.

The first stanza of the poem, with its opening address to the pearl and the concise presentation of the Mourner's problem in the final four lines sets an apostrophic tone for the stanzas which follow in Section I:

> Allas! I lest hyr in on erbere;
> Þur3 gresse to grounde hit fro me yot.
> I deweyne, fordolked of luf-daungere
> Of þat pryuy perle wythouten spot. (9-12).

The second stanza presents the Mourner's response to his loss: he goes frequently to the spot where his pearl sprang from him and undergoes a degree of emotional torment. The Mourner recounts the experience of his grief largely in the imperfect tense and so covers many undetermined past instances; the account thus stands in for the unspoken preamble to the outburst that opens the poem even as it prepares for the time in the *erber* when the Mourner enters into the dream (37-60). The pain of the Mourner's visits is fully disclosed: standing at the grave and longing for the pearl "dot3 bot þrych my hert þrange, / My breste in bale bot bolne and bele" (17-18). The grief at this site pierces his heart, and his sorrow burns and swells within his breast. We see the emotional storm brewing. The feeling soon proves too much and is released as an apostrophe: "O moul, þou marre3 a myry iuele" (23).[106]

The Mourner now turns away from his prior account to give voice to his sorrow. Whereas earlier he speaks about his anguish, here he speaks his grief directly. Like the speaker in Geoffrey of Vinsauf's fifth example, he cries out to the earth, seeking to redirect his anger. This instance of venting creates a symmetrical structure out of the first two stanzas: his identification of his loss (9-12) and his response to it (13-22) are sandwiched between the two apostrophes. This shape suggests the cyclical nature of his grief and his inability to break from its endless repetition. Through his

[106] In her discussion of this passage, Kean unreservedly labels this exclamation an apostrophe (*The Pearl*, 12).

address to the *moul* he tries to transfer blame to the mound in which the pearl is "clad in clot" (22).[107] The apostrophe works to transform the ground from an object to a subject, one that actively "marre3" the buried pearl, and is thus a worthy recipient of blame. The earth does not respond, however, either in words or by releasing the pearl. Nonetheless, the perceived failure of this apostrophic instance is important for our understanding of the Mourner's grief, for his slow development as an effective speaker and mourner, and for the poem's lesson about the difference between the earthly and celestial spheres of language.

The stony silence of the *moul* prompts the Mourner to probe what he can and cannot do with words in the following stanza. The apostrophe to the earth shifts his attention from his acts of grief to the site itself, and his consideration of that "spot of spyce3" (25) focusses on the issue of the pearl's probable dissolution. The most important passage in this stanza has the Mourner contemplating the likelihood that the buried pearl nourishes the flowering spices that grow on the mound:

> 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. (29-32)

This paraphrase of John 12:24-25 is typically understood as the Mourner's attempt to console himself by emphasising the continuity of life in the cycles of the natural world.[108] Edward Vasta suggests another reading of this passage, one that betrays the mourner's anxieties over this (imperfect) form of rebirth. The transference of life is imperfect because it is perennial. The cycle of life, death, and rebirth certainly exists, but it is not, as the Mourner acknowledges, a closed circle; it

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[107] It is most likely, of course, that the Mourner's address here is directed at the plot of ground before him, the "clot" that encloses the pearl. I believe, however, that the poet intended a broader resonance alongside the more immediate reference. The Mourner accuses this earth and all earth—the world "anunder mon" (1092), the mortal lands subject to time and mutability—as the agent of corruption.

[108] Andrew and Waldron explain: "This is a familiar Christian formula of *solacium* . . . for the inevitable fact of death" (55). Gordon observes that the lines are very similar to those in the C-text of *Piers Plowman* XIII.179-81, but maintains there is little likelihood of a direct relationship (47). His comment instead suggests the circulation and popularity of this passage at the end of the fourteenth century.

is a spiral. The beauty of the spice-flowers is fleeting: at the end of the next season they will fade and die and their seeds, not the corpse of the child, will give rise to the next year's crop. Moreover, if the corpse of the child (the pearl, the seed) is transformed into the new life of the flowers, her presence in the mound will end. The memory of the deceased daughter will quickly dissipate and "his loss will then be total".[109] Therefore, argues Vasta, we should read these lines not as a contemplation of the life that might grow and in its turn fade, but as a command (or attempted command) against any such transformation.

The key to Vasta's interpretation is in the word "fede" (29). Most editions and translations interpret the word in the sense of weakening, diminishing, or dying away. Gordon reads it as a descendant of the Old French root *fade* and suggests that we think of the flowers as having lost colour. Israel Gollancz links the word to Old Norse *feyja* and glosses it as "decay".[110] Vasta interprets "fede" as akin to Modern English "fed" through the past participle of Middle English *feden* ("to feed") from the Old English *fedan*.[111] Taken together, the passage thus reads: "flower and fruit may not be fed where the Pearl lies—may not feed on the Pearl's decay".[112] The Mourner seeks to order a halt to the natural cycle, but his commands to the *flor* and *fryte* (or to Nature more generally) go unheeded. The third stanza thus chronicles the Mourner's further experience of the inefficacies of language and of himself as a speaker whose words achieve their purpose. Like his unheeded cries to the lost pearl and to the *moul*, the vegetable world's unrelenting progress through the natural cycle undermines his faith in his identity as a poetic speaker and decreases his hope of finding consolation for his grief.

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[109] Vasta, "Immortal Flowers," 193.
[110] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, 47. Gordon notes that "the vowel *e* [in Gollancz's suggestion] is obscure." Andrew and Waldron follow Gordon, whereas Stanbury sides with Gordon and points to "the stanza's display of rot and regeneration as a causal style" (Stanbury, ed., *Pearl*, 72).
[111] Vasta, "Immortal Flowers," 191. Gordon's appendix on accidence shows how a final –e frequently becomes the standard ending for strong verbs (110-15).
[112] Vasta, "Immortal Flowers," 192. Vasta's reading depends on a reinterpretation of "may" as well. It should not be interpreted as a comment on ability but in the sense of permission (from the Old English *magan*).

The first section of *Pearl* contains yet a third instance of apostrophe, although it occurs obliquely. In the skewed temporalities of the opening section, the Mourner switches from the atemporal or ill-defined address of the first three stanzas to the specific moment of his life narrated in the fourth and fifth stanzas, when he enters again into the *erber* (already mentioned) and begins his plaint: "To þat spot þat I in speche expoun / I entred in þat erber grene, / In Augoste in a hy3 seysoun" (37-39).What follows, after a second and more detailed account of the flowers and spices on the mound, is a real-time account of the Mourner's most recent experience at the grave-mound:

> 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 meseluen sa3t.
> I playned my perle þat þer wat3 spenned
> Wyth fyrce skylle3 þat faste fa3t (49-54)

From what we know about the *Pearl*-mourner in the first three stanzas—he is a man prone to emotional outbursts, one who seems at once to loathe and to relish the opportunity to speak his lost beloved's name—it is safe to assume, I think, that this last lament is similar in form and degree of passion. The desolating grief (*deuely dele*) that lies in the Mourner's heart recalls his earlier comment that reflecting on the lost pearl "dot3 bot þrych my hert þrange, / My breste in bale bot bolne and bele" (17-18). The vehement arguments (*fyrce skylle3*) that clamour within him further evince the frantic character of his pining before the grave-mound. The Mourner's plaint is no doubt full of cries of the pearl's name: we can imagine him feverishly repeating the word to himself until he works himself into a hysterical state. He again calls out to the pearl, but the pearl, enclosed in the equally silent ground, again does not respond. Although the Mourner knows that the "kynde of Kryst" (55) should grant him comfort, the violence of the scene progresses until his reason is unsettled and his "wreched wylle" causes him to carry on in painful woe (56). The emotional turmoil suddenly

overwhelms the Mourner and casts him into the "slepyng-sla3te" (59).[113] Here the implied apostrophes of the final plaint, presaged by the opening of the poem and the sudden and agitated address to the earth, appear to induce the dream. Apostrophes bookend the proem and mark the boundary between waking life in the garden and the otherworldly dreamscape.[114]

Because of the prominent role of apostrophes in the proem, what follows in the dream is, in part at least, a response to the Mourner's disappointment with the lack of consolation that apostrophe affords. Indeed, in one sense, the dream-encounter with the Pearl-maiden is a fantasy of the apostrophic mind. It fulfils and realises what Culler calls apostrophe's optative character.[115] In an admittedly roundabout way, the hailing of the lost pearl leads to the sleep which then leads to the dream in which the Maiden appears: the invocations of poetic mourning are successful.[116] The dream thus presents a unique opportunity to achieve that elusive consolation and to put an end to grief.

Despite the prominence of apostrophes in the proem of *Pearl*, the device appears relatively infrequently in the course of the dream, but these few instances occur at important intervals. There are a total of five apostrophes in the dream sequence. Of these five, the Mourner-Dreamer speaks two and the Maiden three. The Dreamer's first apostrophe is the most significant. After he journeys through the earthly paradise, increasingly amazed by the otherworldly sights and sounds, the Dreamer sees the Maiden. Following the elaborate, four-stanza description of her appearance, he

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[113] Gordon's note to this line emphasises the frantic and painful experience that leads to the Mourner's fainting: "The usual meaning of *sla3t* is 'a violent or sudden blow'" (*Pearl*, 49).

[114] In Books Two and Three of the *House of Fame*, the Chaucerian speaker deploys several apostrophes within his invocations as he launches into another leg of his dream-journey. The use of apostrophe as both a technique of transition and an energising device is attested in these passages.

[115] Culler, "Apostrophe," 146.

[116] The wonder with which the Dreamer greets the Pearl-maiden demonstrates his surprise at the apparent success of his calls to the pearl. It is also reminiscent of the shock with which the *Book of the Duchess* dreamer wakes in the dream, amazed that his prayer-bribe to Morpheus appears to have worked. The irony in *Pearl* is that the Maiden does not, in fact, appear at the Mourner's behest; rather, she is sent by Lamb who has permitted the Dreamer a sight of the Heavenly City (967-68). Compare Dante's journey which is not undertaken by his own will but was "willed on high", *vuolsi ne l'alto* (*Inferno*, VII.11).

calls out to her: "'O perle,' quoth I, 'in perles py3t, / Art thou my perle that I haf playned, / Regretted by myn one on ny3te?" (241-43).[117]

The Dreamer's call and question to the Pearl-maiden are the first words he utters in the vision, and the passage recalls the first lines of the poem. Like the opening "Perle", his speech here is prompted by intensified emotion, a burgeoning joy as he recognises the figure who "wat3 me nerre þen aunte or nece" (233): "No gladder gome heþen into Grece / Þen I, quen ho on brymme wore. . . . / My joy forþy wat3 much þe more" (231-32, 234). The recollection of the first lines is bittersweet. On the one hand, as I have suggested above, it offers an opportunity for apostrophe and elegy to succeed in bridging the gap between the speaker and the addressee, to correct the failed apostrophes of the waking section that were linked so strongly with pain and sorrow. On the other hand, the symbolic return to the beginning of the poem threatens to undo the healing the Dreamer has undergone in the early stage of his vision.

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[117] Before we examine this passage in depth, we must first determine whether this address can be considered an apostrophe or not. There is an argument to be made that calling to the pearl here does not constitute a proper apostrophe because the Maiden is standing before him, albeit on the other side of the river. Be that as it may, the Maiden's presence is questionable on a couple of fronts. First, we must recall that this is a dream vision, and so the tangibility of the events and actors is already in doubt. At this point in the narrative, at least, she is possibly a figment of the Dreamer's imagination. Second, even within the world of the dream, her presence is not confirmed. After the Dreamer states his wish to join her "by3onde þise wawe3" (287), the Maiden rebukes him for his faulty logic:

> Þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle.
> Þou says þou trawe3 me in þis dene,
> Bycawse þou may wyth y3en me se
> . . .
> I halde þat iueler lyttel to prayse
> Þat leue3 wel þat he se3 wyth y3e (294-96, 301-02)

She begins her rebuke by attacking his unreasonable statements: "Wy borde 3e men? So madde 3e be!" (290). Her two comments imply that he is mistaken to think she is really there just because he has seen her. Much later, at the climax of the vision, the Dreamer is surprised to see the Maiden among the many of the procession: "Þen sa3 I þer my lyttel quene / Þat I wende had standen by me in sclade" (1147-48). Gordon glosses "wende" as "supposed" from the Old English *wenan*. The poet's diction highlights the Dreamer's error in thinking the Maiden was truly present on the far side of the river. The uncertainty of the Maiden's presence makes an apostrophic interpretation more plausible, especially if we bear in mind that the poet is here exploring the capacities of apostrophe. We should at the very least consider this utterance a quasi-apostrophe, an address to a figure that is at once absent and not absent, a poetic instance which challenges the definition of the device as it similarly broadens apostrophe's applicability and ponders an improved, even successful form. The first apostrophe of the dream thus teeters between being a joyful success exceeding all expectations and a heart-breaking failure of transient reunion and consolation. On the surface, it is an improvement on the apostrophes in the *erber* which fall flat, but it does not yet promise solace.

As he progresses through the earthly paradise, the Dreamer's sorrow melts away: "The adubbemente of þo downe3 dere / Garten my goste al greffe for3ete" (85-86). Voided of grief, he begins to accrue joy in its place:

> The dubbement dere of doun and dale3,
> Of wod and water and wlonk playne3,
> Bylde in me blys, abated my bale3,
> Fordidden my stresse, dystryed my payne3. (121-24)[118]

The farther he moves into paradisal realm, the greater his bliss increases "ay more and more" (132). The repetition of the initial apostrophe threatens to undo this healing, however. The Dreamer does not delight in the moment of reunion. His first words to the Maiden return immediately to the sustained period of grief:

> Much longeying haf I for þe layned,
> Syþen into gress þou me agly3te.
> Pensyf, payred, I am forpayned . . .
> What wyrde hat3 hyder my iuel vayned,
> And don me in þys del and gret daunger? (244-46, 249-50)[119]

The potential relapse signalled by the renewed apostrophic trope is further emphasised by the repetition of key words from proem. Line 250 takes us back to the intensity, and compounds the grief, of the fraught scene in the *erber* where the Mourner is "fordolked of luf-daungere" (11) and suffers from the "deuely dele" (51) caused by the emotional wound.

The possibility of a return to the troubled state in which the poem opens is also reinforced by the heavy repetition of "perle". The word *perle* (or *perles*) appears 51 times in the poem.[120] The hailing of the pearl in the dream is one of two instances wherein the Dreamer repeats the word with

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[118] The healing aspects of the Dreamer's vision are here underlined through the repetition of the word *bale*, which appears only once before, when the Mourner's consideration of the grave mound spurs his sadness: "My breste in bale bot bolne and bele" (18).

[119] This passage also sees a problematic reversal of the semantic parsing that Vance claims the Mourner carries out through his *ho-hit* substitutions. The Dreamer, once again speaking without weighing his words, swiftly blames the Pearl-maiden for abandoning him in the mutable, mortal world while she lives "a lyf of lykyng ly3te, / In Paradys erde, of stryf vnstrayned" (247-48). Andrew and Waldron comments that the "injured, self-pitying tone of the second half [of the Dreamer's address] . . . complicates the reader's sympathy for him" (*Pearl,* 66).

[120] The synonym *margary(es)*, *mariorys* appears three times (199, 206, and 1037).

such frequency—three times in the space of two lines—and the proximity of these recurrences betrays the speaker's mind drifting back to a physical covetousness and fetishisation of the lost object of address. In the section that precedes his hailing, the Dreamer describes the Maiden's appearance in great detail. As in his account of the marvellous land through which he wanders, the Dreamer relishes the richness of the physical details:

> Þat gracious gay wythouten galle,
> So smoþe, so small, so seme, sly3t,
> Ryse3 vp in hir araye ryalle,
> A precios piece in perle3 py3t. (189-92)[121]

The four stanzas of the description stress the pearliness of the Maiden's apparel and accoutrements: the word appears no fewer than eleven times (192, 193, 202, 204, 207, 216, 219, 221, 228, 229, 240), and there are two occurrences of the synonym *margary(es)*, *mariorys* (199, 206)—more than one fifth of the total instances of "perle(s)" in the poem and nearly one quarter of the combined references to the object. Pearls proliferate in this passage in a manner reminiscent of the grinding gravel over which the Dreamer treads. The heavy repetition also evinces the temptation that Vance locates in the luxurious and luxuriating pronunciation of the word.[122] As the Dreamer's eye delights in the sight of the Maiden, so does his tongue lavishly speak the word over and over again. The first lines of his greeting are thus an intensification of this verbalised fetishisation, reducing the space between repetitions to the most concise point found in the poem, and the instant shift to his sorrow suggests the likelihood that his consolation in the earthly paradise was illusory.

The other instance of such dense repetition occurs in an apostrophe at lines 745-46: "'O maskele3 perle in perle3 pure, / Þat bere3,' quod I, ' þe perle of prys, / Quo formed þe þy fayre figure?" As with the first call to the Pearl-maiden, the Dreamer is perilously close to falling back into his old habits and abandoning the lessons the Maiden has tried to impart. She has just concluded her

[121] As many scholars have noted, these lines echo the Mourner's first description of the pearl (5-6).
[122] Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 131.

explanation of the grace afforded to the innocent (Section XII) and has also related the parable of the pearl of great price (729-44). Rather than concentrate on the metaphysical import of her speech, the Dreamer responds by inquiring about her dress, focussing on its rich trappings and artistic value: he compares her favourably to the natural world, the paintings of Pygmalion, and the sage writings of Aristotle (749-51). The effect of the repetition is heightened by the Dreamer's inversion of the Maiden's phrasing in the lines that precede his response. At the end of her speech, she reiterates the lesson of the parable: "I rede þe forsake þe worlde wode / And porchace þy perle maskelles" (743-44). His inversion is indicative of his recurring act of debasing the allegorical and even the anagogical meaning of the pearl to a literal meaning, as is likewise demonstrated by his attention to her physical appearance. Here, nearly five hundred lines after he first calls to the Pearl-maiden, the Dreamer still threatens to turn away from the right path and revert to languishing in his sorrow.

Three other apostrophes occur in the space of the dream, but these are less prominent than those spoken by the Mourner-Dreamer. Nonetheless, they warrant a brief examination, for I believe they serve as counter-examples for the Mourner-Dreamer's first four apostrophes. All three are spoken by the Pearl-maiden, though two are quotations from the Psalter. The Maiden's first (and most important) apostrophe comes in response to the Dreamer's queries about her position in heaven relative to the Virgin Mary:

> "Cortayse Quen," þenne sayde þat gaye,
> Knelande to grounde, folde vp hyr face,
> "Makele3 Moder and myryest May,
> Blessed bygynner of vch a grace!" (433-36)[123]

Whereas the Mourner-Dreamer's apostrophes are prompted by intense emotions derived from self-pity and self-interest, the Maiden's call involves genuflection, deference, and respect. Similarly, while

[123] The apostrophic nature of this address is ambiguous. The Blessed Virgin's presence at this instance is debatable: unlike the Lamb, Mary is never seen in the dream, she is only alluded to. Like the Maiden, however, the Virgin Mary seems to be simultaneously there and not-there. As the empress of Heaven, Earth, and Hell (441-42), Mary is symbolically present throughout her realm.

she turns away from their debate for a brief space of three spoken lines, she instantly returns to the matter at hand: "Þenne ros ho vp and con restay, / And speke me towarde in þat space" (437-38). She neither is distracted by the apostrophe nor does she expect any gain from the performance.

The two psalm passages, both of which quote David addressing God, similarly demonstrate the value of concision and self-effacement in apostrophe. Both come into play as the Maiden elucidates the grace granted to innocents "by ry3t." She uses the first quotation, adapted from Psalm 24 (23 in the Vulgate), to explain the qualities—"of hert boþe clene and ly3t" (682)—which those who would see the face of God must possess: "Þe Sauter hyt sat3 þus in a pace: / 'Lorde, quo schal klymbe þy hy3 hylle / Oþer rest wythinne þy holy place?' (677-79).[124] The second apostrophe, which derives from Psalm 143 (142), comes only a few lines later and serves to reinforce the lesson on grace:

> Anende ry3twys men, 3et sayt3 a gome,
> Dauid in Sauter, if ever 3e sy3 hit:
> "Lorde, þy seruaunt dra3 neuer to dome,
> For non lyuyande to þe is justyfyet." (697-700)[125]

As she does elsewhere, the Maiden appeals to the authority of Scripture. In these instances, she also deploys David as an exemplary poet and speaker and in so doing provides an example to teach the Dreamer how and when apostrophe should be deployed: to address or to serve the Lord.[126]

The final two apostrophes of the poem, spoken by the man after he wakes from his dream, follow the example of the three apostrophes deployed by the Pearl-maiden and thus correct the Mourner-Dreamer's wayward use of the device. The first is directed at the now-decidedly absent pearl:

> 'O perle', quod I, 'of rych renoun,

[124] Both Gordon and Andrew and Waldron note the overlap with Psalm 15 (14) as well.
[125] The use of this quotation also hearkens back to the Maiden's early lesson that the living Mourner-Dreamer cannot join her on the other side of the river: "Þou wylne3 ouer þys water to weue; / Er moste þou ceuer to oþer consayle: / þy corse in clot mot calder keue" (318-20).
[126] It must be noted that later in the psalm, the speaker turns to address the city gates—"Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!"—but he does so "that the King of glory may come in" (24:7).

> So wat3 hit me dere þat þou con deme
> In þys veray avysyoun!
> If hit be ueray and soth sermon
> Þat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,
> So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun
> Þat þou art to þat Prynce3 paye.' (1182-88)

This apostrophe begins like the others we have seen. There is an element of passion here: he states "I raxled, and fel in gret affray" (1174) and that a "longeyng heuy me strok in swone, / And rewfully þenne I con to reme" (1180-81). However, this apostrophe is much more tempered than those earlier impassioned speeches. For one thing, there is no repetition of "perle" (as at 241-42 and 745-46), nor is there any sign of dwelling on the pearl's physical characteristics (as at 5-6, 189-240, or 745ff) beyond the brief mention of her "rych renoun". Indeed, after this final address, the word *perle* appears only three times more, twice in reference to the lesson the Maiden imparts (1192 and 1206) and, in the final line, as an image of the blessed as God's treasure (1212). More importantly, whereas an apostrophe opens the poem and marks the first words the Dreamer speaks, this latest apostrophe is not the man's first utterance in this part of the poem. When he awakes on the hill in the *erber*, he sighs to himself and speaks the final lesson of *Pearl*: "Now al be to þat Prynce3 paye" (1176). The timing is important. As I have already noted, the Mourner's penultimate apostrophe does arise from feeling "payed ful ille to be outfleme / So soddenly of þat fayre regioun" (1177-78), but, in light of the lesson he acknowledges, he is able to control his emotions and his tongue.

In the Dreamer's previous apostrophes, he turned away from the matter at hand and showed no signs of turning back. In the *erber*, his cries to the *moul* (23-24) lead to the commands that attempt to halt the natural order (25-36). In the dream, he first turns from the question of the pearl's identity (241-43) to focus on the experience of his grief (244-52). In the second *erber* scene, he turns to address the pearl, but is capable of turning back to the world in which he has reawakened: "So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun / Þat þou art to þat Prynce3 paye." These lines prepare the way for the final act of committing of the pearl to God: "to God I hit byta3te / In Kryste3 dere blessyng and

myn" (1207-08). The seven lines of the last apostrophe to the pearl thus demonstrate the control he has come to exert over the potentially disastrous distraction of apostrophe and the wallowing in sorrow it can emblematise.

These lines also show, I believe, that he is turning his back on the practice of what we might call improper apostrophe. He demonstrates this change by apostrophising God: "Lorde, mad hit arn þat agayn þe stryuen, / Oþer proferen þe o3t agayn þy paye" (1199-1200).[127] In this final apostrophe, he emulates the Pearl-maiden and David. Like the Maiden, his apostrophe is one of respect and obeisance: he acknowledges the authority of God and defers from striving (or speaking) against his will. Like David's, his apostrophe is carried out in service of the Lord. The man thus uses the final apostrophe to prove himself one of the "homly hyne" (1211) and a "precios perl[e] vnto his pay" (1212). What was initially a disruptive and problematic feature of the Mourner-Dreamer's grief and speech is recuperated and, in the final stage of the poem, becomes the manner by which he is reconciled to his fate and to his God.

By tracing the trajectory of apostrophe in *Pearl*, we can plot the Mourner-Dreamer's progress through the lessons the Maiden teaches him. In the next section, I will take a broader look at this development by examining how the poet charts his Mourner-Dreamer's education. First I will explore how the poet infantilises the Mourner-Dreamer, how he constructs him as a figure incapable of using language properly. I will then turn to the ways in which the Maiden corrects the Dreamer. At the end of the section, I will address the disparities between the language used by the Maiden and that used by the Dreamer. This discussion will demonstrate what the *Pearl*-poet perceived as the failures of earthly language and how he imagined an improved and elevated system of signs.

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[127] Several times in the poem, the Dreamer utters what on the surface appears to be an apostrophe to God. For instance, as he surveys the marvels of the Earthly paradise he exclaims "Lorde, dere wat3 hit adubbement!" (108). In the moments before the dream ends, he is so moved by the sight of his little queen that he cries out "Lorde, much of mirþe wat3 þat ho made / Among her fere3 þat wat3 so quyt! (1149-50). In both these cases, I contend, the Dreamer is not consciously calling to God. Rather, he is using the name as a mild expletive, much as we might say "Jesus, that's hot!" or "Christ, do I hate the Bruins!"

The Faunt and the Infantilisation of the Dreamer

When the Dreamer first encounters his pearl, he calls her "a faunt" (161). *Faunt* is a conscious choice, for it is the unique instance of the word in the poem and indeed in all of the Cotton Nero A.x. manuscript. In this section, I want to argue that the word choice is deliberate and, as I will explain below, exemplifies one of the major problems of the poem, the incongruent modes of language used by the Dreamer and the Pearl-maiden and her efforts to correct the Dreamer's misuse of language.

Although children are discussed throughout the poem, line 161 is the only place where the word *faunt* appears. Elsewhere, the poet uses *barn(es)* (three times) or *child* and its variants (three times) and seems to do so interchangeably according to the demands of metre and alliteration. The three uses of *chylde*, *chylder* occur within the space of nine lines and in the same passage as one of the three instances of *barnes* (712). This passage, which comes near the end of the Pearl-maiden's longest sustained speech, speaks of the people of Israel bringing their children to Christ that they may be healed by his touch (712-20). Following the transition to Section XIII, the passage also repeats Christ's lesson that he who would enter the kingdom of Heaven must be like unto a child:

> ["]Jesu con calle to Hym Hys mylde
> And sayde Hys ryche no wyy myght wynne
> Bot he com thyder ryght as a chylde
> Other elles nevermore com thereinne["] (721-24).

The passage also serves as a transition from the Pearl-maiden's commentary on divine grace and the Parable of the Vineyard, including the brief invocation of the pearl of great price (730-39; cf. Matt. 13:45-46), to her vivid description of the New Jerusalem. Another instance of *barnes* occurs in this account when she discusses the twelve gates of the heavenly city. Each gate is made of pearl, she says, and "[u]chon in scrypture a name con plye / Of Israel barnes" (1039-40). In each of these cases, children are directly linked with spiritual bliss and heavenly reward: in Christ's parable, the would-be blessed must be like children; in the Maiden's account, the portals to the celestial city are

characterised by children. The first instance of *barne* similarly establishes the connection between children and blessedness, as when the Dreamer defends Mary's position as the only true queen of Heaven: "We leven on Marye that grace of grewe, / That ber a barne of vyrgyn flour" (425-26). In contrast, the Narrator's use of "faunt," which at first appears only to describe the Pearl-maiden's age, distances the Maiden from blessedness—at least to the Dreamer's mind. The label incorrectly sets her at the far end of the path to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The *MED* defines "faunt" as "[a] young child of either sex, an infant, babe."[128] The dictionary locates the first instance of this word in the copy of *King of Tars* in the Auchinleck manuscript. The word also occurs in the Vernon Manuscript copy of the A-text of *Piers Plowman* (X.58) and, in the next century, in a poem by John Audelay: "A faunt þat is bot of on 3ere".[129] As Malcolm Andrew points out, this label suggests a specific association of the word with very young children.[130] The *OED* traces a slightly different history for the word. According to the *OED* editors, "faunt" comes into English in the last quarter of the fourteenth century, first through the Rolls of Parliament for 1376 (II. 342/2), which are still recorded in Anglo-Norman at the time, and later through the Early Version of the Wycliffite Bible (1382), as in 1 John 2:14: "I wrijte to 3ou, infauntis [*gloss* or 3onge children], for 3e han knowe the fadir".[131] This newly introduced word appears to have been popular among a certain set of literary men in the same period in which the *Pearl*-poet was writing. The Latin forms of the word would, of course, be known to readers of the Vulgate: the word appears throughout the Old Testament, repeatedly in the Gospel of Luke, including a passage (18:15) that informs the *Pearl* passage discussed above (721-39), and, perhaps most importantly for

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[128] The second definition, "a son or daughter," adds weight to the dominant argument that the poem mourns a deceased daughter.
[129] Whiting, ed., *The Poems of John Audelay*, 192.
[130] Andrew, "*Pearl*, Line 161," 4-5.
[131] Other variations and derivatives are common in the same period. For instance, Langland uses "fauntelte," "childishness" (cf. Lat. *infantilitas*), in the B-Text of *Piers Plowman* (B.XV.146), and "fauntelet," "a little child," in the C-Text (XII.310). These words were not strictly limited to religious or quasi-religious texts of this period. For instance, the adjective "fauntel." "youthful," appears in *The Laud Troy Book* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 595) c. 1400.

the present discussion, in Paul's Letter to the Romans (2:20), where infants are characterised as empty vessels in need of instruction.[132] The instance of the word in the Early Version of the Wycliffite Bible coupled with the gloss "or ȝonge children" suggests that while the word was known and enjoyed some limited circulation, it was by no means a common term—as the Wycliffite translators well recognised.

"Faunt" is an aphetic form of Old French *enfant*, *-aunt*, which in turn descends from the Latin *infāns*, "child." This is the noun form of the adjective *infāns*, from *in-* + *fans*, the present participle of *fāri*, "to speak," and so directly refers to a child's inability to use language. In *The Etymologies*, Isidore explains that "[a] human being of the first age is called an infant (*infans*); it is called an infant because it does not yet know how to speak (*in-*, 'not'; *fari*, present participle *fans*, 'speaking'), that is, it cannot talk. Not yet having its full complement of teeth, it has less ability to articulate words."[133] Augustine uses this sense of the word in the *Confessions*. In Book I, he writes of his "infant speechlessness," the search for "signs by which [he] made [his] thoughts known to others."[134] This Augustinian use and understanding of the term was, I believe, at the forefront of the poet's mind when he wrote the lines about the discovery of the maiden sitting at the foot of the crystal cliff.

Augustine positions speechlessness and "the power to talk" as the two poles of a spectrum and envisions the movement from one to the other as a process rather than a stark division. He charts his own transition from being "a baby incapable of speech" to being "a boy with the power to

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[132] Luke 18:15 reads: "adferebant autem ad illum et infantes ut eos tangeret quod cum viderent discipuli increpabant illos." This verse is part of Christ's lesson on the virtue of childish innocence that is translated in the *Pearl* passage quoted above (709-23).
Romans 2:20 reads: "eruditorem insipientium magistrum infantium habentem formam scientiae et veritatis in lege." In this passage, Paul is commending those who proclaim and teach the lessons of truth and the law.
[133] Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, XI.ii.9. In the opening of XI.ii, where he sets out the six ages of man, Isidore notes that the first age, infancy, lasts seven years, a period that encompasses the age of the mourner's deceased daughter (cf. *Pearl* 483).
[134] St Augustine, *Confessions*, I.vi.10, (8). For citations from the *Confessions*, I have provided the page number in parentheses as well.

talk."[135] For Augustine, the first impulse to speech comes from an urge to communicate his desires. He points to himself as a young child making the first efforts at linguistic communication: "I threw my limbs about and uttered sounds, signs resembling my wishes, the small number of signs of which I was capable but such signs as lay in my power to use: for there was no real resemblance."[136] Although Augustine locates these desires in sinful selfishness and jealousy, he underscores the importance of language for bridging the gap between the internal self and the external other.[137] Speaking or otherwise communicating through signs and gestures, however ineffective, is an act that helps to build community: Augustine depicts the process of learning language as a gradual emergence from isolation and silence into "the stormy society of human life."[138]

Similarly, in *Pearl*, we see the Mourner-Dreamer learning—with some degree of success—a new (even 'proper') way of speaking. Under the Pearl-maiden's tutelage, he moves from a child-like, erratic (and selfish or self-centred) form of communication to a controlled and measured, if not wholly successful, manner of using language. The Mourner begins in the garden where he tries to put his grief into words. Despite the apparent control exercised by the structure of the rhyme scheme, concatenation, and stanzaic grouping, his manner is fitful and ineffective. He flails like the Augustinian infant trying to make his imperfect signs achieve his desire. Wringing his hands and crying out for his pearl, his mind darting back and forth in time, his "wreched wylle in wo ay wra3te" (56), he mirrors Augustine's account: "I threw my limbs about and uttered sounds, signs resembling my wishes".[139] His utterances do little to assuage his sorrow; indeed, they increase his anxiety and culminate in the "slepyng-sla3te" into which he falls (59). In the dream, he makes

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[135] Augustine, *Confessions* I.viii.13, (10).
[136] Augustine, *Confessions*, I.vi.8, (7).
[137] Augustine, *Confessions*, I.vii.11, (9). Augustine's depiction of the infant's early prompts to communicate, which are rooted in a series of self-centred desires, parallels the web of emotions and desires that lead to the Mourner-Dreamer's first apostrophe; see my discussion above.
[138] *Confessions*, I.viii.13, (11). Augustine's qualification here serves as a reminder that the system of signs used in human society is not perfect and that the misunderstandings perpetuated by the imperfect usage contributes to the storminess of human affairs.
[139] Augustine, *Confessions*, I.vi.8, (7).

progress toward correcting his wayward words and, upon awakening, finds a fixed sign from which he can draw stability.

The choice of "faunt" to describe the Maiden establishes the Dreamer's perception of, and rapport with, his interlocutor, a friction that shapes much of the dialogue that follows. In the literal sense, "faunt" is an apt description of the being he encounters. The Pearl-maiden is identified as the Dreamer's child throughout the poem. When the Dreamer sees the child "by3onde that myry mere" (158), he immediately recognises her—"I knew hyr wel, I hade sen hyr ere" (164)—and later identifies her as his daughter: "Ho was me nerre then aunte or nece" (233). At a later point, he states that she was a young child when she died: "Thou lyfed not two yer in oure thede" (483). The Pearl-maiden herself acknowledges that when the Mourner lost his pearl she "was ful yong and tender of age" (412). The Dreamer is, in one sense, accurate when he labels the child he encounters "a faunt." Gordon correctly adds that "[t]he whole theological argument that follows assumes the infancy of the child when she left this world."[140]

As a two-year-old, however, we should not expect the mortal child to be entirely without speech. Rather, we should plot her somewhere along the Augustinian spectrum of language acquisition, though probably closer to the speechless pole. She was capable of throwing her limbs and uttering sounds, of using a small number of signs, but she was not a fully functioning speaker. Certainly, she hadn't sufficient abilities to properly participate in the rites of the Church. As the Dreamer reminds her: "Thou cowthes never God nauther plese ne pray / Ne never nawther Pater ne Crede" (484-85).

This prior experience of the linguistically limited, living child colours the Dreamer's interaction with the Pearl-maiden. He brings this narrow understanding with him into the dream and, in his efforts to clearly identify the figure before him with the lost pearl of the *erber*,

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[140] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, xiii.

superimposes it onto the Maiden. Throughout the dialogue, the Dreamer mistakes the Maiden's meaning, treating her as one who misspeaks or fails to comprehend the significance of her words. He repeatedly asks for clarification or restates a question, as though her answers (when he gives her time to respond) have proved insufficient (745-47, 755-56, 771-72). He doubts her account of her position as a queen in heaven, thinking that some error or omission has been made (487-88). Following the Pearl-maiden's retelling of the Parable of the Vineyard (493-588), the Dreamer dismisses her story, saying "Me think thy tale unresounable" (590). He invokes the authority of the Psalter (593-96) and may even suggest that what she says is bordering on heresy: "Goddes ryght is redy and evermore rert / Other Holy Wryt is bot a fable" (591-92).[141] What is more, the narratorial introduction to this brief speech, "Then more I meled and sayde apert" (589), favourably contrasts the Dreamer's manner of speaking with the Maiden's. The phrase recalls the Maiden's introduction to the tale—"As Mathew *meles* in your Messe" (497, emphasis mine)—for these are the only two instances of this word in the poem. This parallel further contrasts her use of parable, "sample" (499), with his plain speech ("I . . . sayde apert").[142] Whereas the Dreamer perceives the Maiden's speeches as elaborate fictions rife with impenetrable conceits, he sees his own utterances as crisp and clear, easy to understand.

His perception is, of course, mistaken and stands in sharp contrast to the heavenly Maiden's rhetorical skills and her emphasis on the importance of clear communication. For readers, the Dreamer's characterisation of the Maiden is indeed ironic, for it is he who frequently trips over his

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[141] His accusation of an unreasonable tale echoes the Maiden's first words to the Dreamer, "Sir, ye haf your tale mysetente" (257). His second charge that she deviates from Holy Writ likewise recalls her claim that he distorts God's message, "Ye setten Hys wordres ful westernays" (307). See my discussion of this matter below.

[142] The use of "apert" here accords with definition 1(a) in the *MED*, "[p]lain, evident, obvious". The *Pearl*-poet uses this same sense of the word elsewhere, in *Gawain*, when Sir Bertilak judges Gawain properly punished, releases the knight from his bond, and gives him the green girdle: "Þou art confessed so clene, beknowen of þy mysses, /And hatz þe penaunce apert of þe poynt of myn egge, / I halde þe polysed of þat ply3t" (2392-94). The dictionary also points to two instances where the word appears in fourteenth-century, vernacular translations of the psalms in the Midland Prose Psalter (British Library Add 17376). In both cases, in Psalms 50 and 147, "apert" translates the Latin *manifestavi*, *manifestavit*.

own tongue. In the course of the dialogue, the Dreamer's emotional responses to what he sees and hears shift back and forth, whereas the Maiden remains remarkably consistent in her message, her diction, and her tone. As Bogdanos observes, "the voice of the dreamer moves from optimistic exultation to whimpering self-pity, from pathetic lyricism to nagging envy. Against his violently modulating *duplum*, we hear the Maiden's crystalline, sober voice like a sustained *cantus firmus*, articulating evenly and inexorably the divine theme."[143] The Maiden is certainly aware of the Dreamer's rhetorical flailings and failings, and she chastises him for these outbursts several times. One particularly poignant moment occurs after the Dreamer expresses his desire—indeed makes a request—to dwell on the other side of the stream, reunited with his pearl: "Now were I at yow by3onde þise wawe3, / I were a ioyfol jueler" (287-88). She responds:

> "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.["] (290-94)

She singles out his haste and the imprecision with which he speaks. He is verbose, but does not consider the import or impact of any of his words.[144] The Dreamer's tendency to speak three words at once (291) suggests his inability to control the signifier. The Dreamer's shortcomings, which the Pearl-maiden not only recognises but comments on, suggest that he, not she, is the *infans* in need of instruction. Indeed, Gordon observes that the relationship between the Maiden and the Dreamer in the vision inverts the usual roles of the father and daughter: "the doctrinal lesson . . . comes from one of no earthly wisdom to her proper teacher and instructor in the natural order."[145] The poet establishes the Dreamer's role as student by infantilising him early in the encounter, and, in so doing, sets the scene for the instruction that follows.

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[143] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 74.
[144] Many scholars have commented on the how the poet characterises the Dreamer as a clumsy user of language. See especially: Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 197-99; Donner, "Word Play," 172ff; and Wilson, "Word Play," 121-25.
[145] Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, xiii.

The poet literally infantilises the Dreamer by removing the power of speech. There is a space of 79 lines between the moment he sees the Maiden at the foot of the crystal cliffs (161) and the point at which direct, verbal contact is made. Of the 816 lines in which the Dreamer and the Pearl-maiden are in close proximity and contact (from the first sight at line 161 to the instant that he shifts his attention to the vision of the heavenly city and she departs to take part in the celestial procession at 977), roughly one tenth of that, at the outset of the encounter, passes in silence. Like a small child, the Dreamer gazes at the Maiden—"On leghe I loked to hyr there" (167)—without uttering a word. At the level of the lived experience of the dream, his initial engagement with her is entirely visual. In the opening stanza of Section IV, the description of the Maiden, the Narrator stresses the Dreamer's muteness: "I stod ful stylle and dorste not calle. / Wyth y3en open and mouth ful clos" (182-83). In part, his inability to speak is a consequence of the "drede" (181) that arises in the Dreamer, a fear that if he speaks he will disturb the vision and lose his chance at a meeting with the Maiden: "I dred onende quat shulde byfalle / Lest ho me eschaped þat I þer chos, / Er I at steven hir mo3t stalle" (186-88). Repeated phrasing—"I stod *ful* style" with "mouth *ful* clos"—emphasises the parallel absence of movement and total silence that characterises the Dreamer as a passive recipient of the visual stimuli of the Maiden's beauty and raiment.

Silence pervades the initial encounter until the Maiden addresses the Dreamer. In fact, from the moment the Mourner falls into his "slepyng-sla3te" (59) amid the "fyrce skylle3" (54) of his plaint in the *erber*, through when he awakes in the dream and explores the earthly paradise, he does not speak. Other sounds fill the space of the dream: the shrill metallic din of the silver leaves rubbing against one another (77-78), the grating of the ground of pearls under the Dreamer's feet (81-82), the song of the otherworldly birds (89-94), and the "rownande rourde" of the stream (112). The Dreamer makes no sounds as he moves through the marvellous landscape, but it is only upon seeing the Maiden that the Dreamer is compelled to silence; it is only then that the Narrator

specifically comments on that silence. The Narrator thus distinguishes between the awe-struck silence that passes unnoticed, paired with an increasing sense of bliss as the Dreamer passes through the fabulous landscape and the enforced muteness—of which he is hyper-aware—that arises from the dread of loss. His silent experience of the earthly paradise and his survey of the Maiden's appearance serve as an infantilisation of the Dreamer, preparing him for the lesson he is about to receive.

The Dreamer is freed from this stupefied state once the Pearl-maiden addresses him:

> Ho proffered me speche, that special spyce,
> Enclynande lowe in wommon lore,
> Caghte of her coroun of grete tresor
> And haylsed me wyth a lote lyghte. (235-38)

Her greeting (which is not quoted) permits him to speak, though only partially of his own accord. His first words in the dreamscape are not entirely of his own volition, but rather a response to her call: "Wel was me that ever I was bore / To sware that swete in perles pyghte" (239-40). Thus begins the dialogue that will see the Dreamer repeatedly fumble not only with his own words but with his comprehension of the Maiden's speech. Like the Augustinian infant, the Dreamer searches for signs by which to express his meaning, and, like that same infant, he must be helped along by a knowledgeable teacher.[146]

It is worth noting that the infantilisation of the Dreamer is primarily figurative. As I have shown immediately above, there is an element of literal infantilisation, of making the Dreamer (briefly) voiceless, without speech. Following this period of silence, the Dreamer returns to using language, but his words remain inexact, confused, and wayward—in a word, erring. He speaks, yes, but, from the point of view of the Maiden, he may as well keep his mouth shut: he is saying nothing; his words are empty. Thus, we should read the Dreamer's infantilisation and his subsequent education as a process of learning how to use the right language correctly: he must be taught to say

[146] Augustine, *Confessions*, I.viii.13, (10-11).

what he means and to mean what he says; he must exercise control over the signs that frequently slip from his grasp so that he can access the Maiden's lesson, order his grief, and achieve consolation.

The chief obstacle to smooth communication is that the two figures speak in radically different modes. As the dialogue progresses, the Maiden works to help the Dreamer understand her mode of speech and indeed tries to teach him to use that elevated mode. The juxtaposition of these two types of language—the quotidian, mundane speech of the Dreamer and the idealised, celestial language of the Pearl-maiden—persists throughout the poem, but it is first established at the moment she hails him. Her motions, bowing and removing her crown, create a levelling effect and establish a rapport that, if not egalitarian, allows for an exchange to occur: after she removes the trappings of her heavenly role, she speaks to him with a "lote lyghte." This glad word opens the door for him to address her, and he inquires about her identity and the fate that brought her to this otherworldly paradise, all while suggesting that she is to blame for his current grief (241-52).[147] Her gestures of salutation simultaneously assert the separation between them, however, and the Maiden emphasises this gulf when she replaces her crown before replying to the Dreamer's initial salvo of questions:

> That juel thenne, in gemmes gente,
> Vered up her vyse wyth yyen graye,
> Set on hyr coroun of perle orient
> And soberly after thenne con ho say,
> "Sir, ye haf your tale mysetente . . .["] (253-57)

We see here a reversal of the Maiden's earlier movements of deference and respect. She adopts a formal, even courtly demeanour.[148] Whereas she initially bows her head (236), here she raises her

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[147] As I have discussed above, the first words out of the Dreamer's mouth—"O perle . . . in perles pyght, / Art thou my perle that I haf playned, / Regretted by myn one on nyghte?" (241-43)—recall the apostrophe at the opening of the poem, "Perle, precious to prynces paye" (1). They thus restore to the Dreamer some of the sorrow that troubled him in the *erber*, erasing much of the joy that accrued as he journeyed through the fantastic world. This return of grief, coupled with the dread that strikes him at the sight of the Maiden, unbalances any control and calm that grew more and more as he explored the earthly paradise.

[148] Her courtliness has already been partially established through the Narrator's extended *effictio* of her figure, which draws directly on typical tropes of feminine beauty in courtly literature such as *Le Roman de la Rose* and in chivalric

eyes and returns the Dreamer's gaze. Her spoken response is similarly sober; its tone is one of seriousness and correction. Whereas the Dreamer addresses her in a decidedly familiar manner, using the second person singular (242, 244, 245, 247), she doubly asserts a formal and emotionally cool relationship at the outset of her reply: she calls him "Sir" and twice uses the second person plural (in the nominative and genitive forms) in the space of the first line (257).[149] She shifts pronouns some few lines later, but here the stark opposition of her mode of address to his more intimate manner firmly establishes her relationship with the Dreamer as one of instruction and indeed correction.

Correcting the Dreamer

From the outset of their dialogue, the Maiden frequently corrects the Dreamer for his hasty speech or his erring interpretation of her meaning. In each case, she attempts to lead the Dreamer toward true understanding of heavenly grace, reward, and the afterlife. The first instance of rectification, "Sir, 3e haf your tale mysetente", emphasises his active (though probably unwitting) distortion of the facts. She dismisses his grief, arguing that it is founded upon clear misunderstanding. For one thing, she says, in a phrase that echoes the Mourner's plaint in the *erber*, the pearl is not lost: he is wrong "[t]o say [his] perle is al awaye / Þat is in cofer so comly clente" (258-59).[150] She similarly recasts the pearl's resting place. Just as the *erber* is supplanted by the earthly paradise in the dream, so does the pearl's earthy coffin (22, 23, 30, 41) become the beautiful coffer, the gracious garden in which joy

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romance. This courtly, noble aspect of her identity is reasserted not only by the replacing of her crown but also be the detail of her "yyen graye," which recalls medieval paragons of courtly feminine beauty including the poet's own depiction of Guinevere (*Sir Gawain*, 82).

[149] The two characters' use of the singular and plural forms of the second person fluctuates throughout their dialogue, but both employ the two forms with relative consistency. Although he opens with an informal address, the Dreamer is careful to *vousvoyer* at appropriate times—when making requests, expressing wishes, or rhetorically distinguishing between the Maiden and himself. Similarly, she uses the second person plural whenever she sharply rebukes the Dreamer for misspeaking. When she takes a more conciliatory or helping tone, she consistently switches to the singular form.

[150] Cf. line two, "To clanly clos in golde so clere" and lines 21-22, "Forsothe, there fleten to me fele / To thence hir color so clad in clot." The near-repetition of the Mourner-Narrator's phrasing emphasises the act of correction.

and play are eternal (260-61). Moreover, while the *erber* of waking life where the pearl lies buried is saturated with sadness and grief, in the paradise on the other side of the river "mys [i.e. loss] nee mornyng com neuer nere" (262). The Maiden likewise makes clear that the Mourner-Dreamer has wrongly read the signs, mistaking one symbol for another: "For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose / Þat flowered and fayled as kynde hyt gef" (269-70). What he erringly saw as a pearl, a hard and perduring gemstone, was in fact a flower, which, by its very nature (*kynde*), must blossom briefly and then come to an end. In the same vein, she corrects his faulty view that fate has led him to this sorry spot: "And þou hat3 called þy wyrde a þef / Þat o3t of no3t hat3 mad þe cler" (273-74). His perception of causality is askew, she shows; fate (*wyrde*) is not the path downward into grief but the ascendant way from nothing to something.

These alterations of the Dreamer's account is not a total casting out of his experience; rather, they offer realignments of the given elements in his tale. This is made clear, I think, by the Maiden's use of the word *mysetente*. This is another important word choice on the part of the poet; its only recorded occurrence, according to the *MED*, is found at this line in *Pearl*. The dictionary entry gives the meaning "[m]istakenly fashioned; told wrongly."[151] The *MED* connects it to "tenden" (v.1), and also traces *mysetente*'s origins to the Old French *mesentendre*, to misunderstand, or, more literally, to mis-hear. The *Anglo-Norman Dictionary* provides only one instance of the word, which appears unchanged from the older form. It appears in its *passé composé* conjugation in the Anglo-Norman *Vie de saint Gilles*: "Amis, tu as mesentendu" (422).[152] The poet's choice of this rare word—again, the

[151] This interpretation is echoed by most of the poem's editors and translators: Stanbury glosses the word as "distorted," while Borroff translates the phrase as "Sir, your tale is told for nought."

[152] It is possible that the *Pearl*-poet read this text. He was certainly aware of the popular legend of St. Giles. He alludes to the saint in *Sir Gawain*. Sir Bertilak swears by St. Giles when he praises Gawain following the third and final hunt (1644). Giles may also have appealed to the *Pearl-poet* as a patron saint of the hunt, for the poet certainly has a thorough knowledge of that activity. In *Gawain*, argues Ronald Tamplin, the invocation of Giles also calls to mind the saint's role as a *conoscitor delle peccata*, for part of his fame depends on the saint receiving a divinely sent scroll detailing King Charles of France's undivulged sin and consequently receiving special privilege to intercede on behalf of "all men who wish to amend their lives" (409; cf. Lydgate's "The Legend of Seynt Gyle"). As both Tamplin and Rushforth note, St. Giles is depicted in the stained glass at Malvern, and was very popular in the district generally speaking (Tamplin, "Saints in

only recorded instance thereof in the surviving Middle English literature—captures both sides of the Dreamer's failings as the Maiden sees them. He first misunderstands the import of the events he experiences and the signs he encounters. In turn, his account is a twisted, misshapen thing, a lesser, even fallen, transformation of the truth. The Maiden's emendations, then, are a straightening out of his jumbled, distorted tale.

I have already briefly mentioned one instance when the Maiden calls out the Dreamer for speaking without thinking (290-93). She continues: "Þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle" (294). In the next stanza, still chastising the joyless jeweller, she accuses him of perverting the words of God: "3e setten hys worde3 ful westernays" (307). Like *mysetente*, *westernays* is a word that only appears in this poem.[153] Similar to the northern *widdershins*, "westernays" describes something that is askew or awry. The *MED* suggests the word is connected to a sense (1d) of the adverbial form of "west(e)," which means "sideways" or "in opposite directions."[154] As in the case of the equally unique *mysetente*, the Dreamer's faults are here cast as a skewing of truth, a twisting of Christ's words. The poet's choice and the Maiden's use of this word may have concrete theological resonance: *Pearl* scholars generally agree, and the editors of the *MED* note, that the word is likely adapted from the Old French *bestornëiz*, "wrongly turned," which was used to describe a church that was (erringly) constructed to

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Gawain, 408-9; Rushforth, *Medieval Christian Imagery*, 232). Malvern is not quite in the same neighbourhood as the *Pearl*-poet, but it is certainly within the same region—geographic, political, and ecclesiastical.

[153] It appears elsewhere as a surname.

[154] My observation of the parallels with "widdershins," a chiefly Scottish dialect term that enters English in Douglas's *Eneas*, further strengthens the *MED*'s reading. *Widdershins* has a comparable meaning: "[i]n a direction opposite to the usual; the wrong way."

face west rather than east.[155] The structure of the Dreamer's tale is, the Maiden suggests, incorrectly made—even at the level of the foundation.[156]

The Maiden later reprimands the Dreamer for similar infractions, and these subsequent cases reinforce the characterisation of him as a corrupter of truth and of otherwise clear language and signs. At one point she focuses on his total lack of eloquence: "þou daunce as any do, / Braundysch and bray þy braþe3 breme" (345-46). Like the comparisons of the Dreamer to a hawk and a pheasant elsewhere in the poem (184 and 1085), this simile diminishes the Dreamer's stature as a creature of reason, let alone as a creature of words. In the designation of his speech as braying, she reduces him further, rhetorically robbing him of any of the power of language. This powerlessness is reiterated in the following stanza where she stresses the futility of the Dreamer's plaints. Here the Maiden labels his speeches "strot" and "flyte" (353) and reminds him, "For, marre oþer madde, morne and myþe, / Al lys in hym to dy3t and deme" (359-60). His utterances are variously classified as wrangling (*strot*), chiding (*flyte*), lamenting (*marre*), raving (*madde*), mourning, and muttering (*myþe*). In the Mourner's experience, lamentation and mourning are not equated with madness and muttering, but, according to the true, clear logic of the Pearl-maiden, they are, and this is the lesson she wants to Dreamer to learn.

As the Maiden repeatedly chastises and corrects the Dreamer, he begins to display some self-consciousness and recognise his faults. In the wake of the Maiden's initial onslaught of criticism, he

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[155] One exception among scholars is Sister Mary V. Hillman who posits a native etymology for the word. She reads the word as *west ernays* or "empty pledge" (OE *wēste*, "wasted, barren," and *erneis*, linked to an old sense of "earnest"). This reading is by no means at odds with my own: by misinterpreting God's message of an end to grief and of eternal life, the Mourner-Dreamer empties that promise of its import; he incorrectly transforms truth into "a lyye" (304). Given the *Pearl*-poet's interest in and deft use of puns, including multilingual ones, I see no reason why these two interpretations of *westernays* cannot co-exist. See Hillman, "The *Pearl*: 'west ernays' (307); 'fasor' (431)," 42-44. Cf. Gordon, ed., *Pearl*, note to line 307.

[156] The argument-as-building model pervades medieval discussions of rhetoric, poetry, and interpretation. In *Didascalicon*, Hugh of St Victor compares the production of a text to building a building. According to Hugh, the historical facts—who, what, where, and when—of a text are like the foundation of a building. From these contextual details the allegorical structure rises up, and is finally decorated with rhetorical and poetic flourishes. In his *Poetria nova*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf applies the metaphor of the building to poetry (lines 43-48), and Chaucer translates this passage in *Troilus and Criseyde*, 1.1065-69.

twice begs forgiveness if he misspeaks: "Ne worþe no wrathþe unto my Lorde / If rapely I raue, spornande in spelle" (362-63). He has internalised some of her points. He recognises that he is capable of raving, that he has raved, and that he may well rave again. Moreover, he identifies part of his problem as stumbling (spornande), as erratic and clumsy movement through his speech. The Dreamer is increasingly aware of the divisions between his mode of speaking and the Maiden's. He puts it plainly not long after his first caveat: "Þa3 cortaysly 3e carpe con / I am bot mol and maneres mysse" (381-82).[157] Although he couches his comment in the elevated cultural terms of courtesy and manners, the Dreamer here hits on a key distinction. His words, like the Mourner-Dreamer himself, are of the stuff of this world, "mol," dust. The diction here is all the more poignant for it recalls the Mourner's accusation in the *erber*: "O moul, thou marres a myry juele" (23). Just as the earth mars the interred pearl, so does it affect, even corrupt, his language.

The Maiden instructs the Dreamer both by correcting him and by serving as an example. One method of her instruction is a combination of both approaches. She frequently appropriates words and phrases that the Dreamer first deploys, modifying them to rectify the Dreamer's haphazard misapplication and misuse. For example, James Milroy points to the Pearl-maiden's response to the Dreamer's first speech to her, which concludes, "Fro we in twynne wern towen and twayned, / I had ben a joyle3 jueler" (251-52). In the next two stanzas of Section V, the Maiden adjusts the Dreamer's phrase "joyle3 jueler" by substituting "gentyl jueler" (264) "jueler gente" (265), and "kynde jueler" (276), and so "shows how carelessly and thoughtlessly his words have been chosen."[158] Milroy explains that this method of correction continues throughout the poem, with the Dreamer first using key terms such as *cortaysye* and *ry3t* after which the Maiden "takes up the terms, uses them in different contexts and with different emphases, and exposes their deeper and complex

[157] In the manuscript, the penultimate word of this quotation appears as *mareres*, which most editors emend to *maneres*. Hillman offers an alternate possibility, a run-together form of *mare res*, "great eloquence." Though it is less probable, like "westernays" above, Hillman's suggestion accords with the juxtaposition of modes of speech that the poet constructs.
[158] Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 198.

significance."[159] She improves upon his erring use in a manner parallel to how the earthly paradise transforms the natural features of the *erber*.

The education of the Mourner-Dreamer should be read as a form of elevation. Other scholars, such as Louis Blenkner, Morton Donner, and Milroy, have mapped the spiritual ascent of the Mourner-Dreamer. The lessons on the proper usage of language, of speaking and interpreting signs, run parallel to this spiritual elevation, indeed constitute a part of that elevation. Blenkner shows how multiple tripartite structures are overlaid in *Pearl*, charting the interpretive, theological, and psychic changes that develop in the Dreamer's mind as he moves from whirling thoughts to stable peace. Blenkner convincingly establishes that the divisions of the dream vision in *Pearl* trace "a consistent progression from secular to religious paralleling the Narrator's advance from limited human knowledge to divinely inspired wisdom according to a pattern well established in medieval theology."[160] He identifies aspects of this pattern including Hugh of St Victor's three modes of cognition (cogitation, meditation, and contemplation), Augustine's division of the faculties of the rational soul (memory, understanding, and will), and St Bonaventure's three modes of theology (symbolic, literal, and mystical).[161] Donner demonstrates that these patterns of ascent are manifest in the repetitive word play of the poem, and that variation of morphology as well as semantics clarify the gap between the Mourner-Dreamer and the Pearl-maiden and provide evidence of the poet's ideological desire for completeness.[162] He argues that in the discourse between the Maiden and the Dreamer, a word is presented "from complementary morphological perspectives to bring out a full

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[159] Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 199.
[160] Blenkner, "Theological Structure," 47.
[161] Blenkner, "Theological Structure," 48ff. Following Bonaventure Blenkner further maps the three persons of the Trinity onto the structure of the poem, locating God in the sensible world of the *erber*, the Son (Wisdom) in the intelligible world of the earthly paradise of the dream, and the Holy Ghost (Love) in the mystical world of the New Jerusalem (51). Adapting Hugh of St Victor's *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith*, he likewise argues that the "contemplative's [here the Mourner-Dreamer] ascent to God figures the three stages of fallen mankind's return to the Father through the Law of Nature, the Law of Scripture, and the Law of Grace, which contain the shadow of truth, the image of truth, and the body of truth, respectively" (52).
[162] Donner, "Word Play"' 171-72.

sense of its implications".[163] The derivational variation of lexical repetition aims for a fullness of meaning that recuperates the Mourner-Dreamer's problematic, limited use of words in the poem. As Milroy notes, "the narrator's use of language in the early part of the poem has betrayed by its vagueness in the handling of abstraction a certain superficiality of thought."[164] Donner clearly shows that the Maiden's intervention expands the context and import of words and widens their meanings.[165]

Each of the studies discussed above reveals the trajectory of the Mourner-Dreamer's education from a lowly and incomplete system of signs toward an elevated and idealised one. The corrections and improvements the Maiden introduces to the Dreamer's usage help to raise him out of the pit of his grief toward consolation. In the last sections of this chapter, I want to suggest a way of parsing the differences between the languages of the Mourner-Dreamer and of his instructress before moving on to the final, take-away lesson of the poem, the closing image of the Eucharist.

The Two Languages

The Dreamer's use of language is decidedly mundane, whereas the Maiden's usage is an idealised form of communication. The former represents the limited mode of expression to which the poet finds himself (and his Dreamer-Narrator) confined; the latter represents a transcendent language the poet imagines and to which he aspires. Earthly language is characterised by transience and instability.

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[163] Donner, "Word Play," 168-69. Donner discusses the Maiden's exposition of divine grace revealing how the concentration of derivational repetition in this passage epitomises the dramatic fulfilment of grace through the history of fall, sacrifice, and redemption. For example, whereas Adam's sin cursed mankind "[t]o dy3e in doel" (642), Christ died on the cross, "delfully þur3 honde3 þry3t" (706). The shift takes a broad and consequently inaccessible experience, the *doel* experienced by all of fallen mankind, and concentrates it into an accessible and affective—and thus effective—instance: "The condition distanced by an abstract noun [*doel*] generically applied becomes immediate in its consequence as the specifically individual experience characterized by the adverb [*delfully*]."

[164] Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 203. Milroy is correct in his diagnosis, but he doubts that the Dreamer makes any significant progress through his encounter with the Maiden.

[165] Donner confirms and expands upon Edward Wilson's reading: "What the girl does is to take the narrator's imagery and give it different referends, supernal for earthly. Thus it is an index of the narrator's progress in understanding when we see him using the same linguistic habits as the girl: viz. giving heavenly referends to images which earlier had earthly ones." See Wilson, "Word Play,'" 124.

It is, as St Augustine says, "sound[ed] in time," one syllable after the other, and leaves the world after the silence at the end of an utterance.[166] As we have already seen, the Mourner-Dreamer's language is fraught with unfixed and unsettling signs—*spot*, *mote*, and *mon* among them. It is a form of language which cannot overcome the gaps between words and things: the man's apostrophes and invocations in the *erber* do not restore the pearl to him. The elevated language of the Maiden, by contrast, is a 'fixed' language, both in the sense that it is stable and that it can be seen as a correction of the failures of the Mourner-Dreamer's language. In this section, I will examine the ways in which the Maiden's language resolves many of the problems and frustrations the man encounters in his suffering.

Though both the Mourner-Dreamer and the Maiden are reported to sing songs in the poem, their songs are drastically different. The Mourner's song in the *erber* at first appears to be sweet, perhaps the sweetest song ever to steal over him (18-19), but this is a misconception. His songs are born of grief: "For soþe þer fleten to me fele / To þenke hir color so clad in clot" (21-22). His sorrow may serve as inspiration, but the products are anything but productive. The songs do not assuage his desolating grief, his "deuely dele" (51). Instead, they perpetuate an inescapable cycle of grief and fruitless plaint.[167] Without consolation, he must frequently return to the *erber*: "in þat spote hit fro me sprange, / Ofte have I wayted, wyschande þat wele" (13-14). As he sings his songs of complaint and longing, the Mourner wrings his hands (49), physically manifesting the useless expenditure of energy in the singing.

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[166] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.vi.8, (225). Cf. XI.xxiii.29, (237), and *On Christian Teaching*, 13-14.

[167] The Mourner's actions recall Boethius's futile behaviour at the opening of the *Consolation of Philosophy*: "I who once wrote songs with keen delight am now by sorrow driven to take up melancholy measures. Wounded Muses tell me what I must write, and elegiac verses bathe my face with real tears" (1.m.1). As Lady Philosophy drives out the unproductive muses, whom she labels Sirens, she acknowledges that their songs may seem sweet, but that "[t]hey cannot offer medicine for his sorrows; they will nourish him only with their sweet poison," and their "sweetness leads to death."

The Maiden's song stands in sharp contrast to the Dreamer's earth-bound song. It is part of the endless creation and celebration of the celestial procession. After the maidens commune with the Lamb on Mount Zion, a great voice from Heaven sounds:

> A hue fro heuen I herde þoo,
> Lyk flode3 fele laden runnen on resse,
> And as þunder þrowes in torre3 blo
> Þat lote, I leue, wat3 never the less. (873-76)

The passage translates Revelation 14.2. The sound of many torrents recalls the re-creative act of Flood and the first covenant with Noah, as well as the flowing of the Water of Life out of the throne of God (1055; cf. Rev. 22.1). The thunder speaks to the presence of God (cf. Jg. 5.4-5 and Hab. 3.6), but it also can be read as the voice of God (Ps 104.7 and Job 37.4) joining in the heavenly chorus. The brides' song, in which the Pearl-maiden sings, responds to the thunderous clamour and blends with the celestial chord:

> A note ful nwe I herde hem warpe;
> To lysen that was ful lufly dere.
> As harpores harpen in her harpe,
> That new songe thay singen ful cler
> In sounande notes, a gentyl carpe. (879-83)[168]

The effect of this passage is one of harmony. The triple repetition "harpores harpen in her harpe," a faithful translation from the Vulgate, reinforces the melodious and rhythmic qualities. The passage recalls the early juxtaposition of the Mourner's unsuccessful plaint and the Dreamer's silence, on the one hand, with the "swete asent" (94) of the fantastic birds of the visionary paradise on the other. The "note ful new" contrasts the empty repetitiveness of the sweet-seeming songs in the *erber*. The clarity of the song distinguishes it from the shifting signifiers of the Mourner-Dreamer's utterances. The phrase "gentyl carpe" recalls the Dreamer's juxtaposition of the Maiden's elevated language

[168] Cf. Rev. 14.2-3 and 5.9-10. This passage, in the Bible and here in *Pearl*, also recalls the opening of Psalm 96: "O sing to the LORD a new song" (Ps. 96.1). It also obliquely suggests the song of praise in the preceding psalm, in which the acts of creation are invoked: "The sea is his, for he has made it, and the dry land, which his hands have formed" (Ps. 95.5).

with his own faltering words: "Þa3 cortaysly 3e carp con, / I am not mol and manere3 mysse" (381-82). We are again reminded that the Maiden's speech functions as "a sustained *cantus firmus*" set "[a]gainst [the Dreamer's] violently modulating *duplum*".[169]

With the exception of the brief comments on the songs in the *erber*, the poet spends no time describing the Mourner-Dreamer's language—he lets the bumbling speak for itself—but he does have the Narrator comment on the Pearl-maiden's language several times over the course of the poem. Following her first speech, in which she seeks to dispel the Dreamer's misconceptions that led to his grief (257-76), the Narrator praises the Maiden's words: "A juel to me þen wat3 þys geste / And iuele3 wern hyr gentyl sawe3" (277-78). The comparison with jewels, the chief categorical symbol of worth in the poem, points to the great value of her sage counsel, especially in this section where *jueler* serves as the link-word. The identification of the Dreamer as a jeweller adds weight to the importance of this appraisal—he has an eye for this fine craft, beauty, and the value of gems—and plays upon the close attention he has paid to her physical appearance, raiment, and ornament in the preceding section.[170]

The comparison also mobilises the features of perfection and perdurance associated with gemstones, including the central image of the pearl, which is solidly reinforced in Section IV.[171] The metaphor thus closely identifies the words-as-gems notion with the Maiden-as-pearl trope so often repeated in the first 275-odd lines of the poem. This parallel directly links the speaker (the Maiden) with the speech ("hyr gentyl sawe3"). The Dreamer, by contrast, frequently appears alienated from the words he utters. He stumbles (363). He is often at a loss for words (99-100, 133-36, 182-83). He has trouble controlling his tongue; his words "byfore [his] wytte con fle" (294). He does not

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[169] Bogdanos, *Image of the Ineffable*, 74.

[170] He identifies himself as a perceptive appraiser of jewels in the opening stanza of the proem: "Queresoevee I jugged gemmes gaye / I sette hyr syngeley in synglure" (7-8).

[171] As I have noted in my discussion of apostrophe, Section IV contains a virtual explosion of pearl imagery. The word "perle" or "perles" appears ten times in these sixty lines, and the word "margarys" (or "marjorys") appears twice. These five stanzas are themselves in "in perles pyght." So copious is the pearly adornment of this descriptive passage that the imagery spills over into the opening of the next section where the word appears three times in two lines.

properly understand that which he says (293). By contrast, the Maiden is almost indistinguishable from her verbal products: she is a gem—a "juel . . . in gemmes gente" (253)—that is the source of more gems (277-78). Unlike the Dreamer's fleeting and flitting language, the Pearl-maiden's words-as-jewels take on a physical presence and a lasting quality. Her "geste" embodies the perfect shape and clarity of the gemstone to which it is compared, and serves as a model, albeit an ultimately inimitable and unattainable one, for the poet's own carefully wrought and elaborate artefact.[172]

The equivocation of the speaker and the spoken word significantly parallels one of the most important concepts for the poem, the identity between God and the Word of God. The Maiden herself makes clear later in the poem that, as a bride of the Lamb, she shares many of his attributes, including a transcendent language. When the Maiden is "to þe gentyl Lombe . . . anjoynt", she is "[a]s lyk to Hymself of lote and hwe" (895-96).[173] The word *lote* appears three times in the dream,[174] in this comparison between bride and groom (896), in the account of the thundering voice from heaven discussed above (876), and in the report of the Maiden's first address to the Dreamer, when she "haylsed [him] wyth a lote ly3te" (238).[175] The repetition here further emphasises the identification of the Maiden's language with that of the Lamb. Like the Maiden, whose utterances are jewels, the Lamb, according to St. John, is "as trwe as stone" (822). The fixity and permanence of the Lamb's words are extended to his bride, the Pearl-maiden. Like the spotless Lamb—and unlike the Dreamer whose tale is "mysetente"—she only speaks true and clear words: "For never

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[172] At the same time, the Dreamer-narrator's appraisal of the Maiden's words again demonstrates his chief flaw, his tendency to dwell on surface details and ignore the deeper significance. He is dazzled by the sonic beauty of her words, but fails to absorb the message they contain. Cf. Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 198, 204.

[173] The poet adds this detail to his translation of Rev.14.3-5 (*Pearl* 889-900).

[174] *Lote* appears again once in Section XX. I will address this repetition below.

[175] The word *hwe* serves a double function in line 896. It can mean a shout, a cry, or, metonymically, the voice that creates the sound as it does some twenty lines earlier: "A hue from heuen I herde þoo" (874). *Hwe* can also refer to colouring, of course. The Maiden in her pearly raiment is the same pure white as the Lamb's clothing: "As praysed perle3 his wede3 wasse" (1112). In her hue, then, the spotless Pearl-maiden is like the "Jerusalem Lombe [that] hade neuer pechche / Of oþer huee bit quyt jolyf / Þat mot ne masklle mo3t on streche, / For wolle quyte so ronk and ryf" (841-44). The increased coherence between appearance, virtue or holiness (spotlessness), and the purity of language further supports the identification of the Maiden and Lamb's mode of speech as the model to which the Mourner-Dreamer should aspire.

lesyng ne tale vntrwe / Ne towched [her] tonge for no dysstresse" (897-98). Wedded to the Word, the Maiden "leave[s] all human . . . language far below"; she "knows no gaps between word and reality".[176]

The Maiden's language is further characterised by an emphasis on similarity, connectedness, and identity. The Dreamer, a dweller in the region of dissimilarity, is plagued by disjunction and difference. One useful way of conceiving of the two different languages at work in the poem is to adopt Northrop Frye's categories of metaphoric and metonymic language.[177] Frye defines metaphoric language using the simple formula "A is B." In metaphoric language, there is a direct and inseparable correspondence between subject and object, and yet the original subject (A) and the original object (B) are neither dissolved nor lost: A is B, but it also remains A; A is B, but B remains unaltered. Although there are "[h]undreth þowsandes [pearl-maidens] / And alle in sute her liuré3 wasse" (1107-08), the Narrator can still identify his own precious pearl: "Þen sa3 I þer my lyttel queen" (1147). This is the (celestial) logic of the Bible, demonstrated in passages such as John 1:1 where the Word can be with God, can be God, but does not forfeit its identity as the Word. Metonymic language, by contrast, depends upon and reinforces the separation of subject and object, of word and referent. It is founded on the formula "A is put for B." Metonymic language plays on association and similarity, but a limited similarity: A is like B in some respects and so can be put for B, but A never is (and cannot be) B. Metonymic language thus emphasises—indeed insists upon—difference and the gap between what is and what is said.

The literal-minded Mourner-Dreamer, the man fixated upon superficial details, is bound to metonymic language. The Dreamer's efforts to relate his experience of the fantastic dreamscape

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[176] Watts, "Inexpressibility," 29.

[177] Frye, *The Great Code*, 3-30. See especially 5-8. Frye bases his model of language on that of the Italian humanist Giambattista Vico. Vico's historical and linguistic model divides human language into three modes: the poetic, the noble or heroic, and the vulgar. Frye officially renames these the hieroglyphic, the hieratic, and the demotic (5), but, following the well-known work of Roman Jakobson, he most frequently uses the terms metaphoric and metonymic when referring to the first two modes (Frye, *Code*, 15).

clarify the limits of his ability to link words with things. Confronted with the vision of a world exceeding comprehension, he must make do with comparisons. The trunks of the trees are "*as* blwe *as* ble of Ynde" and their leaves are "[*a*]*s* bornyst sylver" (76-77, emphasis added). The streams glisten "[*a*]*s* fyldor fyn" (106). The gaps inherent in metonymic language underscore the distance between signs and things. The exotic indigo, the burnished silver, and the fine, golden thread are all "put for" trees, leaves, and river, but they are only approximations of the wonders he sees. The comparisons may help us to understand the otherworldliness of the earthly paradise, but at the same time they remind us that the sights he sees are ultimately inaccessible. In this respect, metonymic language parallels the failings of apostrophe and elegy: the vocative noun of apostrophe is put for the addressee, and the contact that appears to be established through the device is a fiction; the lost beloved is briefly recalled from the dead through the words of the elegy, but the conjured figure only gestures toward the real (still absent) person.

Metaphoric language forges and reinforces links between words and things. The metaphorical, writes Stephen Ullman, "is based on a relationship of similarity", whereas "the metonymical is based on an external relationship of contiguity."[178] The metonymical deals largely in physical, visual, or what we might call literal or accidental features. It is the mode of analogy. The metaphorical, Culler argues, is "based on the perception of essential similarity", and, at its highest pitch, insists upon total union.[179] Whereas metonymic language in *Pearl* is identified with the sub-lunary Mourner-Dreamer and his earthly concerns and fixations, metaphoric language in the poem is associated with the Pearl-maiden and the anagogic world of the New Jerusalem, "a world of total metaphor, in which everything is potentially identical to everything else, as though it were all inside a

[178] Stephen Ullman, *Language and Style*, 178.
[179] Culler, "The Turn of Metaphor," 212.

single infinite body".[180] Metaphoric language thus offers a solution to the multiplicity of meanings that disturbs the Mourner-Dreamer and threatens to undo his efforts to achieve consolation. The possibility of total union appeals to the Mourner because it promises to overcome not only the separation from his beloved pearl but also the isolation that results from his grief.

There is a creative power in metaphoric language: in this mode of language, a speaker can do things with words.[181] This power is demonstrated in the creative utterance in Genesis, *Fiat lux* (1:3). With metaphoric language, to say is to do; there is no separation between word and deed. The success of performative language in the metaphoric mode appeals to the elegist because, as I explained in my introduction, every poet who enters into the elegiac tradition is aware of the failures that have come before. An elegy in the metaphoric mode would succeed where metonymical elegies fall short. The elegist's apostrophes would not go unanswered. Instead, the speaker would achieve his goal of recalling the lost beloved: the name of the deceased and any poetic accounts thereof would not simply be "put for" the mourned person, but would be an effective invocation of that person. Similarly, the end of the elegy in the metaphoric mode would not see the beloved fade back into the world of the dead, the victim of the insurmountable gap between word and thing. Rather, the end of such a poetic utterance would realise the full restoration of the lost person. Indeed, an elegy charged with the power of the metaphoric mode would, in the silence that follows its final sounds, negate the cause of its being: it would become a completed work of mourning, still recognisable as an elegy-as-artefact, but, having done away with grief, would no longer be engaged in the process of grieving, the work of mourning. The creative force of the metaphorical elegy is, of course, an ideal beyond the limits of any mundane speaker. Nonetheless, it serves as a target for the

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[180] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 136. Following Frye and the work of J. Allan Mitchell (see below), I associate metaphoric language with anagogy, with a world of full truth and meaning. Mitchell bases his own arguments on Frye's elucidation of the vertical structure of the *axis mundi* and the patterns of ascent connected to it. Mitchell uses the terms "anagogical" and "anagogy" to refer to the uppermost level of existence and of meaning, that final stage that is separated from the mundane sphere.

[181] As Frye writes, in the metaphoric mode of language "the word [has] an element of creative power" (*Code*, 18). See also J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

earthly elegist as he hopes to harness some of its power and deploy it in his own quest for consolation.

Metaphoric language is further appealing to elegists (and to the Mourner-Dreamer in *Pearl*) because it is not bound by earthly conceptions of spatial and temporal distance. The hundred thousand pearl-maidens fill the streets of the New Jerusalem, but "Þagh þay wern fele, no pres in plyt" (1114). Similarly, as Marie Borroff points out, the procession of the Lamb's brides occurs in the same streets (and at the same time) through which the River of Life runs (1055-60).[182] More important to the elegiac project, however, is metaphorical language's nullification of temporal movement. "Anagogic reality," writes J. Allan Mitchell, "is precisely *not* immersed in the stream of historical life".[183] The New Jerusalem in which the Pearl-maiden dwells is, as I demonstrated above, a place without space, a city without physical structure; so too is it "atemporal and eternal".[184] The anagogic City of God exists in a mythic time where "the stages of time—past, present, future—do not remain distinct".[185]

Whereas historical time is defined by a fixed chronology, the anagogical perspective is "aware of no such . . . ordering of time into a rigid system where any particular event has one and only one position".[186] I contend that the Maiden illustrates this conception of time during her explanation of the redemption of mankind and the grace of God (637-660). She begins with the Fall, telling how mankind was expelled from "blysse parfyt" (638):

> 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. (641-44)

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[182] Borroff, "Maynful Mone," 168.
[183] Mitchell, "Figuring the Unfigurable," 88 (his emphasis).
[184] Mitchell, "Figuring the Unfigurable," 92.
[185] Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, 2.106, 111.
[186] Mitchell, "Figuring the Unfigurable," 110.

She continues:

> 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. (645-48)

Here she speaks as one who dwells in eternity: she is like God, whose "vision of occurrences in time," writes Augustine, "is not temporally conditioned."[187] Her narrative moves immediately from the gates of Eden to the top of Calvary. To the Dreamer's mind (and to readers' minds), there is a long stretch of time between the two events, but, for the Maiden, the first event leads to the latter "astyt", straightaway.[188] The contraction of historical time to nearly a single point exemplifies the important difference between how metaphoric and metonymic languages treat temporality.[189]

Metaphoric language functions in a perpetual present, an eternal recurrence, "laden with the past and pregnant with the future".[190] The climax of the Dreamer's vision epitomises the atemporal unity of the anagogical perspective and of metaphorical language. In the eternal Today of the New Jerusalem,[191] the procession of the maidens is never ending, the heavenly marriage ceremony is a perpetual event, and the Lamb is forever bleeding and redeeming the world (1135-44). It is to this atemporal state of bliss that the Dreamer and his language aspire. The language of the Lamb and his Pearl-maiden bride is not the sequential yet fragmented system with which the Mourner-Dreamer is burdened but an eternal, spiritual language which creates and embodies unity. It is the language of the Word of God, as Augustine writes: "That word is spoken eternally, and by it all things are

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[187] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.i.1, (221).
[188] This anagogical or metaphorical way of thinking about time is suggested in biblical texts such as Paul's second letter to Peter: "with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day" (3:8).
[189] For further discussion of the differences between the terrestrial and celestial understandings of time and temporality in *Pearl*, see: Lynn Staley Johnson, "The *Pearl*-Dreamer and the Eleventh Hour," 3-15; Mitchell, "Figuring the Unfigurable," 99-101, 106ff; and Tomasch, "A *Pearl* Punnology," 15. See also Vance, "Saint Augustine: Language as Temporality," 34-50.
[190] Cassirer, 2.111. Compare Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.xix.25, (235), which explains that the precise way to speak of the three divisions of time is to refer to "a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things to come."
[191] I adapt the notion of the eternal Today from Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.xii.16, (230).

uttered eternally. It is not the case that what was being said comes to an end, and something else is then said, so that everything is uttered in a succession with a conclusion, but everything is said in the simultaneity of eternity."[192] This unending speech is the desire of the Mourner-Dreamer and of all elegists. The work of mourning carried out through metonymic language is beholden to time and must eventually cease, and with the last silence at the end of the elegy, the seemingly recalled beloved must fade back into death. An elegy uttered in metaphoric language, however, need never end. Similarly, the metaphoric elegy closes the gap between words and things: the name of the beloved is no longer a token or a placeholder for the creature it represents; apostrophe in the metaphoric mode is redeemed apostrophe, it is the calling that brings closer—infinitely closer—that which is called.

The eternal simultaneity of the holy scene affects the Dreamer and indeed influences his use of language: Section XIX, which is entirely occupied by the climactic scene, is the first in which the link-word does not undergo any change in its repetition—*delyt* reigns throughout.[193] However, the Dreamer cannot, as a living man, stay and witness the glorious scene forever: the dream, like earthly elegies, must end, and he must awake again in the *erber*, in the sub-lunary world of mutability and transience. He does not, however, need to forego the heavenly *delyt* in its entirety, nor does he need to undergo fully the subsequent second loss that characterises the elegiac mode. In the section that concludes this chapter, I will examine how the poet uses the closing symbol of the Eucharist to

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[192] *Confessions*, XI.vii.9, (226).

[193] Donner was, I believe, the first to point out the consistency of *delyt* in the penultimate section. He comments: "The reality of celestial beatitude is properly reported as monistic truth. When confronted with the actuality of Christian belief, the poet subordinates duality of perception to unity of conviction, designing a single-minded link-word pattern that not only epitomizes the experience lexically but also testifies structurally to its emotional perfection. The vision of the Lamb needs no dualism in expression to make its delight seem complete" ("Word Play," 176). I would add that the use of *delyt* here recalls the only earlier occurrence of the word in *Pearl* in the Maiden's explanation of the Fall—"Al wer we dampned for þat mete / To dy3e in doel out of delyt" (641-42)—where lapse is characterised as an exile from bliss: "out of delyt". By repeating the word in Section XIX, with an emphasis on its affirmation and presence, the poet suggests that the Dreamer has a vision of the restored "blysse parfyt" (638).

preserve the bliss and promise of the anagogical perception and metaphorical language the Dreamer so briefly experienced.

The Eucharist and the End of the Poem

The ecstasy of the final, holy scene in the vision overwhelms the Dreamer. Whereas other sights and sounds in the dream are beyond his ability to relate—"[n]is no wy3 worþé þat tonge bere3" (100)—here there is the threat of a total breakdown of the mortal spectator and speaker: "Delyt me drof in y3e and ere, / My mane3 mynde to madding malte" (1153-54). In a moment of frenzy, the Dreamer's longing for his pearl drives him to attempt to cross the boundary stream. It is not permitted that he should enter the heavenly city as a living (and sin-spotted) man, and he is cast out of the dream:

> Quen I se3 my frely, I wolde be þere,
> By3onde þe water þa3 ho were walte.
> . . .
> . . . ry3t as I sparred vnto the bonc,
> Þat brathþe out of my drem me brayed. (1155-56, 1169-70)

He wakes in the *erber* with his head resting on the mound in which his pearl was buried. Though at first he "raxled, and fel in gret affray" (1174) and felt a heavy longing (1180), he nonetheless gains a degree of peace and consolation, as is evidenced in his penultimate apostrophe:

> "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 sermon
> Þat þou so styke3 in garlande gay,
> So wel is me in þys doel-doungoun
> Þat þou art to þat Prynce3 paye." (1182-88)[194]

He resigns himself to live out his life in the transient and mutable world, "þys doel-doungoun," secure in the knowledge that his pearl is fixed among the blessed in heaven.[195]

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[194] See my discussion of this apostrophe above.

In the fourth stanza of Section XX, the Mourner meditates on the limits placed on his access to the divine vision and the all-too-human desire to reach beyond those limits: "Bot ay wolde man of happe more hente / Þen mo3te by ry3t vpon hem clyuen" (1195-96). His admission of these limitations (and aspirations) combines with his prior acknowledgement that "[o]f raas þa3 I were rasch and ronk, / 3et rapely þerinne I wat3 restayed" (1167-68). He observes that it was his hasty trespass that caused him to be ejected from the eternal kingdom—the "kythe3 þat laste3 aye" (1198)—and realises finally that only the mad strive against God's will (1199-1200). His comment recalls the Maiden's initial rebuke of the Dreamer—"Wy borde 3e men? So madde 3e be!" (293)—even as it corrects his error of disbelieving or mistrusting the "kynde of Kryst" in the proem (55).

The Mourner's experience upon waking and his admission (we might even say "confession") in the penultimate stanza prepares for the twelve lines of the poem in which he commits the pearl to God's keeping before turning to the final image of the Eucharist:

> And syþen to God I hit byta3te
> In Krystez dere blessyng an 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. (1207-12)

What might seem to some readers an abrupt departure from the trajectory of the poem has been dismissed by some scholars as an intellectual evasion. David Aers, for instance, finds the ending "theologically superficial and psychologically superficial."[196] However, some *Pearl* scholars have recognised the significance of the closing allusion to the sacrament of the altar.[197] John Gatta, Jr.,

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[195] The change in the Mourner-Dreamer's mind is further characterized in the final stanza by the repetition of *lote*: "Ouer þis hyul þis lote I la3te" (1205). As I discussed above, *lote* is deployed to strengthen the likeness of the Maiden and the Lamb, revealing that they speak the same mode of language. The use of the word here suggests that the Mourner-Dreamer's utterances—possibly including the poem as finished artefact—are in accord with the supernal meanings of the Maiden's usage.

[196] Aers, "The Self Mourning," 70.

[197] It is worth observing that the rite of the Eucharist is not explicitly depicted in the poem; it is merely invoked in lines 1209-10, with the poet showing us the priest showing "vus" the sacrament. I would also note, however, that many people with whom I've spoken have, when asked how about the conclusion of the poem, stated that *Pearl* ends with the

calls attention to the "ritual resonances" of the liturgy as "a major interpretive device" and "an essential index of the poem's meaning".[198] Nicholas Watson writes that the brief turn to the Eucharist in the final lines is a "perfunctory, but apparently confident, gathering in of all the poem's Christian readers to the household of God."[199] Jennifer Garrison claims that the concluding "call to eucharistic devotion" directs the Mourner toward a spiritual reform through the sacrament, one which allows him to exercise emotional control and so overcome his grief.[200] I agree with Watson and Garrison that the shift of focus to the Eucharist "allows *Pearl* to conclude on a hopeful note" and read the last stanza as more than lines "of simple contentment and praise", as Nolan suggests.[201] In this last section, I want to argue that the poet uses the Eucharist as a means of negotiating the troubling gap between word and thing and thus removes many of the barriers to the successful work of mourning.

Despite the claims by Aers and others that the Eucharist represents a sudden interruption of, or intrusion into, the vector of the poem, the poet prepares for this turn several times throughout the dream. The mass is by no means obscured in the text of the poem, buried only in learned allusions and borrowed symbolism. The ritual is directly mentioned three times, once by the Maiden in her explanation of God's grace (497), again when she explains the marriage of the Lamb and the pearl-maidens (862), and later by the Dreamer as he watches the procession of the heavenly brides (1115).[202] The Pearl-maiden invokes the authority of the mass as she prefaces her presentation of the

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Mourner headed to mass. This misconception says more, I think, about the import of the final lines than it does about inattentive reading among contemporary students of *Pearl*.
For further discussion of the function of the liturgy in *Pearl*, see: Oakden, "The Liturgical Influence in 'Pearl,'" 337-53; Gatta, "Liturgy of the Mass in *Pearl*," 243-56; Garrison, "Liturgy and Loss," 294-322; Santha Bhattacharji, "*Pearl* and the Liturgical 'Common of Virgins,'" 37-50; and Susan Powell, "'For ho is Quene of cortaysye': the Assumption of the Virgin in *Pearl* and the *Festial*," 76-95.

[198] Gatta, "Liturgy of the Mass in *Pearl*," 243.

[199] Watson, "Vernacular Theologian," 298. Watson, whose interpretation focuses on the didactic aspects of the poem, positions his argument as a direct response to Aers' reading of the consolatory aspects in "The Self Mourning" (n. 5).

[200] Garrison, "Liturgy and Loss," 294-95, 322.

[201] Garrison, "Liturgy and Loss," 303. Nolan, *Gothic Literary Perspective*, 203.

[202] The mass also appears in the other poems of Cotton Nero A.x. *Patience*, for instance, begins by invoking the missal as the source of the Jonah story which the speaker "herde on a holyday, at a hy3e masse" (9). *Cleanness* insists on the

Parable of the Vineyard: "As Mathew meles in your Messe, / In sothful gospel of God almy3t" (497-98). Her reference here achieves two ends, both of which help the Maiden in her efforts to instruct the Dreamer. First, she defers to a higher authority, the "sothful gospel," contained in Matt. 20:1-16. Second, she establishes the Gospel and the mass as communal sources of true information.[203]

The second mention of the mass helps the Maiden characterise the nature of the marriage between the many brides and the Lamb. The brides, who "þur3outly hauen cnawyng", recognise that the sacrifice of the Lamb achieves salvation: "Of on dethe ful oure hope is drest" (859-60). Thus, she goes on to explain, "Þe Lombe vus glade3, oure care is kest; / He myrþe3 vus alle at vch a mes" (861-62). In a short, three-line passage, the Maiden summarises the causal relationship of the Crucifixion and redemption (860-61), and she suggests the connexions between the everlasting joy achieved through that sacrifice and the daily ritual of the Eucharist (861-62). The gladness of salvation corresponds to the mirth of the mass. These great delights are not only everlasting but also endlessly repeated: the mirth of the Lamb is created "at vch a mes." We find a confirmation of this perpetual present of sacrifice, redemption, and missal celebration in the procession of the pearl-maidens at the end of the vision.

The comparison of the heavenly brides' behaviour in the procession to the ladies in a congregation—they are as "mylde as maydenes seme at mas" (1115)—similarly uses the familiarity

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requisite purity of the clergy to perform the mass. *Sir Gawain* uses mass as one of several important temporal markers throughout the poem. Cf. Garrison, "Liturgy and Loss," 301-2.

[203] Earlier in their encounter, the Maiden chastises the Dreamer for only believing what he experiences directly: "Ye setten Hys words ful westernays / That loves nothynk bot ye hit syye" (307-08). She elaborates that it ill-befits a man "[t]o leve no tale be true to tryye / Bot that hs one skyl may dem" (311-12). Because the Dreamer has refused to believe her account, she appeals to Scripture to convince him. *Pearl* is not the only medieval dream vision poem that employs this type of rhetorical move. In Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, a popular French dream vision poem, a vision of eucharistic transformation includes the lesson not to trust the bodily senses (lines 1465-98, 1503-2004). See also Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, 5.

of the ritual as a touchstone.[204] This simile allows the Dreamer briefly to bridge the gap between known human experience and the otherwise inaccessible action of its celestial cognate. The comparison stands in contrast to the Dreamer's earlier uses of metonymic language to relate the wonders of the earthly paradise. Early in the vision, luxurious worldly ornaments are put for the splendours of the dreamscape. In this climactic moment, he represents the otherness of the supernal celebration with the simple, lived experience of the mass, a rite which blurs the boundaries between the celestial and the mundane. The three explicit allusions to the mass in *Pearl* show the ceremony as a point of social reference; the authoritative and didactic power of the rite; and the mass's ability to create equality, unity, and joy. Moreover, they build toward the consolation that the Mourner-Dreamer locates in the sacrament at the heart of the mass.

The Mourner-Dreamer's brief account of the Eucharist demonstrates that the man has corrected his way of seeing and interpreting signs. As I noted above, the Maiden repeatedly rebukes the Dreamer for dwelling on surface details and appearances: "Ye setten Hys words ful westernays / That loves nothynk bot ye hit syye" (307-08). When he refers to the Eucharist in the final stanza, he is careful to specify that it is shown "in þe forme of bred and wyn" (1209). This phrase is rather common in the religious poetry of late-medieval England and in prose tracts, but the Mourner's use here shows that he recognises the split between the accidents of the Eucharist and the substantial truth, that there is more significance than what he merely sees. The "superficiality of thought" which, according to Milroy, characterises the Mourner-Dreamer's language from the outset of the poem is thus corrected.[205] This change of mind and manner is demonstrated by the physical shift in

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[204] As many scholars note, the procession of the maidens recalls eucharistic processions, especially those associated with the Corpus Christi feast. See Garrison, "Liturgy and Loss" 318; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 77ff, and ""The Eucharist and Medieval Identities," 58. Bossy similarly notes that the *Corpus Christi* mass includes an explicit prayer for unity ("Mass as a Social Institution," 50).

[205] Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 203. Recall my earlier comments about the perceived error at lines 720-21. I suggested that the substitution of *Jesu* for *ry3t* is a surface discrepancy, precisely the type of aberration the Mourner-Dreamer would fix upon. It is a change in accidents, but not in substance. Deeper understanding shows that *Jesu* and *ry3t* are perfectly interchangeable, something the reawakened Mourner-Dreamer would no doubt recognise.

the Mourner's gaze. As the Mourner relinquishes the pearl to God's keeping, he "transfer[s] his layman's gaze from the 'hyul' [*sic*] which hides his daughter's rotting body to the hands of the priest as they mysteriously reveal . . . the resurrected body of her spouse".[206] Like Boethius, the Pearl-mourner turns his eyes from the earth to cast a glance upward to higher, immutable meaning.

The Eucharist-as-sign offers further consolation to the Mourner. The slipperiness of words and signs, which exists due to the gap between words and things, threatens to undo the poetic project of mourning. The Eucharist is a perfected sign, for it removes the troubling gap.[207] It is both the sign and the thing signified, joined in identity.[208] It transforms what would otherwise be metonym to metaphor. The Eucharist wafer is not only "put for" the Body of Christ, but *is* the real Body.[209] Though the Eucharist is broken, the real presence remains total in each part. That same real presence appears at every mass, every day. The unifying power of the sacramental sign provides an instance in the earthly sphere of the metaphoric mode. The Eucharist allows the Mourner-Dreamer, trapped in this *doel-doungoun*, to access the language of the Pearl-maiden, who "knows no gaps between word and reality."[210]

The eucharistic singularity of sign and signified redeems signification for the Mourner. His new perception allows him to see mutability and variation of words not as an unsettling force, but as part of a greater totality of meaning. Although earthly signs can refer to many things—the pearl can be a gemstone, a daughter, the gates of the New Jerusalem, and so on—each points to the ultimate signified beyond the circles of the world, the Word of God, "[t]hat word [which] is spoken eternally, and by [which] all things are uttered eternally."[211] The Mourner can thus delight in the polysemy of mundane language—as the *Pearl*-poet so clearly does—all while preferring the elevated and supernal

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[206] Watson, "Vernacular Theologian," 299.
[207] On the sacrament as a perfected sign, see Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, III.60ff.
[208] Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, 24.
[209] See Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 12-35; Aquinas, *Summa*, III.73-78.
[210] Watts, "Inexpressibility," 29.
[211] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.vii.9, (226).

meanings, as the Pearl-maiden has instructed him to do throughout the dream.[212] The lesson embodied in the Eucharist plays out in the short space following the presentation of the Eucharist in the final stanza: "He gef vus to be his homly hyne / Ande precious perle3 vnto his pay" (1211-1212). The final line recalls the first line of the poem, "Perle, plesaunte to prynces pay" (1), and suggests an element of circularity to the poem: the catch-word of Section XX appears in the first line of the Section I. However, as Tomasch notes, "[o]nly in form are 'perle3' and 'pay' of line 1,212 the same words as in line 1."[213] The pearl of the opening section, whether single gemstone or sole daughter, has become the many pearls, the multitude of the blessed (the *vus*) united through the daily mass. Similarly, whereas "pay" in the first line refers to a pleasure derived from material goods, from the precious stone enclosed in shining gold, in the last line "his pay"—where the pronoun undoubtedly refers to the singular heavenly prince—is the total joy derived from grace, the *delyt* that emanates from the Lamb's face "Þa3 he were hurt and wounde hade" (1142). Although the Mourner is back in the *erber* of dissimilitude and competing meaning, he now uses his words with their highest referents in mind. What we witness in this moment is, I think, a sort of small-scale, low-stakes transformation of the words, something akin to the transubstantiation that occurs on the altar at mass: the accidents of the words remain—*perle*, *pay*—but the substance has changed entirely. In the first *erber* scene, the Mourner's words indicated that his eyes and his thoughts dwelt on the earth, focused on the *moul* in which his pearl was buried. In the final moment in the *erber*, the reawakened Mourner's words indicate a raising of his mind toward eternity.

The recovery of signs through the Eucharist allows for other recoveries to follow. The eucharistic conclusion in *Pearl* reintroduces the human community that was rejected at the outset of

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[212] Milroy, "Verbal Texture," 198-99; Donner, "Word Play," 168-69; Tomasch, "A *Pearl* Punnology," 1-2, 11.
[213] Tomasch, "A *Pearl* Punnology," 20. Cf. Wilson, "Word Play," 124; Staley Johnson, *Voice of the Gawain-Poet*, 203.

the poem. The mass and its climax, the elevation of the Eucharist, are highly social events.[214] The mass, writes John Bossy, "was the central public ritual of the Latin church from the thirteenth century to the Reformation." In the High Middle Ages, the Eucharist "emerg[ed] as the most frequently celebrated and attended sacrament," and, from the twelfth century, the mass was redesigned to emphasise the centrality and divinity of the Eucharist.[215] The medieval mass "functioned as a catalyst which helped create social fusion among its participants."[216] The ritual bound the community together in one space, at one temporal moment, and as one social entity: the paratactic elements of the parish mass, for example, include such social information as marriage bans and so, writes Bossy, the mass presents the congregation to itself.[217]

In the proem, when the Mourner enters into the *erber* to grieve over his pearl, he turns away from the society of the harvesters labouring in the field. Many scholars suggest that the date in "Augoste in a hy3 seysoun" (39) is the English Lammas festival held on the first of August, when the first harvest was gathered together and presented to the local church for the making of host wafers.[218] Lammas was a heavily communal event: "Though harvest was the season of the year when everyone, young or old, man or woman, had to work hardest," writes George Caspar Homans, "the very circumstance that everyone who could be spared from other work was in the fields must have made it a time of company, and the many traditional sports and gifts of harvest helped the work to go forward cheerfully."[219] The Mourner's conspicuous absence from the collective labour and

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[214] Rubin maintains the "audio-visual event" of the elevation marks the climax of the mass: the elevation is "marked by special illumination, incense and the ringing of bells; all attention was directed at the little white shape in which salvation resided." See "The Eucharist and Medieval Identities," 50. In *Corpus Christi*, she stresses the total sensory stimulation of the elevation: "At the elevation all sense were called into play. Bells pealed, incense was burnt, candles were lit, hands were clasped, supplications were mouthed" (58).
[215] Bossy, "Mass as a Social Institution," 33; Rubin, "The Eucharist and Medieval Identities," 47. In the *Summa*, Aquinas argues that the Eucharist is the greatest of the sacraments. See III.65.3.
[216] Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 2.
[217] Bossy, "Mass as a Social Institution," 35-36.
[218] Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, 44.
[219] Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century*, 371. Hutton elaborates on the customs of Lammas, explaining the group activities and creations that went along with the celebration: practices at Lammas include "the crowning of girls as harvest queens by sets of reapers, the bringing home of the last load of corn covered in garlands, with loud acclamations,

celebration reinforces the isolating effects of his sorrow. The lonely enclosure of the *erber* stands in contrast to the teeming open fields, and his unproductive mourning is juxtaposed to the bounty gathered by the harvesters. At the end of the poem, the isolating, vegetable boundary of the *erber* is replaced by the inclusive, stone walls of the parish church.[220] The Eucharist, the materials of which are the product of the communal efforts in the field, restores the Mourner to his community. (We should not imagine that the *Pearl*-poet would fail to recognise and appreciate the etymology of *companion*.) His comments on the elevation establish him as part of a larger body, the "vus" (1210) to whom the priest shows the host, the same "vus" who are the "homly hyne" (1211) of God.[221]

In medieval biblical commentaries, the Eucharist was frequently presented as an agent of unification and a symbol of unity. In the *Summa theologica*, Aquinas writes that the bread and the wine—as artificial products—symbolically reinforce this unity: "Bread and wine are employed in this sacrament to bring out its significance of the unity of the Church. As Augustine says, *one loaf is made of many grains and one wine of many bunches of grapes*."[222] The materials of the host thus exemplify the uniting of the many into the one. (The materials used to make the host further compound communitarian symbolism through the oblique but implicit associations with harvest and production.) At the same time as the sacrament of the altar solidifies the society of the congregation, it reaches beyond its immediate spatial and temporal environs to encompass the entire sphere of Christendom. Each instance of the mass and the Eucharist collapses earthly space so that all

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and the weaving of images from grain stalks" (*The Ritual Year*, 44). There are several resonances here with the events and images recounted in *Pearl*.

[220] On the shape and composition of the *erber*, see Luttrell, "Symbolism in a Garden Setting."

[221] We do well to recall Nolan's comments on the heavy foregrounding of the first person singular in the proem (*Gothic Visionary Perspective*, 160-62). Here the Mourner ceases to see himself as a lone 'I' and instead understands himself to be one constituent part of a larger whole.

[222] *Summa Theologica*, III.75.2, obj. 3. In *De sacramentis*, Master Simon of Flanders discussed the conceit of the Church (Christ's mystical body) as bread: the Church "is assembled of many persons, or grains, is cleansed by the water of baptism, ground between the two mill-stones of the two testaments, that is the new and the old, or between the two mill-stones, of hope and fear." See Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 21-23.

participants are linked in the body of Christ, the *corpus mysticum*, the universal Church.[223] The mass that occurs in Cheshire contains the same real presence of Christ as a mass at Rheims, Rome, or Worms. The body of Christ that appears on every altar in every church "vch a daye" is there in its totality and yet also remains in Heaven. In this respect, the rite of the Eucharist appears to solve the Mourner-Dreamer's problems with locating his absent pearl.[224] The final image of the manifest Body of Christ teaches the Mourner-Dreamer that his understanding of spatiality is limited, and that there exist great powers that can overcome the separations that mundane space seems to require. Like the metaphoric language of the Maiden and the Lamb, the Eucharist removes gaps, forges links, and strengthens bonds.

The sacrament of the altar bridges distances in space and closes a gap between this world and the celestial realm; it also affects time. The Eucharist condenses historical time in much the same way that the Pearl-maiden's account of the Fall and Redemption does. The rite occurs in the present performance of the mass, but it also reaches both forward and backward in time. Aquinas writes that the Eucharist functions as a memorial of the drama of the Passion; it is also a re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice.[225] The words of consecration ("This is my body…") are the same words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper. The separation of the Blood from the rest of the Body ("This is the chalice of my blood…") re-enacts the final wounding of Christ at the Crucifixion. The temporal sequence of the original events—which unfolded over an extended period of hours and days—is condensed into the few minutes of the rite. The events themselves are also carried into the

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[223] Aers, *Sanctifying Signs*, 3. See also Aquinas, *Summa*, III.73.3. Bossy explains in detail how the rite of the Eucharist unites the total body of Christianity, both the living and the dead ("Mass as a Social Institution," 37ff).

[224] Rubin makes note of a twelfth-century eucharistic tract contained in a commentary on John 12:24, the passage that informs the Mourner's deliberations on the burial and dissolution of the pearl in the proem. The anonymous commentator explains why wheaten bread is used in the sacrament of the altar: "This bread is made of nothing but wheat, patently because Christ compared himself to a grain of wheat; as he said: 'A grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies." The important link between John 12:24 and the host adds closure to one of the chief sites of anxiety for the Mourner-Dreamer, for it provides a positive response to his questioning mind at the site of the spice mound under which the pearl lies buried. See Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 38.

[225] *Summa*, III.78.3. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:26; Rubin, "The Eucharist and Medieval Identities," 47, 55.

present of the ritual and experienced by the congregation in that time. At the same moment, however, the eucharistic ritual stretches across historical time in the other direction, bridging the eschatological future and the present moment of the ceremony. As Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, the Eucharist repeatedly points to the time "until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The sacrament invokes the atemporal eternity which follows the end of days. It likewise manifests the total unity embodied in the New Jerusalem. Through the daily ritual of the Eucharist, the poem argues, members of the Church can access the sublime vision of the eternal sacrifice and redemption of the Lamb which the Dreamer beholds in the final moments of the dream.[226]

As I have explained above, the climactic vision is best understood as a compacted time where past, present, and future are brought together in a moment that is at once polytemporal and atemporal. This dense temporality can be termed the *aevum*. As Nolan explains, the *aevum* was a concept developed by high medieval schoolmen to designate "the durative state of the human soul when, drawn out of the pure succession of events in earthly time, it is raised up to the realization of its wholeness and perfection by coming into contact with the divine presence." It is "that duration which participates at once in aspects of time and eternity." The *aevum*, as a means of accessing anagogic reality, serves as bridge between the fullness of being of the eternal and the non-being (or becoming) of successive temporality.[227] The *aevum* bears a striking similarity to the two Pauline concepts of the *ho nyn kairos*, "the time of the now" and "the time that remains" (Rom. 11:5; cf. 1 Cor. 7:29). This "time of the now" is what Giorgio Agamben terms "messianic time," which is "neither chronological [secular, historical] time nor the apocalyptic *eschaton*", but exists between the two.[228] Messianic time, Agamben explains, is part of historical time, but it occupies the period

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[226] I think it no coincidence that, from the twelfth century on, host wafers were frequently inscribed with "a crucifixion scene or the lamb of God" (Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 39). See also Jungman, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, II.381-82.
[227] Nolan, *Gothic Visionary Perspective*, 39.
[228] Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 62. As the title makes clear, Agamben's whole book deals with the intricacies of the time that remains, but for a particularly focused discussion of the complex temporalities at play, see especially 59-87.

following the messianic event (the Resurrection) and the *eschaton*. It is the time when time is ending (but not yet ended), "*the time that time takes to come to an end*".[229] As a mediating period, messianic time brings together aspects of both historical time and eternity.

The Eucharist dwells at a crux between the flow of hours and of days on the one hand and the Augustinian eternal Today on the other.[230] Although the mass occurs within chronological time, it taps into the atemporal nature of the eschatological future. The rite which occurs in a present pregnant with the past and the future also creates a temporary suspension of time. Several medieval commentators suggest that time appears to halt during the ritual. For example, the author of the *Fasciculus Morum* writes that "while one is hearing Mass, one does not grow older."[231] Atemporality is, as I have already stated, very appealing to elegists, particularly to the Mourner-Dreamer in *Pearl*. The suspension of historical time during the mass gives the Mourner respite from the sequence of events that increasingly separates him from his pearl. The Eucharist at mass thus achieves the boons of the atemporality the Mourner-Dreamer sought through apostrophe: it halts the widening of the gulf between the Mourner and his pearl—indeed removes that gulf—and allows the grieving father to commune with his departed daughter. The prospect of timelessness likewise suggests a situation in which mourning need not end (an event which requires the mourned beloved to fall back into the world of the dead), but is transformed instead into a celebration. When the Mourner commits his pearl to God's keeping, carefully associating that transfer with the eucharistic rite, he prepares for

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[229] Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 67. Original italics.
[230] I do not think myself fully qualified to make such pronouncements, but I would like to venture that the sacrament of the Eucharist occurs in messianic time. As Agamben explains, for Jewish thinkers and for the Church Fathers, the Sabbath "constitutes a kind of small-scale model for messianic time" (*The Time that Remains*, 71). I see no reason why this interpretation cannot be extended to the mass.
[231] *Fasciculus Morum*, 411.

future instances of longing for his pearl to become occasions of joy and successful communion, ones in which metaphorical language displaces the problematic metonymic mode of everyday life.[232]

The mass achieves a brief bubble of timelessness within the flow of secular, historical time, but the mass performed in earthly churches is a finite event: each daily mass must come to an end. One of the two chief lessons of the final lines of *Pearl* lies in the phrase "vch a day": the Eucharist brings together the congregants (and their deceased relatives) and gives the participants access to the perpetual celebration of sacrifice, redemption, and unity, but must be experienced daily. The emphasis on repetition is, as I have said above, an important one for elegists, the *Pearl*-poet, and his Mourner-Dreamer. Repetition imposes order and "creates a sense of continuity, of an unbroken pattern".[233] But repetition can become a liability and a trap: recall the languorous repetition of the name of the pearl that perpetuated the Mourner's grief or his recurring visits to the funerary *erber*. Repetition can also highlight discrepancies and semantic shifts in meaning which trouble the mourners and elegists, as we have seen in the discussion of *spot*, *mote*, and *mon*. The pairing of repetition with the unity embodied in and created through the Eucharist recuperates repetition as a positive and a productive action and device. The daily performance and observance of the ritual joins consistent repetition with variance in a manner that reassures the Mourner: the form of the rite remains the same from day to day, but the modifications in the apparatus, readings, and prayers introduce vitality and energy that contrast but complement the atemporal aspects of the celebration. The (liturgical) cycle obliquely suggested by the allusion to mass "vch a day" promises the Mourner that, while (secular) time will march on, it is infused with an element of the eternal. The cycle of joy and celebration replaces the vicious cycle of grief, unproductive mourning, and an intensified and renewed grief that dominates the man who first enters into the *erber*.

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[232] It occurs to me that this is the lesson Monica imparts to Augustine and his brother as she lies dying in Book IX of the *Confessions*. When consulted about her final resting place, the mother tells her sons not to worry themselves with where her body should be interred, but to always remember her at the altar no matter where they are.
[233] Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 23.

Pearl is a poem about loss and how language both perpetuates and assuages that loss. The Mourner-Dreamer begins as a wayward speaker unable to control his emotions, his reason, or his tongue. He calls hopelessly for his lost pearl, bringing about no change except the deepening of his grief. Through the dream-encounter with the Pearl-maiden and the climactic vision of the celestial celebration, he is led toward a more complete understanding of grace and how to use his words effectively. The final image of the Eucharist elevated in the priest's hands functions as a corrective to many of the Mourner-Dreamer's problems in the poem. Whereas he suffers from sorrowful isolation in the first *erber* scene, in the last moments in the garden, he turns toward the community of the Church. In the *erber* and in the dream, the Mourner-Dreamer is troubled by the shifting signs of his language, especially as they unsettle his efforts to end his grief. In the Eucharist, he finds a sign that is at once single and multiple, a sign that, though it appears to be composed of the things of this world, knows no gap between sign and thing. The closing of this gap parallels the collapsing of spatial distances that the Eucharist achieves. The unification that happens in space also plays out in time. As I discussed in the introductory sections of this chapter, a significant part of the Mourner-Dreamer's grief stems from an anxiety about time, specifically the irreversible flow from past to present to future, the flow that increasingly separates him from his pearl. The Eucharist offers an alternative to this unidirectional system of time, one that bridges the past and the present and also looks forward to the final end, the eschatological union of all creation. In the daily repetition of the eucharistic sacrament, the Mourner locates a fixed point by which the problematic shifts of mundane signs are anchored and through which the words of this world may be elevated. The Mourner may have to resign himself to dwell in this *doel-doungoun*, the prison-house of earthly language, but he has gained a high window from which he may gaze upon the heavens.

Chapter Two

"Now hit ys doon": Lyric and Narrative in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*

The *Book of the Duchess* is Chaucer's first sustained narrative poem.[1] This dream vision elegy consequently holds a special place in the Chaucerian canon for it signals an important transition in the course of his development as a poet. Chaucer will continue to write lyrical poetry throughout his career, but the *Duchess* marks a departure from his role as a strictly lyrical poet, one participating in the predominantly *fin' amor*-based poetics of courtly literature. Although some scholarly work has addressed the first of Chaucer's dream visions as a step in his poetic development, there has been an insufficient amount of attention given to the interactions of lyric and narrative in the poem where Chaucer simultaneously announces and undertakes a departure from a predominately lyrical poetic career. In this chapter, I will investigate how Chaucer dramatises his first foray into narrative poetry, how he uses the combination of dream vision and elegy as a testing ground for his own poetic skills, and how he enlarges the capacities of dream-poem and elegy.

The *Book of the Duchess* begins with the Narrator, who is troubled by insomnia, reflecting on what ails him and why he can gain neither solace nor sleep. In an effort to combat his sleeplessness, the Narrator takes down a book "[t]o rede and drive the night away" (49). He then relays the story in the book, an adaptation of Ovid's tale of King Ceyx and Queen Alcyone in the *Metamorphoses*. The story includes the death of a spouse, prayers to Juno for solace, and a dream-visit from the god Morpheus with a message to cease grieving. The lesson the Narrator extracts from the tale is that there are in fact gods that can grant sleep. In turn, he describes a richly appointed bed which he will offer to Morpheus or Juno or whomever, if only they will send him off to dreamland, and he promptly falls asleep on his open book.

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[1] See, for instance: Boitani, *English Medieval Narrative*, 140; Boroff, "Chaucer's English Rhymes," 78; Brewer, "English and European Traditions," 2; Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 52; Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 1. Mehl, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, 22; Owen, "Chaucer: Beginnings," 47; Robertson, "Historical Setting," 235; and Traversi,*Chaucer: The Earlier Poetry*, 33.

In the dream that follows, the Dreamer-Narrator awakens in a bright chamber filled with birdsong and decorated with stained glass scenes of the fall of Troy and paintings based on the *Roman de la Rose*. The Dreamer hears a horn blast, rises, and joins the hunters of the Emperor Octavian in pursuit of a hart. Distracted by a small puppy, the Dreamer journeys down a flowery path and enters a lush grove where he finds a knight, dressed in black and speaking a poem of mourning: the Man in Black laments the loss of his fair Lady White and curses the cruel fate that has left him alive while she is dead. Although the Dreamer overhears the complaint, he fails to understand its message or, in another reading, feigns ignorance.[2] The bulk of the poem sees the Dreamer trying to get the Man in Black to speak his grief plainly. There follows an elaborate chess allegory in which the Knight's opponent, Lady Fortune, steals his queen. The Dreamer misinterprets the allegory, and the mourner must tell his tale in a different manner. The Man then relates how the lovers first met and gives a sustained account of Lady White's beauty and her many virtues. The Dreamer acknowledges that the Black Knight must have loved the lady a great deal, but he fails to comprehend why the Man is so crestfallen. The Dreamer has missed the mark again, the Man in Black says: "Tho wost ful lytel what thou menest; / I have lost more than thow wenest" (743-44). He begins once more, recounting how, madly in love, he took to composing poetry, but the poems earned him no favour with the lady, and he fell into a deep depression. He emerged to try again by speaking his love directly, and he won the hand of Lady White. The Dreamer then inquires: "Sir . . . where is she now?" (1298). "She ys ded" (1309), replies the Man in Black. His plain speech seems to

[2] On the ignorance of the Dreamer, see: Fichte, "A Consolation?"; Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid*, 182-83; Howard, *Chaucer and the Medieval World*, 156; and Kittredge, *Chaucer and his Poetry*, 50. On the Dreamer's tact and attempts at consolation, see: Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, I.61; Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 69-70; and Traversi, *Chaucer: The Earlier Poetry*, 42, 49-50.

break the spell of his grief: the Man rises and rides toward his castle.[3] At that very moment, a bell tolls in the castle, and the Dreamer awakes and vows to put his dream into rhyme.

Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* was written in response to the death of Blanche of Lancaster, the first wife of John of Gaunt.[4] Gaunt and Blanche were married in May 1359.[5] As a consequence of their marriage, Gaunt received the holdings and titles of Lancaster from Blanche's father, Henry of Grosmont, the first Duke of Lancaster and the wealthiest peer in the realm.[6] Blanche died 12 September 1368, likely of the plague; she was 23 years old.[7] Gaunt treasured her memory, establishing annual commemorations of her death, which were celebrated until Gaunt's own passing, whereupon he was buried next to his first wife in an ornate tomb in the choir of old St Paul's.[8] John

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[3] Scholarly opinion is divided over who rides toward the castle at the simultaneous ends of the encounter and the hunt. Immediately following the Black Knight's statement "She ys ded" (1309) and the Dreamer's offer of condolence, the Narrator continues:

> And with that word ryght anoon
> They gan to strake forth; al was doon,
> For that tyme, the hert-huntyng.
> With that, me thoghte that this kyng
> Gan homwarde for to ryde (1311-15)

The *they* of line 1312 refers to the hunters who had been pursuing the hart, but the identity of the king is less clear. A few critics suggest the lines refer to Edward III, Gaunt's father, which seems unlikely given his complete absence from the poem up to this point (Condren, "A New Hypothesis," 210). Several commentators maintain that the king is the Octavian mentioned early in the dream (line 368; see Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 119; Scott-MacNab, "Octavyen's Hunt"; Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 55). Still more scholars read the above lines as referring to the Man in Black. See, for instance: Owen, "Chaucer: Beginnings," 47; Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry*, I.60; Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 51; Davis, "Machaut and the Chaucer Tradition," 402.

[4] Though there have been a few scholarly efforts to discount this association, it is clear that Chaucer intended it. In the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, Alceste lists "the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse" as one of the redeeming texts in Chaucer's corpus, written in service of the God of Love (418).

[5] Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 35. The marriage celebrations for Blanche and John of Gaunt were lavish, including many expensive gifts exchanged between the royal family and its wealthier vassals as well as the first jousts held in Reading, with subsequent jousts held during the wedding procession to London where another tournament was held in honour of the lady of Lancaster. See also Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt*, 14-15.

[6] Grosmont, a military commander in the Hundred Years War and a founding member of the Order of the Garter, was a patron of artists and scholars and a generous benefactor of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He was also the author of a devotional memoir, the *Livre de seyntz medicines*. See: Ormrod, "Henry of Lancaster, first Duke of Lancaster (c. 1310-1361)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

[7] Palmer, "Historical Context," 257; Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt*, 75-78. In the *Joli buisson de Jonece*, Froissart writes of Blanche, "Elle morut jone et jolie, / Environ de .XXII. ans" (247-48).

[8] Robertson, "Historical Setting," 236-38. For details of Blanche's funeral, see Palmer, "Historical Context," 256, which reports that Blanche's "body was transported to London for burial by a thousand horsemen, with due pomp and decorum." See also Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt*, 77, who reports that Gaunt paid two priests who "all the year round . . . chanted masses for her soul at an altar built beside her tomb, and furnished with a rich missal and chalice." Lewis, who offers details regarding the two priests, adds details concerning Gaunt's expenditures on hiring 24 poor congregants as torchbearers during the anniversary services and distributing £10 in alms to prisoners and the poor in the city

of Gaunt and Blanche appear in Chaucer's dream vision as the sorrowful Man in Black and his deceased Lady White.[9]

Although the *Book of the Duchess* is accepted as Chaucer's first major poem, precise dating is difficult to achieve. The two outside dates offered are late-1368 and 1377.[10] Some scholars contend the poem was written in the same year that Blanche died, but, given the complexities of the poem, I think it unlikely that Chaucer could produce such a text in the short space between mid-September and the end of 1368.[11] Other critics, such as David Lawton, state that "the poem appears to have been composed some considerable time after Blanche's death".[12] In most scholarly discussions, the latest given date of composition is 1372, the last year that Gaunt was the Earl of Richmond (cf. *Duchess* 1319).[13] The Richmond argument is tenuous, for while Gaunt no longer held that title by mid-1372, he did retain it for nearly four years after Blanche's death, and so would have been Earl of Richmond during the height of his grief. It is not a stretch of the imagination to think that Gaunt's contemporaries (and thus Chaucer's original audience) would have recalled the Duke's former title and holdings and may have used the reference to the earldom to date the fictional dream to within a

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("Anniversary Service," 179-81). For accounts of the ordering of the tomb at St Paul's, see Goodman, *John of Gaunt*, 257-58, 361.

[9] The representations of the Man in Black and the Lady White remain, in the end, allegorical. There is no perfect correspondence between the former and the Duke of Lancaster, nor the latter and his deceased wife—though, it is implied, this second association is the tighter of the two. As Minnis *et al* caution us, "[t]o equate the Man in Black with John of Gaunt would be absurd, while to deny the connection would be perverse" (*The Shorter Poems*, 154). Cf. Robertson, "Historical Setting," 241-42: "a funerary poem, to avoid boorishness, might be expected to show considerable restraint in its implication concerning actual persons."

[10] In an early essay, based on the presumed 1369 death of Blanche that prevailed at the time, Condren argues that the *Duchess* was composed in 1377 as Chaucer tried to shift his patronage fortunes from the dying or deceased Edward III to the regent John of Gaunt ("A New Hypothesis," 209-11; cf. Stearns, "Chaucer Mentions a Book"). The early limit of late-1368 is now generally accepted, based on Palmer's adjustment from 12 September 1369 to 1368. See Palmer, "The Historical Context of the *Book of the Duchess*: A Revision."

[11] Lumiansky, "The Bereaved Narrator," 117. Palmer argues that Chaucer must have written the poem in a hurry between the death of Blanche and the December 1368 suggestion that John of Gaunt marry Margaret of Flanders ("Historical Context," 255). See also Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 80.

[12] Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 56.

[13] Though he later abandons the reading, Palmer makes the suggestion that the poem had to be composed after September 1371 when Gaunt claimed the title of King of Castile through his marriage to Constance of Castile ("Historical Context," 258). See also *Riverside Chaucer,* 976; Lynch, ed., *Dream Visions*, 3.

few years of Blanche's death.[14] Proponents of the 1372 limit also cite the influence of Chaucer's poem on Froissart's *Dit dou bleu chevalier*. These scholars follow Auguste Scheler's dating of the dit to 1372-73 as proposed in his 1870-72 edition of the works of Froissart.[15] However, as Susan Crane has shown, the 1370s date for the Froissart poem is spurious, and the *Bleu chevalier* was more likely written in the mid-1360s.[16] Froissart's commemorative poem, *Le joli buisson de Jonece*, which memorialises both Blanche and Queen Philippa († 1369), can be dated to 1373.[17] Depending on when he started work on the poem, Chaucer may have had this poem in mind as he wrote the *Book of the Duchess*.

In light of two developments in 1374, I posit that the *Book of the Duchess* was completed in 1373 or early 1374 and performed publicly for the first time on 12 September of that year. In June of 1374, Chaucer received a life annuity of £10 from Gaunt.[18] This annuity may not have been directly linked to the production of the *Duchess*, but it does speak to a patronage relationship between Chaucer and Gaunt. Also in 1374, Gaunt commissioned the St Paul's tomb from Henry Yevele.[19] The annual commemorations of Blanche began shortly after her death, but the memorial

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[14] See Condren, "Of Deaths and Duchesses," 93: "Since John of Gaunt gave up Richmond castle and the title Earl of Richmond in June 1372, Palmer argues that Chaucer's poem could not have been written after that date since it refers to Gaunt by that title. Nonsense. He held the title when Blanche died. Any poem, regardless of when it was written, recreating scenes from that time of bereavement would use a title then current. In fact, a poem written after the title had been surrendered, but reminiscing about a former time, would be particularly apt to use the old title in order to orient the audience to the earlier date." Hardman's research bolsters this possibility; drawing on Woodcock and Robinson, she notes "the use of heraldic displays at funerals as 'matters of record,' which 'do not affect the way a man would bear arms in his lifetime': a similarly commemorative purpose may be intended here" ("Memorial Monument," 206; cf. 211). See also Woodcock and Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, 123.

[15] See, for instance, Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 178-79, which argues that Froissart may have received a copy of Chaucer's *Duchess* from Richard Stury during the latter's travels to Brussels in 1371. See also Wimsatt, "The *Dit dou Bleu Chevalier*: Froissart's Imitation of Chaucer."

[16] Crane, "Froissart's *Dit do Bleu Chevalier* as a Source for Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*," 59-61. See also Froissart, *'Dits' et 'Débats'*, ed. Fourrier, 60, which gives the date of 1364.

[17] Froissart states that the poem memorialises a vision of 30 November 1373 (856-60).

[18] Crow and Olson, *Chaucer Life-Records*, 271; Armitage-Smith, ed., *John of Gaunt's Regsiter*, I.232. Goodman reminds us that there is no hard evidence that Chaucer received the payment as reward for his literary output (*John of Gaunt*, 37).

[19] Armitage-Smith, ed., *John of Gaunt's Register*, II.296-97; Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 73.

of September 1374 was the first that John of Gaunt was able to attend.[20] I contend that Chaucer's poem was performed at the inaugural memorial service. Public elegies such as the *Book of the Duchess* were occasionally commissioned, written, and performed for funeral and memorial services. In 1339, Queen Philippa commissioned an elegy for her father, William of Hainault († 1337), and the resulting *Regret Guillaume Conte de Hainault* by the poet Jehan de le Mote may have informed Chaucer's decision to use the dream vision genre for his elegy for Philippa's daughter-in-law. As I mentioned above, Froissart's *Joli buisson de Jonece* elegises both Philippa and Blanche. Later in the century, elegies and verse eulogies played a role in the elaborate funeral service for, and memorialisation of, Richard II's queen, Anne of Bohemia.[21] Even if Chaucer's *Duchess* was not written expressly for the purpose of a public memorial service, I see no reason to discount that a performance of the poem was a part of the 1374 commemoration of Blanche.[22]

The *Book of the Duchess* is a poem of sorrow, suffering, and the pursuit of consolation. The central episode of the dream, the encounter between the Dreamer and the Man in Black, builds toward the release of the Black Knight from the repetitious cycle of his grief. The Dreamer-Narrator also undergoes a transformation: the frantic, restless mind that suffers from insomnia in the opening sections of the poem is, in the coda that follows the Narrator's waking up, supplanted by the poetic mind capable of writing the dream poem itself. Scholars locate the consolations created or offered through the poem in different aspects of the work. Most critics note and accept the absence of an explicitly Christian message of reunion beyond the circles of the world or the ineffable joys

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[20] The 1374 memorial was particularly sumptuous. The two-part service, consisting of a collation at St Paul's followed by a dinner at Savoy palace, cost a total of £48.15.6d. Gaunt's *Register* (no. 943) reports that the 1371 commemoration cost £38.18. See also Lewis, "Anniversary Service," 181-82.

[21] Van Dussen, *From England to Bohemia*, 24-25, 161-62. See also Lewis, "Anniversary Service," 182.

[22] Minnis et al link the possible 1374 composition date to the confusion around the ascribed age of 24 years to the Man in Black: they explain that xxxiiij—John of Gaunt's age in 1374—could have been misread as xxiiij (*The Shorter Poems*, 141-43). See also Fyler, "Froissart and Chaucer," 198; Condren, "A New Hypothesis" and "Death and Duchesses." For an opposing view, see Rowland, "Chaucer's Duchess and Chess."

bestowed on the deceased, such as those we find in *Pearl*.[23] Helen Phillips finds a philosophic consolation in the isomorphic structure of the *Duchess*: the nesting of parallel symbolism in the episodes of the dream poem presents a unity of meaning in an almost typological manner.[24] Representing a dominant, twentieth-century interpretation of the poem, David Lawton sees it as "poetic monument to [Gaunt's] grief."[25] Phillipa Hardman casts the *Duchess* as a poetic analogue to the physical, sculptured tombs in vogue in late-medieval England. She posits that Chaucer incorporates imagery and aesthetic considerations from the aristocratic funereal structures into his poem and, in so doing, creates for Blanche a monument more lasting than stone.[26] Minnis and other scholars write that the Dreamer manages to give the Black Knight "such relief as a sympathetic hearing can afford."[27] In a similar vein, R.A. Shoaf suggests that the support the Dreamer offers to the Man in Black follows in the tradition of confessional and penitential literature. He argues that the silence that follows the conclusion of the Man in Black's confession-like account of his love and his sorrow, including the Dreamer's expression of pity, gives way to "the silence of a new beginning."[28] The Knight and the Dreamer, freed from their respective oppressions, are able to move on.

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[23] There are, however, several prominent exceptions. The most influential of these is offered by Huppé and Robertson, who write that the poem, especially the closing sequence, deploys the symbolism of death, resurrection, and heavenly reward, and so argue that the *Duchess* presents a "clear and inevitable unfolding of the truth of Christian consolation"(*Fruyt and Chaf*, 95).Whitman suggests that what consolation the poem offers requires a reader's interpretation: "though the man in black is not consoled, it is perfectly clear to any Christian that he ought to be" given the greater joy of salvation ("Exegesis and Chaucer's Dream Visions," 233). See also Shoaf, "Penitentia and the Form of *The Book of the Duchess*," discussed below.

[24] Phillips, "Structure and Consolation," 114-15. She is careful to differentiate the philosophic consolation offered in the poem from a specifically Boethian consolation, which, like the Christian focus on heavenly reward, "den[ies] the reality of the intensity of human, individual consciousness" (115). Cf. Peck, "Theme and Number," 74-75.

[25] Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 56. Cf. Owen, "Chaucer: Beginnings," 62: "*The Book of the Duchess* is unique as an elegy in putting as much emphasis as it does on the positive without expressing faith in an afterlife. For a loss whose finality it never seeks to minimize, it offers the therapy of memory."

[26] Hardman, "Memorial Monument," 207-8.

[27] Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 127. Cf. Phillips, "Introduction" 37.

[28] Shoaf, "*Penitentia* and the Form of *The Book of the Duchess*," 164. Shoaf's analysis brings together the explicitly Christian, even apocalyptic, interpretation of Robertson and Huppé with the criticism focused on a personal or individual experience of grief and consolation.

There is no scholarly consensus that either the Dreamer or the Knight gain consolation. For instance, J.O. Fichte doubts that the poem manages to put an end to grief. He argues that Chaucer rejects the programme of consolation and instead writes a eulogy for the deceased Blanche.[29] Michael Cherniss accepts that the Dreamer offers a form of solace to the Man in Black, but does not think he follows through: "The attempt to console the Knight is incomplete and therefore unsuccessful; the direction toward such resolution as his problem will admit has been pointed, but that is all."[30] Ian Bishop similarly argues that no succour is achieved: although the Dreamer awakens and so (along with the reader) "escape[s] from the intolerable atmosphere of sorrow . . . the bereaved knight must remain there solitary and unconsoled."[31] Bishop's reading is more complex than it may at first appear, however. While he doubts that the poem's characters achieve solace, he does not think that the *Duchess* is an unsuccessful elegy. Indeed, he argues, by leaving the Man in Black in a state of grief, "the poem's elegiac and monumental purpose is fulfilled", for the poem thus emphasises the "feeling of irreplaceable loss" and "the dead Duchess's worth" far more poignantly than any of the Knight's hyberbolic accounts of White's virtues.[32]

The objections of Fichte, Cherniss, and Bishop notwithstanding, I maintain that the *Book of the Duchess* is a poem deeply concerned with consolation. We do not know for certain if, or to what degree, the Duke of Lancaster was in fact consoled by Chaucer's poem—and, for the purposes of

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[29] Fichte, "A Consolation?," 60-62, 65-67. Fichte's analysis stands out from other, similar argments for his early insistence that the Dreamer is neither intelligent nor particularly good-natured. His dismissal of the Narrator figure—whom he accuses of "grossly exaggerate[ing]" his condition due to an "excessive preoccupation with his own 'sufferings'" (57)—seems to predispose his reading to an ignorance of that figure's development throughout the poem.
[30] Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse*, 186.
[31] Bishop, "Rhetoric of Consolation," 41. Bishop misreads the space of the dream as inherently dolorous. In truth, it is the Knight who introduces elements of grief into the otherwise salubrious and cheerful dreamscape; his sorry state stands out against the *locus amoenus* in the same way that his black raiment contrasts with the verdant grove in which the Dreamer finds him. Bishop likewise disregards the Knight's return from the solitary station of the oak to the communal space of the castle and the company of the hunters.
[32] Bishop, "Rhetoric of Consolation," 41. Fichte, too, suggests that what consolation is to be had from the *Duchess* is found outside of the text itself ("A Consolation?," 56, 67).

the present study, we do not need to know.[33] Within the world of the text, the Dreamer-Narrator attempts to aid the sorrowful Man in Black, to tease him out of his solipsistic thought and return him to the vital, social world represented by the (abandoned) hunt. The Dreamer is, I believe, successful: the Knight, who, for so much of the poem, remains static and downcast, returning frequently to dwell on past, now-lost joys and present sorrows, rises at the end and heads back toward the hunters and the castle. The Dreamer-Narrator, too, moves from a state of repetitive captivity to an open engagement with emotion and empathy. As Lawton observes, the Narrator suffers from an "extreme frigidity of emotion" at the beginning of the poem—"I take no kep / Of nothing, how hyt cometh or gooth, / Ne me nys nothyng leef nor looth" (6-8)—but is cured at the end of the dream as he feels great pity and compassion for the Black Knight (1310).[34]

In the chapter that follows, I examine how Chaucer deploys the elegiac dream vision to explore the tensions between lyric and narrative and how the two modes affect the work of mourning. I argue that Chaucer is particularly interested in the differences of lyric and narrative in the *Book of the Duchess*, for the poem enacts his own entry into the role of the narrative poet. I begin by addressing how Chaucer responds to the traditional model of the poetic career. Then, after a consideration of the dream vision genre in terms of the lyric and narrative modes, I offer a reading of his earlier *Complaint unto Pity*, a poem which blurs the distinction between lyric and narrative and so anticipates many of his concerns that will later appear in the elegy for Blanche. My analysis of the *Book of the Duchess* itself centres on the figures of the Dreamer-Narrator and the Man in Black as they move from largely lyrical representations of their sorrows to a form of progress marked by narrative. I first address the opening scene in which we encounter the insomniac Narrator. I then move to

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[33] I recall here Tolkien's comment I quoted in the last chapter: "Even a fictional elegy remains an elegy" ("Introduction," 10). So, too, does a failed elegy.

[34] Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 53. Lawton notes the early temporal disjuncture in the Narrator's reaction to the Alcyone story at lines 95-100: here, the Narrator is speaking as the poet who has awakened and taken up his pen, not as the insomniac speaker of the first waking scene (54).

address the sorrow of the Black Knight as set out in his two intercalated lyrics. Finally, returning to the figure of the Narrator-Dreamer, I show how Chaucer traces a shift from grief to consolation and the parallel move from the lyric to the narrative mode, a move that announces his own arrival as a narrative poet.

The *Book of the Duchess* and the Poetic Career

It is now a typical critical stance to assume that Chaucer, like so many poets before and after him, "began with lyrics and afterwards started writing longer poems."[35] This is not an outlandish proposal and, indeed, seems to be a common trajectory for many writing careers in any age. No novelist, Victorian or otherwise, starts out by producing a triple-decker. I do not mean to say that Chaucer moved from writing lyrics exclusively to writing long, narrative poems exclusively. Chaucer kept writing lyrics throughout his career and would insert short lyrics and lyrical passages into his larger, narrative poems. As Davenport acknowledges, Chaucer was "interested in both . . . aspects of the poet's voice: the lyric voice, which speaks in the moment of feeling, and the narrative voice, which constructs some continuity out of events, variations, [and] consequences."[36] Be that as it may, we can be fairly certain that Chaucer began his poetic career with shorter, lyrical pieces, such as those that were popular in the English court at the time.[37] There are, for instance, the poems of 'Ch', which represent a type of poetry that was immensely popular when Chaucer first arrived at court; it is likely that there are lost ballades, rondeaux, and lays written by Chaucer as well.[38] Nevertheless,

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[35] Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 109. See also Edwards, who points out that Chaucer himself seemed to downplay his own on-going relationship with lyric: "Lyric poetry is a consistent feature of his writing—indeed it probably figured large in his courtly production and it has, as we shall see later, an important influence on the creation of a narrative persona—but when Chaucer seeks to describe his work he does so by reference to narrative" (*Dream of Chaucer*, 12).
[36] Davenport, *Complaint and Narrative*, 8.
[37] Lyric dominated English (Anglo-Norman) poetry throughout the 1350s, the period when Chaucer was starting at court. A young Chaucer would doubtlessly have been attracted to the French tradition typified by poets from Flanders and Hainault like Jehan de le Mote and, in the years after Poitiers, by Machaut (Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 43-48).
[38] Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 115; Wimsatt, ed. and trans., *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 1-8, 65-68. See also: Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 455-58.

there is a point in Chaucer's career at which he undertakes his first narrative poem, and, so far as scholarship has shown, the *Book of the Duchess* marks that point. In this section, I address the trajectory of Chaucer's poetic career and how his first dream vision enacts and comments on his transition to narrative poetry. I also examine how previous scholars have read the *Duchess* in terms of Chaucer's poetic development.

Many Chaucerians have acknowledged the important role of the *Book of the Duchess* in Chaucer's development as a poet. Edward Condren sees Chaucer's engagement with the dream vision genre as part of "a maturing process that grew from energetic attractions and false starts into more thoughtful engagement with the internal world in which he chose to live." The dream poems, he continues, "showed an acolyte kneeling at the steps, impatient with what he had been and eager to discover what he would become."[39] Although I find Condren's characterisation of the dream visions to be an inaccurate representation of Chaucer's developing skills, he is right to state that each of the dream visions "reveals Chaucer's concern with matters that challenge him as a practicing poet."[40] John Lawlor reminds us, however, not to read the early poem as only a lead-up to the *Canterbury Tales*; the *Duchess* is an important document for the study of "the emergence of Chaucer's characteristic powers", but it is also a complex and interesting poem in its own right.[41] Nonetheless, Lawlor does not hesitate to emphasise the important transitional role played by the *Book of the Duchess*: the poem "marks [Chaucer's] leave-taking of an Enchanted Garden" of courtly, lyrical poetry.[42] Both Robert Edwards and Michael Herzog argue that Chaucer uses the dream vision as a means of interrogating his craft and his poetic voice. "[A]lthough Chaucer wrote no formal discursive treatise on poetics," writes Edwards, "he conducted an extensive practice of aesthetic

[39] Condren, *Prentice to Poet*, xiii.
[40] Condren, *Prentice to Poet*, 2. He explains each of these concerns in turn: in the *Duchess*, Chaucer explores issues of patronage and how to establish "an acceptable poetic form"; in the *Parliament of Fowls*, poetry is presented as "a subset of universal harmony" but one in which its practitioners often manifest chaos; and, in the *House of Fame*, Chaucer "worries about the genus and species of this thing called poetry" (2).
[41] Lawlor, "Pattern of Consolation," 626.
[42] Lawlor, "Pattern of Consolation," 647.

speculations. The [early, dream] poems are means of representation and artistic self-consciousness."[43] The *Duchess* is, according to Edwards, "a work of artistic initiation".[44] Lawton also comments that the elegiac dream vision for Blanche begins a new phase of Chaucer's poetic career: "The poetic initiation which the *Book of the Duchess* celebrates leads to an open narratorial *persona*: hereafter, as in the last line of this poem, his voice will be that of a poet."[45]

The *Book of the Duchess* is far from a perfect poem: its metre is at times rough; there are more than the usual number of Chaucerian stock phrases; and the story bulges and strains in places. It is very much a trial work, the product of a young mind. C.S. Lewis writes that Chaucer succeeds in producing an appropriate and effective elegy, but insists that the young poet tries "to do better than he is yet able."[46] It is because of these shortcomings, not in spite of them, that the *Book of the Duchess* is a fascinating and important poem for the study of Chaucer's canon.

Though we have no direct evidence that Chaucer consciously set out on a literary career path—there is no explicit declaration in any of his poetry—it is helpful to consider his works in terms of the Classical poetic career, most often called the *rota Vergilii* or the "wheel of Vergil."[47] The term refers to the stages of poetic development visible in Vergil's three major works, the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*. As (pseudo-)Vergil writes in the *Vita donatiana*, "Cecini pascua, rura, duces" [I sang of pastureland, the country, leaders].[48] The motions charted are both spatial and thematic, horizontal as well as vertical. The poet's move from the untamed, rural setting of the pastorals to the rural but ordered space of the agricultural poems and on to the refined and cultured space of the

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[43] Edwards, *The Dream of Chaucer*, 2. Edwards clarifies that he does not mean to insist that Chaucer's dream-poems are explicitly and exclusively concerned with the writing of poetry, but "that critical reflection is embedded in literary representation" (14). Michael Herzog, echoing Condren, posits that the "*Book of the Duchess* is not only a part of Chaucer's pilgrimage toward a theory of art, it is the essential and formative first step" ("The Vision of the Artist as a Young Dreamer," 269).
[44] Edwards, *The Dream of Chaucer*, 66.
[45] Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators*, 56.
[46] Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 170.
[47] See Faral, ed., *Les Arts poétiques*, 86-89; Edwards, *Dream of Chaucer*, 27-29.
[48] Putnam, "Some Virgilian Unities," 17. Putnam quotes and translates from the *Vita Dontiana*, edited by Brugnoli and Stok.

imperial *civitas* corresponds to the shifts from the elegies, ekphrases, and other lyrics of the *Eclogues* to the didactic poems in the *Georgics* and finally to the epic narrative of Vergil's last poem.[49] The Vergilian *rota* informed Classical, Late-Antique, and medieval poets, as well as Renaissance and Early Modern inheritors of the tradition.[50]

Chaucer would likely have been aware of the model, even if he did not purposefully pursue it. The *rota* was an integral part of John of Garland's analysis and discussion in his *Parisiana poetria* (c. 1240). Andrew Laird has shown that both Dante and Petrarch—the two modern, vernacular poets whom Chaucer calls poets (rather than makers) and places in the same authoritative category as the ancients—consciously engage in an "emulation of Virgil's ascending course".[51] Though Chaucer was probably not yet intimately familiar with the works of Dante and Petrarch, their precedent suggests a general, late-medieval familiarity with, and desire to follow, the track of Vergil's wheel.

Later in his own career, Chaucer acknowledges a similar path of the poetic career. In the envoy of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer bids his book adieu:

> Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
> Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
> So sende myght to make in som comedye! (V.1786-88)

Having completed his tragedy, Chaucer looks forward to his great comedy, the compendium of stories in the *Canterbury Tales*.[52] The *Book of the Duchess* fits into the basic shape of the Classical poetic career. It follows on the early lyrics of Chaucer's work, but also carries over and incorporates lyrical qualities. Most importantly, as an elegy—one that subsumes both the song of mourning tradition

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[49] Putnam, "Some Virgilian Unities," 17-18. Putnam suggests that, in terms of genre at least, Vergil was aware of this progress, figuring it as a movement back through Western literature from Theocritus to Hesiod to Homer (20).
[50] See, for instance, Stephen Heyworth, "An Elegist's Career: From Cynthia to Cornelia" on Propertius; and Maggie Kilgour, "New Spins on Old Rotas."
[51] Laird, "Re-inventing Virgil's Wheel," 139. In *De vulgari eloquentia*, for instance, as Dante envisions the course of writing vernacular poetry, he invokes the *Eclogues* (II.4). In his own Latin eclogues and in the *Inferno* (I.86-87), Dante cites Vergil as his guiding model (Laird, "Re-inventing Virgil's Wheel," 141-43). On Chaucer's mentions of Dante and Petrarch, see Fyler, "Froissart and Chaucer," 198.
[52] Chaucer invokes the esteemed careers of the ancient poets when he bids his little book to "subgit be to alle poesie; /And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace / Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (V.1790-92).

and the love elegy tradition—the *Duchess* simultaneously invokes both Vergil's poems in the *Eclogues* and one of Ovid's first published works, the *Amores*.[53] This accordance with the Classical model is, I believe, what Lewis had in mind when he wrote that Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* anticipates Milton's *Lycidas*.[54] In the *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer not only moves beyond the lyrical poems of his earliest writings, but sets the stage for the long, narrative poems that will follow in subsequent years.

The Dream Vision: Lyric and Narrative

Chaucer's selection of the dream vision genre for his first narrative poem was something of a natural choice. As I have discussed in the Introduction to this study, the genre, popular throughout the High Middle Ages, was especially prominent in the generation preceding Chaucer in Middle French courtly poetry on both sides of the Channel. In part, no doubt, Chaucer was responding to the English court's taste for dream-framed dits amoureux, even as he drew inspiration from the texts of Machaut and Froissart in terms of dream genre and theory, Classical allusions, and form.[55] The dream vision poem is well-suited to the transition from lyric to narrative. Several critics have argued that dream poems occupy a position between the two modes, belonging wholly to neither but deploying aspects of both. In this section, I will explore the lyric and narrative components of the dream vision genre. In the following section, before addressing how lyric and narrative are positioned in the *Book of the Duchess*, I will offer a reading of one of Chaucer's early complaints to examine the play of the two modes.

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[53] There are also resonances with his *Ars Amatoria* and, as the Black Knight suggests obliquely, with the *Remedia Amoris*. On the Ovidian poetic career, and its responses to and subversions of the Vergilian model, see Alessandro Barchiesi and Philip Hardie, "The Ovidian Career Model."

[54] Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 169. In the final lines of the elegy, Milton's pastoral speaker, "the uncouth Swain" (186), turns at end of day from the song of mourning and anticipates his next, greater song: "And now the Sun had stretch'd out all the hills, / And now was dropt into the Western bay; / At last he rose, and twitch'd his Mantle blew: / To morrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures new" (190-93).

[55] Owen, "Chaucer: Beginnings," 48. For the influence of Machaut on Chaucer, see: Kittredge, "Guillaume de Machaut and *The Book of the Duchess*;" Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries* chs 3 and 4; Steven Davis, "Guillaume de Machaut, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, and the Chaucer Tradition;" and Calin, "Machaut's Legacy: The Chaucerian Inheritance Reconsidered." For discussions of Froissart's influence, see: Fyler, "Froissart and Chaucer;" and Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, ch. 6.

Perhaps more than any other late-medieval English dream vision, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* is attuned to the tensions between lyric and narrative. As Chaucer's first foray into sustained narrative, the poem weighs the merits of the two modes. As I will show, this is especially the case where elegy is concerned. The dream vision genre—principally the French tradition of the generation that preceded Chaucer—allows the poet to bring together both modes in one poem. Whereas the earlier, French poets often used the framed dream-story as a showcase for elaborate lyric performance, Chaucer uses the dream vision to investigate how lyric can limit the poetic endeavour and, more specifically, how lyric troubles the project of mourning.

The use of lyrics within a dream poem is part of Chaucer's inheritance from the French tradition. Nearly all of Chaucer's ten French sources for the *Duchess* include embedded poems.[56] Jehan de la Mote's *Regret Guillaume Conte de Hainault* (1339), a dream elegy commissioned by Queen Philippa for her father, contains no fewer than thirty ballades and complaintes.[57] In Machaut's *La Fonteinne amoureuse* (1360-61), the dreamer overhears a knight making a complaint and the inset song is metrically differentiated from the larger dream poem. Froissart's *Paradis d'amours* (1361-62), which serves as Chaucer's model for the opening of his first dream vision, includes several different verse forms such as the lai, the rondelet, and the ballade. As Phillips notes, the French dits amoureux are characterised by a "sort of *lyrical narrative*".[58] In many cases, this amounts to little more than using the dream narrative as a figurative frame for the more artistically intricate lyrics: the dreamer-narrators (as agents of the poets) "envisage situations and attitudes which provide a context for inset lyrics."[59] Chaucer's contribution to the genre—where he differentiates the new, English dream vision from the French tradition on which he draws—is his minimising of embedded lyric without abandoning

[56] Butterfield, "Lyric and Elegy," 36-37.
[57] Butterfield, "Lyric and Elegy," 36-40.
[58] Phillips, "Introduction," 42. Italics in original.
[59] Davenport, *Chaucer: Complaint and Narrative*, 61. Cf. Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries,* 55-58.

the mode entirely.[60] Instead, he incorporates several short lyrics and lyrical scenes within the story of the dream, using these to emphasise the narrative aspects of the poem. In the case of the Man in Black, his two lyrics demonstrate how the Knight is trapped in a circle of mourning. In this respect, the songs emphasise the importance of the story—the narrative—of courtship and love that the Dreamer elicits from the grieving Knight. Similarly, the Narrator's own difficulties in the opening frame are figured largely as lyric tendencies toward a problematic focus on the self and an unproductive repetition.

The dream vision genre is characterised by its double meaning. Russell identifies the two distinct contents of the dream-poem: "the poem about a dreamer and a dream, the fabric of the *figmenta* of a troubled dreamer, is simultaneously about the ideas for which those *figmenta* stand and the mind which created the *figmenta*."[61] Because the dream presented in the poem has the dreamer-narrator as its source, and because that persona is thus "the text's ultimate (and probably only) subject", Russell claims that "the dream vision is a species of the lyrical mode."[62] Russell's argument needs to be approached cautiously, for much of it depends on a Romantic or post-Romantic conception of the lyrical poet.[63] The dreamer is, according to Russell, "regularly depicted as troubled, depressed, and alienated from the comforts of society", and he "suffer[s] from a deeper, more pervasive anguish or depression" than most. The dreamer possesses, in short, "the sort of sensibility we might expect in a lyrical poet".[64] Russell is careful to note the key discrepancy between the dreamer-narrator figure and the concept of the lyric poet, the type of person who writes because he is "moved to do so by some desire to express the overwhelming emotions [he] feel[s]". He explains

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[60] As I will discuss below, Chaucer builds on a development in Froissart's *Paradis d'amour*. Cf. Edwards, *Dream of Chaucer* 12.
[61] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 115.
[62] Russell, *English Dream Vision*,115. It is likely that Russell, who bases so much of his study on Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, is here recalling Frye's observation that lyric "has a peculiarly intimate connection . . . with dream or vision, [with] the individual communing with himself" (*Anatomy*, 250).
[63] In this respect, Russell's theorisation of the lyrical poet is similar to Potts' conception of elegy in her work. Cf. Potts, *Elegiac Mode*, 37.
[64] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 116.

that while the typical lyric persona consciously and deliberately expresses himself, the narrator of the dream vision "never sets out consciously to expose his feelings." Instead, Russell notes, the narrators of dream vision poetry frequently gloss over or otherwise avoid clarifying the sources of their troubled states.[65]

While Russell maintains that the dream vision is, as a whole, "a species of the lyrical mode", it is important to observe that such poems are not uniformly lyrical throughout. The frame that opens dream visions is highly lyrical, but, as the dream progresses, the poem undergoes a "narrative normalization", a gradual dismissing of the lyric mode.[66] Whereas the poem begins with an exposition of the narrator's agitated mind, the majority of the dream itself is spent moving toward a lesson or epiphany. The shift to narrative is best documented in the division between the dreamer experiencing the dream and the narrator reporting it.[67] This narrative process continues for much of the dream—occasionally thwarted or delayed by the dreamer's obtuseness or misunderstanding, as in *Pearl* and the *Book of the Duchess*—but it is the very presence of this impediment to learning or revelation that stimulates the "narrative expectations" of readers.[68] According to Russell, the foregrounding of narrative ends when the dream fades, and the return to the frame story sees a resurgence of the lyric persona, which coincides with a restoration of identity between dreamer and narrator.[69]

Russell's model provides helpful ways of tracing the unfolding of the dream vision and its relation to both the narrative voice and the readers' experience of the text. Where it falls short,

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[65] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 116. Russell problematically conflates the dreamer-narrator of the visions with the poet. While in many instances the dreamer is presented as the author of the text that readers encounter—as in the *Book of the Duchess* and *The Kingis Quair*—this is not universally true. In *Pearl*, for instance, the blurring of the dreamer-narrator with the Cheshire poet is largely a latter-day critical construct. Moreover, Russell fails to account clearly for the discrepancies between the dreamer-as-poet figure and the historical author of the text.

[66] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 120-26.

[67] The distinction between dreamer-character and dreamer-narrator is achieved by the narrator figure recognising and possibly emphasising the fallibility of the character figure. Russell uses an example from the *Roman de la Rose* where the narrator leaves the immediate story of Amant encountering the well of Narcissus to rehearse the Ovidian tale of his death (*English Dream Vision*, 121-23).

[68] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 126.

[69] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 128-30, 136-37.

however, is that it treats the vision itself as a "symptom" of the agitated (lyric) mind of the narrator.[70] Russell argues that any narrative perceived in the dream poem is illusory, a fiction contained by (and so subservient to) the lyric frame. I do not deny that the frame narratives of dream vision poems often display lyric qualities, but the claim that the dream-stories of the poems are lyric masquerading as narrative rings false. In-dream tales can run for hundreds of lines of verse and cover events from eagle-borne journeys through the stars to visions of the Heavenly City. Russell's schematic remains useful, however, because it identifies the tensions between lyric and narrative that exist in the dream vision genre.

One of the ways Chaucer addresses the differences between lyric and narrative is by projecting the modes onto the elegy and the work of poetic mourning. Chaucer does not wholly deny the merits of the lyrical elegy; rather, he uses the *Book of the Duchess* to explore its limitations and to suggest that narrative is a useful tool for the grieving process. I want to emphasise Davenport's distinction between lyric and narrative discussed above, because it will help to understand the differences between the two modes of grieving. Lyric, he says, "speaks in the moment of feeling", while narrative "constructs some continuity out of events, variations, [and] consequences."[71] Wimsatt offers further insight into the concept of the lyric and the lyrical. His notion of the lyrical turns on four primary qualities: subjectivity, emotion, melody, and brevity. Emotion and subjectivity are closely linked: according to Roman Jakobson, we identify the lyrical most often by its first-person speaker who gives voice to his feelings; moreover, as Culler argues, the lyrical does not necessarily rely on an element of realism; it plays on rhetoric and convention.[72] The melody of the lyrical poem, the fusion of sound and sense, sets lyric apart from ordinary language. Similarly, brevity causes a disruption from ordinary (dare we say 'prosaic') experience: lines and

[70] Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 129.
[71] Davenport, *Complaint and Narrative*, 8.
[72] Jakobson, *Language in Literature*, 70; Culler, "Study of Lyric," 39.

stanzas, writes Frye, lead the reader away "from ordinary experience in space or time." Frye explains that this discontinuous aspect of lyric is "often linked to a specific, usually ritual, occasion."[73] I note that the annual commemorations of Blanche of Lancaster discussed above constitute such a ritual occasion. The ability to make an intervention into ordinary experience can be a powerful force, one that can be deployed for the purposes of mourning. As Frye states, "the lyric turns away, not merely from ordinary space and time, but from the kind of language we use in coping with ordinary experience".[74] However, the act of turning away can also be a trap: we need to make sure we turn back to that from which we turn away. This is the peril that lies in wait for Chaucer's Man in Black as he engages in a highly lyrical kind of mourning, a form of grief that removes him from the social world represented by the hunt and reduces him to a sorrowful shade.

An Early Experiment: The *Complaint unto Pity*

The *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer's first narrative of considerable length, is likely not his very first venture in the mode. Several of Chaucer's complaints embody a hybrid form between the primarily lyric and primarily narrative poems by which we usually classify his corpus, and the earliest of these, the *Complaint unto Pity*, serves as an interesting case study. In this section, I will examine how Chaucer combines lyric and narrative in *Pity* and to see how this modal blurring anticipates the tension between the two modes in the *Duchess*.[75]

The *Complaint unto Pity* consists of seventeen rime royal stanzas, and the first eight stanzas, Wimsatt writes, "constitute perhaps the first narrative that Chaucer wrote".[76] These stanzas tell of

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[73] Frye, "Approaching the Lyric," 31.
[74] Frye, "Approaching the Lyric," 34.
[75] Earle Birney observes that "although [*Pity*] is one of the most conventional of [Chaucer's] love lyrics, [it] contains definite anticipations of the manner of the 'mature' Chaucer" (*Essays on Chaucerian Irony*, 56).
[76] Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 118. The poem survives in ten manuscripts, including the three that contain the *Book of the Duchess*. (*Pity* also appears in Thynne's edition.) The date of the poem is unknown, but it is very likely an early composition (Davenport, *Complaint and Narrative*, 18). The *Riverside* editor, Laila Z. Gross, suggests that the poem's derivativeness and artificiality suggest that is "must have been written when Chaucer was still learning his craft"

how the speaker (or narrator), long tormented by "the crueltee and tirannye / Of Love" (6-7) sought out Pity to deliver a bill of complaint. However, by the time he finds her, she has died, and a funeral is already underway. The narrator, frightened to approach the allegorical ladies (Beauty, Youth, Lust, and others) gathered around the hearse lest they thwart his cause, slinks away, but he proceeds to speak his bill to the ether (and the readers). The final nine stanzas comprise the bill of complaint that the speaker had intended to deliver to the now-dead Pity.[77]

The narrative of the poem is uneventful—with the exception of a flurry of movement in the third stanza—but it is narrative nevertheless.[78] In this poem, Chaucer follows the precedent of his French contemporaries by using the narrative frame to showcase his lyric production, an approach he would use again in the *Complaint of Mars* and the *Complaint of Venus*.[79] Like the French poems, the action in *Pity* is thin; indeed, the distinction between lyric and narrative is blurred several times in both the frame and the complaint.[80] In the fourth stanza, for instance, the speaker turns away from his discovery of Pity's corpse to lament her passing and, worse still, his sad fate: "Thus am I slayn sith that Pite is ded. / Allas, that day, that ever hyt shulde falle" (22-23). The complaint, which the narrator mentions explicitly in the seventh stanza (43-44, 47, 49) and again in stanza eight as he

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(1077).Other critics have argued that *Pity* dates from Chaucer's later period, citing his use of the rime royal stanza, which is used in the *Troilus* and in the serious and moral stories of the *Canterbury Tales*. The verse form would have been well-known to a young Chaucer, however, for it was frequently used by the Middle French poets of the preceding generations in both their lyric poems and the intercalated lyrics of the dits amoureux. I follow Wimsatt and Davenport and accept the *Complaint unto Pity* as one of Chaucer's earliest surviving poems—despite its relative complexity (on which more below). See also Edwards, *The Dream of Chaucer*, 20: "The chronology of Chaucer's lyrics is, if anything, probably more vexed than the dating of the narrative poems."

[77] Wimsatt observes that the *Complaint unto Pity* shares a number of characteristics with a chanson royal by 'Ch', which he titles "The Parliament of Love." If indeed the 'Ch' poems represent Chaucer's French poetic efforts, the similarities between the two poems could help to date *Pity*. More importantly, such overlaps inform our study of Chaucer's poetic development as he moved from lyric to narrative. See *Poems of 'Ch'*, 5, 28-31.

[78] In the third stanza, the speaker falls down when he sees the hearse bearing Pity (15), then rises up "with colour ful dyverse" (17), and gazes at the corpse as he tries to move closer (18-19). All this movement is carried out in silence (16, 21), thereby emphasising the physicality of the action.

[79] Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 53-58, 70-73, 116-26.

[80] Although it would later be associated with his great narrative works, Chaucer's use of rime royal here speaks to a lyric tradition, given that he first encountered the form in the ballades of the French poets. Davenport suggests that the *Complaint unto Pity* "may be Chaucer's first trying out of rhyme royal" (*Complaint and Narrative*, 18). See also Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 118.

prepares to deliver it aloud (55), likewise crossfades from lyric to narrative in its closing lines as the speaker sums up his bill:

> This is to seyne I wol be youres evere,
> Though ye me slee by Crueltee your foo,
> Algate my spirit shal never dissevere
> Fro youre servise for any peyne or woo.
> Sith ye be ded – allas that hyt is soo –
> Thus your deth I may wel wepe and pleyne
> With herte sore and ful of besy peyne. (113-19)

The last three lines of the final stanza create a doubled sense of circularity in the poem: the acknowledgement of Pity's demise returns us to the moment of telling the tale of the narrator's discovery and so to the first stanza; the forecast of weeping and mournful utterances returns us to the beginning of the complaint in the ninth stanza.

The cyclical shape of the *Complaint unto Pity* recalls the ballade form from which the *Complaint* stems, a feature exemplified in the rhyme scheme of the poem. The rhyme scheme of *Pity* is very complex. Indeed, it shows an ingenuity one would not expect to find in the early work of a young poet.[81] Like Machaut's *Fonteinne amoreuse*, a poem in which the dreamer-narrator celebrates the lover's use of 100 different rhymes in his complaint, Chaucer makes his poem a rhyming *tour de force*; he works in no fewer than 36 different rhymes throughout the 119 rime royal lines.[82] The eight narrative stanzas are particularly innovative, repeating only one rhyme across a 56-line stretch: the b-rhymes of the first stanza return in the couplet at the end of the quasi-lyric of stanza four. The bill of complaint is significantly more repetitious in terms of rhyme. Although each of the nine stanzas introduces at least one new rhyme (stanzas ten and eleven are the least innovative in this respect), several rhymes of the earlier section repeat at intervals in the bill. The most prevalent of these

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[81] The rhyme scheme is as follows: ababbcc // dedeeff // ghghhii // jkjkkbb // lmlmmnn // opoppqq // rsrsrtt // uvuvvll // wkwkkxx // ucuccyy // zuzuubb // $a^1b^1a^1b^1b^1qq$ // $c^1d^1c^1d^1d^1yy$ // $e^1f^1e^1f^1f^1bb$ // $g^1ag^1aah^1h^1$ // $bi^1bi^1i^1e^1e^1$ // j^1aj^1aabb. The m-rhymes could erringly be read as c-rhymes, but the presence of the final *–e*s in lines six and seven make for a diphthong [iə] (cf. lines 65, 67-8 where the c-rhyme repeats). Similarly, the v-rhymes may be mistaken for b-rhymes, but, again, the final *–e* of lines 2, 4-5, and 27-28 is notably absent in lines 51 and 53-54.
[82] On Machaut's rhyming, see Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 83, and Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 131.

repetitions is the b-rhyme, which occurs most frequently in the words *peyne* and *pleyne* (or *compleyne*) and shows up in five of the seventeen stanzas. (The v-rhymes—*seyn*, *sleyn*, and *ageyn*—in the eighth stanza offer another element of repetition as well, which suggests both closure and continuity for the narrative sequence.) This repetition emphasises the link between the speaker's pained emotion and the poetic impulse: his *peyne* causes him to *pleyne*. The recurrence of both the a- and b-rhymes in the final three stanzas of the bill of complaint creates further circularity: the fifteenth stanza reintroduces the a-rhymes, centring on the speaker's "woo" (103; cf. 3); the sixteenth stanza sees a return of the b-rhymes, including the new rhyme word *sustene* (111); and the final stanza, while still adding a final rhyme (j^1), combines a- and b-rhymes, seemingly returning to the first stanza.[83] This return is further suggested by the repetition of line two in the last line of the poem: "With herte sore and ful of besy peyne" (119).

The tensions between lyric and narrative found in the *Complaint unto Pity* are similar to those found in the *Book of the Duchess*. This early experiment with narrative and inset lyric shares several other features with the dream vision. For instance, the image of the heart is central in both poems. In the *Duchess*, the word *hert* carries multiple meanings, from the bodily organ that is also the seat of love, to a term of endearment for a lover (in both the Seys story and the Man in Black's account), to the quarry of Octavyen's hunters. Of course, the heart-hart parallel (and the respective hunts) forms one of the key links between the Black Knight's quest for consolation and the Narrator's dream

[83] The *Complaint unto Pity* and the complaint spoken therein exhibit ballade-like features. The clearest example, as I have already mentioned, is the use of the rime royal stanza, but the organisation of the nine-stanza lyric complaint is also indicative of the ballade form. The complaint is equally divided into three thematic sections: the first deals with the speaker's declaration that Pity should help him against her enemy, Cruelty; the second, the wounded lover's plea to Pity for mercy; and in the third we see the suffering speaker's assertion that he will remain true in the face of hardship. Interestingly, as Wimsatt notes, each of these three-stanza sections concludes with *b*-rhymes. For Wimsatt, these repetitions—especially the verbatim repetitions of *peyne* and *pleyne* in the two latter sections, which combine with repetitions of *deth* and *woo* —"provide a semantic counterpart to the refrains and continued rhymes in the ballades" (*French Contemporaries*, 119). I suggest further that the lyrical qualities of such repetition fuse with the narrative progress of the *Complaint* (the movement of the speaker to where he finds Pity's bier, his dodging of the threatening allegorical personae, and his turning away narrative from the to issue the bill of complaint) and with the pseudo-narrative progress of the bill of complaint (from request to plea to resolve), and that the effect of such fusion is a poem that is simultaneously linear and cyclical. See Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 116-19; Robinson, ed., *Works*, 856. Cf. Nolan's comments on the legal structure of the bill of complaint, "Structural Sophistication," 364ff.

experience and efforts to escape the oppressive insomnia that torments him at the opening of the poem.[84] In the *Complaint*, the word *herte* appears seven times (2, 14, 25, 57, 81, 107, 119). The word is less versatile than it will be in the *Book of the Duchess*, but it plays an important role in both the narrative frame and the bill of complaint. In three instances, *herte* refers to specific hearts, twice to the speaker's (in the repeated phrase of the opening and closing stanzas) and once in his invocation of Pity in the bill (57). In three other instances, the word is used abstractly to consider the ability to feel and the onslaught of emotion (25, 81, 107); the first two occasions are rhetorical questions. One use of *herte* stands out: when the narrator arrives to present his bill to Pity, he "fond hir deed, and buried in an herte" (14). The image of Pity encased "in an herte", like the pearl "[t]hat is in cofer so comly clente" (*Pearl* 259), stresses the separation of the speaker from the entity he longs to address. The revelation of Pity's death, Davenport argues, turns on the deferral of just such an address:

> The beginning [of the poem] is striking: the word 'Pite' stands waiting for a syntactical function to fulfill, but all the rest of the stanza, and the second stanza, describes the unsuccessful seeking of the long-suffering lover; the linguistic structure imitates the situation, since Pity and the lover fail to make contact and before the word 'Pite' has been found a place in the sentence, the poet finds her dead. (18)

I want to add that the interrupted apostrophe which opens the poem is echoed in the bill of complaint, for, although the lyric is ostensibly spoken to Pity, it has been made painfully clear that the complaint falls on deaf (and dead) ears—and that, at the time of the recitation, the speaker knows this to be true. The *herte* that encloses Pity in the narrative becomes the sorrowful heart in which the speaker of the bill of complaint maintains his *troth* and grief just as the poem becomes a *herte* preserving the original love-pain that spurs the complaint, the story of the aborted delivery, and

[84] On the meanings of *hert(e)* in the poem, see Prior, "*Routhe* and *Hert-Huntyng* in the *Book of the Duchess*;" Grennen, "*Hert-huntyng* in *The Book of the Duchess*;" Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature*, 140-45, 156-58; Shoaf, "Stalking the Sorrowful H(e)art," which links the *Duchess* with the *Livres de seyntz medecines*, the penitential text written by Blanche's father; and Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 120-23.

the complaint itself. The monumental function of a poem—even the artificial and fictionalised version presented in *Pity*—would later become an important aspect of the *Book of the Duchess*.

One final similarity between the *Complaint unto Pity* and the *Duchess* needs to be examined, and that is how the former anticipates the dream vision genre that Chaucer would use for his first three long poems. The narrator's account of his journey to present the bill and the scene into which he enters, writes Davenport, "creates the effect of a man describing a dream, the language waxing into the experience of the vision and waning into the registration of its oddness."[85] The personified figures of the narrative sequence—*Pity* is Chaucer's only overtly allegorical poem—suggest a familiarity with French love vision poetry. As we have already seen in *Pearl*, circularity is an important aspect of the dream vision: the dreamer-narrator often points toward the act of writing that follows from the dream experience, as he does in the final five lines of the *Book of the Duchess*:

> Thoghte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, by processe of tyme,
> Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
> As I kan best, and that anoon."
> This was my sweven; now it ys doon. (1330-34)

The *Complaint unto Pity* ends in a similar fashion. As I have shown above, the return of the a- and b-rhymes in the final stanza combine with the verbatim repetition of the second line in the last line to create a cyclical effect, as though at the moment the speaker concludes his bill of complaint he begins telling his story all over again.[86]

Chaucer's *Complaint unto Pity*, a poem which roughly coincides with or, more likely, predates the *Book of the Duchess*, anticipates many of the poetic features Chaucer would explore more

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[85] Davenport, *Complaint and Narrative*, 19. He locates the strange character of the *Complaint* in the symbolism of the allegory: "Since the allegorical qualities [i.e. the personifications of Beauty, Youth, and all the rest] are aspects of the beloved, ruthless woman, the picture of the company of virtues around the hearse of Pity has a very odd dream-like effect of symbolizing a woman as a well-attended funeral." See also Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 118.

[86] This cyclical pattern, which Davenport reads as highly ironic, "conveys to the reader that it is the lover's fate not to die of love but perpetually to lament that he may do so" (*Complaint and Narrative*, 20). Van Dyke posits that this cycle is suggested earlier in the poem, when the narrator observes that he seems to be the only one who knows of Pity's death (lines 32-35): "The speaker hinted . . . that he has traversed this loop before" ("The Poetics of Agency in Chaucer's Complaints," 377).

thoroughly in the dream vision elegy for Blanche of Lancaster. The pairing of narrative frame with lyric centrepiece, a formal approach borrowed from the French poets, introduces the tensions between the two modes. The *Complaint*'s blurring of lyric with narrative and the cyclical and echoing structure of the poem prepare for the dream vision's emphasis on the perils of repetition.[87] In the next section, I will examine how the opening of the *Duchess* foregrounds the Narrator's problematic relationship with repetition and the lyrical mode, before moving on to trace the transformations of the Narrator and the Man in Black as they shift from lyric expression to narrative.

Chaucer's Troubled Narrator and Froissart's *Paradis d'amour*

At the opening of the *Book of the Duchess*, we find the insomniac Narrator restlessly pondering his fate. In a forty-three-line lyric meditation, he gives an account of his sorry state, emphasising the mental and physical anguish he experiences. The first thirty-three lines present the twisted and twisting nature of his condition:

> I have gret wonder, be this lyght,
> How that I lyve, for day ne nyght
> I may nat slepe wel nygh noght;
> I have so many an ydel thoght
> Purely for defaute of slep
> That, by my trouthe, I take no kep
> Of nothing, how hyt cometh or gooth,
> Ne me nys nothyng leef nor looth.
> Al is ylyche good to me –
> Joye or sorowe, wherso hyt be –
> For I have felynge in nothyng,
> But as yt were a mased thyng,
> Always in point to falle a-doun;
> For sorwful ymagynacioun

[87] There is one telling difference between *Pity* and the *Duchess* which warrants consideration. The central dramatic tension of the dream vision elegy is the Knight's deferral of acknowledging the lady's death in plain, unpoetic terms: "She ys ded" (1309). The *Complaint*, by contrast, proclaims Pity's demise no fewer than seven times: lines 14, 21, 28, 30, 32, 35, 117, plus lines 19 and 51 where the narrator refers to "the corps". (Like the Black Knight, the persona in the *Complaint unto Pity* repeatedly anticipated his own death.) The literary and social contexts of the two poems differ, of course—the one is almost certainly fictional while the other is all too real and immediate for its original audience—and so the presence and purpose of death in each poem is accordingly different. Both poems are, however, concerned with poetic responses to death and absence, with the need to say *something* in the wake of loss.

Ys always hooly in my mynde.
    And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
Hyt were to liven in thys wyse,
For nature wolde nat suffyse
To noon erthly creature
Nat longe tyme to endure
Withoute slep and be in sorwe.
And I ne may, ne nyght ne morwe,
Slepe; and thus melancolye
And drede I have for to dye.
Defaute of slep and hevynesse
Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse
That I have lost al lustyhede.
Suche fantasies ben in myn hede
So I not what is best to doo.
    But men myght axe me why soo
I may not slepe and what me is?
But natheles, who aske this
Leseth his asking trewely. (1-33)

The Narrator stresses the unnaturalness of his situation. His illness, he says, is against the laws of nature; no living thing should be able to last so long under such extreme duress (16-21). He sets out a cyclical relationship of insomnia and sorrow: his "defaute of slepe" is caused by his many "ydel thought[s]" born of his "sorwful ymaginacioun". Consequently, the lack of sleep leads to further sorrow: the "hevinesse" of his experience "hath slayn [his] spirit of quicknesse"; he has "lost al lustyhede". He is indeed "a mased thyng".

The labyrinthine qualities of the Narrator's condition—hinted at by the second meaning of *mased*—run deeper still. Chaucer creates a sense of inertia and captivity through the combination of line breaks and a division of sense in the middle of couplets. For example, at the division of the verse paragraphs in lines 15 and 16, the end of the sentence "sorwful ymagynacioun / Ys alway hooly in my mynde" gives way to a renewed appraisal of the unnaturalness of his situation, "And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde / Hyt were to lyven in thys wyse". Lines 29 and 30 function in a similar

fashion, recharging the speaker's plaintive voice as he simultaneously repeats and expands on his plight.[88]

There is an element of progress in the couplets,[89] but Chaucer uses end rhymes, alliteration and assonance, and repetition to reinforce the sense of an inescapable circle of sleepy despair. The vowel sound of *lyght* in the first line returns in *lyve* in the second: both words represent antitheses of the Narrator's sorrowful state. Similarly the *nyght* at the end of the second line twists into the *nogbt* of the third, smudging the borders of the couplets, even as the consonance of *nygh* and *nogbt* tightens the lines internally. The heavy repetition of "I"—as in the case of the Man in Black, the very first word the Narrator speaks—suggests the sort of egocentric obsession with his own plight that binds and bounds the narrator.

The Narrator identifies his "many an ydel thogbt" (4) as an emblem of his suffering. These thoughts are simultaneously a cause and a symptom of his sleeplessness: they are born of his "defaute of slep" but are also an embodiment of his "sorwful ymagynacioun." The designation *ydel* is important, for it captures the Narrator's sense of stasis as well as the futility of his words and deeds.[90] Such thoughts have no effect upon his state of mind, neither improving nor worsening his

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[88] An exception may prove the rule here: the end of the first sentence at the eighth line coincides with the end of the fourth couplet; however, as the narrator starts in to the first elaboration of his plight in the next line, he emphasises the identity of each path he takes—"Al is ylyche good to me".

[89] Cf. Busby, "Froissart's Poetic Prison," 84.

[90] Both the *OED* and the *MED* provide several meanings for *ydel*/*idle* which accord with the mental state the Narrator describes, each of which was in circulation during the fourteenth century. *Idle* can carry the meaning of empty or void, as attested in the *Ancrene Riwle* and the Wycliffite Bible (*OED* 1a; cf. *MED* 2a). Perhaps the most apt and intriguing meaning of *idle*—so far as the *Book of the Duchess* is concerned—is *OED* entry 2a: "Of actions, feelings, thoughts, words, etc.: Void of any real worth, usefulness, or significance; leading to no solid result; hence, ineffective, worthless, of no value, vain, frivolous, trifling" (cf. *MED* 1a and b). Chaucer uses this sense of the word in his translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy*: "Yif yt be for the audience of poeple and for idil rumours" (2.pr.7.46). The *OED* cites an earlier example, one which may have informed Chaucer's composition of the *Book of the Duchess*: in the *Cursor Mundi* we find the phrase "Idel gammes, chess and tablis" (28338). The line appears in a passage of the section on penance:

> Quen idel thoght me come and vain
> Wit will i stode þam noght again,
> Bot oft i lete þam on me rene,
> To þai me drogh to dede o sine.
> I ha me liked ai vm-quile
> In vnnait wordes, lath and vile,
> Til idel gammes, chess and tablis,

situation. He is caught in a sort of suspended animation, a state characterised by its emptiness as the Narrator confesses: "I take no kep / Of nothing" and "I have felynge in nothyng" (6-7, 11). The Narrator's journey in his dream, then, can be figured as a quest to break free of this idleness, to open the closed circuit of his worry and move forward—to move beyond repetitious lyric into sequential narrative.

Chaucer's weaving of the opening scene of his dream vision, as I have shown above, depends on a carefully wrought combination of repetition and slippage of sound and sense. While innovative, this approach is not wholly original. The opening of the poem is a translation of the first lines of Froissart's *Le Paradis d'amour*, one of the chief sources for the *Book of the Duchess*. It serves, writes Wimsatt, as "a compositional model . . . based on the dits of Machaut", and as a lens through which the wider French traditions of the dits amoureux and of dream visions more generally are focussed toward Chaucer's elegiac project.[91] Fyler claims that, by using lines from the *Paradis* to open

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Bot or eigning hert and rime and fablis. (28332-39)

Here, idle thoughts lead the speaker to distraction and to sin. The idle games in which the speaker engages are linked, too, with the *vnnait words*, the empty or vain words, loathly and vile, that have likewise preoccupied him. Compare the *Book of the Duchess* Narrator's appraisal of his selection of reading material, chosen, of course, to combat the "ydel thoughts" that are keeping him awake:

[I] bad oon reche me a book,
A romaunce, and he it me tok
To rede and drive the night away,
For me thoughte it better play
Then pleye either at ches or tables
And in this bok were written fables (47-52)

The shared rhymes could be little more than a coincidence, but I contend that—given the connection between idle thoughts, "chess and tables", and fables in both poems—Chaucer had this passage in mind when he wrote the opening lines of his first dream vision. Of course, bookish Chaucer, through his equally bookish narrator, rehabilitates the books of "olden tyme" (53) and the act of reading.

[91] Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 178. He elaborates: "Froissart's poem has a dream frame inspired in part by Machaut's *Fonteinne amoureuse*, with the substance of the work modelled on the *Remede de Fortune*. In turn Chaucer's elegy has a dream frame inspired first by Froissart's *Paradis* and second by the *Fonteinne amoureuse* (Froissart's source), with the substance modelled mainly on *Remede de Fortune* (also Froissart's source) and the *Jugement du roy de Bahaigne*. Thus, in making his opening passage of the *Duchess* a near-verbatim translation of Froissart's first lines, Chaucer ostentatiously announces that he is following the compositional procedure of Froissart in the *Paradis*" (178). See also Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid*, 66-68.

his own inaugural narrative poem, "Chaucer—writing in English—signals his self-confident insertion of himself into the French poetic tradition."[92]

The first lines of the *Paradis d'amour* also present an insomniac narrator tormented by his lack of sleep. Froissart's narrator begins:

> Je sui de moi en grant merveille
> Comment je vifs quant tant je veille,
> Et on ne poroit en veillant
> Trouver de moi plus traveillant,
> Car bien saciés que par veillier
> Me viennent souvent traveillier
> Pensées et merancolies
> Qui me sont ens au coer liies
> Et pas ne les puis deslyer,
> Car ne voeil la belle oublyer
> Pour quele amour en ce traveil
> Je sui entrés et tant je veil. (1-12)[93]
>
> [I can only be amazed that I am still alive, when I am lying awake so much. And one cannot find a sleepless person more tormented than myself, for as you well know, whilst I am lying awake sad thoughts and melancholy often come to torment me. They bind my heart tightly, and I cannot loosen them, for I do not want to forget the fair one, for love of whom I entered into this torment and suffer such sleeplessness.][94]

Froissart's opening turns on an even tighter set of variations of sound and sense. (Chaucer's English does not hold the same rhyming resources as Froissart's French, but he nevertheless manages to capture the enclosed and enclosing character of the narrator's worried mind.)[95] The compounded repetition of *veille* (to wake or to stay awake; sleeplessness) and *traveil(le)* (to torment or be tormented;

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[92] Fyler, "Froissart and Chaucer," 198. Edwards writes Froissart's text "stands as a metonymic figure for the style of court poetry that dominated the immediate literary and social milieu" (*Dream of Chaucer*, 68).
[93] Jean Froissart, *Le Paradis d'amours*, in *Oeuvres de Froissart*, vol. 1, ed. M. Auguste Scheler.
[94] Windeatt, trans., *Sources and Analogues*, 41. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the *Paradis* are taken from Windeatt's translation.
[95] Brewer comments on Chaucer's adaptation of these lines: "There is no attempt at close translation. Chaucer has taken the subject-matter from the French, but not the style." He contrasts Froissart's "direct, well-articulated sentence that winds its way gracefully thought the octosyllabic rhyme-scheme" with Chaucer's fifteen lines, which are "lively, conversational, emphatic, dramatic, stuffed with doublets and alternatives, asservations that are mild oaths, expletives and parentheses" ("English and Europeans Traditions," 2-3). As I hope I have demonstrated above, Chaucer's opening passage also "winds its way" through the account of the Narrator's plight, and, if anything, the relative lack of grace in the passage is itself meaningful, for it is further indicative of the bounded-yet-rambling mind of the sleepless Narrator.

torments) and their variants in lines 2-6 and again in lines 11-12 indicate an obsessed mind driven to near-madness through the torments of his insomnia.[96] The inversion of the troubling pair of concepts in the final couplet of this passage suggests the cyclical nature of his suffering and reveals that he is, like his heart, tightly bound (*liies*).[97] Keith Busby has shown that images of enclosure or imprisonment, popular in much late-medieval literature, are particularly prevalent in Froissart's narrative poetry. *Le Paradis d'amour* is especially concerned with elements of enclosure, including the frame narrative which contains the dream, the poet-narrator in his chamber, and the six intercalated lyrics throughout the dream vision.[98] By contrast, the happy lovers who gather around the God of Love, Busby notes, dwell upon an open plain.[99] The deliverance afforded by the dreamer's experience, according to Peter Dembowski, is not just a freeing from multiple enclosures, but an opening on to "the domain of creativity."[100]

The *Paradis* is Froissart's first dit.[101] It appears first in both major extant manuscript collections of Froissart's work, which were, in all likelihood, copied under the supervision of the author. Scholars of Froissart's *œuvre* assume a general chronological organisation in the manuscripts.[102] Like Chaucer in his later *Book of the Duchess*, Froissart dramatizes the production and reception of lyric poetry in his dream vision, and, in so doing, signals the beginning of the phase of

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[96] As Fyler observes, the whole opening passage relays "the obsessive self-regarding ruminations of a sleepless lover-poet" ("Froissart and Chaucer," 199). Cf. Borroff, "Chaucer's English Rhymes," 89.
[97] Compare the Chaucerian narrator's comment that he is like "a mased thyng" discussed above.
[98] Busby, "Froissart's Poetic Prison," 81-83. Calling into question whether we should characterise Froissart's dits as lyrico-narrative or "narrato-lyric", Busby sees the two modes as engaged in a struggle: "lyric may be seen as trying to escape from the prison of narrative, or occasionally, . . . narrative may be struggling to impose discipline on an underlying lyric form" (83).
[99] Busby, "Froissart's Poetic Prison," 82. He adds: "There is thus an implicit contrast between the unhappy poet-narrator in his multiple enclosures and the happy lovers in an apparently open space."
[100] Dembowski, "Tradition and Poetic Craft," 287.
[101] Dembowski, "Tradition and Poetic Craft," 278. Other critics have suggested different dates for the *Paradis*: Wimsatt, for instance, posits that the poem was written c. 1365, and so decidedly during Froissart's time in England as part of Queen Philippa's household (*French Contemporaries*, 189). Dembowski's date, which is more widely accepted, makes it likely that the *Paradis* was written shortly before Froissart's departure from Hainault or shortly after his arrival at the English court; the latter possbility accords with Wimsatt's view that Froissart was brought across the Channel specifically to write poetry (*French Contemporaries*, 176).
[102] Scheler, ed. *Oeuvres de Froissart*, xi, xviii-xix. The two extant manuscript collections are housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris and are catalogued as BN MSS francais 830 and 831. It is believed that ms 831 is the presentation copy Froissart gave to Richard II during the poet's last voyage to England in 1394.

his career concerned with (largely) narrative poetry.[103] Like Machaut and de le Mote before him—and decidedly unlike Chaucer who follows—Froissart's first effort in the dit tradition contains a significant foregrounding of embedded lyrics. Of the poem's 1723 lines, the narrator's first song, the "Complaint de l'Amant", an extended lyric during which he laments his unrequited love and renounces his fealty to the lord of Love, runs 128 lines; the lay performed before the God of Love totals 276 lines. Unlike many of the lyrico-narrative poems of his predecessors, however, Froissart's "Complaint de l'Amant", "like all [his] other inserted lyrics, constitutes both an integral part of the narration as well as an independent poem."[104] Whereas in cases such as de le Mote's *Regret Guillaume* any narrative structure is buried beneath the numerous lyrical pieces, the Lover's Complaint in the *Paradis*, for example, not only provides context for the narrator's life as an unrequited lover but also serves as the prompt for the arrival of Plaisance and Esperance and the correction and consolation they bring to the otherwise sad and hopeless lover.

Froissart is, as Philip Bennett states, "a 'writerly' author . . . fascinated by the process of his creation."[105] One of the chief manners by which Froissart traces his dreamer-narrator's progress as a poet is the reported reactions to his several songs in the dream sequence of the *Paradis d'amour*. His first, long lyric received no direct response from within the world of the poem. Instead, the dreamer-narrator reacts to his own poem by collapsing into melancholy (203-12). The other poems, the two rondeaux, the lay, the virelay, and the final ballade that the dreamer sings as the vision progresses, each receive comments from figures in the dream. "Par le corps De," says Plaisance following the

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[103] On the interrelation of Froissart's life and his art in the later dits, see Sinclair, "Poetic Creation." Freeman, Bennett, and Busby all read the *Joli buisson* as Froissart's farewell to poetry. See: Freeman, "A Farewell to Poetry?"; Bennett, "The Mirage of Fiction," 297; and Busby, "Froissart's Poetic Prison," 94.

[104] Dembowski, "Tradition and Poetic Craft," 289 n. 13. For an opposing view, see Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 189-93, which insists upon the essentially lyric quality of Froissart's dits.

[105] Bennett, "The Mirage of Fiction," 286. It is possible that the writerly biographical arc traced by Froissart's dits (cf. Sinclair, "Poetic Creation") informed Chaucer's decision to use the dream vision to announce his own entry into the narrative mode. Such a reading is strengthened if Chaucer began the *Duchess* after Froissart had completed *Le Joli Buisson*, but it does not depend on this chronology: the trajectory set out in *Le Paradis* would have been sufficient to inform Chaucer's own plotting of his intended path.

first rondel, "Moult bien me plaist en tous endroit" [By the Body of God, that pleases me very much in every way], and she asks that the three companions sing it again together (861-63).

When the dreamer performs his lay before the seat of the Lord of Love (1079-1354), the lord listens with rapt attention, as the narrator retroactively reports:

> Je ne le pooie veoir,
> Mès Plaisance me dist depuis
> Qu'elle l'a veü moult de nuis
> Et moult de jours en ses esbas,
> Mès onques, ce dist, hault ne bas
> Ne li vit yex muer ne bouche,
> Tant li fu la matere douce. (1070-76)
>
> [I could not see, but Plaisance told me later that she had seen him
> many nights and many days in his joyful diversions, but she did not
> see him move his eyes or lips in the slightest, so very agreeable was
> the matter to him.]

The metrically elaborate lay tells of the narrator's first encounter with his beloved, the pains and sacrifices a lover undergoes, and includes an appeal to Pity to look kindly on the poor, bereft lover and to serve as his spokesman to the lady. The poem also contains a critical reflection on the poet's abilities (albeit one tempered by the modesty topos):

> Je ne sui pas Orpheüs
> Qui par ses chançons
> Et ses douls melodieus sons
> Endormi les dieux de là jus (1139-42)
>
> [I am not Orpheus, who by his songs and his sweet melodious
> playing put the gods to sleep down below.]

His poetic voice has not the power to move the rulers of the underworld (or, what is perhaps inferred, to deliver his beloved into his arms). Without such skill, he watches his desires elude his grasp continually:

> Mès sui li las Tantalus,
> De qui li mentons
> Joint à l'aigue et voit jusqu-au fons
> Et n'en poet ester repeüs (1143-46)

> [but I am the wretched Tantalus, whose chin touches the water and
> who can see the water but cannot be quenched.][106]

Despite these acknowledged shortcomings, the God of Love is impressed: he praises the veracity and clarity of the dreamer's poem, recognises him as a true lover, and promises the sought-after reward in due course (1355-84). In the meantime, the song has earned the dreamer-poet access to Love's garden of pleasure (1402-4).

The lay thus plays an important narrative function: it is the work that gains the dreamer admission to the sphere of the dream-world where he will encounter his beloved. Moreover, as I have stated above, it helps to chart his progress as a poet in the vision. The careful deployment of the modesty topos—"I am not Orpheus"—causes us to consider in which ways the speaker is like Orpheus even as we acknowledge the discrepancies: it shows us what he is capable of as well as that which he is not (yet) able to do. The reaction of Plaisance to the brief virelay that the dreamer performs as he, Plaisance, and Esperance move through the garden confirms his achievements: "Par le corps Dé", she says, "il est moult bien fais; / Or le chantons en nom de pais" [By God's Body, it is very well written. Now let us sing it in the name of peace.] (1446-48). When the three companions sing the song together, they do so as one: "Lors le chantames d'une vois / Moult clerement entre nous trois" (1449-50). The harmony of the three voices brought together as one—an image which possibly anticipates the resonating concord of the birdsong at the outset of the dream in the *Book of the Duchess* (295-320)—blends with the nightingale's song as the trio enter the woods, thereby creating a sense of perfection shared between the poet's song and the natural world.

The final intercalated lyric of the *Paradis*, the ballade that the dreamer sings at the request of his beloved (1627-53), is the most important for both his journey toward consolation and conciliation and his progress toward poet-hood. Once the dreamer, Plaisance, and Esperance enter

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[106] These lines may have suggested to Chaucer the conclusion of Black Knight's first long account of his woe: "Allas, than am I overcome! / For that ys doon ys not to come. / I have more sorowe than Tantale" (707-9). To my knowledge, no other scholar has noted this correspondence.

the wood they encounter Bel Acueil (Fair Welcome) and two young girls gathering flowers to make chaplets (1472-75). One of the two girls is the dreamer-narrator's beloved. After an exchange during which the dreamer confesses his love and his pledge to be a true, modest, and prudent lover, the lady asks him, "Avés vos riens fait de nouvel?" [Haven't you composed anything new?] (1602). In response, the dreamer makes a song from the depths of his happy, loving heart; the song is in praise of the daisy, *la margherite*.[107] As several scholars have suggested, it is likely that the name of the flower puns on the name of the young lady, possibly even a lover of Froissart. The ballade is so well crafted and successful that Plaisance immediately sets about providing a musical arrangement. It is not Plaisance who offers praise or criticism of the poem in this instance, however; it is the lady. She tells the dreamer: "La balade est moult bonne, / S'est drois que le chapelet donne / A celui qui l'a ordonné" [The balade is very good, and it is right that I give the chaplet to him who composed it] (1666-68). The acceptance of the dreamer as a lover coincides with the announcement of the dreamer as a first-class poet. The lady has him kiss the chaplet before kissing it herself and finally placing it on his head (1675-78). (Her subsequent suggestion "Alons, alons, / Esbanoyer d'une autre part" indicates the acceptance of the lover may be more thorough than her acceptance of the poet.) The chaplet, made from the daisies (and by the Daisy) about which the poet sings, stands in for the laurel wreath that adorns the brows of great poets. Froissart here alters the symbol to evince his arrival as a poet of dits and dream visions, if not yet (or ever) the creator of a great epic.

The conclusion of Chaucer's dream poem contains no such overt elevation of the narrator as a poet, but it does acknowledge his movement from dream experience to written account:

> Thought I, "This is so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, by processe of tyme,
> Fonde to putte this sweven in ryme
> As I can best, and that anoon."
> This was my sweven; now it is doon. (1330-34)

[107] This ballade doubtlessly informs Chaucer's later song to the daisy in the proem to the *Legend of Good Women*.

Froissart's poem closes with a similar reference to the poem as a finished work: "Ensi sui je ravis jadis / Dedens l'amourous paradys" [Thus was I once ravished into the Paradise of Love] (1722-23). Where the two poems differ, however, is that, while Froissart casually suggests the poem-as-work by providing the title in the final line, Chaucer's ending explicitly invokes the act of writing. The Narrator's promise to write a poem about his dream coupled with the *Duchess*'s final line, "This was my sweven; now it is doon", returns us to the opening of the dream vision, but we now see the text with the eyes of the reawakened Dreamer.[108] The Narrator's gradual move from a highly lyrical speaker to the dream-narrator who has put the dream into rhyme occurs primarily through his encounter with the Man in Black.

The Man in Black and the Trap of Lyric

The suffering Man in Black dominates the central episode of Chaucer's dream vision. His accounts of love and loss occupy more than 700 of the poem's 1333 lines. Although the Man's responses to the Dreamer's inquiries shed light on his plight, they do little to bring him respite; rather, his speeches lead him deeper into his grief. This is especially true of the two short lyrics the Knight sings during his encounter with the Dreamer. In this section, I will first examine Chaucer's presentation of the Black Knight's sorrow, including how it parallels the Dreamer-Narrator's own suffering. I will then address the Man in Black's mourning lyric and the song sung during the courtship of Lady White to show how Chaucer casts the lyric mode as a closed system which stands in contrast to the opportunities afforded by narrative poetry. He uses the occasion of mourning to interrogate the repetition and the temporal enclosures created by the lyrical poem. In the next section, I will return my focus to the narrator of the poem to investigate how both men are gradually released from their respective lyrical bonds.

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[108] The line also returns us to the outset of the dream. After the Narrator reports the success of his prayer to Morpheus and Juno, he transitions from the waking scene to the dream: "Loo, thus hyt was; thys was my sweven" (290).

When the Dreamer first encounters the Black Knight in the wooded dreamscape, the Man's grief is foregrounded. The Dreamer chances upon the Knight sitting against an oak tree (445-46). He is described as a handsome, "wonder wel-farynge knyght" (452) and quite young: "[o]f the age of foure and twenty yer / Upon hys berd but lytel her" (455-56).[109] The Man's appearance, youth, and the vigour expected to accompany them are at odds with his dour cast of mind. In his black garb, he stands out from the verdant background and the salutary character of the dreamscape; his green pallor (497-98) opposes the harmony of the bright and clear blue sky of the dreamscape (339-43; cf. 295-313, 410-15).[110]

Like the Narrator in the opening sequence, the Man in Black's dolour goes against the "lawe of kinde" (56): "Hit was gret wonder that Nature / Myght suffre any creature / To have such sorwe and be not ded" (467-69).[111] The sorrows of both the Narrator and the Knight are characterised by muddlings and inversions of the natural order. The Narrator comments that day and night have become indistinguishable to him and that he cares for nothing given that he cannot distinguish between joy and sorrow (1-15). The Black Knight gives an extended catalogue of the inversions he experiences in his sorrow (599-617). In a passage reminiscent of the Narrator's opening complaint,

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[109] The age the Dreamer ascribes to the Man in Black does not accord with the age of his model, John of Gaunt, who, born in 1340, would have been 28 at the time of Blanche's death. Some scholars attribute the discrepancy to a copyist's error. If the poem were in fact written for one of the anniversary memorials ordered by Gaunt, the discrepancy widens. However, if the poem were written for the memorial of 1374, as has been suggested, then the difference in age of an even ten years can be explained either by copyist error (*xxiv* read for *xxxiv*; *twenty* for *thirty*) or, also likely, as clear and explicit flattery.

[110] The colours are significant. Blue is the colour of constancy and heavenly truth, and so accords with the ringing of the birdsong in the ordered chamber. The greenness of the Knight speaks to his grave illness, yes, but, as the colour of inconstancy, it stands in contrast to the fastness of consolation that the Man in Black seeks. I do not mean to suggest that the Knight is an inconstant lover—if anything, he is too constant. The inconstancy invoked by the colour green stresses the vacillations of the mournful Man's behaviour: he cycles through his emotions in the self-perpetuating circuit of his grief. Cf. *The Squire's Tale* V.643-47; *Troilus* 3.885.

[111] Compare the Narrator's observation regarding his own unnatural situation:

> And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
> Hyt were to lyven in this wyse,
> For nature wolde nat suffyse
> To noon erthly creature
> Nat longe tyme to endure
> Withoute slep and be in sorwe. (16-21)

the Man in Black explains, "To derke ys turned al my lyght, / My wyt ys foly, my day ys nyght, / My love ys hate, my slep waking" (609-11; cf. 1-4). Similarly, the Knight reports:

> My song ys turned to pleynynge,
> And al my laughtre to wepynge,
> My glade thoghtes to hevynesse,
> In travayle ys myn ydelnesse (599-602)

The word *hevynesse* recalls the Narrator's comments on the "[d]efaute of slep" that "[h]ath slayn [his] spirit of quyknesse" (25-26); the Knight's allusion to his now-absent "glade thoghtes" in combination with the following line, "In travayle ys myn ydelness", invokes the sleepless Narrator's "ydel thoght[s]" (4), "sorwful ymagynacioun" (14), and "fantasies" (28) that bring on his duress.[112] The Man in Black's mind is confused much like the Narrator's, and he engages in a form of repetition and cyclical behaviour similar to that of his waking counterpart.

The Black Knight's tendency to repeat himself is evidenced in many ways, but one of the most poignant is the heavy repetition of *sorwe* and its variants. The words *sorwe(s)*, *sorowe(s)*, *sorweful*, and *sorwing* appear 44 times in the poem;[113] more than thirty of these instances concern, or are spoken by, the Man in Black.[114] The first versicle of the Knight's mourning lyric invokes sorrow in

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[112] I suspect that Chaucer plays upon the multiple meanings of *travayle* here even as he deploys the concept of idleness introduced in the Narrator's initial complaint. Most editors of the *Duchess* gloss *travayle* as "labour" or "toil." The word certainly carries this meaning (*MED*, sv *travail* (n.) 1a), but it can also mean "effort," "exertion" (2a) or "violent or vigourous physical activity" (2b). Chaucer uses these senses of the *travayle* throughout his works, from the translation of the *Rose* to the *Canterbury Tales*. The word can also refer to suffering and affliction (3a), hardship or difficulty (3b), and even emotional or spiritual distress (3c), senses that appear in Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, *Troilus*, and *Miller's Tale*, respectively. These latter senses of *travayle* correspond to Froissart's repeated use of the Middle French *traveille* (which Windeatt translates as "torment") in the opening passage of *Le Paradis d'amour* (lines 4, 6, and 11). It is my view that in the Knight's catalogue of his experiences, Chaucer obliquely alludes to his source for the Narrator's complaint and thus further blurs the sufferings of the Dreamer and the Man in Black.

[113] Oizumi, *A Complete Concordance to the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, vol. 5, 162.

[114] Nine instances of *sorwe* and its variations occur in the Narrator's retelling of the story of Alcyone's grief. The occurrences are contained in two relatively short bursts: five times from lines 85 to 104 and four times between lines 202 and 213. Three of the nine occurrences are found in a narratorial aside:

> Sych sorowe this lady to hir tok
> That trewly I that made this book
> Had such pittee and such rowthe
> To rede hir sorwe that, by my trowthe,
> I ferde the worse al the morwe
> Aftir, to thenken on hir sorwe. (95-100)

its first line: "I have of sorwe so gret won" (476). He begins with sorrow and is left with sorrow. The densest block of the Man in Black's references to *sorwe* occurs, however, in the lead-up to the catalogue of inversions. The Man says that even Tesiphus, a compound figure indicative of hellish torment,

> May not of more sorwe telle.
> And whoso wiste al, by my trouthe,
> My sorwe, but he hadde rowthe
> And pitee of my sorwes smerte,
> That man hath a fendly herte;
> For whoso seeth me first on morwe
> May seyn he hath met with sorwe,
> For y am sorwe, and sorwe is y. (590-97)

In the space of eight lines, the noun appears five times, culminating in the doubling of the word in line 597. The evolution of *sorwe* in this passage is one of interiorisation and transformation. Although the first mention of *sorwe* refers to the general concept or category, particular sorrows are soon the Knight's focus: "My sorwe . . . / . . . my sorwes smerte". Finally, the Man in Black is so dominated by his sorrows that he becomes indistinguishable from them, transforming into an allegorical figure. The final, chiastic metaphor, "y am sorwe, and sorwe is y", is indicative of the Man's solipsistic state; he is both enclosed in sorrow and contains it within, even as the two *y*s surround the doubled *sorwe*. Like the Narrator and his labyrinthine complaint, the Man in Black's utterance demonstrates a cyclical, repetitious tendency and the difficulty he has in breaking out of it.

The Man in Black's two short songs demonstrate many of the limitations Chaucer locates in the lyric mode. The first, which introduces the Man's plight, reveals his over-commitment to the past and the ways in which he seems to indulge in his suffering. The second song, part of his courtship of the now-dead Lady White and so chronologically the earlier lyric, documents his

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This passage stands out for three reasons. First, we have here the first of two explicit identifications of the Narrator as a (the) poet. (The only other reference will come in the closing lines of the poem.) Second, this passage compounds several temporalities. The Narrator here looks ahead in the time of the narrative to when the story is read, the dream is dreamt, and the poem itself is written. In so doing, Chaucer's Narrator anticipates the resolution of the dream, as the use of the word *routhe*, the Dreamer's final word to the Black Knight (1310), suggests. The Narrator's response to the story of Alcyone's sorrow parallels the sympathy he comes to feel for the Man in Black.

adherence to the traditions of courtly love and love poetry. In so doing, this early lover's paean establishes the limitations that will daunt his efforts to achieve consolation in the wake of his loss.

The embedded lyrics in the *Book of the Duchess* have not received much in-depth attention. Many scholars comment on the lyrics in passing, often as an indication of the Man in Black's inheritance of, and reliance upon, the language of courtly love and devotion. One of the few exceptions is Ardis Butterfield's work on embedded lyrics in medieval narrative. As Butterfield notes, commentary on the *Duchess* lyrics has been limited in part because critics consider the Knight's two songs "not so much meaningful as meaningless" and "plain to the point of dullness".[115] For instance, Minnis, Scattergood, and Smith acknowledge that the mourning lyric locates the Man in Black within the traditions of courtly poetry and the complexities of the poetic voice (is the Knight reciting a well-known text or is he telling a true tale?), but they do not interrogate how the song functions.[116] Butterfield finds value in the lyric: it serves to introduce the topic of White's death and thus reveals "the poem's true function: elegy".[117] Indeed, she insists that because of the gap that is introduced when the Dreamer fails, or pretends not, to understand the expression of grief, the Knight's first lyric "is of vital importance to the poem's consolatory structure and function."[118]

The mourning lyric constitutes the first words we hear spoken by the doleful knight and establishes several important aspects of the Man in Black's character and his identity as both a lover and a mourner. Caught up in great sorrow and ignoring all else, the Man adopts a typically Boethian posture, hanging his head and so missing the Dreamer's approach (461).[119] The gesture, which speaks to the limited scope of the Man's mind, is paired with his speaking of the mournful lyric. The

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[115] Butterfield, "Lyric and Elegy," 33.
[116] Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 81-83.
[117] Butterfield, "Lyric and Elegy," 33.
[118] Butterfield, "Lyric and Elegy," 34.
[119] Cf. *Consolation of Philosophy* 1.m.2. The *Boece* reads: "Allas! Now lyth he emptid of lyght of his thoght, and his nekke is pressyd with hevy cheynes, and bereth his chere enclyned adoun for the grete weyghte, and is constreyned to loken on the fool erthe!" (28-32).

Dreamer characterises this song as the saddest—"[t]he most pitee, the most rowthe" (465)—that ever he has heard. It is made "with a dedly sorwful soun" (462) and is "[w]ithoute noote, withoute song" (472):

> I have of sorwe so gret won
> That joye gete I never non,
> Now that I see my lady bryght,
> Which I have loved with al my myght,
> Is fro me ded and ys agoon.
> Allas, deth, what ayleth the,
> That thou nodlest have taken me,
> Whan thou toke my lady swete,
> That was so fair, so fresh, so fre,
> So good that men may wel se
> Of al goodnesse she had no mete! (475-86)[120]

The lyric, divided into two versicles of five and six lines respectively, splits the difference of the Dreamer's estimation of a song "of ryme ten vers or twelve" (463).[121] The rhyme scheme, aabba//ccdccd, sets the lyric off from the regular rhythm and progression of "the universal narrative octosyllabic couplet."[122] The repetition of the a-rhyme in line 479 further interrupts the flow of the poem, just as the death of the Knight's lady has interrupted the progress of his life as a lover. The three a-rhymes of the Boethian lyric exemplify the reversals of the natural order and the emptiness

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[120] Some editors, including Lynch (2007), maintain the twelve-line lyric that first appears in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's works. Thynne includes a sixth line in the first versicle, "And thus in sorwe lefte me aloon", which gives a rhyme scheme of aabbaa, a form that matches the early love lyric reported later by the Man in Black (1175-80). In all extant manuscripts, the Black Knight's mourning song consists of 11 lines. I maintain the manuscript reading in the current study for I think the lop-sided structure is an authorial decision (cf. line 463). I follow the *Riverside Chaucer* lineation. Shippey notes the critical constricts introduced by this numbering, however. It obscures, for instance, an important element of the *Duchess*' design, its 1333 lines ("Arithmetical Mentality," 179-91, 197; for further discussion of the significance of the number 1333, see Peck, "Theme and Number," 95). See also: Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 115; Spearing, *Dream-poetry*, 53; Davenport, *Complaint and Narrative*, 65; Owen, "Chaucer: Beginnings," 58.

[121] Shippey argues the number of the eleven lines "is elegiacally highly appropriate", and cites Ovidian and Christian sources. In the *Fasti* (II.561-70), Shippey explains, Ovid states that eleven days are the appropriate length of time for mourning. Hugh of St Victor writes in his discussion of biblical numerology that eleven is the number of transgression for it is one over ten, the number of the Commandments and thus the Law. As Shippey observes, eleven is also the one less than twelve, the number of Grace. See "Arithmetical Mentality," 191-92; cf. Peck, "Theme and Number," 94-95. Chaucer's use of eleven lines here is likely informed by both these traditions. What is more, the unevenness of the song's structure suggests its flawed relationship to mourning and consolation.

[122] Busby, "Froissart's Poetic Prison," 84.

with which the Man in Black struggles.[123] The abundance (*so gret won*) of sorrow he possesses converts the absence of his lady (who *ys agoon*) into a tangible (and plentiful) thing. At the same time, joy—normally considered a good or *bonum* and so, in Boethian logic, a thing—is, in the inverted world of grief, known only as an absence, a no-thing: "joye gete I never non".

The b-rhymes of the first versicle reinforce the sense of loss: "Now that I see my lady bryght, / Which I have loved with al my myght" (477-78). The pairing of the lady's brilliance with the Man's strength suggests a correlation between the two: once the bright lady is no more, the man's virility and vitality are sapped. Moreover, the structure of this first versicle encapsulates the Knight's fixation: the couplets represent both the complementary pairing of the Man in Black and the "lady bryght" and the standard progress of narrative established in the preceding 400-odd lines, but here they falter with the return of the a-rhyme. The suggestion of his happy love is couched between rhymes insisting on absence, *noon* and *agoon*.[124] These formal upsets of the poem combine with the concision of meaning to emphasise the Man in Black's problematic use of the lyric to dwell on the past and his consequent failure to achieve consolation.

The song is circular in both its cause and its effect. The lyric seems at once to be a symptom of the Man's condition, an outward expression of the inner turmoil, and also a cause, or recharging agent, of his on-going torment. The first versicle picks up where the Dreamer's description leaves off, allowing the Man to mourn with his own voice, and he gives a concise account of his sorrow. The second versicle heightens the emotional charge of the lyric by recalling the exceptional qualities that make the loss of the lady so poignant. The end of the song coincides with a redoubling of the

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[123] Cherniss observes that the Black Knight's first lyric "parallels the verses with which Boethius begins the *Consolation*" in 1.m.1. "Boethius calls this lament a 'querimoniam lacrimabilem' [1.pr.1], and Chaucer translates these words as a 'weply compleynte'" (*Boethian Apocalypse*, 179). Cf. Peck, "Theme and Number," 75.

[124] The import of this reading can be underscored through a small thought experiment. If we accept Thynne's sixth line for the first versicle, "And thus in sorwe lefte me aloon", as authorial, the Man's sense of present loss is not affected. Indeed, it is doubled with the fourth *a*-rhyme emphasising the isolation of the Knight: once the lady *ys agoon*, he is isolated in his sorrow. Moreover, the return of *sorwe* in the sixth line creates a further sense of circularity in the song. That said, the 12-line song of mourning loses the elements of caesura and the upset of a natural (or naturalised) order that the asymmetrical 11-line lyric suggests.

Man's grief, especially its physiological manifestations: the blood rushes out of his face and limbs, and he grows green and pale (490-99). The movement embodied in the lyric, from silence to speech and back again, is at once cyclical and linear. The Man remains buried in sorrow, but that sorrow has been renewed, and he descends deeper into grief. The ideal elegiac lyric—so different from what the Man sings here—would reinvigorate the lost beloved; the Knight's song can give vitality only to sorrow.[125]

The lyric serves to isolate the Knight further. In the silence that follows the end of the song, the Man loses himself in deep thought: "he spak noght, / But argued with his owne thought, / And in hys wyt disputed faste" (503-5). Just as he has left the social activity of the hunt (cf. 542-43), the Man withdraws from the world around him, closing himself off from sensory stimuli such as the Dreamer's proximity and greeting (502-3, 510), an effect presaged by his hanging head as the Dreamer approaches.[126] By retreating into his own mind—a mind half lost, according to the Dreamer (511)—the Man in Black forsakes human interaction, embracing instead a one-sided discourse and the repetitious feedback and the bifurcation of self that such discourse can produce.

The first versicle emphasises the Man in Black's solipsism. Although the song is made in response to the lady's death, in the first five lines the singer concentrates on himself as a subject. The first-person singular pronoun appears in four of the five lines; the focus is on the speaker (the Black Knight) as an actor: as one who possesses (*sorwe*) or lacks (*joye*), who perceives, and, at least in the past, as one who loves greatly. Similarly, in the fifth line where the first-person appears in a prepositional phrase, the Knight positions himself as a locative centre: his references to the lady's death—she "[i]s fro me ded and ys agoon"—classifies her absence as a departure from the Man. This rhetorical gesture reasserts the centrality of the mourner to the lament. It also affirms the lyric's

[125] We have seen a similar effect in the *Pearl*-mourner's response to his laments in the *erber*.
[126] The Man assures the Dreamer of the thoroughness of this self-removal from the world: "I herde the not, to seyn the soth, / Ne I sawgh the not, syr, trewely" (520-21).

origin and basis in the present moment: the speaker is the bereaved survivor, left behind to pine for a reunion that is not forthcoming.

The mortal separation of the lovers is elaborated in the second versicle. Here, the Knight turns away to address a personified Death. In so doing, he removes (or forfeits) a great deal of the agency he held in the first five lines. This transfer of ascribed agency, which begins in the final line of the first versicle where we see the lady leave her lover, recasts the Man in Black as a passive victim, unable to do more than issue his lyrical complaints.[127] His fruitless apostrophe goes unanswered: he is as unable to elicit a response from Death as he was unable to succeed in his request to join the lady in her doom. The shift of focus from his own woe to the figure he identifies as the bringer of that woe allows the mourning Knight to move further beyond himself to spend the final four lines of the brief song on a enumeration of the lady's virtues. In the second versicle, her *bryght* character is expanded through multiple superlatives: she was "so fair, so fresh, so fre, / So good" (483-84); she had no equal (485). Nevertheless, the past participles deployed in this description, *was* and *had*, make clear that she no longer possesses these qualities; now she is simply dead and gone (479).[128]

Despite the disjuncture between past and present, between living love and surviving sorrow, the Man in Black's lyric confounds the past and present. The song allows him to bring together the past events of loving courtship and the loss that followed with the present reality of mourning and complaint. The lyric permits the Man to dwell on, and in, the past. The seemingly happy past suggested by the final four lines of the song must be seen through the lens of the present sadness of

[127] We see a similar nuanced shift in the agency or responsibility for the death-parting in the proem to *Pearl*. In the final lines of the first stanza, the Mourner explains the source of his sorrow: "Allas! I lest hyr [the pearl] in on erbere; / Þur3 gresse to grounde *hit fro me yot*" (*Pearl* 9-10, emphasis added). Again, in the first lines of the next stanza, he specifies that the pearl actively left him: "in þat spote *hit fro me sprange*" (13). Like the Black Knight, the *Pearl*-Mourner is left to do little more than grieve: "Ofte have I wayted, wyschande þat wele" (14). See also Vance, "Poetics of Participation," 134.
[128] This temporal gap is likewise suggested by the *Whan* than opens line 482.

the first seven lines, and it is this double-vision which throws the Black Knight deeper into despair at the closing of the lyric.

The Man in Black's repeated complaints, like the *Pearl*-Mourner's fruitless visits to the funereal *erber*, do not lead him to consolation; he shows little sign of progress, returning again and again to the same points. His second lyric likewise demonstrates a problematic tendency to repetition. The Man in Black recites the lyric to the Dreamer as part of his account of his attempts at verbal courtship of Lady White:

> Lord, hyt maketh myn herte lyght,
> Whan I thenke on that swete wyght
> That is so semely on to see;
> And wisshe to God hit myghte so bee
> That she wolde holde me for hir knyght,
> My lady, that is so faire and bryght! (1175-80)

Admittedly, this is not very good poetry; it is the sort of passage Lewis has in mind when he refers to the "bad, old manner" that pops up in the *Book of the Duchess*.[129] We should, perhaps, grant the Man the benefit of the doubt: it is, after all, the very first song the young Knight wrote for his beloved (1173). Nevertheless, the lyric is important in the trajectory of the Man in Black's love and mourning. On account of the limitation it puts on rhyming (aabbaa), this short song initially appears to exhibit more poetic skill than the later song of mourning. However, the ingenuity shown by finding four appropriate *-ygh(e)/-igh(e)* rhymes—the difficulty of which Chaucer highlights in *The Complaint of Venus*—is checked by the monotony of the simple lines and stultifying effect of the same sounds. Indeed, the inset lyric reads like the worst examples of nineteenth-century sentimental verse; the lines could be rearranged in almost any order without affecting the saccharine yet bland meaning of the poem.[130] What is more, the shape of the lyric suggests a short path of return to more of the same: what first looks like a series of couplets, the form recognised by readers of the *Book of*

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[129] Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, 164.

[130] The young would-be lover can be granted more leeway, perhaps, than can the mature, mourning Black Knight: few poets, fourteenth-century or otherwise, produce shining juvenilia.

the Duchess as embodying narrative advance, quickly folds in upon itself, creating a self-contained structure. Similarly the short lyric twice employs internal rhyme and slant rhyme, further enlacing the shape of the poem. The Knight's optative plea, "hit myght so bee" (1178), shifts at the line break to the object of his desire, "she" (1179). In line 1179 the poem again bends inward with the string "wolde holde". The labyrinthine form of the love song demonstrates the peril of repetition and refrain in lyric. As I will discuss below, this repetition demonstrates the limited and limiting aspects of lyric in the poem, its twisting and returning nature.

One of its most apparent features of the young Knight's love song is the foregrounding of the *-yght(e)/-ight(e)* rhymes. These rhymes appear four times in the space of six lines—an occurrence which is, so far as I can tell, something of an anomaly in the couplet-based poem. (One of the chief exceptions, of course, is in the Knight's mourning lyric, which has three *-on* rhymes in the space of five lines.) A survey of the *-yght(e)/-ight(e)* rhymes in the *Book of the Duchess* reveals a limited semantic scope. There are 13 such rhyming pairs (of a total 666; this number counts the split triplet of the first lyric as one) composed of various combinations of eight words.[131] With the exception of the first two instances, which address the narrator's sleeplessness, all the rhyming pairs deal with the Knight, the Lady White, and their affair. For example, one pair serves to introduce the Man in Black when the Dreamer first spies him: "Than found I sitte even upryght / A wonder wel-faryng knyght" (451-52). There is nothing particularly revelatory about the rhyming pair here, save that it establishes the Knight as one pole of the rhyme web that will be fleshed out as the dream-encounter progresses. The coincidence of the relatively rare *–yght(e)/-ight(e)* rhyme with the discovery of the Knight also serves to draw parallels between the Dreamer and the Man in Black. The poem begins with the same

[131] The rhymes are found at lines 1-2, 45-46, 451-52, 477-78, 529-30, 609-10, 821-22, 949-50, 963-64, 1015-16, 1175-76, 1179-80, and 1281-82. The words (including variations) are: *light, night, upright, bright, might, knight, wight, right*. *Might* is the rarest of these rhyme-words, occurring only once (line 478). (Although *might(e)* appears 17 times throughout the text, line 478 is the only place where it is a noun; all other instances are adverbial.) *Light* and *bright* are the most frequent, with five instances each, including twice as a pair. The rhyming pair *wightes-nightes* also appears at lines 579-80; I have not counted it among the 13 pairs listed above, but, as will be demonstrated shortly, it does maintain the pattern established by the pairs using singular forms.

pair: "I have gret wonder, be this lyght, / How that I lyve, for day ne nyght / I may nat slepe wel nygh noght" (1-3). The second instance of the rhyming pair follows shortly thereafter , again emphasising the narrator's insomnia:

> So whan I saw I might not slepe
> Til now late this other night,
> Upon my bed I sate upright
> And bad oon reche me a book (44-47)

The first three *–ygh(e)/-igh(e)* rhymes (1-2, 45-46, and 451-52) reinforce parallels between the Narrator's plight and the Man's sorrow. The rhyming pair that introduces the grieving Man quoted above (lines 451-52) inverts the order of the narrator's second complaint, and lines 46 and 451 are the only places where *upright* occurs in a terminal position.[132] More significantly, the Knight uses the rhyme in his catalogue of the unnatural inversions caused by sorrow (599-617)—"To derke ys turned al my lyght, / My wyt ys foly, my day ys nyght" (609-10)—a move that further identifies the Man's debilitated state with the Dreamer-Narrator's affliction. (This couplet repeats the rhymes of the opening couplet, the only time this repetition occurs.)

The majority of the eleven *-ygh(e)/-igh(e)* rhyming pairs in the dream concern Lady White and the Knight's love for her. Seven of these, including the two tightly knit rhymes in the love lyric, occur in the earliest chronological period of the Man in Black's narrative, in the lead up to, and at the beginning of, the love affair. When he recounts his first sighting of White, the Man in Black deploys the first of two *bryghte-lyghte* pairs. Having chanced upon a gathering of beautiful ladies, the Man spies his future love:

> Among these ladyes thus echon,
> Soth to seyn, y sawgh oon
> That was lyk noon of the route;
> For I dar swere, withoute doute,
> That as the someres sonne bryght

[132] It is found in a medial position in the description of the sleepers of Morpheus' cave (175) and in the Man in Black's characterisation of Lady Fortune's false seeming (622). In none of these four instances does it bear an explicitly positive connotation.

> Ys fairer, clerer, and hath more lyght
> Than any other planete in heven (817-23)

The simile elevates White not only above the women in her retinue but above the heavenly bodies themselves, and so serves as a proleptic intensification of the Knight's love for the lady. A comparable elevation of the beloved occurs when he names her for the first time amid his decorous description of White:

> And goode faire White she het;
> That was my lady name ryght.
> She was bothe fair and bryght;
> She hadde not hir name wrong. (948-51)

Her character and her name are identified with purity, and, moreover, she symbolises a perfect pairing of word and thing ("She hadde not hir name wrong"). Other instances of the rhyme pair are used to underscore White's inexhaustible grace (963-64, the second *bryght-lyght* pair), her unerring allegiance to justice (1015-16), and her identity as a forgiving agent of correction (1281-82).

Given the strong links between *-ygh(e)/-igh(e)* rhymes and the love of the Knight for his lady, it is no surprise that the rhyming pair turns up in the mournful lyric the Dreamer overhears when first he chances upon the Knight: "Now that I see my lady bryght, / Which I have loved with al my myght, / Is fro me ded and ys agoon" (477-79). The shared rhymes create a continuity between the two lyrics: the love hoped for in the young Knight's song is remembered and its passing lamented in the mournful lyric the Dreamer overhears. What is more, by subordinating the dominant rhymes of the love song to the rhymes of loss and absence in the later lyric, Chaucer shows how sadness has eclipsed the joys the Man once experienced: the foregrounded, enveloping a-rhymes of the juvenile courtship lyric become the enclosed b-rhymes of the song of grief.

Clearly, the Knight's two songs ought to be considered in relation to each other. If we read the mourning song in terms of the lover's paean, we gain further insight into the importance of lyric in the *Book of the Duchess*. Both songs split in the approximate middle of the poem, and thereby mark

shifts from the internal state of the speaker to external events. Both poems also effect temporal splits at the break. In the mourning lyric, the division stands between the present state of grief in the first versicle and the remembered blissful past of the second. In the lover's song, we see the present of the estranged lover and his hope for reciprocation. When taken together, the two poems chart a movement from the unacknowledged admirer (1175-7) to the hopeful lover (1178-80), to the forlorn widower (475-9) who longs to rejoin his lost love (480-5). Both poems contain an optative element, but whereas the young man wishes for reciprocation, the bereaved speaker wants so much more—he wants to overcome the gulf of death, whether through his own demise (584, 587-8, 690) or, the goal of the elegist, by restoring his beloved from the grave.

Beyond the repeated rhymes discussed above, the mourning song contains faint echoes of, and allusions to, the lover's lyric. Granted, many of these are stock images and phrases of courtly love poetry, but the parallels are nonetheless telling of the Man's limited scope and craft and speak to the story of his love affair. "That swete wyght" that the lover desires (1176) becomes "my lady swete" (482). The superlative descriptions of the pie-eyed young lover—his lady is "so semely" (1177) and "so fair" (1180)—return and multiply in the nostalgic lament, spilling over from one line to the next: "so fair, so fresh, so fre, / So good" (483-4). The apostrophes, too, demonstrate a clear difference between the Man's two states. The address to the "Lord" at the opening of the love song (1175), while serving as an exclamatory intensifier of the feeling that follows,[133] also invokes the young Knight's vassalage to the Lord of Love (764-74). By contrast, the Black Knight calls on a different authority in his grief-song: he addresses Death. The Man does not perform (or appear to perform) the same obeisance to Death that he paid to Love—"With good wille, body, hert, and al. / . . . I putte in his servage / . . . and dide homage; / And ful devoutly I prayed hym to" (768-71)—but

[133] See Culler, "Apostrophe," 138.

that simply makes his pleading to his new governor all the more pitiable.[134] Whereas the Knight-as-lover is a happy thrall (767), the mourner who supplicates himself to Death does so woefully. And, of course, whereas the lover's service to his lord is answered when he wins the lady's love, his appeals to Death receive no such answer (480-81, 690-92).

The Knight, the Narrator, and the Move toward Narrative

The Dreamer aids the Man in Black by helping him break out of his cycle of grief. He does so by leading the Knight away from his lyrical lamentations toward a narrative structure. By having the Man tell the story of his courtship of White and his eventual acceptance into the lady's graces, the Dreamer causes the Man to reach the crucial point of his tale and to acknowledge directly the death of his beloved. This is not the end of the story, however, as the Man in Black realises when he rises and rides toward the castle; the hart-hunting may have concluded, but the Black Knight continues. In turn, the Narrator, who begins the poem trapped in a cycle of worry and insomnia, wakens to find himself freed not only from sleeplessness but from his frantic anxiety. In this final section, I examine the Man in Black's and the Dreamer-Narrator's parallel paths from lyric to narrative. I will conclude by discussing how this transition reflects the new stage of his poetic career on which Chaucer embarks in the *Book of the Duchess*.

The Black Knight's songs of love and mourning are not the only examples of his lyrical tendencies. His lengthy praise of White's beauty and virtues follows the typical pattern of a poetic portrait. It dwells on her features and character for two hundred lines (819-1033). What is more, the indulgence in lyrical description interrupts the story the Man had begun. After the Man in Black's poorly received chess analogy the Dreamer requests the full tale: "Good sir, telle me al hooly / In

[134] According to his account, the service the Man gives to Love is very much a feudal one, with submission on the part of the servant but with an important reciprocity on the part of the lord. The Knight's supplication to the Lord of Love is repaid: his lord bestows favour on the Man (772), who learns the craft of love (791), and, of course, wins the love of the lady.

what wyse, how, why, and wherefore / That ye have thus youre blysse lore" (746-48). The Knight begins by reviewing his youthful service to Love and how he first encountered Lady White amid her retinue (805-19). The mention of that "oon / That was lyk noon of the route" (818-19) leads him down the long and winding path of description. Chaucer underscores the opposition of the portrait to narrative advance at the end of the account of White when the Man asks, "But wherfore that y telle my tale?" (1034), recalling that the initial prompt was to explain his loss and sorrow. Of course, the Knight is almost immediately distracted again by his mention of the "swete wif" (1037), and, after a short exchange with the Dreamer, launches into another sixty-line paean to White's unique powers of speech, truth, and cheer, and the Knight's unswerving devotion to her (1052-1111).

As the Man in Black prepares to begin what would likely be a long meditation on falsity, traitors, and his pledge to uphold the memory of the deceased lady (1115-25), the Dreamer redirects him:

> "Now, goode sir," quod I thoo,
> "Ye han wel told me herebefore;
> Hyt ys no nede to reherse it more,
> How ye sawe hir first, and where.
> But wolde ye tel me the manere
> To hire which was your firste speche —
> Therof I wolde yow beseche —
> And how she knewe first your thoght,
> Whether ye loved hir or noght?
> And telleth me eke what ye have lore,
> I herde yow telle herebefore." (1126-36)

The Dreamer's phrasing expressly discourages repetition—"Hyt ys no nede to reherse it more"—and asks the Knight to move on from the initial encounter and his infatuation to the next episode. The request causes the Man to relate the story of his early devotion to Lady White, his use of songs as a form of lover's consolation, and his eventual acceptance into the loving service of Lady White.

The Man in Black's youthful pursuit of love has important parallels to the search for consolation that he and the Dreamer undertake. Suffering from lovesickness, the young lover begins

to write *songes* (poems) "to kepe [himself] fro ydelnesse" (1155), and they bring him some small comfort (1171-72). The songs prove to be little more than an temporary outlet, however, and do nothing to bring him closer to his beloved. Compelled to tell her of his love lest he perish (1187-88, 1201-2), the Man addresses White, but it does not go well: "many a word I over-skipte / In my tale, for pure fere / Lest my wordes mysset were." As he continues, he is "[s]ofte and quakynge for pure drede / And shame, and styntynge in my tale" (1208-10, 1212-13) . The stumbling, wayward speech fails to win the lady's favour; his words miss their mark. In time, the Man tries again, swearing to be hers forever (1232-35). Her response remains negative: "she acounted nat a stree / Of al my tale" (1237-38). Despite this setback, the ardent lover persists; in a year's time, he makes a third attempt. This final effort proves successful: the Lady White gives him a ring as token of her acceptance of his *troth*, and they "lyved ful many a yere / So wel" (1296-97).

Just as his pursuit of love is figured as a process of learning how to express himself—to avoid making a stinted, stumbling tale—so is his consolation built out of tale-telling, the clear and direct ordering of his experience. Initially, the Knight is a poor speaker, unable to organise his thoughts or deploy his words deftly. The effects of this poor performance—beyond failing to impress his beloved—are similar to the consequences of the unsuccessful song of mourning the Dreamer overhears: "myn hewe al pale — / Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and red" (1214-15; cf. 488-99), and he "heng the hed" (1216; cf. 461). His second and third utterances move him further along the path. The second speech, which increases the clarity of the young lover's *troth* even as it stresses concision, yields no positive result. This is most likely due to the lady's perception that his words are empty: they are generic in their sentiment—stemming, like so many of the Man in Black's characteristics (his first lover's song included), from the tradition of *fin' amors* without any personalised reflection, interpretation, or application. Thus, so far as White is concerned, they are uttered without any action to back them up. There is a perceived divorce between his words and his

deeds; or, rather, there is nothing in his words that assures that comparable deeds will follow. His third profession of love, by contrast, comes at the end of a long period of unrequited devotion: in this case, the words match the deeds already accomplished.

The Man in Black's successful account of his love affair with White sets the stage for the Dreamer's last inquiry and the final quick, painful exchange between the two men. The Dreamer's simply phrased question, "Sir . . . where is she now?" (1298) threatens to return the Knight to his cyclical and static sorrow. In response to the query, the Man "stynte anoon" (1299) and "wax as deed as stoon" (1300): he is stopped completely and silenced—but only temporarily. When he speaks again, his utterance bears signs of renewed recurrence as he recalls and summarises the dialogue:

> . . . Allas that I was bore!
> That was the los that here-before
> I tolde the that I hadde lorn.
> Bethenke how I seyde here-beforn,
> 'Thow wost ful lytel what thow menest;
> I have lost more than thow wenest.' (1301-6)

The sonic near-repetition of the rhymes in the first two couplets—*bore*, *here-before*, *lorn*, *here-beforn*—seems, at an authorial level, a sign of poorly wrought verse, but, in the mouth of the Black Knight, exemplifies his tendency to dwell on the same subject and to rehearse the past. Similarly, the third repetition of his reticent and vague explanation to the Dreamer, "Thow wost ful lytel what thow menest; / I have lost more than thow wenest" (1305-6; cf. 743-44, 1137-38), suggests the possibility that he will revert to yet another account of his sorrows. However, the Dreamer's earlier request for the story and the Knight's obliging response has established sufficient momentum in the trajectory of the tale to carry the Man forward from his past reminiscence to the present, the *now*, about which the Dreamer inquires: "She ys ded" (1309).

The clear, concise admission of White's demise allows the Man in Black to continue moving forward in the story. The Dreamer's offer of sympathy, "Is that youre los? Be God, hyt ys routhe"

(1310), is the first step in the process of rehabilitating the mourner to the society from which his grief had isolated him:

> And with that word ryght anoon
> They gan to strake forth; al was doon,
> For that tyme, the hert-hunting.
> With that me thoghte that this kyng
> Gan homwarde for to ryde
> Unto a place, was ther besyde,
> Which was from us but a lyte —
> A long castel with walles white,
> Be Seynt Johan, on a ryche hil (1311-19)

The Man in Black's return to the castle symbolises his return to the blissful social world of the hunt. Although the hunt has concluded for the time being—"al was doon, / *For that tyme*" (1312-13, emphasis added)—it will resume with the Knight as a participant. The Dreamer-Narrator's encounter with the Man in Black has freed the mourner from the cyclical trap of his grief by prompting the Knight to put his sorrow into narrative rather than expressing himself through limiting lyric.

The Narrator, too, undergoes a gradual transition from lyric to narrative. The poem eases from the highly lyrical complaint of the insomniac Narrator into the story-book, to the in-dream waking, hunting, and wandering, the encounter with the Man in Black, and the Knight's own embedded tale of his courtship of Lady White. Through each of these movements, the Narrator becomes more solidly fixed on the concept of narrative progress.

The initial move in this direction is from his opening complaint to the Ovidian story. This transition is achieved through the device of the mini-story of taking down the book:

> So whan I saw I might not slepe
> Til now late this other night,
> Upon my bed I sat upright
> And bad oon reche me a book,
> A romaunce, and he it me tok
> To rede and drive the night away (44-49)

At six lines, it is the most minor narrative in the poem, but it serves an important role as the first break from the cycle of sorrow and complaint in which the Narrator finds himself stuck. The passage provides an element of action that has otherwise been absent from the poem: there is action stemming from reflection (the decision to read), implied dialogue (bidding *oon* to fetch the book), and further action pending (the act of reading and the story retold). This short narrative passage opens the possbility of further narrative even as the sleepy Narrator opens his book.

The retelling of the tale of Seys and Alcyone—the first sustained narrative section of Chaucer's poem—is itself an easy or soft entrance into narrative: although Chaucer tailors the story to suit his needs, emphasising certain details whilst omitting others, the narrative is, of course, a translation. The primary source is of the story is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, though both Wimsatt and Minnis note Chaucer's reliance on the *Ovide Moralisé*.[135] Chaucer also borrows some from Machaut in this respect, for the French poet translates the Alcyone tale in his *Fonteinne amoureuse*.[136] What Chaucer is doing, then, is cautiously trying his hand by re-presenting someone else's story.

The Alcyone story is important for the trajectory of the poem because of how it resonates with the Narrator's plight and the Man in Black's dolorous situation: the grief of a surviving spouse, the desire for communication, and, in the case of the Narrator especially, the importance of visions for consolation. The Ovidian tale is also important for its emphasis on storytelling. Alcyone's sorrow arises not only from the absence of her husband, but from not knowing the full story:

> Anon she sent bothe eest and west
> To seke him, but they founde nought.
> "Alas!" quod she, "that I was wrought!
> And wher my lord, my love, be deed?
> Certes, I nil never ete breed,
> I make avow to my god here,

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[135] Wimsatt, "The Sources of Chaucer's 'Seys and Alcyone,'" 231, 238-40; Minnis, "Chaucer and the *Ovide Moralisé*," 254-56. See also Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid*, 17-19.

[136] Machaut, *Fonteinne*, 439-698. Chaucer ignores certain details that Machaut emphasises and vice versa. He also incorporates some details from Froissart, such as the name of Hypnos' son, Eclympasteyre, who is an authorial invention in the *Paradis d'amour* (28).

But I mowe of my lord here!" (88-94)

In Alcyone's grief, the *ubi sunt* motif is physicalized as part of the narrative structure as the queen mobilises her subjects to seek word of her lost husband.[137]

Other minor narratives are embedded in the Seys and Alcyone story. There is Juno's proleptic account to the messenger of what Morpheus should do with the drowned Seys to bring consolation to the queen (136-52). After the messenger journeys to the realm of Sleep—a minor narrative episode that weaves together several older versions of the tale—that same messenger retells the sequence to Morpheus (188-90), though this retelling is glossed over.[138] Although the Narrator (and, by extension, Chaucer) declines to engage the oral tradition trope of verbatim repetition here, the omission of the messenger's words to Morpheus highlights the narrative aspect of this part of the poem and the role of the Narrator: "And tolde hym what he shulde doon / (As I have told yow here-to-fore; / Hyt ys no nede reherse it more)" (188-90). The intrusion of the 'I' into the narrative here is not merely to report the experiences of the Narrator, as will so often be the case during the dream sequence, but to underscore the Narrator's identity as narrator. In so doing, he substitutes himself as the point of reference, the voice of authority, displacing the "clerkes . . . in olde tyme, / And other poetes" (53-54) he had cited at the outset. The Seys and Alcyone tale is as much about the Narrator finding his storytelling sea-legs as it is about the drowned king and his sorrowing wife. At this point, the Narrator can enter the dream where the techniques of narrative (and the contrasting devices of lyric) will be further explored.

The dream is, of course, the primary narrative component of the poem, but it is divided into sub-sections as well. The three major sections of the dream are the chamber in which the Dreamer

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[137] The Narrator's reaction to Queen Alcyone's grief indicates another narrative path in the poem, for it alludes to the end of the not-yet-dreamed dream, the Dreamer's sympathy for the Man in Black, and the Narrator's turn from reading to writing: "trewly I, that made this book, / Had such pittee and such rowthe / To rede hir sorwe, that, by my trowthe, / I ferde the worse al the morwe / Aftir" (96-100).

[138] Chaucer's version brings together texts by Ovid, Machaut, and Froissart, as discussed above. Wimsatt analyses this episode at length, emphasising the role played by Statius' *Thebaid* in the presentation of the realm of Morpheus ("The Sources of Chaucer's 'Seys and Alcyone,'" 232-37).

awakens, the hart hunt, and the encounter with the Man in Black. The chamber evokes two of the grand narrative traditions which inform late-medieval English poetry: the Matter of Troy and the *Romance of the Rose*. The hart hunt, with its high-energy pursuit, clearly suggests narrative movement. The encounter with the Black Knight is more complex, but there is a general trajectory from sorrow to consolation, a trajectory which is given physical form when the Knight rises and rides toward the castle at the end of the dream.

The opening of the dream sequence echoes the beginning of the poem in mode, if not in tone. The first thirty lines of the dream, when the Narrator first awakens on the May morning, return to a highly lyrical presentation. The singing birds embody the natural music of the dreamscape. Their song, which tells no story, is nonetheless highly esteemed by the Narrator. It does not suffer from the errors that plague the Narrator's opening complaint: the birds sing in harmony (313); their many melodies are "al of on oon acord" (305) and resound throughout the chamber (314) in manner reminiscent of the harmonious music of the spheres (308). Like so much else in the dreamscape, the lyricality of the birdsong inverts the problems of the Narrator's waking experience. In this respect, the birdsong represents lyric redeemed.[139] Importantly, this musical-poetic production is not made by the Dreamer-Narrator—such a controlled and unoppressive form of lyric is yet beyond his reach.

The images that decorate the Dreamer's bedchamber provide models of narrative practice for the novice poet to follow.[140] The mythological and epic Matter of Troy appears in the stained glass windows while scenes of the more recent and less lofty *Romaunce of the Rose* are painted upon the walls. The short, four-line description of the scenes in the windows moves from the martial

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[139] As Nancy Ciccone observes, the singing birds offer a further recuperative image: "The detail of birds beginning the dream recalls the metamorphosis into sleep for that of Alcione and Seys into birds" ("The Chamber," 207). The dream is thus positioned as a continuation of the Narrator's waking experience, even as it corrects the problems with which he contends.

[140] Ciccone reads the ornament of the chamber as a parallel for the Man in Black's education as a literary lover and mourner ("The Chamber," 210ff).

aspects of the Trojan tales represented by Hector, Priam, Achilles and Laomedon (328-29) to the romantic or marital aspects suggested by Jason and Medea, Paris and Helen, and, moving into the next phase of the Trojan story, by the mention of Lavinia, the bride of Aeneas (330-31).[141] Through the subtlety of a split couplet, the Narrator transitions from the Trojan decoration to the French love vision (331-32). The move is a downward one, from the windows to the painted walls, and from the elevated themes of ancient myth to the more earthly (if allegorically fantastic) concerns of the *Roman de la Rose*. The Narrator's description of the murals, moreover, speaks to both the process of reading and interpretation as well as a re-presentation of the material, a distillation of the content given again in the reader-cum-writer's voice: "the walles with colours fyne / Were peynted, bothe text and glose, / Of al the Romaunce of the Rose" (332-34). The ekphrastic mediation at work in this passage, while brief, calls attention to the levels of representation in the narrative: the text of the Old French poem is first expanded, annotated, and possibly translated into another language; it is then translated in form by the unknown artist or artists into the paintings that adorn the walls. Finally, it is presented poetically in the narration of the dream.

The slow but steady transition to narrative in the chamber gives way to the next narrative episode of the dream, the Emperor Octavian's hunt. Although this scene is also short—it spans less than 50 lines—it is full of action, the sounds and the flurry of the hunt: the hunters ride "bothe up and doun" (348) with much chatter (350-53); the horn blasts punctuate the beginning of the hunt, the releasing of the hounds, and the regrouping of the hunting party (344-47, 375-77, 385-86).[142] The Narrator, too, mounts his horse with gusto and joins in the pursuit (356-57); the darting and dodging of the hart, its hide-and-seek from the hounds, add to the frenetic energy of the episode.

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[141] Chaucer was, of course, aware of the perceived Trojan cultural inheritance of England, and no doubt indirectly invokes it in this passage. Cf. *Sir Gawain* 1-19; Ciccone, "The Chamber," 213-14, 221-23.

[142] The *forloyn* the huntsman blows when the hounds lose track of the hart marks a suspending of the pursuit rather than an end of the hunt. See Rooney, *Hunt*, 154.

With the temporary disappearance of the hart, the hunt narrative is suspended when the Narrator diverts from his account as he is distracted by the whelp (387-94). Failing to catch the puppy—the Dreamer is as much a novice at the hunt as the whelp is—he is led down the flowery way to the bower where he finds the Knight. As I have discussed above, the narrative force and process suggested by the pairing of Trojan stories and the *Roman de la Rose* in the chamber scene are offset by lyrical aspects in the same scene: the harmonious birdsong that greets the wakened Dreamer, the brief consideration of the fair "welken . . . / Blew, bryght, clere" (339-40), and the minor ekphrases of the chamber decoration. Similarly, the Dreamer's entry into the green bower is marked by a shift to lyrical description. The image of departure from the so-called path of the hunt (indicative of narrative process) is an important one for it serves as a metonym for the potential trap of the lyric. In the passage that follows the Dreamer's pursuit of the puppy, wherein the Narrator describes the *locus amoenus* at considerable length (398-442), the narrative threatens to give way to an endless elaboration of that rich and fruitful place. The Narrator stresses the near-infinite wonders he beholds: the "moo floures, swiche seven / As in the welken sterres bee" (408-9); the "many grene greves / Or thikke of trees, so ful of leves" (417-8); and the many beasts that populate the paradisal space. Indeed, the Narrator states, even Argus, "the noble countour" (435), would be unable to calculate the fantastic sights found therein: "Yet shoulde he fayle to rekene even / The wondres me mette in my sweven" (441-2). The multiplication of marvels—and the Narrator's contemplation of the possibility of continuing their enumeration—indicates the possibility of interruption, a leave-taking of narrative that could conceivably occupy the remainder of the dream.[143]

Narrative is not abandoned, of course, as the Dreamer-Narrator shifts from describing the scene to his discovery of the Man in Black. We have already examined the Black Knight's gradual

[143] There remain, however, several minor suggestions of narrative progress within the account of the *locus amoenus*. For instance, the list of deer seen in the wood—the "founes, sowres, [and] bukkes" (429)—traces a clear biological progression of male fallow deer. See Lynch, ed., *Dream Visions*, 16 n. 4.

shift from a lyrical form of mourning to a narrative-based approach to grief. As the interlocutor in the process, the Dreamer plays an important role in this transition. Following the Man in Black's acknowledgement (and reassertion) of Lady White's death, the Knight is freed from his static position beneath the oak tree and, as we have seen above, rides toward the white-walled castle. At the same moment, the dream comes to an end:

> Ryght thus me mette, as I yow telle,
> That in the castell ther was a belle,
> As hyt hadde smyten houres twelve.
> Therwyth I awook myselve
> And fond me lyinge in my bed;
> And the book that I hadde red,
> Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,
> And of the goddes of slepyng,
> I fond hyt in myn hond ful even. (1321-9)

Once the Narrator awakens, he reflects on his dream:

> Thoghte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, by processe of tyme,
> Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
> As I can best, and that anoon." (1330-3)

Like the mourner-dreamer in *Pearl*, the Chaucerian Dreamer-Narrator wakens into a world that, at first, looks very similar to the one in which he fell asleep. He finds himself in bed, in his mundane bedchamber (no harmonious birdsong or wonderful decoration here), with his book still in hand. Reawakened from his dream encounter, he sees this world in a different light. His observations about the dream and subsequent decision to write an account of his experience makes the poem cyclical, in one sense returning us to the beginning of the poem. At the same time, however, the Narrator remains in the present of his narration, closing the tale immediately after his promise "to putte this sweven in ryme". This vow, reported in the present of narration but referring to a statement that occurred in his past, also looks forward from that past to a future when, "by processe of tyme", his dream will become a poem. The last line of the *Duchess*, "This was my sweven; now it is doon", deploys a shift in tense to emphasise the bringing together of multiple temporalities.

Through the complex compound of time he creates in the final lines of the poem, the Narrator is able to move beyond the lyric complaint with which the poem opens by transforming his experiences—both that of the lead-up to the dream and the dream itself—into a story. What began as a lyrical complaint—"I have gret wonder by this lyght / How that I lyve for day ne nyght / I may nat slepe" (1-3)—is recast as the beginning of a narrative. In so doing, Chaucer marks his own entry into the mode.

Chapter Three

Death Framed by Love: Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes*

In the first two chapters of this study, I have addressed elegiac dream poems of the late-fourteenth century. *Pearl* and the *Book of the Duchess* represent significant achievements of medieval poetry in England and are today among the best-known and most-studied works of that age. In this chapter, I want to shift my attention to a less familiar text, written several decades after the Ricardian explorations of the genre: Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes*, a long, mixed-mode work written during the poet's twenty-five-year captivity in England (1415-1440).[1] Heavily informed by both French and English dream visions, this 6500-line poem tells the story of the Narrator's initial entrance into the service of love, his courtship and eventual loss of a beautiful lady, his protracted experience of grief, and the renewal of love through the introduction of a new beloved. Although it deploys many set-pieces of the genre, *Fortunes Stabilnes* develops the dream vision in new directions. By embedding extended sequences of lyrics within narrative frames, Charles of Orleans "composed in Middle English a kind of work that no English poet had yet attempted".[2] His formal experiments were not the only innovations that Charles of Orleans introduced into English elegiac dream visions, however. In this chapter, I examine how *Fortunes Stabilnes* responds to and renovates the traditions the poet inherits. At the same time, I treat the poem on its own terms, reading it as a coherent work with its own symbolic resonances, games of diction and phrasing, and literary concerns. My reading argues that Charles of Orleans ties the inherited traditions of the dream vision genre to a story of

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[1] I adopt the title given to the poem by Charles' most recent editor, Mary-Jo Arn. She explains that she has drawn the title from "one of the author's most striking phrases, an idea which serves to sum up the whole of his narrator's circumstances" (xii; cf. 9-11). Alternate titles are in circulation among scholars. A.C. Spearing has suggested "The Duke's Book" to offer a balanced pairing with a contemporary text, *The Kingis Quair*, believed to have been written by James I of Scotland during (or shortly after) his own sustained captivity in Lancastrian England. Joanna Summers, meanwhile, uses *The English Book*, a title which reinforces the connexions with Charles of Orleans' French works, especially his personal manuscript (Paris, BN fr. 25458). Throughout this chapter, I use the titles interchangeably, but Arn's title is used in citations (shortened to *Stabilnes*).

[2] Arn, "Poetic Form," 13. Cf. Arn, "English Context," 1-4. This model of using the dream vision poem as a framing device for lyrics is typical of the fourteenth-century dits amoureux of Machaut and Froissart.

overcoming personal grief and that he implicates the structure of the poem in the project of consolation.

In the first half of the chapter, I investigate how Charles of Orleans adopts and adapts the dream vision genre, how he plays with conventions from his French and English sources, and how he joins the two traditions in his own novel work. I argue that Charles of Orleans intended the whole of *Fortunes Stabilnes* to be read as an intervention into the dream vision genre and that he structured the poem accordingly: the complex system of nested frames responds to earlier poets' uses of the device, increasing the tension between framing and contained narratives and lyrics even as it blurs the distinctions between these separate levels of the poem. Two longer sections address the sustained visionary episodes in the Dream of Age and the Dream of Venus. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the poet's engagement with elegiac poetry within the context of the dream vision. Much of my attention in these sections is given to the first ballade sequence, especially the suite of six lyrics about the lady's absence and three sets of three lyrics dealing with her illness, death, and the Narrator-Lover's grieving responses. In the final section of the chapter, I return to the Dream of Venus to see how the Dreamer-Narrator's dialogue with the goddess performs an important act of mourning, one which allows him to re-enter his role as a lover.

Although he was not a native speaker of English, Charles of Orleans' English poetry is an impressive example of mid-fifteenth-century verse, one which responds both to the English dream visions of the two or three preceding generations and to the French traditions that inform those poems.[3] We must also acknowledge the relationship between Charles of Orleans' French and English corpora. It is true that many of the lyrics and some narrative passages in his English poetry

[3] Some scholars maintain that the poems in Harley 682 are the work of a translator rather than of the princely poet. However, Charles of Orleans' (imperfect) knowledge of English has been used to bolster claims of his authorship of the poems. The verse occasionally includes errors typical of non-native speakers. Arn convincingly argues that such linguistic quirks, coupled with bilingual word-play, point to Charles as the author of the English poems. See "Poems of Harley 682." Cf. Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 96-100; Steele and Day, eds., *English Poems*, xxv, xli-xliii.

have French equivalents, but *Fortunes Stabilnes* is more than a simple translation of the Duke's French poetry.[4] The Duke's English poetry is an expansion and, in terms of cohesion of the total work, an improvement, upon the French precursor. As he moved into English verse and carried some of his earlier lyrics and several short narratives with him, the poet may have found in the newer, English branch of the courtly vision tradition renewed possibilities for his art. His process of transformation of the French poems can be seen at all levels of the English lyrics: in the diction, prosody, and symbolism.[5] Moreover, the English poetry represents a considerable extension of the narrative that is only loosely mapped out in the French Book. For instance, the final third of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, which tells of the Narrator's continued mourning for his first lover, the introduction of a new beloved, and his courtship of the second lady (including a lyrical sequence of 36 ballades), exists only in English.

In many respects, Charles of Orleans is typical of other fifteenth-century Middle English poets. Like them, he writes in the shadow of Chaucer.[6] Many passages in *Fortunes Stabilnes* echo or allude to Chaucer's poetry, especially the four dream visions. More than simple imitation, however, Charles of Orleans' engagement with his Chaucerian inheritance reveals close reading and consideration of the Ricardian poet's corpus.[7] He is likewise familiar with much of the work of Chaucer's most prolific literary descendent, John Lydgate.[8] Charles of Orleans' renovation of

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[4] On the issue of translation in Charles of Orleans' French and English poems, see Coldiron, "Paroled Poetics," especially 172-75 and 184-92, and Critten, "Political Valence," especially 341-56.

[5] Boffey comments, for instance, on the absence or suppression of the "'Chaucerian tinge'" in the French poems ("Charles Reading Chaucer," 48).

[6] For further discussions of Chaucer's influence upon fifteenth-century Middle English poetry, see: Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates*, 1-18, and Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 3-56. Neither Ebin nor Lerer mentions Charles of Orleans in the course of their analyses. Pearsall comments on the Duke's English poetry in passing, noting the "new, intimate, personal, passionate quality and a stylistic inquisitiveness" that Charles brings to "the thin Chaucer-Lydgate tradition of love-lyric" ("The English Chaucerians," 234).

[7] A deep appreciation of Chaucer may have been an Orleans family trait. Charles' brother, Jean of d'Angoulême, had a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* made before his return from exile in England. See Ouy, "What Their Manuscripts Tell," 50; Champion, *La Librairie*, 121.

[8] It is possible that the Duke of Orleans met the Monk of Bury during the former's stay in the custody of William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk. The earl's wife, Alice Chaucer, was one of Lydgate's foremost patrons. See Askins, "The Brothers Orleans," 42.

received traditions is likewise reminiscent of English poets' engagement with their predecessors. The Duke's English expansion of his own French work, for example, is similar to Richard Roos' translation of Alain Chartier's Middle French dream vision *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* which significantly adds to the framing narrative. In other ways, Charles stands apart from his contemporaries and immediate precursors in Middle English poetry. While he certainly indulges in "intricate verbal design," he displays little to no "fondness for amplification, aureate diction, . . . and attenuated forms" that Ebin says characterise fifteenth-century poetry.[9] Nevertheless, Charles of Orleans' literary interest in the power of poetry and his uneasiness about the gaps and shortcomings inherent in language show that he shared the concerns of many of his English contemporaries.

Charles of Orleans: Prince and Poet

Because the works of Charles of Orleans are much less studied than the works of the other authors I have considered here, and because his works are more caught up with his autobiography than are the other texts I have analysed, we must briefly examine his life before moving on to his poetry. Charles of Valois (1394-1465) was well-acquainted with the vicissitudes of Fortune.[10] Charles was born the first son of Louis, Duke of Orleans, and Valentina Visconti, daughter of the Duke of Milan; he was the nephew of Charles VI, king of France.[11] Before he reached the age of majority, Charles experienced great sorrow and suffering many times over. His father was assassinated by his cousin's Burgundian forces in 1407, and, a little over a year later, his mother died as well. In 1409, Charles would lose his first wife, Isabelle, daughter of Charles VI and widow of Richard II. The pair had married in 1406, when Charles was eleven years old, and Isabelle died shortly after giving birth to

[9] Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates*, xiii. Indeed, much of Charles of Orleans' verse abstains from lengthy, detailed accounts of setting or other engagements with *amplificatio*. Several scholars comment on the sparseness of Charles of Orleans' descriptions.
[10] For a thorough account of Charles of Orleans' biography, see McLeod, *Prince and Poet*.
[11] He would become father to one king of France and uncle to another.

their daughter, Jeanne. Three years later, in 1412, Charles' younger brother, Jean of Angoulême, was sent to England as a hostage.[12] In 1415, Charles was captured at the Battle of Agincourt (25 October), when he was discovered under a mound of corpses. He was transported to England where he would be held until his release in 1440. During the course of his imprisonment, the Duke would lose his brother Philip (1420), his daughter, Jeanne (1432), and his second wife, Bonne of Armagnac (c.1430-35). These many separations and deaths no doubt affected the Duke, and his poetry consequently bears tones of intense longing for people and places at great distances in space and in time.

Charles of Orleans' English poems were produced during his time as an English prisoner, likely in the two-decade period between 1420 and his release. MS Harley 682, the only extant copy of his work in English, was produced in 1439 or early 1440 and left in England when the Duke returned to France in October 1440.[13] We know that his life was intimately bound up with the making of poems: "He began writing poetry before his capture by the English, and he was still composing poetry when he died at seventy."[14] The Duke of Orleans' poetry is generally celebrated for its learning, innovativeness, and formal complexity. John Fox writes that the roundels of Charles of Orleans "are the outstanding representatives of the genre. Each is wrought with great skill".[15]

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[12] Jean would remain a prisoner until 1444. There is evidence that the brothers met at least once during the years of their imprisonment in 1437 (Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 25). Gilbert Ouy argues that the brothers in fact met often and shared books throughout their decades as hostages, including a period beginning in January 1429 when both Jean and Charles were in the care of Sir John Cornwall ("What their Manuscripts Tell," 50). See also Askins, "The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers."

[13] Arn, "Two Manuscripts, One Mind," 62; Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 37. Arn interrogates what she sees as the decision to leave the English Book behind: "The question of why he left the English manuscript behind in England cannot be answered conclusively, but it is more than likely that it represented a body of work that he had no intention of ever enlarging." She goes on to suggest that the English Book was perhaps intended to be given as a gift, given the spaces left for ornamentation ("Two Manuscripts, One Mind," 78).

[14] Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 21. Cf. Goodrich, *Themes*, 45.

[15] Fox, *Lyric Poetry*, 147. Cf. Poirion, *Le Poète et le prince*, 348-60, where he claims Charles of Orleans' roundels constitute the apogee of the form.

Despite the Duke's foreign birth and allegiances, Spearing calls him "one of the most gifted and fascinating English poets of his time."[16]

Much of the early scholarship of Charles of Orleans' English poetry dealt with authorial and biographical concerns: some critics argued over the attribution of the poems to the captive Duke while other scholars, having accepted the French prince as the author, sought to determine the identity of the two beloved ladies in the poem.[17] Others mined the texts of both the English and French poetry for allegorical clues of Charles' personal history and the political intrigues of fifteenth-century French nobility.[18] As more scholars began to accept the identity of the author as Charles, Duke of Orleans, focus shifted to the literary aspects of the text.[19] In an early essay, Mary-Jo Arn considers the structural organisation of the poem, addressing both its macro arc and the micro-structure of suites within the lyrical sequences.[20] Julia Boffey explores the influence of Chaucer's dream visions as a way of enlarging our understanding both of *Fortunes Stabilnes* and of how Chaucer was read and interpreted in the Lancastrian period.[21] Critical interest is also given to the literary context of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, such as Pierre Champion's and Gabriel Ouy's work on the Orleans family libraries at Blois and in England. As the Charles-as-reader approach suggests, most critical discussions of Charles of Orleans' English and French poetry address biographical issues to some

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[16] Spearing, "Duke's Book," 144. It is worth noting, as Spearing does, that one of the other most gifted poets of the period is the equally foreign James I of Scotland who likewise composed in the dream vision tradition.

[17] The identity of the two ladies remains a concern for some scholars. Cholakian insists that the first lady is the poet's second wife, Bonne of Armagnac ("Poetic Persona," 52). Goodrich similarly argues, though on far less certain grounds, that the affair with the new lady and the second ballade sequence "treat a coherent story of the poet's love affair with an English 'fayre' who disdained his suit" (*Themes*, 28; cf. McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, 209-17). Fox dedicates an appendix to the question (*Lyric Poetry*, 152-56).

[18] For example, one nineteenth-century French academic, Constant Beaufils, insisted that Charles of Orleans' poems were historical allegories where *Daungier* stood for Jean-sans-peur, the Duke of Burgundy, and *Beauté* was a personification of the France Charles longed to reach. Cf. Goodrich, *Themes*, 16.

[19] On the reasons for accepting Charles of Orleans as the author of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, see Arn, "Harley 682;"Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 32-37; and Steele and Day, eds., *English Poems*, xi-xxi, xxv.

[20] Arn, "Structure," 18.

[21] Boffey, "Charles Reading Chaucer," 44. Importantly, she points out that the Chaucerian influence is particularly strong in the English versions of the lyrics (48-49), but is also careful to note that many of the tropes inherited from Chaucer have their origins in the French dits amoureux which served as Chaucer's sources and influences ("French Connections," 113-14; cf. Spearing, "Duke's Book," 125; Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 97).

degree. Such issues should not be avoided entirely, and the present study responds to them where appropriate. That said, too great a concern with correspondences between the life of Charles of Orleans and the poetry he produced has dominated much of the scholarship on his poetry. While some critics trumpet the significance of Charles' incarceration as a prime motivator for his poetry, Joanna Summers cautions us that "[a]lthough the *English Book* appears ostensibly a narrative book charting the poet's two love affairs, the text is actually pseudo-autobiographical."[22] She points out that the considerable amount of poetry produced during the Duke's twenty-five years of captivity only refers to imprisonment "through images of confinement, and possibly through a pervasive introspection, a sense of isolation, and a concern with separation and absence."[23] For the purposes of the present study, I accept that Charles, Duke of Orleans, wrote the text found in Harley 682, but I make little reference to his biography beyond how it informs his relationship with his sources and analogues.[24] In the conclusion of this chapter, however, I will incorporate biographical matters into my reading, but such matters will remain secondary to the poetry itself. I will suggest that, through the elegiac dream visions of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, Charles of Orleans repositions enclosure in a positive light, using it as a productive rather than a limiting condition.

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[22] Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 95. Boffey argues that Charles "cultivates the metaphor of the prisoner of love", especially in the first ballade sequence, but stresses that his lyrics "exploit the image of the prisoner almost solely for its metaphorical value" ("Chaucerian Prisoners," 87-88). Epstein likewise identifies the trap of assuming that the French duke is writing deliberately and explicitly about his own experience ("Prisoners of Reflection," 172-73). Cf. Arn, "Poetic Form," 14.

[23] Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 96. Fox acknowledges the poet's recurring use of images of enclosure—"[w]ells, doors, rooms, beds"—to manifest feelings of melancholy (*Lyric Poetry*, 87). Spearing similarly comments that prison images in the Duke's Book "do not add up to a consistent fiction," and should instead be read as "objective correlatives . . . to his depression and frustration" ("Prison, Writing, Absence," 85-86). Cf. Fein, "Distance and Separation," 69.

[24] Because the author of *Fortunes Stabilnes* blurs the lines between his historical identity and the literary figure of his dreamer-narrator, it is necessary here to establish a clear set of terms to distinguish between the two men. Throughout this chapter, I will use *Narrator*, *Dreamer*, and *Charles* to refer to the persona in the text, while *poet*, *author*, and *Charles of Orleans* will refer to the historical man. Cf. Arn, "Structure of the English Poems," 23 n. 4.

The Poem: Its Content, Structure, and Use of the Dream Vision Genre

Fortunes Stabilnes is a lyrico-narrative poem which tells the tale of the Narrator's experiences in two love affairs.[25] It combines narrative sequences with two intercalated ballade sequences and one collection of approximately 100 roundels.[26] In this respect, it is more closely identified with the dits amoureux of Machaut and Froissart than with its English sources. Arn comments that formes fixes collections were relatively rare in late-medieval England.[27] The hybrid structure of *Fortunes Stabilnes* likewise differentiates Charles of Orleans from contemporary writers of individual lyrics, both French and English, "and gives his poetry different claim on our attention."[28] By bringing together the lyric and the narrative modes, the poet reintroduces the French model that precedes and informs the English (largely Chaucerian) dream visions but does not erase the influence of the later tradition. The modal and structural hybridity of Charles of Orleans' dream vision is just one way that the poet reconciles his twin poetic inheritances.

The poem is divided, roughly speaking, into three major parts.[29] The first part concerns the initial love affair, charting the Narrator's initiation as a lover, the courtship of the lady, her death, and his songs of mourning. It includes a seventy-four-ballade sequence, which, although composed of short lyrics, traces the development and the tragic end of the affair. In the second part, the

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[25] I borrow the term from Huot, *From Song to Book*, 1-2, 83-87. Like Russell, she argues the dream vision genre "is a lyrico-narrative contruct" for "[t]he dream embodies imagination itself, source of both lyric and narrative poetry" (86; cf. Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 115-26). More than Russell, however, she suggests a link between the rise of the lyrico-narrative poem and the rise of the dream vision: "the format of the dream miraculously serves to create a new kind of discourse, one both lyric and narrative." The division of the 'I' that characterizes dream poetry—the dreamer is both the participant in the dream and a reader of the dream-as-text who then narrates the experience—is demonstrated in the hybrid lyrico-narrative form (86-87). Cf. Phillips, "Frames and Narrators," 80.

[26] Two short series of ballades (Ballades 75-80 and 81-84) are inserted in the narrative passage that includes the Dream of Age, the withdrawal from Love's service, and the journey to the Castle of No Care, but these are not typically considered separate series; scholars refer to Ballades 1-74 as the first sequence and Ballades 85-121 as the second.

[27] Arn, "English Context," 1, 3.

[28] Arn, "English Context," 4.

[29] Although *Fortunes Stabilnes* incorporates lyrical pieces obviously written earlier and for different initial purposes, the text as we have it should be considered as a single work. Arn states that the narrative sections—several of which do not appear in the French book—"demonstrate clearly that the series of poems was conceived (in the end if not at first) as a single work" ("English Context," 3). Cf. Arn, "Structure," 17; Spearing, "Duke's Book," 144.

grieving Lover is visited by Age in a dream, who states he can withdraw from the service of Love.[30] Upon waking, Charles composes a formal document to enact his retirement; he presents the bill at a feast held by the God of Love and is granted quittance by the Parliament of Love. He then removes to the Castle of No Care where he attempts to gain some comfort. While in retirement, Charles composes and performs a series of roundels and other chansons, presenting them as a *jubilé* or banquet of poems—food for lovers' hungry hearts, eyes, and minds.[31]

The third and final part of *Fortunes Stabilnes* opens with the Narrator ambling in his retirement, musing upon his past, and penning the occasional complaint, roundel, or ballade on behalf of burdened lovers. One such person requests a poem on the subject that gives the poem its current title. After making the song, Charles experiences another dream vision, an encounter with the goddess Venus. During the course of their dialogue, the dreaming Charles has a vision of the goddess Fortune wherein he spies a new lady sitting on the goddess' wheel. Venus claims not to share the vision, but offers to help him in pursuit of his new love. As she bears him aloft on her kerchief, Charles grows increasingly afraid and cries so loud that he wakes himself, only to discover he is still holding a fragment of cloth. As he wanders and contemplates his dream, Charles enters a wood and chances upon a company of gentlefolk playing at the courtly game of Post and Pillar; the

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[30] Steele and Day divide the first and second parts differently. They include the Dream of Age, which they title the *Vision in Complaint* (cf. Champion's *Songe en Complainte*), with the first part of the poem. Arn follows suit in her edition. I judge the nocturnal visitation among the second 'act' of *Fortunes Stabilnes*: the Narrator's retirement from the service of Love and the lyrical interlude that fills the space, so to speak, between his first love and the events that introduce him to his second. Grouping the three parts in this way, I believe balances the middle part with its two bookending narratives. Such an organisational structure interprets the withdrawal from the service of Love as an eventual consequence of the Lover's mourning process, but one that is distinct from the process itself. This division sees the shift from the lyrical ballade sequence to the dream vision—sudden though that shift is—as a narrative tactic to move from the first love affair toward the next. A similar stark division marks the conclusion of the roundel and chanson series in part two. Following the end of the *Iubile*, Charles wanders about, making poems on behalf of distraught lovers. Upon completion of the commissioned poem on "fortunes stabilnes" (4660), a tired Charles lies down to rest; the dream in which he is visited by Venus leads to the third intercalated lyric sequence, the ballades that concern his new love. Each of the latter two sections, then, are preceded by a dream episode. As I shall argue below, it is probable that the poet used this same model in the first section as well. If this is indeed the case, then the shape of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, generally speaking, is one of alternating narrative and lyric sections with a total of three each.

[31] Cf. Ballade 83. It appears that the series was meant to contain 103 roundels. In the English Book as it survives, however, there are 15 roundels absent, for the fourteenth quire of the manuscript is missing (Roundels 72-86, inclusive; see Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 102-6). Several other short lyrics follow a brief meditative interval, many of them metrically complex and experimental (see lines 4389-4637).

new lady is among them. An acquaintance of Charles tears his hose and must quit the game, but offers Charles his place. He promptly makes his way to the lady, and, after confessing his love, begins another sustained ballade sequence which documents the second love affair. The poem concludes in an unexpected manner: although the final ballade sees Charles bid his lady farewell, it is unclear whether the poet had the intention of adding any further lyrics or narrative.[32]

The extant version of *Fortunes Stabilnes* opens with a letter patent from "god Cupide and Venus the goddes / Whiche power han on all worldly gladnes" (1-2). However, MS Harley 682 is missing its first quire, which likely contained some 400 lines of narrative verse, the equivalent to the allegory contained in Charles of Orleans' French Book.[33] In this missing episode, the Narrator tells of his induction into the service of the God of Love. The allegory begins when, early on a Valentine's Day morning, the Narrator is awoken by Youth (*Jeunesse*), who tells him that he must attend the court of "a certain lord" (*un seigneur*). Though the Narrator initially protests, claiming he is still too young for love (he confesses he fears the pains he has been told accompany it), Youth manages to convince him that the joys outweigh the sorrows, and they travel to Love's manor. When they reach the castle, Youth introduces the Narrator to the porter *Compaignie* as "Charles, Duc d'Orlians" (114), and the travellers go with *Bel Acueil* (Fair Welcome) and *Plaisance* into the court of the God of Love. At court, Charles is introduced to *Plaisant Beauté*, who is tasked with making the Narrator fall in love. Though his heart is swiftly aroused, he begins to suffer the sorrows of love almost immediately. Following a bit of mockery from Cupid for his melodramatic performance, the Narrator is comforted by Beauty, and she teaches him the ten commandments of the God of Love. The scene concludes with Charles swearing fealty to Love, and Cupid orders his secretary to draft a letter patent sealed by Loyalty. As part of the ceremony of homage, the God of Love retains the

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[32] On the end of the poem, see Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 9; Arn, "Structure," 22.
[33] Arn, ed., *Fortunes Stabilnes*, 2 n. 3, 3, and the paraphrase at 133-35. For an accessible edition of the French text, see Fox and Arn, eds., *Poetry of Charles d'Orléans and His Circle*. Cf. Champion, ed., *Charles d'Orléans: Poésies*.

Narrator's heart. When Charles protests, the God assures him that his dear physician, Hope (*Esperance*) will maintain him until he can secure another heart.

It is worth considering how this opening episode, lost from the surviving English Book but almost certainly once part of the narrative, relates to the dream vision and dit amoureux traditions that inform Charles of Orleans' poetry. As the French Book tells it, the Narrator is awoken by Youth standing at the foot of his bed. The diction—*En ma chamber* [*elle*] *s'en vint un bien matin / Et m'esveilla* (23-24) —suggests that Charles has indeed risen from slumber, but both the poem's literary precedents and other, later visions in *Fortunes Stabilnes* itself trouble this interpretation. In Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, a text which Charles of Orleans knew well, the Lady Philosophy appears to the forlorn senator and drives away the Muses from about his bed.[34] There is no explicit mention that he is asleep; indeed, Boethius says he is pondering his hardships and writing his complaint. Nevertheless, the *Consolation* was usually read as a dream vision in the Middle Ages and served as a prime model for medieval dream-poems, including *Fortunes Stabilnes*.[35] Charles of Orleans may very well be following Boethius' lead by omitting the detail of the sleeping narrator. The heavy use of allegory in the first narrative sequence likewise suggests a dream vision. The figures of Youth, Fair Welcome, and the other attendants at the Court of Love are drawn mainly from the love vision tradition that stems from the *Roman de la Rose* and its French descendants such as Machaut's *Voir*

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[34] Fox and Arn (eds.) observe that Charles of Orleans owned seven copies of the *Consolation* (*Poetry of Charles d'Orléans*, xxxvi), including one copy with glosses by Nicholas Trivet, an English Dominican (Champion, *La Librarie*, 22). Summers reports that the Duke had two copies with him in England (*Late-medieval Prison Writing*, 104; cf. Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, 49). What is more, the Duke was likely acquainted with the text during his youth: the Orleans family library at Blois contained four copies of the *Consolation* in both Latin and French and a commentary (Boffey, "Charles Reading Chaucer," 61; cf. Champion, *La Librairie*, 20-21).

[35] Boethius, *Consolation*, 1.pr.1. In the *Boece*, Chaucer writes "In the mene while that I, stille, recordede these thynges with myself and merkid my weply compleynte with office of poyntel, I saw, stondynge aboven the heghte of myn heved, a woman of ful greet reverence". Cherniss explains that the question of whether Boethius wakes or sleeps when Philosophy appears is left unanswered by the text: in Prose 2, Philosophy describes the fallen senator's illness as a *lethargum patitur*, which in Isidore's definition is "a pathological urge to sleep" (*Boethian Apocalypse*, 20-21). Boffey observes that "some of the opening illustrations to medieval copies of the [*Consolation*] . . . set next to an image of the author in colloquy with Philosophy another image of the author asleep in bed" ("Introduction," 2-3; cf. Courcelle, *La tradition littéraire*). Charles of Orleans' omission of detail here may also recall the first canto of the *Divine Comedy*, which follows many of dream vision conventions without having its narrator fall asleep. See also Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 12-17; Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 4-5, 118.

Dit. The Court of Love also recalls Chaucer's *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*, Cupid's court in Froissart's *Paradis d'amour*, and the halls of Venus in Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* and in *The Kingis Quair*.

In *Fortunes Stabilnes* itself, the poet consciously deploys the dream vision genre several other times, and these instances should inform how we read the opening allegory. The narrative that separates the first ballade sequence from the roundel "jubilee" begins with a dream visitation from Age, who prompts the Narrator to move into a new stage of life and out of Love's service (2557-2635). In the lead-up to this dream, Charles makes clear that he was, in fact, asleep, but specifies that he was not in a deep slumber: "y was leyde, in slepe y was lightly" (2548). Similarly, in the minor dream vision found in the first ballade sequence, Charles positions himself between sleeping and waking: "As half in slepe, in slombir half wakyng, / Me mette this sweuene in spryngyng of þe day" (2264-65). In both cases, the poem plays upon uncertainty—the uncertainty of the Narrator's physical and mental states and the uncertainty of the meaning of dreams.[36] In each of the dream visions within the outer frame, Charles is visited by an allegorical figure: a Flower in Ballade 66, Age in the narrative sequence after Ballade 74, and Venus and Fortune in the two final visions. The roles of Youth (*Jeunesse*) and Age in the outer frame should be considered in this light. Davidoff insists that if an instructor or guide is to appear in a dream vision, then that guide must appear once the dreamer-narrator is asleep: "[a]n adventure-guide who appears to the poet-narrator before he slumbers is useless to him."[37] Age, who bears the message from Lady Nature, and Youth, who escorts Charles from her house to the halls of Cupid, both function in the capacity of an adventure-guide in the opening narrative. When Age reprises this role to lead the Lover into retirement, he does so in a dream.

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[36] The ambiguity of signs and portents in dreams is a common trope of dream vision poetry as well as philosophical, medical, and theological discussions of dreams in the classical, late-antique, and medieval periods. The mutability and multivalence of dreams afford authors greater flexibility in their poetic explorations, but the potential for misleading or duplicitous meaning is a force which dream poets must consider. I discuss each of these instances at greater length below.

[37] Davidoff, *Beginning Well*, 65.

I contend that the allegory that begins the French Book—a version of which was almost certainly contained in the now-lost first quire of the English Book—is itself a dream vision, or, like Boethius' opening of the *Consolation*, an episode that troubles the distinction between the sleeping and the waking vision.[38] If we read the narrative that precedes the letter patent as a dream, then what follows gains new significance. The proceedings at the Court of Love—scenes heavily influenced by love vision predecessors—are thus also part of the dream, as is the first ballade sequence and, indeed, the whole of the poem that follows, including its three dream visions. The result is a *mise-en-abime* of dreams within dreams, which contain and interact with the lyric sequences of ballades and roundels. In the outermost dream frame (which we will call A), Charles is inducted into the service of love and meets his beloved; he sings his ballades; he suffers from insomnia (Ballades 8 and 12); he dreams (Ballade 66; Dream B), wakes, and continues singing.[39] At the end of the ballade sequence, he again goes to sleep, dreams of Age (2540f; Dream C), wakes, and goes once more to the Court of Love.[40] The episode concerning Charles' journey to, and early experience at, No Care includes two short series of ballades (Ballades 75-84) which are not usually grouped with either the first ballade sequence that precede them nor with the roundel sequence that comes later.[41] At the Castle of No Care, he performs his roundel jubilee. When Charles falls asleep after making the commissioned

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[38] Following the 'wake-up call' from Youth and a brief debate, the Narrator rises and dresses so that the two companions can journey to Love's manor (*Poetry of Charles d'Orléans*, 91-100). The scene of dressing is surely borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose*, where Amant's toilet and sartorial preparations are described in detail (see *Romaunt* 90-104). The allusion adds greater credence to my reading of the episode as a dream vision.

[39] As I shall discuss below, where and when Charles wakes from the dream of Ballade 66 is a matter of debate: no waking scene is included in that lyric, and the following ballade contains imagery that suggests he is still dreaming. As Arn and other scholars point out, Ballades 70 and 72 share in some of the dream vision topoi found in Ballade 66 and in the poems that inform *Fortunes Stabilnes*.

[40] In the French Book, this section bears the title *Songe en Complainte*, which Steele and Day include in their edition. In the discussion that follows, I refer to it as the "Dream of Age" to maintain consistency with the Dream of Venus in the third part of the poem.

[41] In "Poetic Form," Arn counts these ten ballades as part of the first sequence (13), but she does not advance this argument elsewhere. Ballades 75-84 are grouped in the second part of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, according to the organizational structure I have discussed above and will elaborate below. Moreover, the ballades are markedly different in tone from the lyrics of the first sequence. Whereas the ballades directly connected with Charles' love of and subsequent mourning for the lady are often personal and emotional, Ballades 75-81, which are set at the Parliament of Love, are more plainly narrative in purpose and often carry a sense of formal, even legalistic, process. Ballades 82-84 serve to introduce the roundel sequence within the context of Charles' on-going stay at No Care, and so are closely linked with the second lyrical sequence.

complaint on fortune, he encounters Venus in a dream (D). Within this dream, he sees Fortune descending from the heavens, a sight which Venus claims she cannot see (5073; Dream E). The schematic on the next page shows the grouping of dreams, narratives, and lyrics in the poem. Dream A encompasses all the action of the poem, represented in the central and right-most columns.[42] Dreams B, C, and D are, in essence, second-order dreams, contained within the narrative which is framed by Dream A. Dream B is differentiated from the other two by virtue of being contained within a lyric sequence and so is twice-framed.[43] Dream E stands apart from the other four dreams because it comes upon Charles within the already framed Dream D, which, of course, occurs within Dream A.

Charles of Orleans thus creates a nested structure for his poem, moving fluidly from dream-narrative to intercalated lyrics and, in the case of Dream B, beyond to a minor dream-narrative enclosed within a ballade suite. *Fortunes Stabilnes* is not the first dream poem to combine its frames and visions in this manner: Will in Langland's *Piers Plowman* falls asleep while dreaming twice in Passus XI and again in Passus XVI of the B-Text.[44] The Duke's playfulness with the simple frame-narrative of the dream—whether used to provide a loose context for a lyric collection as in the *Regret Guillaume* by Jehan de le Mote, or to dramatize the poet's entry into the narrative mode as in Froissart's *Paradis d'amour* and Chaucer's *Duchess*—demonstrates a keen interest in, and considerable exposure to, the genre.

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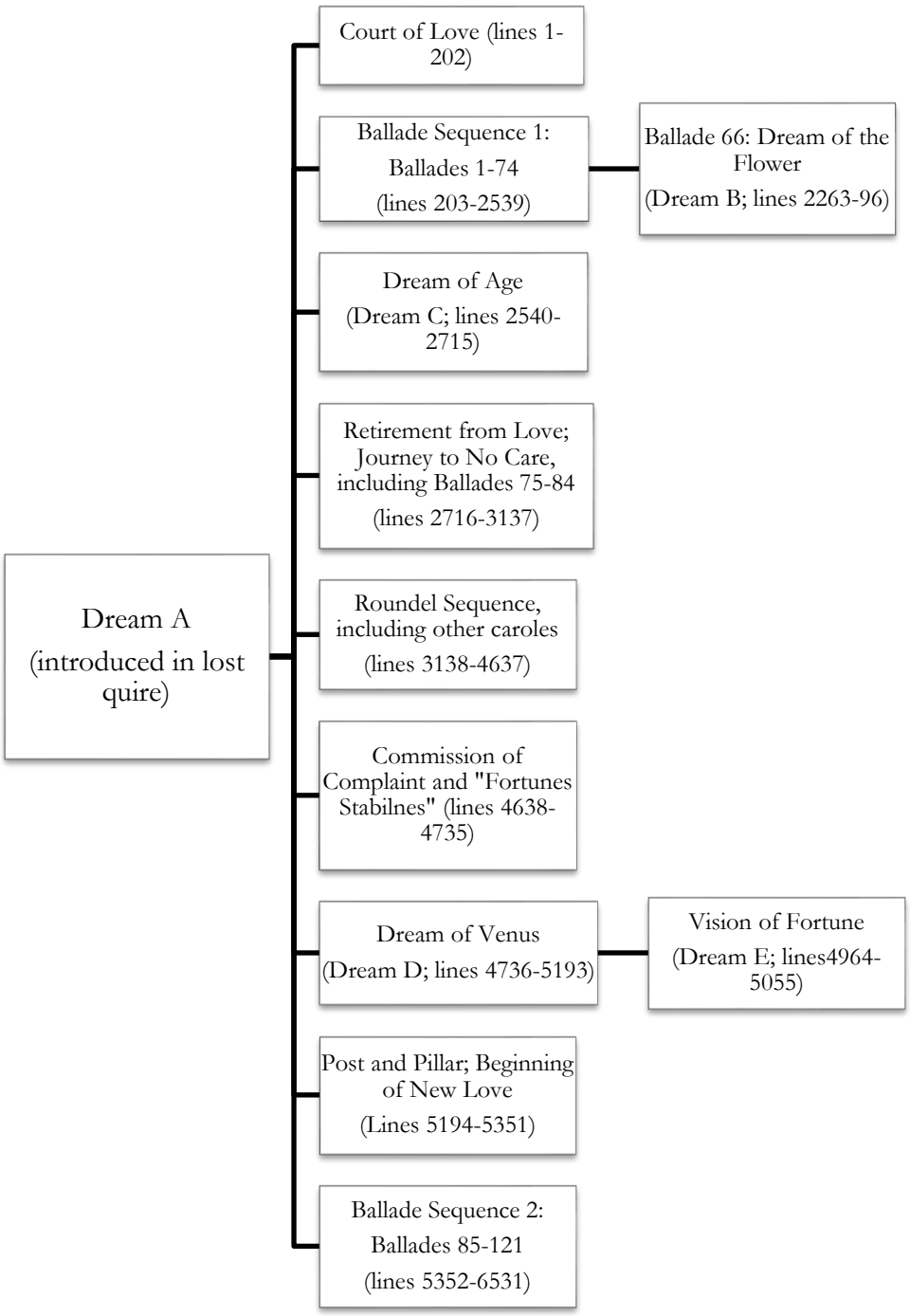
[42] Cf. Davidoff's comments on the narrative core and the framing fiction's influence thereon (*Beginning Well*, 18).
[43] Davidoff comments that dream-vision lyrics were not popular until the early sixteenth century: of the total number of such lyrics that she considers, only two date from the fifteenth-century (*Beginning Well*, 74). It is worth noting that Davidoff does not include Charles of Orleans' English poems among her sample of more than two hundred Middle English framing fictions.
[44] There is no scholarship, to my knowledge, that suggests Charles of Orleans was familiar with any version of Langland's poem.



By making Dream A nearly coeval with the poem itself (there are but 20 lines of narratorial commentary preceding the mention of Youth waking the Narrator), the poet removes the pre-sleep proem of the typical dream vision. By having the Narrator awaken rather than fall asleep, the poem inverts the trajectory of the dream vision at the outset. However, as Charles of Orleans would have

known from both the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Book of the Duchess*, a dreamer often seems to wake at the outset of the dream.[45] At the beginning of the *Rose*, Amant blurs the distinction between waking and dreaming states:

> En icelui tens deliteus,
> que toute rien damer s'esfroie,
> songai une nuit que j'estoie.
> Lors m'iere avis en mon dormant
> qu'il iere matin durement;
> de mon lit tantost me levé,
> chauçai moi et mes mains lavé;
> lors trés une aguille d'argent
> d'un aguillier mignot et gent,
> si prins l'aguille a enfiler.[46]
>
> I dreamed one night that it was that delightful season, when
> everything is excited by love, and as I slept it seemed to me that it
> was already broad daylight. I rose from my bed at once, put on my
> shoes and washed my hands, then took a silver needle from its dainty
> and charming case and began to thread it.[47]

The syntax and diction obscure whether Amant wakes and goes about his morning ablutions and dressing or whether these rituals are carried out in his dream.[48] The dreamer-narrator in Chaucer's *Duchess* finds himself in a bed in the ornate chamber (294). Charles reports that Youth awakens him on St Valentine's Day, an allusion to Oton de Grandson's *Songe de Saint Valentin* and to Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* (*Fowls* 309), both excellent examples of the highly polished love vision genre to

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[45] Phillips, "Frames and Narrators," 81.
[46] Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de la Rose*, 84-93.
[47] Horgan, trans., *The Romance of the Rose*, 4. For the Middle English translation attributed to Chaucer, see *Romaunt*, 90-105.
[48] Russell observes that "[t]he passage seems to violate the rules of logic, sequence, and narrative succession", and points out that the detail of Amant's basting of his sleeves furthers the enigmatic qualities of the scene (*English Dream Vision*, 118). I note that a similar dressing scene occurs in the introductory narrative found in Charles of Orleans' personal manuscript (and likely contained in the lost first quire of *Fortunes Stabilnes*). Once Jeunesse convinces Charles he should journey to the Court of Love, he prepares to depart as soon as he may: "Sans plus parler, sailli hor de mon lit, / Quant promis m'eut ce que devant est dit, / Et m'aprestay le plus joliement / que peu fair" [Without saying more, I jumped from my bed / As she promised me what has been said above, / And I dressed myself as attractively / As I could manage](*Poetry of Charles d'Orléans*, 91-94).

which *Fortunes Stabilnes* is heir.[49] Taken cumulatively, these aspects of the opening allegory suggest that Charles of Orleans intended to present his lyrico-narrative poem as a dream vision.

The poet's nesting of dreams within dreams stretches and tests the frame structure of the traditional dream vision. In so doing, Charles of Orleans plays upon the cultural and literary assumptions of an audience familiar with the genre.[50] The topography of dreams and visions that he builds into his poem surpasses the framing structures of his predecessors. His Narrator moves in and out of dreams and visions with a frequency found in few other medieval poems.[51] Other Middle English poets create pseudo-frames within the context of the dream-vision frame as Chaucer does in the *Book of the Duchess*.[52] To my knowledge, only *Fortunes Stabilnes* has all its subsequent dreams occur within an on-going dream frame. The piling up of frames weighs on each of the intercalated dreams' significance for Charles' story of love and for their relation to each other. For instance, as I shall discuss to a greater extent later in the chapter, the final vision of Fortune, which occurs within the Dream of Venus, undermines the veracity and the authority of each of the preceding dreams. In this respect, Charles of Orleans doubles—and, in some cases, trebles—the playfulness with which earlier poets engaged the dream vision genre.

Charles of Orleans alters several other topoi of the genre as well. In Ballade 66, he inverts the usual function of the dating of the dreams in visionary poems. Most earlier entries in the tradition have the dreamer enter into a bright, springtime *locus amoenus*, a space differentiated from

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[49] Ballade 72, a lyric which contains several dream tropes, likewise opens with Charles awakening the morning of Valentine's Day (2455). For a translation of *Le Songe Saint Valentin*, see Windeatt, *Sources and Analogues*, 120-24. See also: Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, 220-27; Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of Saint Valentine*, especially 64-76.

[50] By the time Charles of Orleans comes to the genre in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, many of the tropes of dream-vision poetry would be seen as highly conventional and so easily recognizable. His audience, Davidoff points out, would not only be prepared for the familiar structure, "but also equipped to appreciate complex and subtle manipulations of the framing fiction + core pattern" (*Beginning Well*, 135). Cf. Spearing, "Duke's Book," 125; Boffey, "French Connections," 114.

[51] Indeed, the breaking of the dream core once it has begun is very rare in the genre. I have already mentioned the exception of *Piers Plowman* above. One of *Fortunes Stabilnes*' successors also interrupts the narrator's slumber: in the *Isle of Ladies* (c. 1475), the dreamer-narrator wakes up at the end of part one, but goes back to sleep to continue the dream. Cf. Davidoff, *Beginning Well*, 60-61, 205 n. 3.

[52] See Davidoff, *Beginning Well*, 101-14, especially the chart on pp. 104-5.

the date on which the narrator falls asleep: Froissart's *Joli Buisson* occurs on 30 November; the *House of Fame* begins on a mid-December night; and the *Pearl*-mourner enters the funereal *erber* toward the end of summer.[53] Charles of Orleans, by contrast, has his Narrator dream on 2 May. Similarly, the setting of the Dream of Venus is not distinguished from the space where Charles lies down to rest: in the dream, he remains on the rocky seashore where he earlier wandered and composed his latest ballade.

One of the most remarkable changes to dream vision tropes is the poet's (and, by extension, the pseudo-autobiographical Narrator's) position within the world of courtly love. Spearing observes that the Duke of Orleans, like his contemporary James I of Scotland, occupies a social role that is distinct from his poetic forebears. As a member of the noble (indeed royal) estate, Charles is an active participant in *fin' amors* rather than a passive observer.[54] Machaut, Chaucer, Lydgate, and others wrote at a remove from the direct experience of love won and lost. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, for instance, the Chaucerian narrator comments that while he may learn the theory of love and comment upon it, he does not participate in it; the narrator of the *House of Fame* who sits up at night reading books and composing poems does not pass his days playing at Post and Pillar. As we have seen in the case of the *Book of the Duchess*, it is not the dreamer-narrator that suffers lost love (at least not explicitly), but the aristocratic Black Knight whom he encounters in the dream. Kevin Brownlee notes the similar "radical separation" of the poet and lover figures in Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, the division between professional court poet and his noble patron.[55] This elevated position of the Dreamer-Narrator allows for greater exploration of the minutiae of courtly love.

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[53] Cf. Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape*, 77-83, 102-5; Curtius, *Latin Middle Ages*, 195-200.
[54] Spearing, "Duke's Book," 124. Cf. Epstein, "Prisoners of Reflection," 162.
[55] Brownlee, "Love Experience and Poetic Craft," 147. Froissart is one of the few exceptions to this rule among fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poets: in his first major poem, *Le Paradis d'amour*, his narrator is both poet and lover and composes occasional poetry in response to his ongoing love affair in the dream. Admittedly, neither Guillaume de Lorris nor Jean de Meun were noble-born.

The poet uses dreams as a means of structuring the lyrico-narrative love story he tells. As I have suggested, each of the three major parts of the poem has its dream vision, and the first and third parts contain second-order dreams. In each of these dream narratives (or, in the case of Ballade 66, narrato-lyric), the poet challenges and expands upon the dream vision traditions and topoi received from both his French and English (Chaucerian) sources. The next two sections of this chapter examine Charles' dreams of Age and of Venus, including the inset vision of Fortune, in greater detail. In the Dream of Age, we will see how *Fortunes Stabilnes* echoes its precursors by interrogating and muddying the classification of dreams and by obscuring the present dream's place along the spectrum of true and false dreams. The Dream of Venus likewise troubles the categories of dreams, but it is more concerned with the blurring of the divisions between waking and dreaming states. Moreover, the Venus episode demonstrates how Charles of Orleans, in both the local space of Dream D and the wider context of Dream A, uses the dream vision to undertake a project of elegiac memorialisation.

Charles' Dream of Age

The Narrator's dreams of Age and Venus both occur soon after long lyric passages.[56] The sustained ballade sequence speaks to the considerable efforts and expenditures of mental, physical, and emotional energies that go into the production of the poetry. Accordingly, at the end of the first series, Charles prepares for bed:

> Aftir the day, that made is for travayle,
> Ensewith nyght, the werre in to rest.
> So now but late Slepe gan me to assayle
> That to him yelde me thought it for þe best,
> Which all the day in karfull payne had lest,

[56] Neither the ballade nor the roundel sequences are intended to represent one continuous moment of composition or recitation. For instance, the first ballade sequence covers many days and nights; indeed, it stretches for at least a year, for in Ballade 72 the Narrator reports that it is again the morning of St Valentine's Day (2455), and thus an anniversary of his initial vision of Youth.

> So that to doon y made myn apparayle
> To gon to bedde, syn daylight did me fayle
> And that the sonne was closid in the cloudis west. (2540-47)

The quotidian image of the Narrator donning his pyjamas mirrors his preparations to visit the Court of Love in the opening allegory; in so doing, the poet also inverts Guillaume de Lorris' image of Amant getting dressed at the beginning of the *Rose*.[57] Amant's rising and dressing on the May morning follows immediately upon the opening passage that calls into question the significance and truthfulness of dreams (*Romaunt* 92-95; 1-20).

Unlike Charles' Dream of Venus later in the poem, in the lead-up to the Dream of Age the Narrator does not explicitly interrogate the meaning of dreams as he drifts off to sleep. Many scholars, consequently, have taken for granted that the poet intends to present a dream of total veracity. Spearing, for instance, labels the dream an *oraculum*, a prophetic dream that offers the dreamer direction and guidance regarding future endeavours.[58] However, the Narrator provides several details that invoke a generic tendency to undermine the strict authority of the dream. First, he foreshadows the possibility of hidden or obscure meanings by the image of the veiled sun at the close of the first narrative stanza (2547; quoted above).[59] Elsewhere in the poem, the sun is a symbol of clarity and blessings. In these instances, the Narrator invokes the rising of the sun and associates its brightness with a transition out of a dark or oppressive state.[60] In the preamble to the Dream of

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[57] The first rhyme-word of the stanza, *travayle*, may be an oblique, homophonous reference to Froissart's *Paradis*, where the dream vision is prefaced by a complaint of insomnia (1-12). Whereas Froissart's dreamer cannot sleep because of his torments (*traveil*) and is thus further tormented (*traveillier*), Charles, having worked (cf. MFr. *traveiller*) through his pains in the production of the ballade sequence, is ready to slumber.

[58] Spearing, "Duke's Book," 135. The *oraculum* is the highest of Macrobius' five types of dreams, in which the dreamer is visited by an otherworldly or divine figure, occasionally an ancestor. The presentation of Age as "a man with lokkis gray" (2551) fits with this type of dream. Charles of Orleans was no doubt familiar with Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. The library at Blois contained a copy of Macrobius (Champion, *La Librairie*, 70; Boffey, "Charles Reading Chaucer," 61).

[59] See Phillips, "Frames and Narrators," 86. Commenting on the French version of the *Le Songe en Complainte*, Goodrich keenly observes the fine balance created by the first stanza of the narrative: "As a contrast to 'jour-souleil-clarté-travail' the reader is given 'nuit-vespree-mussee-repos-sommeil" (*Themes*, 141).

[60] In Ballade 45, for instance, the sun is associated with the lady's favour, that which will rouse the Lover's heart from its "fowle and sluggissh slogarde" (1613; cf. 4041). The lyric concludes with the Lover wondering when he will be see this

Age, the imagery emphasises the failing of light. The corresponding French lines further emphasise this point: "si fis mon appareil / De me couschier, sitost que le souleil / Je vy retrait et sa clarté mussee".[61] The French passage makes explicit the link between the sun and clarity, but the English version is more understated. The English lines, moreover, alter a detail, one which has bearing on the subsequent dream. Whereas in the French poem the sun is simply concealed—apparently behind the horizon—the narrative in *Fortunes Stabilnes* notes that the sun is "closid in cloudis".[62] Goodrich, writing of the French poems, observes that "[t]he poet's 'couschier' is also the setting of the sun."[63] This is equally true in the corresponding English passage.[64]

Other details unsettle the clarity of the Dream of Age. As I have already discussed, Charles reports that he was not yet in a deep sleep when he received the vision: "y was leyde, in slepe y was lightly" (2248). The space between waking and dreaming is, as Macrobius explains, the source of the *visum*, a spectral dream wherein the semi-conscious dreamer imagines shapes and spectres.[65] The narratorial introduction of Age further obscures the clarity of the dream: "And in my slepe y met right as y lay / That (as me thought) y sy right well trewly / Bifore me stonde a man with lokkis gray" (2549-51). The aside, a minor bit of editorialising on the Narrator's part, casts further doubt on the origin of the dream: if indeed Charles' dream is an *oraculum*, then its source is not his mind but an external authority. The lesser, often misleading dreams have their source in the thoughts of the dreamer, often in response to his physical or mental distress. That the dream here is an

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sun "shewe his gret clerte / In at the wyndowes of my derkid eyne" (1627-28). Ballade 72, which deploys several dream-vision tropes, begins when the "burnyd bemys" (2457) of Phoebus bring Charles out of "the slepe of Heuynes" (2460).

[61] See Fox and Arn, eds., *Personal Manuscript*, 144. *Mussee* (or *mussé*) is an obsolete word meaning "hidden away" or "concealed". See, for instance, McLeod, *Prince and Poet*, xii.

[62] Compare the proem of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* where "derk Diane, ihorned, noþing clere, / Had [hid] hir bemys vndir a mysty cloude" (8-9).

[63] Goodrich, *Themes*, 141.

[64] Moreover, the sun veiled in clouds parallels Charles swapping outfits: he removes his lover's garb and puts on his "apparayle / To gon to bedde". His wardrobe change is symbolic of an important shift in Charles' trajectory. In the courtship ballades of the first sequence, his lover's apparel is associated not only with his love but also with the hardships he undergoes and, most significantly, with his efforts to communicate with his beloved. By swapping mantles, he marks an initial step in his retirement from the world of love.

[65] Macrobius, *Commentary*, I.iii.7. It is worth noting that Macrobius refers to the *visum* as the "first cloud of sleep."

insomnium, the lowest type in Macrobius' hierarchy, is hinted at by Charles' decision to rest, due in part to the "karfull payne" he experiences "all the day" (2244).[66]

By troubling the characteristics of the dream, the poet engages with his predecessors on both sides of the Channel. Earlier poets like Guillaume de Lorris and Chaucer ask explicitly if dreams are reliable.[67] The Narrator adopts this approach in the preamble to the Dream of Venus in a two-stanza digression. As Charles descends into sleep, the Narrator comments on the ambiguity of dream interpretation:

> And all be hit that sum folkis say
> To truste on dremys nys but a trifill play,
> Yet oon may mete the dreme wel yn his sevyn
> As aftirward that shall bifalle him evyn. (4739-42)

He continues his meditation and invokes the authority of Macrobius, "him that wrote the straunge avisioun" (4744), to explain why he will not totally disregard possible messages conveyed by the dream.[68] In the prelude to the Dream of Age, Charles of Orleans is more subtle; he deploys the categories of dreams known to these same predecessors deliberately to obscure the nature of the dream.

Charles' Dream of Age could be categorised as an *oraculum*, a *visum*, or an *insomnium*. What is more likely, given the poet's conflation of causes and attributes, is that it is a combination of all three, and so refuses to be bounded by the rigid hierarchy of dream interpretation. No matter the label attached, its significance lies in its relationship to the larger narrative arc of the poem. According to the schema I outlined above, the Dream of Age marks the beginning of the second major part of the Duke's Book, Charles' renunciation of love and retirement to No Care. The grouping of the Dream of Age with Charles' letter of resignation, the journey to No Care, and the

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[66] Macrobius, *Commentary*, I.iii.6.
[67] In the proem to Chaucer's *House of Fame*, for example, the narrator begins his account by enumerating the types of dreams and the difficulty dreamers (and readers) have deciding into which category a dream falls (1-58). Cf. *Romaunt* 1-20
[68] This gesture parallels the similar comments found in the *Romance of the Rose* and the *House of Fame*, as well as the Chaucerian narrator's reading of the *Dream of Scipio* in the proem to the *Parliament of Fowls*.

roundel sequence creates a symmetry in the structure of the full poem, what Phillips calls the "unity of design" characteristic of the nested frames of dream vision poetry.[69] I think that the poet intended such a consistent structure: each of the three parts begins with a brief proem and a dream vision which leads to a lyric sequence. The letter Charles sends to Cupid and Venus neatly mirrors the letter patent that he receives from the gods early in part one.

Goodrich locates the Dream of Age as a sort of coda to the first part of the poem.[70] Spearing similarly remarks that the Dream of Age occupies a medial position in the narrative of Charles' service to and withdrawal from Love, but he locates it in the second phase of the trajectory and argues for a performative function of the dream: it "symbolizes but also brings about Charles' renunciation of love."[71] What Spearing does not explain, however, is that it is not the dream alone that effects Charles' departure, but his reflection upon the dream in the ten stanzas that follow his waking from slumber. Goodrich comments that the inclusion of the Narrator's analysis of the dream, which we find in both *Pearl* and Chaucer's *Duchess* to varying degrees, represents an improvement on the short vision narrative of Ballade 66. What is more, she reads both the Dream of the Flower in the ballade sequence and the Dream of Age thereafter as "preparations for an even more complete dream"—the one written only in English, the Dream of Venus.[72] Indeed, the Dream of Venus, which further complicates both the Narrator's and the poet's relationship with the dream vision genre, builds upon the earlier, briefer vision episodes. While I am reluctant to read the progression of dream visions in *Fortunes Stabilnes* strictly as an index of Charles of Orleans' poetic development as Goodrich suggests, his engagement with forms and topoi in the final two visions of the poem does constitute a deeper exploration of the genre and demonstrates the poet's innovations.

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[69] Phillips, "Frames and Narrators," 72.
[70] Goodrich, *Themes*, 142. Her further comment, that the placement of the Dream of Age "implies in rather strong measure that the entire Cycle was, in actuality, only a dream of love", fits with my argument above that all the action of *Fortunes Stabilnes* as we have it is contained with the frame of Dream A, the narrative that presumably begins in the now-lost quire.
[71] Spearing, "Duke's Book," 134.
[72] Goodrich, *Themes*, 143. Cf. Goodrich's comments on the dream vision as a quasi-juvenile form (*Themes*, 135).

The Dream of Venus, including the Vision of Fortune

The Dream of Venus, the longest and most complicated of the five dream visions in *Fortunes Stabilnes*, departs from the three preceding visionary episodes in that it has no French equivalent. The roughly 1700 lines, including the second ballade sequence, that comprise the final part of the poem are found only in Harley 682. Accordingly, part three holds particular interest for those scholars concerned with Charles of Orleans' development of the dream vision genre, the echoes of his sources, and his innovations.[73] The Dream of Venus episode is, more than the other dream visions in *Fortunes Stabilnes*, concerned with writing. The Dream of Age is preceded by the tiring work of producing the ballades of the first cycle; it prompts the Narrator to draft his letter of resignation. In the Dream of Venus, the paired acts of writing and reciting occupy much of the proem to the dream, and they contribute, more explicitly than in the case of the Dream of Age, to the Narrator's need for rest. The production of the commissioned poem on "fortunes stabilnes" (4660) so tires Charles that he is compelled to sleep right where he wrote: "And when that y had made þis poor bill, / So hevy gan myn eye liddis way / That even therwith into a slepe y fill" (4736-38).

The proem to the Dream of Venus foregrounds the similarities between dreaming and the making of poetry. Having delivered the final courses of his lyric jubilee, Charles whiles away his time at No Care: "Not kowde y ellis but wander vp & downe / Musyng in my wakyng dremys sad" (4659-60). Charles' wayward but bounded movements speak to a restlessness characteristic of the insomniac narrator of Chaucerian dream vision. He is, as Goodrich puts it, "outwardly idle, inwardly busy with his thoughts."[74] Indeed, Charles explains that his "ydill thought so besy" (4641), which ceaselessly whispers to him (*gan me rowne*), is the root of his unrest. The phrase *ydill thought* recalls the

[73] Spearing posits that "it was probably a later composition, reflecting Charles's fuller acquaintance with Chaucerian poetry and a new development in his plan for an English poetic sequence" ("Duke's Book," 136).
[74] Goodrich, *Themes*, 144

harried mind of Chaucer's narrator in the *Book of the Duchess* (4), who, as I discussed in the last chapter, is bewildered by his twisting, frenetic thoughts and transformed into "a mased thyng" (*Duchess* 12).[75] Charles will again invoke this imagery early in his dialogue with Venus when the goddess inquires if he is not, in fact, lodged at No Care. He replies:

> Soth, dwelle y so lijk as a masid man
> That hath a bidyng and wot not where,
> For though y whilom fer from Sorow ran
> Yet wol he lo for ought þat evyr y kan,
> Be with me, to and to, wil y or no,
> And as my frend thus cherisshe y my fo! (4814-19)

The image of the writhing mind—which Charles also deploys in the Dream of Age—combines, as it does in the *Duchess*, with the inversions of natural order typical of the lover's strife or the mourner's grief.[76] Similarly, the image of Charles striding back and forth along the strand alters Froissart's and Chaucer's image of the tormented narrator in bed: Charles' pacing dramatizes the restlessness of his and the other narrators' minds.

The pent-up energies of the Narrator do find an outlet, and, in this respect, Charles is brought closer to some of his literary predecessors. Charles' relationship to writing is changed in the proem to the Dream of Venus. Whereas in the first two lyric sequences, Charles chronicles his experiences of love, loss, and mourning, in this proem he explains that he occupies himself by writing lyrics on behalf of other lovers suffering under the adversities of love. Spearing comments that this "clerkly role" stands at odds with his earlier, simultaneous roles as lover and poet.[77] At this

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[75] Fein describes the *Fortunes Stabilnes* Narrator's "psychic space" as a "labyrinth" ("Distance and Separation," 76).
[76] The Narrator describes his struggle to recognise the figure before him: "with my thoghtis writhid y" (2553). Charles' sense of being pursued as though through a labyrinth is strengthened as he explains how he is inescapably haunted by Sorrow. Venus argues that, given that Charles is dwelling in the Castle of No Care, he is surely at a great distance from Sorrow. "Nay!" he responds, "sothely, *nere*, / For when me happith *here* or *there* to *go* / And thenke that yonder *lo* my lady dere / Gaf me this word . . ." (4821-24, emphasis mine). The subtle touches of the internal rhyme suggest a man met at every turn with painful reminders of his loss. I shall return to this matter in the final section of this chapter.
[77] Spearing, "Prison, Writing, Absence," 89-90. In a discussion of the roundel sequence, Arn seems to suggest that some of the lyrics serve to gradually distance the Narrator from his deceased beloved: the reiterations or re-presentations of amorous feelings in the roundels are transformed from their so-called 'real-time' iterations in the earlier ballade sequence; the roundels are thus love poems without an object—or, at least, without a living object—and so are, in a sense, empty. (Arn goes so far as to label them "mildly perverse"; see "Structure," 18-19.)

juncture, no longer in an active role as a lover, he turns his experience into a form of authority; he is abstracting, as it were, his own previous practice and so creating an impersonal theory of love.[78] The shift to the composition of ballades and roundels for others removes Charles from a narratorial lineage akin to that of the *Roman de la Rose* and places him in a narratorial position more like that found in most dits amoureux and the Chaucerian tradition. He is transformed from a servant of love to a servant of a servant of love.[79] It is in this capacity that he produces the inset lyric, the double ballade on "fortunes stabilnes."

As Charles gets ready to write the complaint, we see him preparing in a manner similar to his preparations for the first ballade sequence. In that earlier part, he leaves the madding crowd of the Court of Love and establishes himself in "an herber grene" (190); with pen and paper provided by Good Hope, he sets about making his poems. In the case of the complaint against fortune, Charles once again isolates himself, albeit only from a single person, *that on* (4659) who requires the poem:

> Forth bi my silf thus went y me alone
> Toward the see, where nygh my bidyng was
> To y come to an high huge Rokke of stone
> That to biholde hit glemshid bright as glas,
> Where as y fonde a benche of mosse & gras
> . . .
> Where as noon that downe my silf y sat
> And gan me muse to maken þis complaint (4666-70, 4673-74)

The leafy arbour of the early composition scene is here traded for the rocky seashore. Whereas the green bower is a typical site of courtly love and composition, the barren strand marks a departure from Charles' sources and inspirations. An echo of the enclosed garden remains, however, in the grassy mound on which Charles sits (and will later sleep). Although the tools of writing are mentioned in both episodes, only in the latter does the Narrator make explicit the act of writing. He

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[78] Charles in fact cites his previous experience as qualification: "y was so moche to Loue biholde / In my fer afore past dayes olde, / Ther nas to Loue so sympill servyng wight / But that y fayne wolde plese hem if y might" (4655-58).
[79] Importantly, as Spearing notes, the chief consequence of the Dream of Venus is the restoration of Charles to his former role as poet-lover ("Prison, Writing, Absence," 90).

does so by calling attention to the physicality of the document, blurring the boundaries between the document produced for *that on* and the book held by his reader: "these were my wordis faynt / I for him seide, and gan my papir sprede / And wrote right thus, if so ye list to rede" (4677-79). The invitation to read on in the final clause of the introduction to the complaint achieves two ends. First, it establishes further distance between the Narrator-writer and the written complaint: by underscoring its readability, the Narrator refigures himself as a reader, one among many who might go over the poem without feeling any particular connection to it. In this respect, the complaint is unlike the ballades of the first sequence (or the roundels, for that matter), which are genuine representations of the poet-lover's emotions and often serve as a process of thinking through problems that confront him.[80] Secondly, the invitation to read sets the stage for a parallel, if implicit, call to read the dream that is presented in the stanzas following the complaint. The Narrator thus highlights the similarities of dreams and poems.

The completion of the complaint, as I have mentioned above, gives way to the entry into sleep and the Dream of Venus. This transition from waking to dreaming marks a significant point of departure from any previous dream vision known to Charles of Orleans. Chaucer was innovative for having his narrator's dream be inspired by his reading material.[81] The Dream of Venus is brought on by what Charles has written, and the inset vision of Fortune is inspired by it.[82]

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[80] The great irony of the commissioned lyric is, of course, its applicability to, and influence upon, Charles' own story. For the ex-Lover stuck at the bottom of Fortune's wheel and so worn out by grief that any laments he composes need be on topics removed from his immediate circumstances, Fortune does indeed seem to be cruelly stable. As the doubled vision and the narrative of Post and Pillar will show, the complaint seems to have a real effect on Charles' journey around Fortune's wheel. In these resonances between the complaint of fortune and the unfolding story of the Narrator, there is an interesting commentary upon the stereotypical courtly lyrics—characterised, as they are, by their malleable subjects and objects of desire—that the retired and idle Charles produces. Unbeknownst to the recipients of the commissions, and, apparently, even to the maker himself, the poems contain vestiges of the life and experiences of the author and so carry an added element of authenticity even if that authenticity remains hidden from all concerned.

[81] Stearns, "Chaucer Mentions a Book," 28-31.

[82] Boffey, "Charles Reading Chaucer," 50. Cf. Boitani, "Old Books Brought to Life," 41. As I have suggested above, however, Charles is both writer and reader: his invitation treats the finished double ballade as a document to be read and so puts a distance between himself as producer and himself as consumer.

Although Charles the Dreamer does not immediately recognise Venus, they soon establish a rapport by which she attempts to convince him that his self-imposed exile from love is undertaken in error, that he should pursue some new beloved. In her efforts to restore Love's apostate, Venus deploys a bawdy adaptation of Lady Philosophy's argument in the *Consolation*: "Remembre must ye that ye ar a man / And haue of nature als yowre lymys goode, / So ought ye kyndely, thenk me, spend it than" (4869-71). Charles maintains his resistance, claiming loyalty to his deceased beloved and blaming an inability to learn new habits of love. As Venus continues to assail him with arguments, suggesting that a different sort of circulation of texts—gossip and slander—will plague both Charles and the memory of the dead lady if he does not take a new love, Charles turns his eyes skyward to see Lady Fortune descending in her golden chariot (4964-66).

The sustained description of Fortune (4979-5049) provides a series of inversions of the stableness Charles ascribes to her in the complaint. Her vestment, which shifts its colours moment by moment, is adorned with laughing and crying eyes, clouds and rains, the phases of the moon, and tiny, flowers that blossom and fade; her necklace is covered in spinning dice, and her crown is composed of metallic "wawis nyce" (5030). These images of change and chance all demonstrate the error of Charles' characterisation of the goddess.[83] I notice also that the order of the description inverts the usual structure of the blazon, beginning at the Fortune's feet and working upward to her neck, crown, and face. This reversal indicates the Dreamer's position below the descending goddess but also speaks to the upside-down worlds of love, grief, and the dream.

Venus tries to rouse the stricken Charles even as she denies the veracity of what he sees "I trowe that ye haue spide a mase, / Or ye haue tane sum sodeyne sweuene, / For wheron ist, good, that ye gase?" (5073-75). Venus' aspersions of the vision resonate throughout *Fortunes Stabilnes*. More than the subtle images and diction before the Dream of Age or the explicit questioning of dreams'

[83] Spearing makes the comparison with the dream-inversions of the story of Seys and Alcyone in the *Book of the Duchess* ("Duke's Book," 140).

meaning and value before the episode in which the goddess herself appears, Venus' dismissal of this latest vision undermines each of the previous dreams, including the outer frame of the tale (Dream A) and the very dream in which she appears. If the appearance of Fortune before the distraught ex-Lover can be a figment of the imagination (a *mase* or a *sodeyne sweuene*), then what guarantee does the Dreamer-Narrator have that his other dreams carried any truth? Charles, like the readers of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, can never be certain.[84]

The instilling of doubt about the veracity of the vision, as I observed earlier, is typical of the dream vision genre. Where Charles moves beyond his English sources is in the blurring of the boundaries between dream and reality at the end of the vision. Venus uses her kerchief to carry Charles into the sky to introduce him to the lady whom he saw set upon Fortune's wheel. The Dreamer is terrified of plummeting back to earth and he cries out so loudly that he wakes himself from the dream:

> . . . [y] cry
> So lowde that it awook me verily,
> And fond my silf wher as y was downe layd
> And in myn hond, as y from slepe abreid,
>
> Yet se y wel a gret pese of pleasaunce,
> The which y took and in my bosum put,
> So forto kepe it in remembraunce. (5187-93)

Charles awakes on the cold seaside, which is, of course, the same setting as both the pre-dream frame and the dream itself. He is holding what appears to be a piece of Venus' kerchief, torn in his fearful flailing and borne across the threshold between his dreaming and waking states. In other, earlier English dream visions, the dreamers likewise find or create souvenirs of their experiences.

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[84] His waking excursion from the shore contains further imagery that calls both the dream and his response to it into question. Rising from where he slept, he starts walking: "And forbicause þat y nedis mut / Muse on my dreem, y sett me vp afoot, / And so gan wandre in my thoughtis sade" (5194-96). The passage echoes Charles' pacing on the strand in the preamble to the Dream of Venus: "Not kowde y ellis but wander vp & downe / Musyng in my wakyng dremys sad" (4639-40). As he journey further from the sea, he comes "vndir a grene wood shade" (5197), a phrase that likely alludes to the opening of Dante's *waking dremys sad* in the *Inferno*, where the poet-narrator walks in a *selva oscura*. Cf. Russell, *English Dream Vision*, 17.

The *Pearl*-dreamer locates fond recollection of, and communion with, his lost pearl in the symbol of the Eucharist. Chaucer's *Duchess*-dreamer does not have any concrete reminder of his *sweven* in the brief closing frame of that poem; however, by calling attention to the dream as the inspiration and prompt for the writing poem, and by suggesting that the poem is an accurate representation of the dreamed experience, the narrator makes the poem itself serve as a souvenir.[85]

The memento that Charles carries out of the dream is multivalent. Even as it seems to confirm the reality of the Dream of Venus (and, by extension, the Vision of Fortune), the kerchief reintroduces an element of doubt: it is, after all, a covering, a veil. As a piece of the goddess' vestment, it recalls the dialogue of the dream and the lessons imparted. It also serves as a reminder of the sight of the new lady upon Fortune's wheel and, in this aspect, as the prompt for the subsequent journey to encounter her amid the players of Post and Pillar. Of equal importance is its symbolic value as a memento of the Narrator's first love, or, more specifically, of his acts of devotion and remembrance. I will discuss the elegiac tone of Charles' conversation with Venus below; for the time being, let us consider how the kerchief-as-memento recalls the love affair chronicled in the first ballade sequence and carefully set aside in the Dream of Venus and the second ballade sequence that follows.

Charles describes the bit of fabric he holds as "a gret pese of pleasaunce". The word *pleasaunce* refers to both the fine quality of Venus' garment and to the joy the Dreamer felt in response to the glimpse of the new lady and the prospect of the journey toward her (his sleep-shattering fear notwithstanding). It also refers back to the first love affair, to the exchange of hearts

[85] Charles of Orleans is not entirely alone among later English dream-poem authors in troubling this boundary. In *The Kingis Quair*, the reawakened dreamer receives messages confirming the promises of his dream. In the Middle French dits amoureux, there are similar occasions that blur the separation of dreams from reality. For example, the noble protagonist of Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse* receives a ring from his lady in the dream he shares with the poet-narrator, and upon awakening, he is wearing the ring on his finger (2519-23). See also Brownlee, "Love Experience and Poetic Craft," 153.

and other tokens of *troth*.[86] In Ballade 32, Charles tells his lady of the great care and attention he gives to the keeping of her heart:

> . . . hit wrappid is, parde,
> Hool in a plesaunt kercher of Pleasaunce
> And so is closid for a more sewrete
> As in the Cofir of my remembraunce. (1167-70)

The ceremonial devotion with which Charles attends to the heart—he often washes it "in the teeris of Pitevous Thought and Chere" and dries it "by the fyre of Esperaunce" (1173, 1176)—shows a ritualistic practice which transforms the gifted heart into a relic of the religion of love. The "Cofir of my remembraunce" amplifies the memorialising of the heart and suggests a parallel with the recollection that occurs through the writing (and subsequent reading) of the ballades themselves.[87]

The *kercher of Plesaunce* of the early ballade is distinct from the fragment of fabric Charles clutches after the Dream of Venus, but the curious resemblance in the phrasing points to important parallels between the two acts of cherishing and remembering.[88] Charles' later promise to treasure the "gret pese of plesaunce" echoes other acts of devotion in the course of his love affairs. He says he puts the bit of kerchief "in my bosum" (5192). This gesture repeats a similar one from the first ballade sequence, in which the Narrator writes to his lady thanking her for her own recent letter and states that he will keep it close to him at all times: "neuyr fro my brest as shall hit twyn" (511). I contend that this echo is deliberate and that the latter passage suggests one of two situations: either the *pece of plesaunce* is joining the *writyng* of Ballade 10 among Charles' chest of precious souvenirs, or

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[86] Green suggests that the exchange of hearts between Charles and his lovers repeatedly depicted in *Fortunes Stabilnes* corresponds to actual exchanges of physical gifts. He cites several late-medieval, enamelled, and inscribed heart ornaments, brooches or pins, and depictions of such exchanges in contemporary illumination, carving, and tapestry. See Green, "Hearts, Minds, and Charles d'Orléans."

[87] The phrase also resonates with the *Pearl*-dreamer's misapprehensions about his pearl "Þat is in cofer so comly clente" (259).

[88] Venus uses the phrase when first giving Charles instructions about their flight: "Hange hir vpon my kercher of pleasaunce, / And y shal brynge thee vp to hir aloft" (5170-71).

the veil, representative of both the promise of love's renewal and the transition of the Dreamer-narrator out of a phase of mourning, is supplanting the letter which dates from the first affair.[89]

The separation and transformation of a metonymic representation of the lost beloved is an archetypal image in elegiac poetry. It demonstrates, as Sacks explains, "the dramatic relation between loss and figuration."[90] Citing the Ovidian stories of Apollo's grief for Daphne and Pan's sorrowing over Syrinx, Sacks shows how mourners must perform "substitutive turn[s] or act[s] of troping" as a key part of the work of mourning.[91] When Daphne is transformed into a laurel tree, Apollo fashions a wreath for his brows in a token of remembrance; Pan similarly creates his pipes after his beloved nymph becomes a bunch of marsh reeds.[92] Both of the gods' processes involve a substitution of the part for the whole, which requires an act of severing: Apollo cuts off a branch of the laurel, and Pan takes the upper part of the reeds. The work of mourning thus re-enacts and recasts the painful caesura created by the loss of the beloved as a productive action: cutting to make, to keep, rather than simply to end or to destroy. Both processes likewise involve an element of artifice to transform the natural object into the memento: twining or weaving creates the wreath; arranging and binding gives the pipe its shape and its tones. In Charles' case, the work, the artifice, is poetic—linguistic and performative—rather than physical, but his placement of the scrap of kerchief next to his body parallels the appropriations of the symbol in the stories of Apollo and Pan. He makes the token of love lost and love foretold a part of his person and in so doing creates a new form of communion.

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[89] I prefer to think that the former case is the more likely, and that Charles' new love is generous and capacious enough that it can accommodate a continued fond remembrance of the earlier lady. There certainly is historical and courtly precedent for such behaviour: recall, for instance, John of Gaunt's dedication to Blanche of Lancaster through two subsequent marriages and his final request to be buried beside his first wife.

[90] Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 4.

[91] Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 5.

[92] It is no coincidence that the laurel wreath and the pipes are consummate symbols of poethood, as Sacks notes.

The First Ballade Sequence and Poems of Absence

The transformation and preservation of the kerchief is just one example of the elegiac themes of *Fortunes Stabilnes*—and a late one at that. The last third of the first ballade sequence is concerned with the death of the lady and the Lover-Narrator's sustained grief for his beloved. The loss of the lady resonates throughout the rest of the poem, influencing the Dreamer-Narrator's lyric expressions as well as his engagement with the Court of Love and its reigning deities. The matters of love and loss shape the poetic voice of the ballade and roundel sequences, and the development of Charles as lover, mourner, and poet are charted through the lyrics. In this section and the three that follow, I will address the central themes of absence and loss in the first ballade sequence to show how an elegiac mood permeates *Fortunes Stabilnes* and pairs with the dream vision genre to explore the poet's relationship to the language of love and sorrow.

In the narrative episode that follows the end of the Cupid's letter patent, the poet establishes his Narrator as a novice both in love and in composition.[93] In the opening allegory, the Narrator insists he is still too young to enter into love's service. At court, Cupid comments that Charles "lakkist witt" (115) when it comes to the arts of love, and offers him some instruction in the matter; he cautions the would-be Lover that in order to win the heart of a noble lady he will have to speak and behave intelligently, courteously, and in a controlled manner:

> For gentill must be wonne with gentiles,
> Bi goodly speche and curteys countenaunce.
> . . .
> Tyme to speke and not payse in balaunce,
> For to nobles longith sewte of curteys speche
> As he fynt tyme bi mouth or writyng seche. (140-41, 144-46)

The struggle of a lover to master his tongue and to make his love known is a frequent trope of *fin' amors* and the love vision tradition, one which we have seen in the case of Chaucer's Black Knight

[93] As I noted early in this chapter, the 143-line passage between the conclusion of the letter patent and the beginning of the first ballade sequence has no French equivalent. Charles of Orleans uses the additional English narrative to emphasise his Narrator's identity as a novice lover and poetic speaker.

(*Duchess* 1146-1297).[94] The Narrator makes explicit mention of his fumblings with language. When first he thanks the God of Love for making him a servant, he confesses he is unable to express himself appropriately: "y kan not athanke yow as y aught, // For to my will my tunge kan not suffise" (62-63).[95] Two stanzas later, he observes his tendency to misspeak: "Fy, my speche hit squarith oft" (77). As Charles sits down to write the first ballades, he alludes to the difficulties he has in making his mind known, of communicating his love of the lady. He also acknowledges the importance of intellectual creativity for his courtship of the lady and the consequent release from his pining sorrow:

> . . . in my childisshe witt if y koude grope
> Sum praty thing that myght hir plesere bene,
> But even liche as hit were a swarme bene,
> So gan ther thoughtis to me multiply
> To helpe me fynde, if they koude, remedy. (191-95)[96]

The Narrator here emphasises his writing as both the source and the process of comfort. The pretty things—the poems and epistles produced in the bower—should please the lady and so sway her to accept his love, thereby freeing him from his torment. The act of writing also brings forth the multitude of thoughts which, it is hoped, will lead the Lover to success.

The hope that his words will be up to the task of winning the lady and, in the meantime, of affording him some comfort carries over into the ballade sequence. In the second stanza of Ballade 1, the Narrator decries his skill in speech: "My greef to playne, albe y not konnyng, / Loue causith this my nakid wordis fle" (211-12). His words, unadorned and plain, do a poor job of assuaging his

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[94] The *Pearl*-dreamer's efforts to commune with his lost pearl and his repeated blunders during the dream encounter are informed by the same topoi, but are deployed to ends beyond the courtly love tradition. The proem of *Pearl* opens in a manner that suggests a lover's complaint. The *Book of the Duchess* likewise plays upon the type of the lamenting, lovesick man.

[95] One consequence of this failure, he continues, is a waywardness of thought: "Twene ioy and woo my gost supposid is / As this to thynke and this oft to avise / My witt as now so renneth this and this" (64-66). In this respect, the *Stabilnes* Narrator is comparable to both the *Pearl*-mourner and Chaucer's dreamer in the *Duchess*. Both men are shown to undergo a sort of twisting of their experience and their words.

[96] Once he sits with pen and paper, Charles reiterates his doubt in his abilities as a writer and, by extension, as a lover: "A trouthe, . . . here lakkith not but Speche / And Konnyng, but allas they be my foon" (198-99).

pains, but he is nonetheless compelled to sing the lady's praises and the "worldly . . . gladnes" (216) his love has brought him. The first nine ballades of the sequence, which culminate in a double ballade or *chant royal*, address aspects of the lady's beauty and virtue while also exploring the Lover's suffering. Ballade 8, for instance, is an insomnia poem in which the Narrator is kept awake by his personified heart who stays up all night reading old romances, reacting loudly, and nudging a somnolent Charles to share choice passages.

Whereas Ballades 1 through 9 deal with the initial phase of the Narrator's love for the lady, his sustained praise of her beauty, the peril of her eyes, and his quarrels with his misbehaving heart, Ballades 10 through 15 document a period of the lady's absence. This section is much more self-conscious than the previous lyrics; in each of these six intercalated poems, the Narrator considers the act of writing as a means of coping with his beloved's absence. Ballade 10 is not explicitly epistolary, but it begins with an address to the lady (491) and mentions her own recent missive in the third stanza: "y humbly thanke yow ay / For yowre writyng" (507-8). These gestures establish an important conceit for the five subsequent lyrics: although none of the absence ballades is presented directly as a letter to the lady, the repeated references to their separation combined with a concern with bridging that distance by words suggest an epistolary relationship.[97] The thirteenth ballade reminds the lady of his oath of service in an almost legalistic manner, promising in the refrain to serve her no matter what. The fourteenth takes on a more informal, conversational tone—"Now what tidyng, my lady mastres? / How farith oure loue, y pray yow hertily?" (615-16)—and the refrain asks that she requite his troth. The fifteenth, which closes the minor suite, looks forward "[v]nto the tyme y see yow eft ageyne" (650), but also wonders about her own intentions. Has absence made her heart grow fonder or will she refuse him? The question hangs in the balance and plays out in the thirty ballades that he presents before the lady accepts his love.

[97] In a rare instance of misreading, Spearing suggests that the bulk of the lyrics in the first ballade sequence are epistolary ("Prison, Writing, Absence," 88-89).

Ballades 11 and 12 function as a piece that both recalls the opening vision scenes with Youth and Cupid and anticipates the dream visions that appear later in the first ballade sequence and the second. Neither poem is a dream vision per se, but Ballade 11 makes use of allegorical figures in a manner very similar to the traditional love vision poems like the *Romance of the Rose* as well as the poet's own opening narrative. Because he is so far from his beloved, Charles writes, "In company of Woo and Gret Distres / I lyue, and loke for comfort day bi day / Of Plesere, which Absence hold vndir kay" (521-23). He finds himself surrounded by *Greef* and *Peyne*, too, and longs to flee them, which, *Esperaunce* assures him, he will do once he is reunited with the lady.[98] Ballade 12 is, like Ballade 8 before it, an insomnia poem: "By nyght to slepe as haue y no power" (561), Charles complains. Harried by Thought and Lust, Charles imagines he is cuddled up with his beloved: "oft y thynke . . . / That y in armes haue yow, my lady, / For which y clippe my pylow lo and cry / "O mercy, Loue" (563-66). The mention of insomnia in the second stanza gives way to a resurgence of allegorical figures in the third, where Hope promises to help deliver the Lover. As in Ballade 11 and in the opening narrative preserved in the French Book, the poet's use of allegory suggests a dream or dream-like state.

Ballade 10 is the most important lyric in the absence suite. The Narrator wonders if his words will have their desired effect—or any effect at all:

> Madame, a trouthe not wot y what to say
> Nor bi what ende that y shulde first bigynne
> The wofull lijf vnto yow to biwray
> Which shertith me more nerre than doth my skyn. (491-94)

The Lover, at a loss for words, turns his non-beginning into the starting point of a confession not only of his typical suffering, the *wofull lijf*, but also of his inability to communicate. Charles then calls

[98] The ballade also contains what I believe to be an allusion to the *Book of the Duchess*. The envoy begins "I haue of woo so gret an aboundance" (549), a line which echoes the opening of the Black Knight's song of mourning in Chaucer's poem: "I have of sorwe so gret won" (476). The link with the Chaucer's poem prepares for the sleeplessness of Ballade 12.

into question his attempts to tell the lady of his anguish and loses hope that any message can close the gap between them:[99]

> Hit forto speke, as well lo may y blyn—
> Forwhi bi speche not kan y be the nerre;
> What helpe, god wott, as shulde y bi hit wyn,
> Syn hit is so that y am from yow fare? (495-98)

The second stanza widens the scope of this doubt as he points to the discord that can arise between sign and referent. Charles explains that his outward appearance and observable behaviour mask inner torment: "y for drede my countenaunce forpeyne / As with my mouth to shewe a laughtir gay / When that myn hert as wepith me withinne" (500-2).[100] The discrepancy Charles identifies here undermines his following claim that it would be entirely appropriate to call him a martyr for love or one of Cupid's saints since "paynys thikke endewre y, lo, not thynne" (505). If he has shown that signs are empty, then the labels he attaches to himself are equally meaningless.

Despite his undermining the import of signs and his doubt of language written or spoken to bring the lovers closer together, he nevertheless thanks her for "writyng" (508). Indeed, he treasures the letter, "the whiche y more sett by then all my kyn" (510), and swears to keep it close to his heart: "neuyr fro my brest as shall hit twyn" (511). In so doing, Charles replaces one sign with another. The letter, made one with his breast, supplants the *wofull lijf* that, in the first stanza, "shertith me more nerre than doth my skyn" (494). The significance of this grandiose gesture changes in the final lines of the stanza, however. The happiness the letter brought him at first, he says, is fled: "now my blis on hit is to myssyn" (513). The letter, worn close to the body like a holy sign or relic, is now an empty vessel, its *Swete Comfort* (509) spent. He persists in carrying it, but it is now a sign that points back to a better state rather than restore that state.

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[99] Cf. Fein's comments on the corresponding French lyric ("Distance and Separation," 71).

[100] Arn explains that *forpeyne*, which is a likely a scribal error for *forpyn*, carries multiple meanings: "The basic meaning [of *forpyn*] is to impound, but here it is 'restrain, confine,' i.e. force (myself) . . . . Charles may, of course, have had the reflex '(for)pain' in mind (cf. 402)" (Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to line 500). I think it highly probably that the poet is indeed exploiting the multivalence of the word, casting further suspicion onto the ability of words to convey his intended meaning.

The six absence ballades serve as a significant waypoint in the Lover's slow and suffering journey toward winning the lady's love. They allow him to consider how his poetry falls short of an idealised form of communication and of the goal of bridging the gap between the lovers. The absence ballades thus also prepare for the twenty mourning lyrics that follow the lady's death—when her absence becomes permanent and his doubt of the powers of language and of poetry much greater. In the next three sections, I will address a selection of the ballades of the all-too-brief joys of consummation and Charles' songs of mourning in the wake of his beloved's death. Particular attention will be paid to themes of isolation, the failing voice of the grieving Lover, and the poet's use of dream vision tropes in his elegiac ballades.

The Grieving Lover: Songs of Mourning in the First Ballade Sequence

After a series of love-lorn ballades stretching from Ballades 16 through 46, Charles finally gains admittance to the lady's favour and is overjoyed: "Welcome and yit more welcome, bi þis light, / O Fresshe Tidyngis, vnto myn hert are ye!" (1658-59).[101] There follows a short section of seven lyrics celebrating and relishing their love, which concludes with a second chant royal at Ballade 54. Like the initial lyrics, this section tempers any joys the Lover experiences with the constant threat that the affair will end or otherwise be interrupted by Daunger. Ballade 48 is a Maying poem; the day is dedicated to reverence of the God of Love and the cheering of "[t]he hertis of vs poore louers heuy" (1699), but the Lover reports that he takes no joy in the activity for Daunger sent his lady away and so has caused him and his heart to "endure full greuous paynes" (1706).[102] The interceding

[101] Although *bi þis light* is a colloquial expression and a common line-filler phrase, I think Charles of Orleans uses it here as an intertextual reference to the opening line of Chaucer's *Duchess*: "I have gret wonder, be this light". The arrival into the lady's graces is, for the Narrator, like waking from a bad dream into the full light of day. Indeed, in the first lines of Ballade 48, he calls to his heart to rise: "To longe (for shame!) and all to longe trewly, / Myn hert, y se thee slepe in displesere. / Awake this day, awake!" (1689-91). The imagery of the sleeping heart and the call to awake recurs in the second ballade sequence as well (cf. Ballade 107).

[102] Maying was a game of love, wherein groups of young people traversing the countryside collecting hawthorn flowers. The activity afforded time for semi-private conversation and flirtation. See Arn, ed., *Stabilnes* 55-56; Eberly and

poems see Charles vacillate from sorrow to joy and back again, and the chant royal at the end of the section sees the lady absent once more.

As in the six absence ballades earlier in the sequence, Ballade 54 uses an epistolary style to engage with the absent lady. Stanzas one and two play upon memory, figured as the allegorical figure Remembraunce, to remind the lady of her troth to Charles, her love for the God of Love, and the promise she made when she took him as her "poor knyght" in service of his "lady and maystres" (1881-82). The second stanza reiterates the same points but in terms of the Lover's oath of service unto death. It also reaffirms Charles' sincerity: "This is no faynyd tale—no, no, dowtles!" (1890). While he may speak truthfully in this case, the next stanza sees the speaker introduce some doubt into the state of their affair. Charles is tormented, he says, by an "absent payne" (1896), which is created chiefly by his total lack of contact with his lady and mistress. Underscoring the importance of their epistolary relationship, he suggests that a letter from her would vastly improve his condition: "And neuyr sith koude be so happy wight / To haue writyng to sett me in gladnes" (1899-1900). Bolstered by any minor kind thought from his lady, he vows he will fight with Absence and put him to flight (1909-11), an image which recalls the earlier account of his condition in Ballade 11.[103] The fifth stanza shifts the focus to show Charles as the absent party (1913), a change that highlights the discrepancy between where he is and where he ought to be. The sustained attention to the various separations of the lovers in Ballade 54 prepares for the three-lyric suite of the lady's reported illness and illusory recovery in Ballades 55 and 56 and the announcement of her death in Ballade 57.[104]

Chamberlain, "Ane Hawthorne Grene," 25-26. Compare also the gathering of daisies in *Paradis d'amour* (1472-75, 1610-24).

[103] Ballade 11 makes similar use of a present Absence, a figure with power and with agency: in that ballade, Absence holds Plesere under lock and key (523). The notion of an agential Absence recalls Boethius' misconception of evil as a force, an idea which Lady Philosophy dispels by showing evil to be nothing but an absence of good (*Consolation*, 3.pr.12).

[104] The envoy to the chant royal hints darkly that a reversal of any boons he knows or is to know when, in the final two lines, Charles mentions Fortune: "For Fortune koude sett me no more on hight / And ye to ben my lady and maystres" (1926-27). The imagined scenario sees the Lover high atop Fortune's wheel—where he will, in fact, find a lady in the second vision—but the partial repetition and expansion of "For Fortune" indicates a sense of movement and change which anticipates the wheel's continued course from apex to nadir.

The bliss Charles gains after winning the lady's acceptance is all too brief, and the news of the beloved's sickness, reported in Ballade 55, turns the elation of Ballade 47 on its head: "Allas! allas! how is hit heth gen entresse / Vnto myn hert this woful tidyngis here?" (1928-29).[105] By circumlocution, Charles' rhetorical question identifies the double-edge of the epistolary relationship he celebrated in the previous ballade: sometimes the letters bring bad news. Whereas Charles offers words meant to console—he assures his Heart that "she shall be helid hastily" (1941)—the Heart's utterances are simply outpourings of emotion, copious if ultimately ineffectual: he does nothing "[s]aue wayle and wepe and prayeth in euery stounde" (1943), and even his prayers, pleas for the release of death, are in vain. In a final effort to assuage his Heart's grief, Charles naively claims that

> . . . Fortune nys so crewel of manere
> To robbe this world of so gret a ricches
> Which is yowre very lod sterre here & stere
> Of eche good thyng . . . (1947-50)

Like in the envoy to the chant royal that precedes, the Lover reveals his misunderstanding of the nature of Fortune. As in the envoy as well, Charles' language unwittingly suggests Fortune's vacillations. The combination of assonance and homophones (or, to read it slightly differently, internal rime riche) in the phrase "sterre here & stere" reveals the mutability of Fortune. As his Heart is quick to remind him, "To trust is gret foly / On Fortune which doth turne hir whele so round!" (1951-52), a lesson that would best be remembered in the following lyric.

Ballade 56 offers a brief glimmer of hope when Charles and his heart receive news that their beloved is on the mend. These glad tidings cause another reversal in Charles' opinion of verbal communication and epistolary relationships. The refrain invokes St Gabriel, patron saint of

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[105] Compare the first two lines of Ballade 47: "Welcome and yit more welcome, be þis light, / O Fresshe Tidyngis, vnto myn hert are ye!" (1658-59).

messengers. In the envoy, Charles' Heart vows to have the saint's mass sung in "Louys high chapell" (1991) in honour of this welcome news and in hope for further such reports.[106]

The hope that is recalled from exile back into the Lover's life (cf. 1988) proves short-lived: the next ballade begins in the wake of the lady's death. The first of eighteen mourning lyrics, Ballade 57 opens with an apostrophe to Death:

> Allas, Deth, who made thee so hardy
> To take awey the most nobill princesse,
> Which comfort was of my lijf and body
> Mi wele, my ioy, my plesere and ricchesse? (1994-97)

The address echoes the second versicle of the Man in Black's first song in the *Book of the Duchess* (cf. lines 475-86), and, like the Black Knight in his protracted mourning speech, Charles calls for his own demise. The lady was, Charles claims, taken before her due time (2003-9), and her death functions as a caesura from his past. The world he now inhabits is a world transformed; he would rather die "[t]han langwysshe in þis karfull tragedy, / In payne, sorowe, and woofull aventure" (2001-2). Death, of course, pays no heed to Charles' cries, and, condemned to endure his sorrowful life, the grieving Lover experiences an overwhelming sense of isolation: "Allas! alone am y [out] compane. / Fare well, my lady! fare well, my gladnes!" (2012-13). He vows, however, to spend his remaining days in service to the deceased lady through continuous acts of mourning:

> . . . y make yow here promes
> That with prayers y shall of gret larges
> Here serue yow, ded, while my lijf endure,
> [Out] forgetyng in slouthe or slogardy,
> Biwaylyng oft yowre deth with wepyng ey
> In payne, sorow, and wofull aventure. (2015-20)

He makes good on this promise immediately, for the envoy consists of a prayer for the lady's care in heaven. Whereas each of the three stanzas in Ballade 57 begins with an anaphoric statement of

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[106] For Charles of Orleans, who spent so much of his life away from his home, his family, and his loves, the archangel must have held a special point of reverence: as Champion reports, in 1464 the Duke commissioned a book which contained the office of the mass of St Gabriel. See Champion, *La Librarie*, 78.

regret and complaint—*Allas*—in the envoy Charles turns to address God (likely the Father in Heaven, rather than Cupid) to ask that the lady's soul be forgiven for any offense and granted grace and reward. The trajectory of this ballade suggests a model of effective, even successful, mourning: Charles' grief moves from the fact of death, to the deceased, to a bid at parting and a promise to remember, and, finally, to the divine. The pattern shown here is not carried out clearly in the mourning ballades that follow, but there is, by the end of the first ballade sequence, a move toward consolation as the Lover retires.[107]

The Immediate Aftermath: Ballades 58, 59,and 60

Each of the sixteen ballades that round out the first sequence explore grief and the work of mourning from different perspectives. Ballades 58, 59, and 60 follow immediately upon the revelation of the lady's death and the Narrator's initial reaction to it. These poems, which Arn describes as "exceptionally well-crafted", are of particular interest within the larger text because they have no French equivalents.[108] They thus reveal further nuances of the poet's composition and Charles the Lover's experience of grief.

Ballade 58 draws parallels between sleep and death, an important trope in a long text dotted by visionary experiences and struggles with insomnia. In this poem, sleep is used as a metaphor for the nullifying effects of grief:

> In slepe ben leyd all song, daunce, or disport,
> Also prays of bewte, bote, or gentilesse
> Now Deth, allas, hath, to my discomfort,
> Enrayfid me my lady and maystres. (2026-29)

[107] Arn comments on the careful organisation of the grieving ballades: "It is clear that they are carefully organized to provide, [sic] not so much a furthering of the plot as an opportunity to analyse various states of mind and attitudes toward love" ("Structure," 18). She is right to note that the eighteen mourning ballades do not form a step-by-step progression from sorrow to consolation. I disagree, however, that they do not further the plot. Although the ballades' process of mourning is parabolic in shape, they do, in fact, show the Narrator's movement from the initial shock of grief toward the Dream of Age that precipitates his withdrawal from the service of Love. As I will demonstrate below, the progress can be best observed in the minor suites of ballades within the larger collection of mourning lyrics.

[108] See Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to line 2026.

The end of joyful activities—*daunce* and *disport*—coincides with the cessation of poetry as Charles once knew it, the songs in praise of beauty, nobility, and the boons of life. Poetry continues in the form of the mourning ballades themselves, but the differences in theme, tone, and imagery emphasise the changes and underscore the loss. The nullification continues in the second stanza where the Narrator ponders the absence he experiences:

> . . . what am y, quyk or deed?
> Nay, certis, deed, this am y very sewre,
> For, fele y plesere, ioy, nor lustihed?
> Wo worthe the fate of my mysaventure! (2034-37)

Like Chaucer's restless narrator in the *Book of the Duchess*, Charles is plagued by an emptiness of feeling and finds himself caught in a state between life and death.[109] He moves further toward nothingness in the final stanza: "Me thynkith right as a syphir now y serue. / That nombre makith and is him silf noon" (2042). Like the zero, Charles carries no value in and of himself and only gains significance when paired with another cipher—such as the *oon* that he has lost (cf. 2152).[110] The emptying out of Charles' feeling and identity has an isolating effect, and this solipsism is explored in the subsequent ballade.

Although, as I have mentioned above, there is no French equivalent of Ballade 59 in Charles of Orleans' works, there is one available elsewhere in late-medieval French poetry. The ballade is a partial translation and adaptation from a poem by Christine de Pisan.[111] Charles of Orleans' lyric expands upon the images of the Narrator all alone (2012) and as "an outcast creature" (2040) given in the previous two ballades.[112] Each of the poem's 28 lines begins *Alone*. The first line repeats the word twice, at the opening and close of the line, putting an extreme emphasis on the isolation of the speaker by enclosing him with loneliness: "The *Alone* which stands at the beginning of each line does

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[109] Cf. *Duchess*, 6-8, 16-24.
[110] Spearing, "Prison, Writing, Absence," 96. Cf. Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to lines 2041-42. Arn observes how the Charles-as-zero image "echoes the *nought* of the refrain." Epstein sees a return of the cipher in the apostrophic 'O' that appears so frequently in the succeeding ballade ("Prisoners of Reflection," 175 n. 31).
[111] See Urwin, "The 59th English Ballade."
[112] The refrain of Ballade 59, "Alone y lyue, an ofcast creature", offers a variation of line 2040.

not simply function syntactically as a recurring adverb", Arn argues. "It sometimes stands completely outside the syntactical structure and, like the tolling of a bell, punctuates rhythmically the lamentations of the poet".[113] The anaphoric repetition of the word is as much a reminder for the speaker himself as it is an insistent message for readers of the poem: the frequent utterance of *alone* comes to fill the space of the lyric where few other sounds are heard and acquires an oppressive weight as the repetitions compound through three stanzas and an envoy.

The ballade conveys little action. Several of the verbs pertain simply to existing—being (2054, 2062), living (refrain and 2072), and enduring (2059)—with a few exceptions, such as "Alone of woo y haue take such excesse" (2078), adding dramatic detail to Charles' lonely survival. Elsewhere, Charles characterises his mourning as a form of exile: he is "forlost in paynfull wildirnes" (2063) where he "wandir[s] . . . in heuynes" (2066). The majority of the verbs in the alone poem concern speaking, but in each instance the utterances appear to be in vain: he has no auditors; his words achieve nothing. In his solitary sojourn, he believes that directionless raging offers some form of solace: "Alone to rage, this thynkith me swetnes, / Alone y lyue, an ofcast creature" (2068-69). Throughout the course of his lamentation, Charles sighs and groans (2056), wails (2057), curses his foul fate (2059). He comments that, because he is alone, he is "withouten whom to make my moan" (2064)—that is, he has no one to whom he can complain, and so catharsis eludes him. His only interlocutor, Death, "most welcome Deth" (2073), again gives no indication of heeding his pleas.[114] The ballade shows the sorrowful Lover as yet another voice crying hopelessly in the wilderness of grief, and the next lyric sees him moving toward an abandoning of speech as a response to loss.

Ballade 60 combines the tropes of Ballades 58 and 59 and rounds out the initial suite of poems that chart the Narrator's reactions to the death of his beloved. Picking up from the failing

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[113] Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to lines 2054-81. She notes also that the scribe has offered graphic emphasis of the word by placing virgules after each instance of *Alone*.
[114] Compare similar, unanswered calls in Ballades 57 and 58.

voice of the mourner in the Ballade 59, this poem advances Charles toward a total embrace of silence. The ballade plays upon the paradoxes and inversions that confront the grieving Lover:

> For dedy lijf, my lyvy deth y wite;
> For ese of payne, in payne of ese y dye;
> For lengthe of woo, woo lengtith me so lite
> That quyk y dye, and yet as ded lyue y.
> Thus nygh a fer y fele the fer is ny
> Of thing certeyne that y vncerteyne seche,
> Which is the deth, sith Deth hath my lady.
> O wofull wrecche! O wrecche, lesse onys thi speche! (2082-89)

The highly chiastic opening demonstrates the bewildered mind of the mourner, a mind that turns in upon itself even as it moves in contrary directions.[115] The central notion of the first stanza, the blurring of death and life, recurs in the third stanza:

> What is this lijf, a lijf or deth y lede?
> Nay, certes, deth-in-lijf is lyklynes,
> For though y fayne me port of lustihede,
> Yet inward lo it sleth me, my distres (2098-2102)

His paradoxical confession of untruthfulness, which recalls the false masks of the first absence ballade (Ballade 10; cf. 499-502), undermines the authenticity of any of his speech and, in so doing, prompts him to hasten to silence.

In the second stanza of the ballade, the speaker begins to partition himself, objectifying and addressing aspects of his being:

> O gost formatt, yelde vp thi breth attones!
> O karkas faynt, take from this lijf thi flight!
> O bollid hert, forbrest thou with thi grones!
> O mestid eyen, whi fayle ye not yowre sight? (2090-93)

The splintering of the self begins first by separating the soul from the body. Here, the poet may be playing on the associations of spirit, breath, and poetic inspiration.[116] In this respect, the address to the *gost formatt* follows logically upon the first iteration of the refrain in the preceding line: "O wofull

[115] The effect is reminiscent of both the dreamer-narrator and the Man in Black in the *Duchess*.
[116] Compare, for instance, the opening of Chaucer's *General Prologue*, where the breath of Zephyrus inspires the birds to sing of love (9-11). In biblical commentaries, too, we find similar associations.

wrecche! O wrecche, lesse onys thi speche!" (2089). An early step in ending poetic speech is to separate oneself from inspiration.[117] With the spirit set aside, Charles turns his attention to dividing the body. His process is significant in three ways. First, he moves from largest to smallest, suggesting an increasingly refined division. After disdainfully dismissing the body in general, Charles addresses the *bollid* (swollen) heart and his *mestid* eyes. This order inverts the typical blazon process for discussing aspects of the body, as Charles moves up rather than down.[118] The shift from the body, which is merely a vessel or vehicle, to the two organs most closely associated with Charles' love for the departed lady is also significant. Several of the earlier love ballades show the eyes as the chief point of access for the lady's beauty to stir his heart and his mind. In Ballade 60, the *mestid* eyes, presumably clouded by tears, continue their gaze even though their favourite object is no more. Like the Lover, the eyes seem to have outlived their purpose. Similarly, Charles' heart, the portion of Charles we most identify with suffering and with wailing, sighing, and groaning (cf. 2056-57), is called upon to end its plaints in one final, cacophonous utterance: "forbrest thou with thi grones!" The envoy concludes Charles' move toward silence. The refrain is an address to himself, a gesture that builds upon his comment in Ballade 59 that he is without auditors (2064). The command—"O wofull wrecche! O wrecche, lesse onys thi speche!—also exemplifies the alienation from and fragmentation of his self in response to his grief. This division allows Charles to stand apart and call for an end to speaking.[119]

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[117] Of course, one of the bitter ironies of the mourning Lover's efforts here is that much of his poetic inspiration heretofore stems from separation, distance, and absence. In the mourning lyrics he has simply substituted separation-by-death for the distance (emotional and physical) from the still-living lady in the earlier love ballades.

[118] I have already discussed a similar inversion in the Vision of Fortune above.

[119] The end of Ballade 60 also marks the first dramatic 'beat' in the mourning lyrics. Ballade 61 is a poem in the chess-as-love and game-against-Fortune traditions (cf. *Duchess*, 652-741). Ballades 62 through 64 continue the mourning series in different ways, each largely disconnected from the others.

Ballades 65, 66, and 67: A Brief Dream Vision and Its Counterparts

The silencing of the mourner's voice is only temporary, of course, and thus largely a rhetorical device. Fourteen more ballades follow in the sequence and *Fortunes Stabilnes* runs for another 4400 lines. While each of the remaining lyrics continues the project of mourning, most are much less tightly linked than are Ballades 58, 59, and 60. The exceptions, however, are Ballades 65, 66, and 67. In these three poems, the poet engages the dream vision genre to further the project of mourning. In the first two poems of the suite, he responds to the French tradition of setting lyric poetry within a dream frame. The third ballade, which is neither distinguished from the preceding dream nor explicitly separate from it, introduces issues of ekphrasis and the plastic arts alongside the already paired concerns of elegy and the dream vision.

In the first of the three ballades, Charles is very much awake. The poem is another First of May lyric, a recollection of happier times. The Narrator thinks back to a May morning when he had the good fortune (2227) to play at the game of The Flower and the Leaf with a courtly company.[120] By chance—"Right as that Fortune lust agide the caas" (2232)—Charles draws the leaf. He considers this a fitting match: since his beloved is dead, "[o]f othir flowre, god wott, y take no quere" (2244). In the envoy, the Narrator reflects on the fleeting nature of this world: "Ther nys leef nor flowre that doth endewre / But a sesoun, as sowne doth in a belle" (2259-60).[121] His reference here to the tolling of (church) bells evokes not only the inescapable passage of time, but also some significant events of a human life, notably the ringing of bells at marriage and funeral rites—the latter rites having excluded the Lover from experiencing the former. Combined with the repeated references to chance and Fortune—including the refrain, "As that tyme was myn hap and aventure" (2236)—the Narrator's discussion of the flower and the leaf and his recollection of his own lost

[120] This popular debate game consists of players arguing over the virtues of, and their (trivial) allegiance to, the flower or the leaf. Sides in the argument are usually chosen by lot—as in Ballade 65—and the amusement of the game arises from creative and often humorous rationalisations. See Arn, ed. *Stabilnes*, 55-56.
[121] Charles' observation recalls the refrain of Ballade 64, "That this world nys but even a thyng in vayne" (2205).

flower emphasise the impermanence that characterises human experience, both joy and sorrow. More importantly, however, Ballade 65 prepares for the following lyric, in which Charles has a dream wherein he is chastised for his choice of the leaf over the flower.

Early the next morning, Charles has a vision of the flower he had rejected for the leaf the day before:

> The secund day of fayre, fresshe lusty May
> As half in slepe, in slombir half wakyng,
> Me mette this sweuene in spryngyng of þe day,
> How to me came a flowre this resonyng
> Me . . . (2263-67)

The in-betweenness of the Dreamer's state—"half in slepe, in slombir half waking"—is compounded by the early hour of the experience in the twilight of early morning (*in spryngyng of þe day*).[122] The poem questions the distinction between surface appearance and deeper meaning. Charles' defense to the Flower is that his service to the leaf is ultimately meaningless for it was brought about by chance: "happe of such chesyng / The leef to serue this heyre hath made me he" (2277-78); the seeming link between the Lover and the leaf is merely part of the courtly game in which he is engaged.[123] By contrast, Charles continues, his allegiance to the flower runs deeper and is more enduring: "Als yow in cheef that do y honoure ay / What part y am as is me well sittyng / All for oon flowre that me was tan away" (2283-85); he swears that his devotion would remain constant "[t]hough that y levys were a thousand skore!" (2290).[124] Charles' allusion to the *oon flowre* he has lost further confounds clear signification and meaning. There is no direct indication that the flower who appears to the sleeping Charles is his lost lady, but, as Arn explains, the two figures are linked: the flower in the dream is "in some sense her representative, the head of the lady's 'faction' (Flower with

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[122] As Goodrich points out, the inbetweenness of Charles' visionary state is particular to the English ballade: its French equivalent reads simply "je dormoye"; the version of the poem in *Fortunes Stabilnes* specifies he is "half in slepe" (*Themes*, 139).
[123] Cf. Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to 2277-78.
[124] It seems to me likely that, as he speaks to the personified flower, Charles exploits the pun on *levys*.

a capital F), as this line makes clear."[125] The shifting signs of the dream space allow the grieving Dreamer as direct a communication with his lady as he has been able to have in any of the preceding love or mourning ballades.

What is most interesting about Ballade 66 is not the vision of and colloquy with the flower, but how the lyric stands in relation to the rest of *Fortunes Stabilnes* and to the traditions of dream vision and elegy. First, there is the matter of inversions. Whereas earlier poets—especially French ones, but also English poets as late as Lydgate—used dream visions as convenient frames for intercalated lyrics, Charles of Orleans, in this instance, inserts a minor dream vision in a collection of ballades. Second, the poet places a dream vision within an elegiac work (or section of a work). Third, in the ballade itself, we see the Dreamer-Narrator falling asleep in the 'fresh month of May' rather than awakening into such a world. These inversions suggest a fusion of the French and English (elegiac) dream vision traditions. The French tradition—the source of most of the stock imagery such as the May morning—is more closely identified with love visions, as the common label "dits amoureux" makes clear. The inversions of these topoi emphasise how death has affected the man's life and experience as a lover and as a love poet. His play with the typical English elegiac dream vision—to have the standard shape of the dream vision contain the elegiac project—speaks to a similar upset. Charles (here both the poet and the literary character) is not only working through grief, but also trying to reconcile two of his chief poetic inheritances.

Two other ballades of the first sequence deploy dream-vision tropes. Ballade 72 opens on the morning of St Valentine's Day, when "fresshe Phebus" (2455) wakes Charles "of the slepe of Heuynes, / Wherin forslepid [he] all the nyght, dowtles, / Vpon [his] bed so hard of Newous Thought" (2460-62). The lyric, which alludes to both Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* and to the *Duchess*-dreamer's 'waking' in the painted chamber, describes the gathering of a host of birds to choose their

[125] Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to line 2285.

mates, and the great noise of their cries keep the Narrator from returning to his slumber.[126] Ballade 70 betrays its influences less explicitly, but it, too, draws on the dream vision tradition. The poem opens with Charles in the "Forest of Noyous Hevynes," "wandryng in the moneth of May" (2395-96).[127] He meets Venus and explains to her that he is an exile from joy, known by all folk as "[t]he man forlost that wot not where he goth" (2402).[128] This ballade anticipates both the Narrator's journey to and residence in the Castle of No Care following the first sequence as well as the sustained encounter between the Dreamer and Venus later in the poem.

The dream-vision characteristics of Ballade 70 are underscored in the French Book (Ballade LXIII), where it follows immediately upon Charles' vision of the flower. At the end of Ballade 66 (LXII in the French Book), there is no mention of the Dreamer waking up. It is very possible that the next ballade continues the dream, and that the meeting with Venus in the painful wood is another episode of the same vision. The same may be true in the English Book, although the order of lyrics is different.

The English Ballade 67 is a tomb poem in which Charles describes the monument he has had raised for his lady. He begins with the memorial service:

> I Haue the obit of my lady dere
> Made in the Chirche of Loue full solempnely
> And for hir sowle the service and prayere,
> In thought waylyng, haue songe hit hevyly,
> The torchis sett of Sighis pitously
> Which <were> with Sorow sett aflame (2297-2302)[129]

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[126] Cf. *Fowls*, 305-15, and *Duchess*, 295-305. As in the *Book of the Duchess*, the singing and chattering of the birds stands in sharp contrast to the Narrator's dejected state.

[127] The image of the Lover wandering in the forest is by no means the exclusive property of Dante, but Charles of Orleans may be drawing in part on the scene at the opening of the *Inferno*. Cf. Harrison's comments on Ballade 70 (French Ballade LXIII), "Reluctant Traveler," 84. On the Duke's Italian influences, see: Fox, *Lyric Poetry*, 5-6, 49. Cf. Vesce, "The Pose of Love," 444-46; Goodrich, *Themes*, 115-16.

[128] Though the goddess tries to comfort him, the Narrator insists that he is doomed by Death to wander as a blind man, "with my staf grasping wey" (2419).

[129] Arn inserts *were*, which is absent from the manuscript.

The Church of Love in which he has the tomb built may be the same one in which he has the mass of St Gabriel sung in Ballade 56, when he prayed for glad tidings of the lady's recovery (cf. 1992-93). The service around the tomb accords with contemporary practices, such as the memorials John of Gaunt commanded for Blanche of Lancaster, as discussed in the last chapter. The service takes on an otherworldly or dreamy aspect, however, when we read that the torches are made of sighs and were set alight by a personified Sorrow. Contrary to the flames fuelled by Passion and by Love, no matter how bright these mournful torches burn, they cast a sombre light. The memorials for the deceased beloved stand in sharp contrast to the living love he held for the lady.

The tomb itself is likewise otherworldly:

> The tovmbe is made als to the same
> Of karfull cry depayntid all with teeris,
> The which richely is write abowt
> That here, lo, lith withouten dowt
> The hool tresoure of all worldly blys. (2303-7)

The fairy-tale casket made of cries and decorated with shed tears adds to the defamiliarising qualities of the mourning process. The refrain, "the hool tresoure of all worldly blys", is reminiscent of an image in two of the poems discussed in earlier chapters. In *Pearl*, the Maiden presents the Dreamer with the image of the pearl "Þat is in cofer so comly clente" (259). In Chaucer's *Complaint unto Pity*, the speaker tells of the deceased Pity "buried in an herte" (14). The tensions at play in these poems—between closeness and separation, keeping and losing—are equally found in Ballade 67. The tomb is intended to enclose and so to preserve the beloved. At best, however, it preserves the memory rather than *all wordly blys* itself and in so doing unwittingly underscores the distance between the time of that bliss and the sorrowful present.

The effigy placed atop the tomb embodies some of the lasting qualities the speaker seeks:

"Of gold on <hit> ther lith an ymage clere, / With safyr blew ysett so inrichely" (2308-9).[130] Effigies of the deceased were a common feature of medieval burial structures, but the choice of material, while not completely unrealistic, demonstrates a desire for both clarity and permanence. As Charles explains, "hit is write and seide how the safere / Doth token trouthe, and gold to ben happy" (2310-11). The lapidary knowledge the Narrator here invokes underscores the accuracy of the statue; the representation is *an ymage clere*, as close a reproduction of the "ewrous trewe madame" (2313) as can be hoped. The legend that wraps around the tomb, which reflects contemporary practices of sepulchral ornamentation, functions at once as a summary of the lady's life and virtues and as a continual remembrance of those same qualities.[131] The petrification of writing and of images is an important topos for the poetic mourning process. Whereas elsewhere in *Fortunes Stabilnes* the sorrowful Lover tries to find comfort in the fleeting nature of this world—commenting that "this world nys but even a thyng in vayne" (Ballade 64, 2205) and that nothing endures "[b]ut a sesoun, as sowne doth in a belle" (Ballade 65, 2260)—there is also a tendency for the elegiac speaker to seek a more permanent form of expression.

There is something mildly ekphrastic about Ballade 67.[132] Although the Narrator neither attempts to cause the painted tears to flow off the tomb nor to animate and converse with the

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[130] Arn inserts *hit*, which the scribe has omitted.

[131] See, for instance, Van Dussen's description of the tomb of Anne of Bohemia in Westminster Abbey (*From England to Bohemia*, 23-26).

[132] Ekphrasis is most commonly defined as "the verbal representation of visual representation" (Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 3). More than a simple description of a painting or a sculpture, ekphrasis seeks to enliven the still, silent image even as it offers the dynamic, vital, yet fleeting poetry some of the lasting qualities of the art object. Insofar as it engages with the device, the tomb ballade belongs to the sub-category of notional ekphrasis, the poetic account of an imagined artefact (Hollander, "The Poetics of Ekphrasis," 209). Literary engagements with plastic arts, imagined or otherwise, turn up in many medieval poems, including the descriptions of the three temples in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and Gawain's shield in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Ekphrasis is not uncommon in dream vision poetry: the malleability of realistic depiction that characterises the dream-poems make them an ideal venue for considering the interactions of and contests between poetry and the plastic arts. We find instances in the account of the wall ornaments at the opening of the *Roman de la Rose*, in the brief descriptions of chambers and temples in the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*, and in the Dante-pilgrim's encounters with the statuary in Canto 10 of the *Purgatorio*. Boethius' reports on the appearance and apparel of Ladies Philosophy and Fortune in the *Consolation* also owe something to the ekphrastic tradition. In the *Temple of Glas*, Lydgate's dreamer-narrator spends some two hundred lines describing vast murals depicting the many hapless lovers of history and mythology before transitioning to his discovery of the plaintive lady standing before a painting and

frozen image of the deceased, he nevertheless engages in the yearning to blend the qualities of the verbal and the plastic arts that so often characterises poetic ekphrasis. The combination of the gold and bejewelled sarcophagus with the stony legend suggests that Charles thinks he may have stumbled upon an appropriate mode of preservation for his lost lady. The "flowering" (2314) of her name and reputation that he forecasts is imagined in quite a different manner than the earthly growth he discusses in the preceding ballades. The memory of his beloved is not a rose that flowers and fails as nature deems, but a persistent and perduring thing. Moreover, Charles combines the lasting qualities of the physical structure with the vitality of his own unending poetic mourning that he promises on first hearing of her demise (Ballade 57; cf. 2015-20).

In the ekphrastic turn, we find again the recurring theme of enclosure or nesting that I have analysed above. As the tomb encases the deceased lady, so does Ballade 67 enclose the tomb. By extension, the ballade sequence contains the lyric and is, according to the model I presented early in the chapter, in turn enclosed in the outermost frame of Dream A. If, as I posited above, the account of the tomb is a continuation of the dream begun in Ballade 66, then yet another level of framing is added. The enclosure of the sculptor's creation within the poet's work serves as a marriage of the two forms of memorialisation favoured here. The layers of mediation, the pairing and alternation of their respective attributes, promise to preserve the memory of the beloved in a way that a single medium cannot.

The building of the tomb in precious stones and in words recalls Hardman's argument about the poetic monument Chaucer creates for John of Gaunt through the *Book of the Duchess*. Hardman demonstrates how Chaucer builds the forms and functions of contemporary tomb sculpture into the structure, imagery, and register of his poem.[133] Though she never uses the term, what Chaucer

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a statue of her patron goddesses. Despite the prevalence of ekphrasis in medieval dream vision, the subject remains understudied.

[133] Hardman, "Memorial Monument," 206-8.

achieves is a kind of ekphrasis: he "animates a funerary monument and makes it 'speke'" even as he imbues the living (but fleeting) poem with the durability of the solid monument.[134] In *Fortunes Stabilnes*, Charles of Orleans similarly unites the verbal and the plastic arts to raise a monument to the Lover's departed lady. His ekphrastic monument preserves her memory and makes an artefact out of the Lover's grief.

The powers accorded to each medium are emphasised through an implicit comparison with the creative power of God, "the which that made hir" (2315). As God created the lady, so the sculptor raised the tomb, and, in turn, the mournful Lover made the ballade. Despite this analogous creative authority, the lyric carries a doubt in its own ability to preserve. The language of the ballade notes the gaps that are implied in any manner of mediation: as the golden effigy is a metonym (*an ymage*) for the body of the living lady (and not the decaying body that lies beneath it), so does the blue sapphire "token trouthe" (2311) but not truth itself. Similarly, the productive powers of the mortal craftsmen, the sculptor and the poet, are imitations of divine creation: whereas God made a living being, a real *tresoure of all worldly blys*, the stone-worker and the wordsmith make only vessels for that *tresoure*. And, while the work of the mason might last an age, the elegiac speaker worries that his words—even when committed to writing on parchment or in stone—may ring no longer than "sowne doth in a belle".

The doubt of the memorialising capabilities of the Lover's poetic grieving in Ballade 67 exemplifies the imperfection and consequent failure of his work of mourning. Before he can return from his exile in sorrow and solitude, he must sufficiently complete the act of grieving. In the final section of this chapter, I will briefly examine Charles' dialogue with Venus in his penultimate vision to show how the poet brings about a satisfactory end to the project of mourning, one which does

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[134] Hardman, "Memorial Monument," 212-13. Hardman compares the prosopopoeia she claims Chaucer achieves with Morpheus' animation of Ceyx's corpse in the Ovidian tale.

not abandon the memory of his first beloved but that allows him to re-enter the community of love's service.

Charles and Venus: Sharing the Language of Grief

In the first half of this chapter, I discussed how Charles, reawakened from the Dream of Venus, transforms the fragment of fabric carried out of the dream into a lasting memento of his experience as a lover. This transformation is the last act in a process begun earlier in the dream during Charles' colloquy with the goddess about his status as an ex-lover and mourner. In this last section, I will demonstrate how the dialogue between Dreamer and goddess enacts a clear movement through and subsequently out of sorrow and into the light of love renewed. In so doing, this process fulfils the path of successful mourning set out in Ballade 57, which, up until this point, Charles has failed to follow. Finally, I will step back to consider the whole poem in light of the scenes of loss and mourning to suggest that Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes* should be read not only as a dream vision from start to finish but as a poem caught up in the elegiac issues of loss and longing, and of the desire to end the isolation they cause.

Once Charles recognises the apparition as Venus, she asks after his habitation and how he leads his life in retirement. Charles tells how he lives "[a]s an ancre . . . in clothis blake" (4802; cf. 4862), and calls his enduring dedication to his deceased love a "paynfull, ded professioun" (4855). This label characterises his existence as a form of stasis: he is "[w]ithouten chaunge or newe opynyoun," and in this service he remains "stedfast" (4857-58).[135] He further compares his devotion to the life of a "contemplatijf" (4864), for he fixes his thoughts on the past, meditating upon a few objects and other tokens of that happier time. The repeated description of himself as an anchorite reintroduces ambivalent images of enclosure. Charles is, in a sense, immured by his sorrow and the

[135] He similarly admits that he is totally nullified: "Forcharge nave y of thing to me bileft / Of good nor harme more then y telle yow þis" (4848-49). Cf. *Duchess*, 6-12.

"wel more a thousand thoughtis mo" (4842), but, like the devout practitioner, he persists in his devotion despite its extreme hardship.

He is met at every turn—"nere, / . . . here or there" (4821-22)—by reminders of his dear lady and the story of their love, and the memories are bittersweet. The list of prompts the Narrator provides is by no means exhaustive, but it is thorough enough to provide a relatively full account of a protracted love affair: he recalls singing and dancing, sleeping and waking, crafting objects, playing at games, telling tales, the exchange of gifts, the ebb and flow of passion, and the composing of texts (4825-40).[136] The general order of this catalogue of painful reminders and the memories they conjure likewise establishes a rough chronology of the courtship from near-innocent exchanges of pleasantries, to courtly pastimes, the confession of love, the series of gains and losses, and the consummation of the caress.

Spaces, too, hold a particular allure for the grieving mind of the Lover, especially enclosed or framed spaces: the dancing *chambre* (4826); the bathing room (*bayne*; 4827); the windowframe (4830); the stairway that leads to the church (4831); and the bed in the tower in which the lady died (4841-43). Importantly, in recollection Charles emphasises the absence embodied in these sites and objects: the windowsill, like the tower or the deathbed, is now empty, and the presence that each space or thing suggests is but a fleeting illusion. The *ryng of gold*, the only object mentioned that is Charles' own possession, best symbolises this painful fact, for a ring, while solid, is defined by the absence at

[136] It is no coincidence that each of these recollections has elegiac resonances both within the poem and in the wider context of the tradition of elegy. For example, the memories of song and dance echo the newly-bereaved Lover's proclamation of the end of joyful pastimes: "In slepe ben leyd all song, daunce, or disport" (Ballade 58; 2026). The rhythms of both song and dance inform the repetitions of the elegy, and speak to a need to impose order. The image of the lady making handicrafts—"this and that y saw hir yonder worche" (4828)—parallels both the sharing of stories and the composition of texts. Moreover, the word *worche* is more than a dialect cognate of *work*; it suggests an object wrought, and elsewhere the word refers to the twisting torment of the Narrator's heart (1727), to embroidery (5016), and to the making, weaving, or unravelling of fate (latterly linked in Ballade 74 to the Fates, Atropos, Lachesis, and Clotho). Sacks notes the prevalence of weaving imagery in elegiac poetry, and I have already commented the common pun on *textere* and *textus* (Sacks, *The English Elegy*, 18).

its centre.[137] Charles comes to fetishize the enclosed, empty spaces his lady once occupied: "For thorugh the deth my thoughtis riche[s] y mys / That stede of hit the wallis bare y kis" (4851-52). This fetishization of space creates a sort of temple (or, if the word were not anachronistic, a museum) of the lady. The act of kissing the perimeters (the frames) of these spaces is a highly ritualistic performance, a kind of consecration that transforms each space and fills its emptiness with meaning. The fetishizing also accomplishes, as Charles recognises (if only subconsciously), the important task of substitution. Because he cannot kiss his deceased beloved (his *thoughtis riche*[*s*]), he embraces the *wallis bare*. As I will show below, it is this first substitution that catalyses Charles' ability to locate and order his sorrow and so to move beyond it.

A similar, if more poignant, image follows the consecration of the haunted spaces. Charles also fetishizes personal objects of the lady: "the wallis bare y kis / Or ellis a glove or smokke y from hir stale / Which was þe <shift> of hir y louyd and shall" (4852-54).[138] The sad image of the Mourner caressing the empty glove conjures a pathos found few other places in Middle English dream-poems.[139] The items of apparel, like the golden effigy atop the tomb, are indicative of the absent, vital body of the lady. Like the fetishized spaces discussed above, these intimate objects once functioned as frames for the beloved's body—the smock is called a *shift*, a sheath—and, now that they enclose only an absence, a lack, the Mourner must attach himself to that frame.

Charles' explanation to Venus of the onslaught of memories he undergoes is an important part of his work of mourning. Like the *Pearl*-mourner and Chaucer's Man in Black, Charles' grief isolates him from others: even as he sings his roundel to the Court of No Care, we can imagine him feeling alone in the hall, standing in the late-medieval equivalent of the cinematic lone spotlight. Fein, who describes Charles' mind as labyrinthine, observes further that it "contains only self-

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[137] Compare his earlier description of himself as a cipher, a zero.
[138] See Arn, ed., *Stabilnes*, note to line 4854. Steele and Day also comment on the word *shift*.
[139] I am reminded here, however, of Minnis' comparison of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* with Larkin's "An Arundel Tomb." See Minnis et al, *The Shorter Poems*, 74-78.

referential bearings".[140] Daniel Poiron also comments on the isolating character of Charles' poems and the inner world they elaborate and explore: "Mais dans la solitude s'élabore un monde hallucinatoire, et le livre poétique, qui se referme sur lui-même, n'ouvre ses fenetres que sur la chambre de la pensée" [In solitude, he elaborates a hallucinatory world, and the poetic book, which he closes around himself, only opens its windows into the chamber of his thoughts].[141] The account he gives to Venus is like a guided tour of his grieving and poetic mind: he unpacks references and explains how objects, spaces, and images resonate through his speech and his lyrics. Moreover, he explains how language itself carries the marks of his lost love: "yondir lo my lady dere / Gaf me this word . . . / . . . / And with this word she made myn hert to bold / And with this word, allas, she made me cold" (4823-24, 4838-39). He thus teaches Venus the private language of his sorrow, an act which is both liberating and restorative.

This sharing creates a community, limited as it is to the Mourner and his interlocutor, and thereby ends (or begins to end) Charles' sorrowful, lonely exile. Recall, for instance, how in Ballade 59 he laments his inability to speak his grief to anyone: "Alone withouten whom to make my mone, / Alone, my wrecchid case forto redresse" (2064-65). His annotated account of the contents of his life and mind sets him on a path toward controlling the elegiac influences that weigh so heavily upon him. Although Charles does not himself immediately realise this change—indeed, he resists Venus' advice for dozens of stanzas—the catalogue and the simultaneous tale of the affair and continued devotion effectively enclose each of the painful reminders named and, by compartmentalising them, make them more manageable. The catalogue of memories is itself enclosed in the Dream of Venus, which, in turn, is metonymically represented by the *pece of plesaunce* Charles maintains from the dream. Charles displaces the attachment to the memories, now each sufficiently enumerated,

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[140] Fein, "Distance and Separation," 76.
[141] Poiron, *Le Moyen Age*, II.212. The translation is mine.

arranged, and elaborated upon, to the kerchief which he carries not only as a sign of those memories but of the work of mourning and of the dream experience in which that work occurred.

The story told in Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes* begins (in the now-lost quire) as a dream vision poem. In the narratives, lyric sequences, and dreams that follow, the Narrator-Lover-Dreamer experiences the trials and pains of courtship, of lost love and mourning, of an alienation and retirement from love, and the restoration to love's service through a successful work of mourning. More than other poets in either the Middle French or Chaucerian dream vision traditions, Charles of Orleans complicates the issues of framing. His dreams-within-dreams, lyrics-in-dreams, and dreams-in-lyrics test the structures of the genre and allow him to explore the rigours of love, loss, and poetry. The theme of enclosure serves the forlorn Lover-Narrator, for it provides him with an accessible means to present his grief and thus to pursue and to create an effective work of mourning. If we are to heed those scholars who insist on reading Charles of Orleans' poetry as a result of and response to his incarceration, then we should consider how the poet redeems or rehabilitates the imagery and symbolism of enclosure and deploys it to a beneficial end.

Coda

Written in a seventy-year period that saw the rise of the English vernacular as a literary language, *Pearl*, the *Book of the Duchess*, and *Fortunes Stabilnes* all combine the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode to explore the limitations of language and of poetry. As I have demonstrated in the three preceding chapters, the subject matter of the poems—united as they are by the use of the dream-frame narratives and the elegiac tone that pervades them—are equally varied. Each poem deals with love and with loss, but does so from a different angle. In *Pearl*, the poet uses the paternal grief of the mourner-dreamer to interrogate the failures of his mortal tongue and to imagine an elevated, celestial language which offers a capaciousness of meaning without suffering from the mutability of mundane language. Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, which is concerned primarily with assuaging the grief of another rather than that of the dreamer-narrator, dramatizes the poet's entry into the narrative mode. Charles of Orleans' *Fortunes Stabilnes* combines the French tradition of the mixed-mode dits amoureux with the English elegiac dream vision to trace its dreamer-lover's experiences of initiation, courtship, loss and sorrow, successful mourning, and the renewal of love.

Comparisons of the three poems studied in this dissertation, which heretofore in this study have been brief and have only hinted at deeper resonances, broaden our understanding of how these Middle English poets used the elegiac dream vision. In both the *Duchess* and *Fortunes Stabilnes*, the dreamer-narrators deploy narrative as a means of ordering the experience of grief and turning the frantic energies of the sorrowing mind toward productive ends. As I discussed in chapter two, Chaucer's narrator leads the Man in Black out of the cycle of repetitive mourning: the Black Knight's concise enumeration of the episodes of his love affair and its tragic end allows him finally to rise and return to the social world of the living. In the course of the dream and, more importantly, through the creation of the dream-poem in response to the experience, the Chaucerian narrator shifts from the closed circle of lyric to the more linear narrative structure with which the poem

concludes. In the final dream-narrative sequence of *Fortunes Stabilnes*, the still-bereaved Charles moves beyond his sorrow by travelling through his memories of his lost beloved. Less rigidly narrative than the Black Knight's final tale of his love for Lady White, Charles' procession of metonymic objects and spaces recalls the early suite of mourning lyrics, which, while each lyric contained a meditation on some aspect of his grief, manages to manifest an element of narrative progress. The tour of mourning mnemonics that Charles shares with Venus likewise builds toward the final station of the nested images of the deathbed in the chamber. In turn, as I showed in chapter three, Charles is released from his grief and is able to return to the company of lovers he joined at the outset of the poem.

Charles' explanation of the significance of each of the prompts to painful memory frees him from the isolation of sorrow. As he unpacks the private symbolism of each object, he instructs Venus in the private language of his grief. In so doing, he ends the total privacy (or solipsism) of that language, but as he does so he builds a small community, a select group that understands the meaning behind the signs. The *Pearl*-poet, too, deploys community-forming and –binding symbols to lead his mourner-dreamer toward consolation. The image of the Eucharist raised in the priest's hands in the final lines of the poem supercedes the shifting sign of the pearl with which the poem began. Whereas the pearl in the proem is linked with the mourner's exile from the social world of the harvest, the Eucharist reconnects him with the community of the congregants witnessing the sacrament—in his own church and throughout Christendom. The spatial and temporal connection invoked in *Pearl* is broader in scope than the sharing between Charles and Venus in *Fortunes Stabilnes*, but both dream-enclosed elegiac performances stress the importance of formalised, ritual structures in the poems.

The ritual scene that closes *Pearl* stands in sharp contrast to the fruitless repetition suggested by the mourner's return to the *erber* in the proem. A similar tendency to unproductive and

confounding repetition characterises the Chaucerian Black Knight and the narrator-dreamer in the early scenes of the *Book of the Duchess*. Both poems, as well as Charles of Orleans' dream vision, differentiate between useful and useless forms of repetition. Often, as I have argued, productive repetition is figured in ritual terms. Such a configuration may have important bearing on the context of the early performances of Chaucer's poem. If, as I suggested in chapter two, the *Duchess* was written to be presented as part of the commemorative services for Blanche of Lancaster, then its emphasis on proper forms of repetitive (that is, ritual) behaviour bears increased weight: it privileges the memorial function of the poem and positions Chaucer's text as an important part of the ceremony. Whether or not Chaucer's *Duchess* was performed annually in memory of Gaunt's duchess, its relationship with the commemoration—which continued until Lancaster's own death and burial next to his first wife—and the identification of the text with the established ceremony gives the poem an important role in solidifying the vernacular literary tradition.

As the example of the *Book of the Duchess* suggests, dream poems and elegies occupy a curious position between the public and the private spheres. The experiences of dreams and of sorrow begin as private experiences, but, once put into rhyme, performed or read, copied and disseminated, dream-poems and mourning-poems become public things. In my introduction, I posited that the dream vision and frame deployed in Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars versificatoria* presents the process of inspiration, composition, and dissemination; it traces the writer's entry into, and engagement with, the world of discourse. My dissertation shows that Middle English elegiac dream visions do the same. The dreamer-narrators of *Pearl*, the *Book of the Duchess*, and *Fortunes Stabilnes*, each move from an isolated state to integration with a wider community. In closing this study and looking forward to further investigations, I want to suggest that the trajectory from isolation to inclusion, a common trope of both the dream vision genre and the elegiac mode, corresponds to the poet establishing an audience and engaging with that cultural community. The implied audience that reads the

Chaucerian dreamer-narrator's "sweven in ryme", the company that listens to Charles' roundels, Venus learning the symbolism of Charles' mementos, and the congregation gathered together in the *Pearl*-narrator's final lines all represent the community of readers of the growing corpus of vernacular literature to whom the Middle English poets address their writing.

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